

The Rocky Road to a Rural Dementia Friendly Community



Ann Pascoe, Portgower, the Highlands of Scotland

- We live in the Scottish Highlands
- 7 years ago my husband Andrew was diagnosed with vascular dementia
- We were a dementia family on our own with absolutely no support
- This long, lonely journey made me determined no-one should have to do this alone

In 2010, the Scottish government launched the Scottish Dementia Strategy, addressing support, care, treatment and basic rights of dementia families. It was very clear that those at the top knew exactly what was needed, but it was simply not reaching us at grass roots.

After four painful years, I decided to speak out and to get the Strategy down to us, we as a community started pushing upwards to meet it filtering down. To do this we built a network of local talent and resources – informed by people with dementia and carers within our community - and established Dementia Friendly Communities, a Social Enterprise with a vision for our community to recognise and embrace the challenges a life with dementia presented to families affected, thus enabling them to live life to its full potential.



Speaking Out

By volubly speaking out about the loneliness of being a dementia family I found a group of like-minded people who shared my vision and together we began slowly turning our rural community into a Dementia Friendly one.



Awareness Raising

In collaboration with our local newspaper we developed an awareness campaign to open the door to dementia awareness.

- We target businesses, organisations and groups;
- Talk about dementia generally and gently;
- and explain how ordinary people can respond to people with dementia



Developing projects

We formed a Dementia Friendly Communities Collaborative and brought together:

- local agencies
- service providers
- voluntary groups
- businesses

From the Collaborative membership we established task groups to make our projects happen:

- Awareness campaign
- Organise community events to promote social inclusion
- Put local care homes at the heart of the community
- Reduce dementia isolation with roaming bracelets
- Change the crisis ethos to one of prevention



Challenging myths and stigma

To complement our community work, we created a series of websites to challenge the myths and stigma around dementia:

- A Carer's Voice focuses on the support needs of dementia caregivers. www.acarersvoice.com
- A Dementia Voice offers a dedicated platform and peer support for people with dementia to tell the 'inside story'. www.adementiaivoice.com
- A Care Home Voice gives professional carers as well as residents and their families the chance to have their voices heard. www.acarehomevoice.com
- A Dementia Friendly Community is our flagship site and highlights progress towards our vision of living well with dementia. www.adementiafriendlycommunity.com



Overcoming funding challenges

Without funding it's virtually impossible to move forward effectively. A key ingredient seems to be that once we showed potential funders that projects are sustainable and they'd not have to fund us forever, money started flowing in: Our vision is to have an online shop, linked to a mobile van for local sales of:

- Branded butterfly products
- Art and crafts from dementia friends
- Cakes and jams from a working kitchen
- Vegetables and plants from a sustainable garden
- Refurbished tools from a 'men in sheds' project



Disseminating information

Now we are ready to take our message to others:

- Translating knowledge into action via lectures/workshops locally and nationally
- Working with Alzheimer Scotland to map dementia friendly communities in Scotland
- Using Churchill Fellowship connections to roll out our dementia friendly community programmes throughout Britain
- Using 'out of the box' thinking to fill the gaps in dementia needs as a Trustee on the game changing £50M Life Changes Trust
- Guest speaker of Shinko Fukushikai Foundation at Global Welfare Summit for Social Entrepreneurs in Japan (November 2012)



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