

ANNUAL REPORT

In Brief

Person Centred Planning

Two of our Staff have completed formal training in Person Centred Planning and we are enthusiastically preparing to develop our Company's skills in inclusion.

Standards Audit

This year saw a reform in our workplace standards to reflect those issued by the National Care Standards Commission. We carried out a very successful pilot audit in all of our schemes, allowing us to reflect on current practices and highlight any areas for future development.

Web Site

We were proud to serve our own web site in September. It has received many visitors from all corners of the world.

SHAW

In October we were pleased to enrol in the Scottish Health at Work Awards, and continue to operate towards achieving this excellent quality return for all our Staff.

SVQ

Birchwood Highland recognises the benefit of Scottish Vocational Qualifications as an instrumental method of evidencing staff competencies. Our intake of new SVQ candidates was high this year, and we were delighted to have one member of Staff complete her SVQIII.

Befrienders.

A grant from Lloyds TSB will assist us in creating Befriending Projects in Inverness and Lochaber. This work, builds on the successful Befrienders Project in Easter Ross

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This year the Board of Directors took major decisions to prepare the company for Supporting People funding, with minimum disruption to Service Users. I am pleased to say that we achieved this aim through the good work of Staff, Volunteers, Service Users, Directors and Staff in Highland Council. With a Supporting People block contract, we will have a firm base to plan our services over the next two to three years.

I am delighted to say we appointed Alastair Chisholm to the post of Strategic Director. Alastair is a person with considerable management and strategic experience in the commercial, voluntary and statutory sectors. Alastair's wisdom, experience and skills are vital as we plan and develop the Company.

In June, Peter Cattanach took up his post as Operational Manager and he immediately started work on preparation for Supporting People and ensuring that the Managers and Staff were continuing to provide valued services.

In August, the Directors and Managers held a celebratory lunch for Derek Bigg and his wife Margaret. Derek was the first Chairman of Birchwood Highland. Our lunch was a happy occasion showing our warmth and thanks to Derek on his retirement.

We appreciated visits from two MSPs in July – Mrs Maureen Macmillan and Mrs Mary Scanlon. Mrs Macmillan kept us informed of the issue of Water Rates relief for Charities as the matter progressed through the Scottish Parliament. Mrs Scanlon is able to raise issues about people in hospital who may need services such as Birchwood Highland. I am delighted by the personal and professional interest both Mrs Scanlon and Mrs Macmillan take in our Company.

I was pleased that the Board of Directors gave formal support to the Scottish Association of Mental Health in their campaign to amend the new Mental Health Act in Scotland.

I would like to thank all Directors, Volunteers, Staff, Service Users and colleagues in other agencies in helping the Company flourish this year. I am encouraged by the continuing development of the Service Users Association and I look forward to attending *their* AGM next year.

Helen Betts-Brown

STRATEGIC DIRECTOR'S REPORT

I was delighted to join the Company in December 2002. My first task was to get to know Birchwood Highland, its Staff and Service Users and to agree objectives. The objectives we arrived at include:

- Developing a three-year strategic plan and policy proposal by the end of 2003.
- Leading negotiations for a renewed Birchwood House contract with Highland Council. The existing contract ends in December 2004.
- Considering proposals to expand or diversify the business of the Company.
- Ensuring that other agencies and potential Service Users are aware of what we have to offer.
- Linking with the new Care Commission and Social Services Council.
- Contributing to the strategic development of Staff, through appraisals and Investors in People.
- Working with the Board of Directors in their development and offering best advice.
- Ensuring the Company's future mainstream funding and also funding for specific identified plans and projects.

The Operational Manager and I have established a sound working relationship and we enjoy working together. This is very important, as we need to support each other to achieve the Company's objectives. As well as being a Director on the Board, I am also a member of the Operational Management Team. Birchwood Highland is a grand Organisation and we look forward to a further challenging year ahead.

Alastair Chisholm



Operational Manager's Report

Service Users' Association

The Association worked hard to write its constitution and to prepare for the 1st Annual General Meeting in April 2003. The Association organised fundraising events this year including sponsored walks, a BBQ and a Raffle. Being involved in Company days with Staff and Directors means that Service Users are having a stronger voice.

Birchwood House

In August, some Residents went on Holiday to Badaguish. In Mental Health week (October) we raised £600+ for Residents from a sale of work and had an information stand in the Victorian Market. A Christmas fair raised £270 for Residents. The training kitchen was upgraded and is now used every day.

