



Media Release

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Dementia friendly farming project for Dumfries & Galloway

People living with dementia in Dumfries and Galloway will reap the benefit from a new project that helps them connect with the outdoors through agricultural and farming activities. A funding award of £14,800 has been made to the project by the Life Changes Trust.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway will develop and deliver a two year project in the Stewartry area, working with the farming community and other organisations to build a programme of activities for people with dementia who are from a farming background, or who are interested in learning something new and getting outdoors.

10% of Scotland's national agriculture workforce are located in Dumfries and Galloway. For them, farming is a life of being outdoors. But when someone needs care or has to stop their farming activities because of dementia, they can also lose touch with being outside in the environment which is a key part of their identity and their memories.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway will work with the farming community and a partnership of organisations including care homes, public and third sector organisations, to build a programme of activities that will support people to visit farms, attend marts and agricultural shows - a key event in the farming calendar - get close to farm machinery, and connect, or reconnect, with farming life.

Everyone who participates will have the opportunity to develop their own personal memory resource, so that memories and experiences can be revisited and shared with family and carers.

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia

programme said, "Farming is an integral part of life for many people in Dumfries and Galloway, and it can be a big part of their identity. This project will ensure that, even with a diagnosis of dementia, individuals do not lose that connection with farming - something they may have done their whole lives. The project will also be open to people living with dementia who want to find out more about their local farms and activities and provides the added social benefit of bringing people together as part of a community".

The funding award is one of six made by the Life Changes Trust under the banner of 'Get Outdoors', with a funding total of £90,000. The funding will help improve the physical and mental well-being of people living with dementia – and their families - by supporting projects that increase their participation in outdoor social activities. The six organisations to receive funding are:

- NHS Dumfries and Galloway
- The Ecology Centre, Fife
- Sporting Memories Network, central Scotland
- The Froglife Trust, Glasgow
- Evanton Community Wood, Dingwall
- Instinctively Wild Services, Hawick

Some of the projects concentrate on connecting with nature, for instance taking part in walks or art classes in woodlands. Others concentrate on physical activities such as sport.

All of the funded projects aim to empower people with dementia to have a say in how they wish to connect with the outdoors and support them to do so in a way that is meaningful to them.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway will be working closely with Alzheimer Scotland, the University of Stirling and the Royal Scottish Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RSABI) to deliver this new project.

Stella Milsom, Stewartry Health and Wellbeing Project Co-ordinator who is leading the project, said: "We are very proud to be one of the areas to receive a grant from the Life Changes Trust to enable this innovative work to take place in Dumfries and Galloway. Working with members of the Retired Farming Social Group, we are developing a programme of outings and collecting resources that stimulate reminiscence. For those in the community who have more advanced dementia we are working in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland so we are able to offer personalised experiences on a one-to-one basis. The support we are receiving from across the farming community is fantastic, with offers of venues for trips and shared activities with the local young farmers clubs.

"This is one initiative within a wider piece of work on Health and Wellbeing in the Farming Community. We already know there is evidence that being connected and in nature is good for our wellbeing, as is being with people with shared interests. So we are already seeing people feeling less isolated and more connected. One lady who attends with her husband who has dementia said, "I haven't seen my husband so animated in an age. He goes to a day centre, but doesn't have anything in common with the people there. But here, he has stories, life experiences and laughs to share with everyone else.""

Anna Buchanan added 'By funding a diverse range of dementia friendly communities throughout Scotland, we are developing a deeper understanding of how to meet the needs of people with dementia and their families. Being able to connect with the outdoors has already proved invaluable for people with dementia and their families, and we look forward to watching this project grow."

The Life Changes Trust was 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.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Our work with people with dementia has shown that the phrase “Dementia sufferers”, or using the word suffering to describe dementia has a strongly negative view from people with the condition. We would request that you avoid using the phrase in headlines or in any article you publish to combat the negative way that people with dementia feel the condition is described.

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery 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.

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.
- Dementia costs the country more than cancer, heart disease and stroke put together.

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