



Media Release

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Dementia friendly funding for Scottish Highlands

The Scottish Highlands are to become dementia friendly thanks to a funding boost of £225,000 from the Life Changes Trust.

The project is a partnership between Dementia Friendly Communities (DFC) Helmsdale, Age Scotland and NHS Highland Public Health, and will be based on a dementia inclusive model already developed and used by DFC Helmsdale.

The Helmsdale model ensures that people with dementia and their families are included in their community, and that local activities exist so that they can continue to enjoy things that are meaningful to them, for as long as they wish to. It also provides services such as 'Dinner To Your Door', Men's Sheds and 'Bridge Over Troubled Waters' which provides support for carers.

The £225,000 funding will be used to roll out a model and toolkit based on the experience of DFC Helmsdale to 8 other rural communities across the Highland area, starting with two pilot sites - one in Appin in the West Highlands and the other in Milton, in Easter Ross.

DFC Helmsdale, Age Scotland and NHS Public Health will work with these communities to ensure that people living with dementia and their carers are involved in the design and development of programmes built around the needs of their particular community.

They will also provide support to develop bespoke activities to improve inclusion, health and well-being, and to raise awareness of early stage dementia by delivering awareness training, providing information resources and improving public knowledge.

All of the learning from the two pilot sites will contribute to the toolkit, which will help with the development of the other six rural communities.

As well as the £225,000 funding from the Life Changes Trust, the three partner organisations will also contribute in-kind funding totalling £137,000.

Keith Robson, Chief Executive of Age Scotland said: "Age Scotland has worked for many years to ensure older people living in rural areas are not disadvantaged in the provision of key services, and so we are delighted to be part of a project which will ensure people with dementia in rural Highland communities have better access to the support they need. People can live well with dementia if they live in communities which are supportive and dementia aware, and this project will roll out a proven model to establish more dementia friendly communities in the Highlands."

Cathy Steer, Head of Health Improvement, NHS Highland said: This is a fantastic boost for the Highlands. Dementia represents a major public health challenge and with an aging population, it is predicted that the number of people with a diagnosis of dementia in Scotland will increase markedly. This project is a great opportunity to help people with dementia and their families feel included in community life and also an opportunity to raise awareness and to make sure that people with dementia feel engaged and valued."

Dr Iain McNicol, who is heading up one of the pilot sites, in Appin said: "We are delighted to be involved in this Highland-wide initiative. Appin is a strong community with many community-based activities, including those aimed at our older residents, and we are always looking for ways to support them and improve their lives. This funding initiative will allow us to expand activities to target isolation and other factors that often come hand in hand with a diagnosis of dementia.

“We hope to improve health and well-being with walking groups and exercise classes, as well as provide stimulation with learning new skills or enjoying old skills, such as music, art, or literature.”

The funding award is part of a second phase of Dementia Friendly Communities investment from Scottish charity, the Life Changes Trust. The Trust invested £3 million in 14 dementia friendly communities in 2015, the success of which has led to a further investment of £2 million.

Dementia Friendly Communities are places where people affected by dementia, including carers and family members, are included and supported to do the things that matter to them. They also help empower those whose lives are affected by dementia so that they remain integrated in society, live as independently as possible and participate actively in decisions that affect their lives.

Some dementia friendly communities are geographical communities, relating to a specific location like those already established in West Dunbartonshire or Kirriemuir. Others are communities of interest that bring people together because they are interested in similar activities, for example, sport, art, or walking outdoors.

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme said, “A diagnosis of dementia can lead to social exclusion and isolation, and rural communities can find it difficult to reach some of the more remote population. This funding will help develop and sustain an environment for people with dementia and those who care for them across the Highlands, so that they are part of their own communities, supported to do things that are meaningful to them, valued as individuals and involved as members of society.”

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 two groups: people affected by dementia and young people with experience of being in care.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information on Life Change Trust funding for Dementia Friendly Communities, see the Trust website:

<http://www.lifechangetrust.org.uk/projects/dementia-friendly-communities>

*Dementia Words - 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.