

# Birchwood Highland Caithness Support Service



## Annual Report 2010/2011

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Caithness team members



Amherst building



Wellness Recovery Action Plan  
leaflet

2010-2011 saw another successful year for the Caithness service. During this period the team supported 16 people to live independently in their own homes, with 4 people achieving positive outcomes and moving on from the service.

One staff member said: *“We have been very committed to supporting people to become more socially included in the local community and I am delighted at the progress that some people have made. One individual who did not used to get out much is now able to go out on a regular basis to football practice and other activities”.*

The team finally moved into permanent premises in February 2011 with thanks to the Catholic Church making rooms available at the Amherst building in Wick.

## Promoting recovery

This year the Scottish Recovery Network held a follow up in Wick to last year’s road show in Thurso. Both events were attended by staff and service users, who felt that Birchwood Highland practiced in a recovery focused way and were proud of this fact.

Birchwood Highland continues in its strong commitment to working with people towards recovery. Here in Caithness the team is known for promoting recovery and social inclusion through their work with individuals and the training events they provide. This year these have included a Wellness Recovery Action Planning workshop where 6 people learned how to use this valuable self management tool. The attendees included staff, volunteers, people who use our service and a worker from another agency.

## Training

A Mental Health Awareness session promoting positive mental health was attended by 20 local people from a variety of other agencies including the Caithness Mental Health Support Group. The feedback from

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this session was very positive and confirmed a need for workers from different care backgrounds to have some knowledge of mental health issues, how these can affect individuals and what help is available. One person who attended the session said, *“I enjoyed finding out about symptoms and common sense advice”*.

This session will be repeated again later in the year.

Other training events attended by staff and people who use the service included:

STORM (Skills Training on Risk Management);

Communication skills: This has helped to develop communication standards for the team and a communication charter;

Recovery training, including promoting social inclusion.

Training for Volunteers was also provided from the team.

## Promoting healthy lifestyles

The Cycling Group has continued to run throughout the summer, helping to promote good physical health for people who use the service and for staff.

Staff took part in a 5 minute MOT health check that looked at diet and lifestyles with physical tests for blood pressure, lung capacity and fluid levels. The session was very informative and staff were able to pass on information gained to the people that they support.

Events like these and general health promotion materials promoted throughout the year help to gather evidence for the company working towards the Healthy Working Lives gold award.

## Friends of Birchwood

The ‘Friends of Birchwood’ group have had a very successful year, raising funds for the group through bag packing, collections in local shops and a sponsored



Promoting healthy lifestyles

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Preparing to climb Ben Nevis

walk up Ben Nevis. The walk took Andrea and a service user with his dog Sapphire 5 hours to get to the top in less than ideal weather, but it was worth it raising over £300 towards the groups funds with a generous donation from the Dounreay Community Fund to help cover the costs of the event.

Well done and thank you to all those that took part and supported these events. There will be more of this type of event in the forthcoming year.

Friends of Birchwood hosted this year's Service User Association Annual General Meeting. This event was a huge success with a fantastic turn out from the other services. Each service gave their report, backed up with pictures and achievement boards. One staff member commented "*I was immensely impressed at how people have come together and achieved so much*". The weather could not have been better and those that went out on the speedboat trip "*thoroughly enjoyed it*".

Following the AGM some people enjoyed having a 'kick about' on the 5-a-side pitch so much they decided to form a team, the 'Gulls', and started practicing to play against teams from other Birchwood Highland locations.

## Volunteers

We took on 2 new volunteers this year who have made significant contributions to the team and made a difference to the lives of the people they help us to support. They have helped to organise and carry out different activities, contributed to the success of the football and the cycling group, and been involved in fundraising too. One of the volunteers said, "*I enjoy it and I like giving something back*". So a big 'thank you' to them. We are always looking for new volunteers to join the team.



5-a-side

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## Mental Health Week

To mark Mental Health Week this year the team got together with a number of people who use the service and prepared a healthy meal. Afterwards, the recipes from the day were published in the newsletter.

## Consultation

Results from this year's consultation with people who use the service are very positive with 8 out of 9 people saying that they felt more independent than they did a year ago, comments included *"I have more confidence now"*; *"Staff help to motivate me to do things for myself"*.

When asked what helps them to stay well people indicated that 'talking' helps. In relation to recovery people said that "being there for me" made a difference.

## Looking ahead

In the forthcoming year the team is aiming to grow through providing services to people who are able to self fund or are receiving direct payments, and through the newly formed Caithness Mental Health Forum develop more efficient ways of working, as services move towards being managed by NHS Highland.

Further fundraising activities are planned including a sponsored walk along the Great Glen Way and prize bingo.

Further training sessions will take place including a repeat of the Mental Health Awareness.



Celebrating Mental Health  
Week



Fundraising on the  
Great Glen Way

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**Healthy  
Working  
Lives**

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