Inverness Support Service

Service Users continued to attend college and T.A.G for training, e.g. gardening, mechanics, woodwork, media studies and computing. They also enjoyed a variety of outings including holidays at Aviemore, Spanish lessons, concerts, skiing, tennis, golf and pottery. New additional Staff were welcomed to the service. Nursing Students from Stornoway paid a visit. Sadly, one of the Service Users died.

Garbheinn House

Extra properties were obtained for Service Users to move on to, from Garbheinn. The garage was converted to a Place of Safety for the Local Mental Health Services. In August, Staff and Tenants climbed Ben Nevis to raise money for the mini-bus. New Staff were welcomed to the service. A Best Value Review started for Garbheinn.

Easter Ross

The numbers of Service Users and Staff has increased this year. We have a Mental Illness Specific Grant which supports the Easter Ross Befrienders Project, the Kindling Project and the Service User Association. Staff have had training opportunities in First Aid, Food Hygiene, Risk Assessment and Dealing with Challenging Behaviour.

At the start of the year (April 2002) we had a **Supported Accommodation Service** comprising of 22 houses for a potential of 32 Service Users in Easter Ross and Inverness. These houses were all registered as care homes and were mainly funded by Highland Council Social Work Services. We also had accommodation for 9 tenants in Lochaber, again with funding from Highland Council. Towards the end of March 2003, the Care Commission de-registered all our supported accommodation houses at our request. De-registration was a requirement for us to be eligible for Supporting People funding. So on the 31st March (the eve of Supporting People) we were delivering 650 (approx) hours of housing support per week to over 40 service users in Easter Ross, Inverness and Lochaber. These figures will form the basis of our Supporting People contract with Highland Council and until our service is reviewed by them within the next three years.

Now, as a provider of housing support services we can offer both **Accommodation Based Services** (where we are the private landlord of houses leased from Lochaber Housing Association, Cairn Housing, Albyn Housing and Highland Council) and **Floating Support** services for Service Users who live in houses where we are not the landlord. Floating Support and Accommodation Based Services are offered in Inverness, Lochaber and Easter Ross.

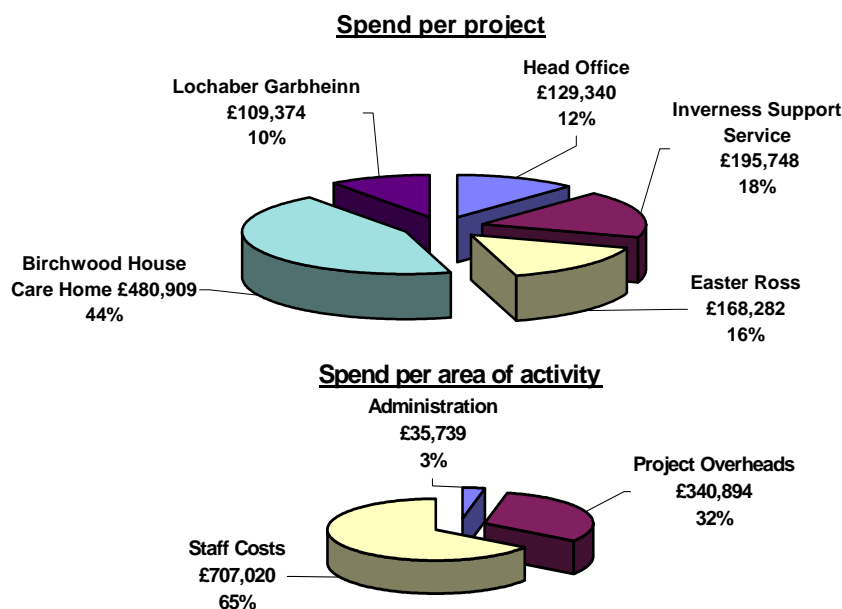
The transition to Supporting People was a significant piece of work and we achieved it through the excellent work of all Staff and Managers, with the full support of the Directors and with the very positive support from Highland Council Staff, the Care Commission and the Housing Agencies noted above. We were also greatly helped by the positive attitudes of Service Users who each had to work through what the change might mean for them.

Throughout the year we maintained almost 100% occupancy and a waiting list in our 20 bed Registered Care Home – Birchwood House.

We introduced an important management change when the Manager of the Inverness Service moved to take up a post with the Care Commission. The Manager of Birchwood House added the Inverness Service to her responsibilities and we formalised a Team Leader post for the Inverness Service at the same time. This change could help us develop closer working between our two services in Inverness which may be attractive to Highland Council when we look at renewing our Birchwood House Contract with them next year.

Peter Cattanach

EXPENDITURE £1,083,653 (INCLUDING DEPRECIATION)



Copies of the 2002/03 Annual Accounts are available from Head Office

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Scottish Charity Number SC 003198