

Independence Inclusion Recovery



Birchwood  
Highland

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Easter Ross  
Support Service  
Annual Report  
2008/09

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*“There is no medicine like hope, no incentive so great, and no tonic so powerful as expectation of something tomorrow”.*

Orson Swett Marden (1850-1924)

American author and founder of Success Magazine.



Hope is a fundamental need, in all of us. To instill hope in others, during our working lives, is a gift we all should cherish.

We are lucky here in Birchwood Highland because we can use this gift, every working day. We see people flourishing, becoming optimistic and leading happy fulfilled lives, within their own communities.

The Easter Ross Service now supports 31 people, covering an area around Tain, Invergordon, Alness, Evanton, Dingwall and Conon Bridge.

We have evidence that people have started their journey, on their road to recovery. People are living their lives the way they want, moving forward and some requiring less direct support from the team.

“ My quality of life has changed. My lifestyle has changed. Since I moved my life is normal, I do normal things, walk the dogs and watch the wee one. ”

“ I never thought I could have such a happy life! I am now happily married and have my own house. I wish my mother and father were alive to see me now. I bet they never dreamed this was possible! I'm happy and that is what Birchwood did for me! The road to Recovery has improved my quality of life. I am much more independent as long as I keep taking my medication, I know now, its keeping me stable. This has improved my quality of life, I can go out to the Recovery Centre to do gardening and I am also a Befriender. This makes me feel good and I feel wanted. I like to have Birchwood in the background but I am moving forward and looking forward to things that might happen in my life. ”



Housing Support continues seven days per week, but on a Friday everyone can let their hair down at the “Drop In”. The venue has changed this year from the Joss Street Hall to Invergordon Arts Centre, which costs less to rent.



### Raising funds

The Service User Fund is quite healthy at the moment due to lots of fundraising efforts last year by service users and staff.

Fundraising activities were supported by our very good friend Shirly who knitted a fantastic Dennis and Gnasher. Raffles for the pair raised a lot of money.

All members of staff participated in packing bags at Tesco Dingwall one Saturday morning; this also helped boost the Service Users Fund.

Two stalls were operated by both service users and staff at the Invergordon Lifeboat Open Day. Everyone had a very happy, memorable, money-raising day.

A good turnout of staff and service users operated a large stall at the Invergordon Highland Games; this was also a very successful day.

Participating in local events like this also raises the profile of Birchwood Highland, and gets people interested in the work we do.

‘ I like helping out at the different events. It helps us to raise money for our funds and I meet different people. It also makes me feel needed.

By helping it makes me feel I am giving something back and it makes me feel useful. ’

Pamela and Melissa Keith, whose mother is a member of the Easter Ross team, ran on behalf of Birchwood Highland in Baxter’s Loch Ness Festival of Running 2008. Pamela came up for the day from Aberdeen especially to run in the 10k. The two girls really excelled themselves.

‘ I like getting out and about, I’m happy. I look forward to my support worker coming. I didn’t like in the past when somebody else came, just sitting and talking, it wasn’t Birchwood. When you’re out and about you can open up and express more. ’

Unfortunately the Free Church mini bus failed its MOT, which meant the Friday Group had no access to a vehicle for trips and days out. Although the service users missed the opportunity to get away, they continued to meet every Friday and enjoyed different activities in the Arts Centre. At the beginning of this year the Church purchased a new mini bus and they immediately asked us to book it. This unprompted offer of support makes us realise the high regard in which Birchwood Highland is held within our own community.

Service users had some memorable days out at the Black Isle Show, the Falls of Shin, the White Church at Portmahomack, Inverness Bonfire Night and meal, and at Dornoch. Christmas shopping day, Christmas meal, New Year Party, Burns meal and many more days out were enjoyed by all.

‘ I like going on the bus with my friends, we always have a good time out!  
Its great going to places I would not be able to go on my own because some places are out of the way. I do not have a car and you can’t get to the places by the buses. ’

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## Service Users' AGM

The Service Users AGM took place in Invergordon 5th September 08. The venue was the Joss Street Hall. Staff from Invergordon Service decorated the hall and arranged for the Crazy Horse Restaurant to provide the buffet. Activities at the Invergordon Leisure Centre included Archery, Dance to Music and Spin Cycling. An enjoyable day seemed to be had by all.



“ It was nice to meet up with other service users, from Birchwood and to hear what they had been doing all year. ”

## Shared training

During the year there have been several shared training days, held in the Invergordon Office. Subjects covered have been the Mental Health Act, Vulnerable Adults and abuse.

Donna from Disability Scotland took part in a shared training day, which proved to be very informative about how her organisation works.

Cath and her colleague from the Jobcentre came along and joined in a shared training day, and passed on useful and up to date information about benefits and what can be available to those who would like to get back to work.

A lady came from the Scottish Autistic Society and shared her knowledge of Autism and its different spectrums. Her knowledge was impressive and it was a very interesting

afternoon.

There is more shared training planned for this coming year. Both service users and staff are looking forward to this.

“ I enjoy the shared training days because I like learning new things. I don't feel so stupid because it's good to be in the know. ”

## Staffing

Stephen Dunphy our Service Manager has now transferred to the Recovery Centre in Inverness. Stephen started the Easter Ross Scheme for Birchwood Highland thirteen years ago and has built up the Scheme through the years. His leadership was outstanding and he is greatly missed by service users and staff members.

Cath MacInnes from the Inverness Scheme has now taken up the post of manager for Easter Ross.

“ We hope Stephen will be happy in his new job and Cath happy working in Invergordon. ”

Julieann Perry has changed her role within the company, and now she enjoys her position as a Support Worker. When asked about her experience within Birchwood Highland on Recovery, she gave us this quote, *“Helping people move forward and reflect on their every achievement, helps to build confidence and motivation. This is how I see recovery working”*.

Easter Ross has acquired a distinguished new member of staff. This is Molly Keith, the canine company mascot. Molly is a very friendly and intelligent black lab who brightens up service users' and staff's days - an asset to the Easter Ross staff team.



## Involving others

At Easter Ross all family and friends are encouraged to join in our fundraising activities. Julieann's daughter Hollie mixes well with both service users and staff. Everyone enjoys her bright personality. Lynn Keith's twin daughter and son and older daughter have been fundamental to a large amount of fund raising for Birchwood Highland. Fiona has introduced her grandson Ruben early to Birchwood. We hope that our efforts will reduce stigmatism in the future, as children do not see any difference in people.

Service Users families have also helped by contributing to our fundraising activities. Many families have joined us over the past year. Mrs Clark from Alness has been outstanding in her efforts.

## In the wider community

Community involvement has grown over the past year. Service Users have been participating in several different community activities. One service user has received awards from the council for keeping the areas where he lives clean and tidy. The Community Council asked for our help in planting and maintaining the flower planters on the street, outside our office and at the Railway Station. The Railway Station received an award, for the best-kept planter. This was thanks to Henrietta and David. The planter outside our office is now becoming spectacular, thanks to Jimmy and all his care to it.

Mixing with young and old within our community we hope will reduce stigmatism.

We must put our Service Users to the forefront at all times.



## Birchwood Highland

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