



Media Release

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£146,000 funding boost for dementia befriending and peer support services in Edinburgh

Two new projects which provide peer support and befriending services for carers of people with dementia have been given the go-ahead thanks to £146,000 funding boost. Both projects are based in Edinburgh.

Run by VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian), the first is a peer support service which will provide both one-to-one and group peer support to carers of people with dementia.

Group support will facilitate the sharing of expertise on key themes such as understanding diagnosis, what local services and supports are available, and how to advocate for someone with dementia. One to one sessions will help to improve the health and well-being of carers, increase their confidence in their caring role and their ability to engage with and influence services.

Support will be provided by volunteer peer mentors who have personal experience of caring for someone with dementia, in order to reduce the feelings of isolation, loneliness, stress and worry often felt by carers.

The second project is the inspiration of the Eric Liddell Centre, who will create a service to reach out to new carers for people with dementia in Edinburgh, with the help of trained volunteer befrienders.

Building a relationship with a befriender can offer a new carer either the opportunity to talk about and share their feeling on their caring role or a chance to have a break from their caring responsibilities and enjoy time for talking about and doing other things.

With the support of a befriender, simply getting out and exploring their local area and what it has to offer can help reduce isolation and loneliness for new carers, and in turn promote the development of confidence and self-esteem. This can also be enormously beneficial to health and well-being.

VOCAL were awarded £62,000 for their peer support project and the Eric Liddell Centre were awarded £84,000 for their befriending initiative, both over five years.

Funding has come from the Life Changes Trust, an independent charity set up with a Big Lottery Fund endowment of £50 million to improve the lives of two key groups in Scotland: people affected by dementia and care experienced young people. The Trust will be investing a total of £1.2 million in both befriending and peer support initiatives over a five-year period.

Befriending and peer support are two of the services which people with dementia and carers say they most value because of the positive impact they have on the person with dementia and/or their carer.

They have been identified through research as key ways in which isolation and loneliness can be reduced, factors which can have a significantly negative impact on a person's sense of well-being and their physical and mental health.

Jane Greenacre, Assistant Director of Carer Support at VOCAL said:

'Voice Of Carers Across Lothian supports carers to build their resilience and health and well-being, and so we are delighted to have been awarded Life Changes Trust funding to develop personalised peer support opportunities for carers of people with dementia in Edinburgh. Carers consistently tell us about the positive impact that peer support has on their health and well-being – this new funding is an excellent opportunity to deliver positive outcomes for carers in the city.'

Fraser Quinn, Chief Executive of The Eric Liddell Centre said: 'The Eric Liddell Centre (ELC) has community at its core. We are delighted that the Life Changes Trust award will support further development of our Befriending service specially tailored for carers of people living with dementia. Carers tell us that befrienders listen with respect and empathy and support them getting out and about to do things, thereby helping them to feel less isolated and giving them back their confidence. With this new funding, the ELC also will also develop bespoke programmes of training for Carers and Befrienders of people living with dementia, that offer person- and community-centred support to help promote inclusivity and understanding.

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme said: 'Both peer support and befriending services provide a very specific, person-centred type of support. We know anecdotally about the power and benefits of initiatives like these. Using effective evaluation methods, we will be able to offer further evidence of their significant value to individuals and to society. We are privileged to be funding these two organisations, who will use their skills and experience to make a real and significant difference to the lives of those who care for people with dementia.'

In Scotland:

- It is estimated that around 90,000 people have dementia
- The number of people with dementia in Scotland is increasing, because the population is getting older. Based on current dementia prevalence rates, the number of people with dementia in Scotland is projected to double by 2038*.
- Much of that financial burden falls on family carers and friends, who may also experience social isolation, exhaustion and health problems associated with the demands of caring.
- Dementia costs the country more than cancer, heart disease and stroke put together.

ENDS

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EDITORS NOTES:

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund in April 2013 with a ten year endowment of £50 million to support transformational improvements in the quality of life, well-being, empowerment and inclusion of people affected by dementia and young people with experience of being in care.

The Trust will invest £1.2 million in befriending and peer support initiatives over a five-year period. Funded initiatives will be required to find match funding in years 3 to 5.

Befriending: by this, the Trust means a voluntary, beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support a person with dementia or a carer of a person with dementia.

Peer Support: by this, the Trust means the help and support that people with a lived experience of dementia (including experience of caring for a person with dementia) are able to give to one another.

VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian) manages the CarersNet Edinburgh & Lothian website and works in partnership with other local carer organisations. VOCAL support carers in all family or relationship settings, be they defined by kinship, partnership, friendship, affection or obligation. Their services include information, advice and emotional support, training, advocacy, counselling and groupwork.

The Eric Liddell Centre is a local Edinburgh charity which operates a range of quality caring services including a registered day care service for people with a diagnosis of dementia and a Befriending service for carers. They also provide low cost office space for small charities and rooms for hire for other groups providing activities for the community. The Eric Liddell Centre is dedicated to inspiring, empowering, and supporting people of all ages, cultures and abilities, as an expression of compassionate Christian values.

*Based on current dementia prevalence rates, the number of people with dementia in Scotland is projected to double by 2038. However, while ageing is a major risk factor for dementia, there is growing evidence that an increase in protective factors such as healthy eating and regular physical exercise and reduction in risk factors such as alcohol and tobacco use, could reduce people's risk of dementia, or delay the age at which they may develop it.

www.lifechangestrust.org.uk.