



Independence
Inclusion
Recovery

Annual Report

Lochaber Support Service

2007/08

Birchwood Highland
Lochaber Support Service
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Annual Report for Lochaber Support Service 2007/2008

The Service



This past year has been a time in which we have witnessed the barriers between service users and staff in Lochaber diminish. Our participation in the Care Commission's pilot grading scheme gave us an opportunity to look again at current practices and at additional ways in which service users can help shape the development of our service. An important part of this was developing a partner relationship between staff and service users so that we were all working together towards common goals.

Aims and Objectives

After a forum to review and discuss the past year's action plan, we found that 7 out of 9 objectives had been achieved, with the other 2 being explored further this year.

Our achievements, linked to our mission statement objectives include: **INDEPENDENCE** – by working alongside the Service Users' Group, supporting them to grow and providing a facilitator, they have established a committee and weekly meetings. Through this they have succeeded in raising their profile within both the service and community. **INCLUSION** – by working together to promote awareness of the



Group through various media, including radio; by informing other services why we are here and how to access our service; by raising funds to carry out activities together using collection tins, posters, quiz nights and raffles – all of these have brought both service users and staff closer, narrowing the gap of exclusion to a feeling of inclusion; and **RECOVERY** - an intensive week long course on peer support resulted in the team working ever more closely

on the concept of recovery. The team has focused on the objectives of building confidence and self-esteem; seeking a re-finding of self and the taking back of control by establishing individual purpose.

Improving Communication

In the past year we've taken significant steps toward improving methods of communication. Through mixed forums, joint training with service users and the increasing use of independent advocates we've promoted a higher level of insight into the service.

This year our SERVICE USER SURVEYSE were carried out by independent persons, in an effort to make service users feel more at ease and answer more openly.



Some of the comments from service users on what the service did were: *Help folks who have had setbacks towards an independent life; support me to recover and get my outlook back on track; they encourage me to go to work when I don't feel like going.*

For the first time, we carried out a CARERS SURVEY aimed at anyone who provides some form of support or care for a person who also receives support from Birchwood Highland.

Whilst the responses indicated that *service users were treated by staff with dignity and respect*; and that *the service was managed to a high standard*, it was felt that we could improve on the information provided to carers - about the service or the support it gives. As a result we are focusing on a carers' forum early into the new year.

DVD



to what our service offers and to some of the people who currently use the service.

We have been looking at alternative ways to provide information to new service users and one of our projects this year has been the development of a DVD. The DVD has been created by staff and service users together, each learning new skills and supporting one and other to enhance existing ones.

Included in our introduction pack, the DVD offers a visual introduction



SERVICE USER GROUP

Having changed so much over the past year, there is now a real sense of peer support happening. With the group meeting weekly, friendships are developing and through these strengths are being realised. Several months ago members started by sending out letters to local businesses highlighting their cause; this led on to raising funds and purchasing the camcorder to make the DVD - then giving time and money to good causes, such as donating fruit trees to the new Greenfingers orchard project and spending time helping others. The Group's success is highlighted through their own Annual Report.



Birchwood Highland

Birchwood Highland is a progressive organisation with charitable status, whose aim is to support people through mental ill health towards recovery.

Operating from bases in Inverness, Easter Ross, Caithness and Lochaber, Birchwood Highland's housing support teams help people manage in their own homes and provide personal care where necessary, seven days a week. Birchwood Highland has also set up the Highland's first Recovery Centre at Muirfield Lane, Inverness, which opened in March 2008.

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