

Birchwood Highland

Easter Ross Support Service



Annual Report 2009/2010

A Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in Scotland 105400

Registered Office Address: 27 Huntly Street, Inverness, IV3 5PR

Registered Charity No: SC003198

www.birchwoodhighland.org.uk

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Easter Ross Support Service



Independence
Inclusion
Recovery

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Over the past year Birchwood Highland Easter Ross Service has supported twenty-seven people in the Invergordon, Alness, Tain and Conon Bridge areas of Ross & Cromarty.

They have provided Housing Support to Service Users five days per week.

The On-Call Service ceased in 2009 without any apparent detriment to Service Users.

The Friday Drop In for Service Users is now held in Birchwood's office. The Drop In is well attended and service users have devised a programme of events stretching over the coming months.

Thanks to the Free Church for giving us the use of their new minibus for outings.

'Birchwood staff have helped me with my confidence. I feel secure and comfortable with their support. This helps me to mix in my community and this makes me feel more confident. I am now helping at Birchwood Highland Recovery Centre in Inverness. I feel I am confident to help others now.'

Ian Merrick

Training

Three Service Users are working towards their ASDANS. This is an approved awarding body, offering programmes and qualifications to develop key skills and life skills.

Staff and service users have attended shared training sessions on Living Life To The Full in Inverness and First Aid Training in Invergordon.

Staff have received WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) training in Invergordon. Birchwood Highland mandatory training is available to all staff.

Lynn Keith, Assistant Manager, graduated from Inverness College on the 13th November 2009. She attained a Personal Development Award (PDA) in Care Service Management. After the ceremony Service Users joined staff in a celebratory meal together.



Voluntary activities

Several Service Users are involved in voluntary activities within the Community.

For example David has taken control of the flower planters outside our office and at the Railway Station.

Ian has taken on a role as a handyman / gardener at the Recovery Centre in Inverness.

Carol has taken on the role of answering the office phone, one day per week.

Billy attends Community Council meetings, thus keeping everyone informed of what is happening in the community.

'It's nice to be part of my community. I like to get involved with whatever is happening. It makes me feel good that I have done something for charity. I've done some things that others don't get a chance to do.'

Carol

Community Involvement

Staff have supported Service Users to join in many community activities, thus giving **everyone** (or them) the opportunity to feel less isolated. Participating in the wider community helps individuals to feel valued and is one of the factors that can

improve mental health and aid recovery.

Staff and service users were asked to join one of the biggest events to be seen in the area, when the "Big Blue Man" came to Invergordon.

In preparation for the spectacle we had the use of Invergordon Arts Centre on three occasions to make, paint and put together the squares of cloth for giant figure's quilt. It was evident that we had quite a few talented artists in our midst.

On the day of his arrival several thousand people came from all over the North of Scotland to welcome him. We felt privileged to be invited to take part.

The Service Users and staff carried the Big Man's quilt up to his bed. The quilt was made of squares of material, four of which were painted by Service Users. Other organisations in the community had painted several squares each.

A Piper led us along the High Street and the look of pride on everyone's faces was memorable.

'I think the Big Man was the best thing that ever happened in our community. We were very happy to be invited to join the performance. This made us feel important and accepted in our community. It gave everyone in town a lift;

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there was a great atmosphere that day. Lots of people came to Invergordon from other areas. We hope it will return one day.'

Billy

Our Community links in Invergordon continue to grow stronger.

All local businesses now support us in different causes, when approached.

We have developed strong links with the Community Mental Health Team based at the County Hospital.

We are involved with other Support Services in the area such as Key Housing and the Isobel Rhind Centre. These two organisations support adults with learning difficulties.

'Birchwood Highland are a great service. I could not manage without them. They have helped me mix in my community. They have helped me mix with others, I like meeting new people. I like to go to the Joss Street cafe. People with learning difficulties from the Isobel Rhind Centre run the cafe, I feel I am helping them.'

Ian McBride

The Arts Centre manager accommodates us whenever possible, for example if we need extra space to carry out a project - even at short notice! Their facilities can be

utilised by Birchwood Highland Training if required.

The Arts Centre is also the venue used by the local Youth Group, with whom we are planning to work closely in the future.

Lynn has plans to visit local schools in the coming year. Lynn and Service Users will take a presentation to each school with the aim of reducing stigmatisation associated with mental ill health.

Lynn has begun to work with younger children by helping out at the Local Cub Scout Group.

The Averon Centre in Aness and Invergordon Leisure Centre continue to work closely with us, providing access to physical exercise, which benefits good mental health.

We have close links with the local Fire Service, and have arranged for their officers to carry out safety checks on all our Service Users' homes. They provided a written report for each home, which was very useful. The Friday Drop In has been invited for afternoon tea at the Fire Station and to be shown around.

The Lifeboat crew stationed at Invergordon are all local men and women, whom we know well. On their Open Days we are



invited to set up a stall of our own, raising funds for the Service Users' Group. The crew always invites us on board the large Lifeboat to be shown around and taken out to sea, if we wish.

We now have a closer association with Highland Users Group (HUG) through Linda Odd, who provided us with the Laughter Workshops during Mental Health Week in 2009.

New Start Highland, which supplies second-hand furniture, has a new outlet in Invergordon and our former colleague Kath Macfarlane works for them.

Marion Rhind meets with us quite often. She is now employed with the Ross-shire Volunteering Action Group and keeps us updated on what is new or changing in volunteering.

The Post Code Lottery donated funds for six new folding bikes and six helmets for Service Users and staff to use during the cycle group weekly meetings.

Lynn and Fiona are now members of the local Local Implementation Group (LIG). Quarterly meetings take place at the County Community Hospital in Invergordon. A senior member of the Community Mental Health Team chairs

the meeting. This meeting informs us on all that is new and upcoming in the local area. We discuss new ideas on ways of working together with local and national organisations for the benefit of all Service Users.

LIG group membership includes the Area Manager for Social Work, Alzheimer Scotland, Alcohol Counselling Service Ross and Sutherland, Volunteering Highland, Campanas Cottage, Training and Guidance (TAG), Advocacy Highland, The Calman Trust and a representative from Highland Council Housing / Albyn Housing Association.

This is a large group of statutory and voluntary sector people working together. We feel this is the way forward for our service and working together can achieve positive outcomes.

Fundraising

Service Users and staff have been busy fundraising over the past year. Many events have been attended, for example:

Isobel Rhind Centre Summer Fete - our stall was very well attended and we sold lots of items.

Lifeboat Day was very busy - staff and service users had a stall there and mingled

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with the other organisations that attended. Raft Race Day was very hot; lots of foil helium balloons were sold and the proceeds went to the Service Users' Fund. Invergordon Highland Games – another hot day. We sold all the balloons.

Christmas Sale of Work in the office - with support from Viv Caird, Manager for the Alcohol Counselling Service for Ross & Sutherland. Viv helped by gathering donations from people she knew. This was a very successful sale. Service Users and staff were kept busy all day with customers and serving teas.

Christmas Street Fare - we had a large stall, courtesy of the Invergordon Initiative Group. Demand for our foil balloons exceeded supply. The proceeds went to the Service Users' Group.

The funds raised from these activities enable Service Users to take part in outings during the summer months, arrange activities and celebrate special occasions.

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