

‘Dementia Dog’ scheme in Scotland given £300,000 funding boost

Submitted by: Life Changes Trust

Thursday, 4 August 2016

Media Release

4th August 2016

‘Dementia Dog’ scheme in Scotland given £300,000 funding boost

A ground breaking programme which provides support to people affected by dementia through the provision of ‘Dementia Dogs’ has been given a funding boost of £300,000.

The Dementia Dog project has been running in Scotland for just three years and uses specially trained dogs to support and enable people to live well with dementia

The project started as a collaboration between Alzheimer Scotland, Dogs for the Disabled (now Dogs for Good), Guide Dogs UK and product design students from Glasgow School of Art, to bring fresh ideas to service design for people with Dementia.

The original idea was to provide people in the early stages of dementia with a fully trained assistance dog. Dogs would act as a companion and helper, and be trained to provide reminders for key daily tasks like taking medication. Having a dog would also encourage owners to get out and about, increasing not only physical activity but also social interaction.

An initial pilot in 2013 saw four dementia dogs matched with individuals living with their full-time carers during the early stage of their diagnosis.

This new funding will help Alzheimer Scotland and Dogs for Good to broaden the project to help even more families who are living with dementia.

The funding will help to provide aftercare support to the existing assistance dog teams as well as place a further 8 fully trained assistance dogs with a person living with dementia and their carer. The dogs will be trained to support their owner, and as well as being of practical help, will also provide great emotional support.

Ken Will has dementia and lives with his wife Glenys in Angus. They had been married for 45 years when Ken received his diagnosis and the impact of the condition became increasingly challenging for both of them over time.

Then they heard about the Dementia Dogs pilot and decided to get involved. They welcomed Kasper into their home in 2013.

Kasper had been given special training so he could offer practical assistance to someone with dementia and also reduce anxiety levels. This meant that Glenys could leave the house knowing that Ken would be safe, as Kasper had been trained to respond to alarms that would remind Ken to carry out tasks, like take his medication.

Glenys says “Kaspa has given us our life back. He greets Ken in the morning, so Ken starts his day happy. I have noticed if Ken is agitated or unsettled Kaspa gives him a nudge so Ken talks to the dog or goes out in to the back garden and forgets what had bothered him. Kaspa has removed my fear that Ken had gone, life is so much better for both of us now. Ken is happy and it has taken so much stress away from me as well. Every day we wake up knowing it’s going to be a good day thanks to Kaspa.”

Funding has come from the Life Changes Trust, an independent charity set up with a Big Lottery Fund endowment of £50 million to improve the lives of two key groups in Scotland: people affected by dementia and care experienced young people.

Joyce Gray, Deputy Director of Development at Alzheimer Scotland said, “The current Dementia Dog project is leading the way across the world in the development of services bringing dogs and people together to support people with dementia and their carers, and this funding provides a fantastic opportunity to build on this exemplar project. Dementia Dog has also allowed us to bring a fresh approach to the challenge of dementia. We are overwhelmed that Life Changes Trust has supported the project to this level. It shows such faith in the potential we know the project can deliver to the dementia community. We will be able to extend our work, deliver innovation and joy to families who participate, and share our work on a global stage.”

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme said: “We are delighted to award this funding to support the continuation of the Dementia Dog initiative. These dogs deliver support on many levels, from reconnecting individuals to their community to making the home environment feel safer. This is important because we need to ensure that people living with dementia can live well and safely at home and in their own community.”

In Scotland:

- It is estimated that around 90,000 people have dementia.
- The number of people with dementia in Scotland is increasing, because the population is getting older. Based on current dementia prevalence rates, the number of people with dementia in Scotland is projected to double by 2038.
- Dementia costs the country more than cancer, heart disease and stroke put together.

For more information on how Dementia Dogs work, see:

http://www.dementiadog.org/Dementia_Dog_Press_Case_Study.pdf

ENDS

For further information and for press enquiries contact:

Deborah Cowan, Communications Manager: 0141 212 9606

Deborah.cowan@lifechangestrust.org.uk

EDITORS NOTES:

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery Fund in April 2013 with a ten year endowment of

£50 million to support transformational improvements in the quality of life, well-being, empowerment and inclusion of people affected by dementia and young people with experience of being in care.

Dementia Dog started its life as a Glasgow School of Art service design project commissioned by Alzheimer Scotland that secured funding from both the Scottish Executive and the Design Council through the Living Well with Dementia Challenge. It began as a collaboration between Alzheimer Scotland, The Glasgow School of Art, Dogs for the Disabled and Guide Dogs UK, bringing together the teams' expertise in dementia care and provision of trained assistance dogs.

Alzheimer Scotland provides a wide range of specialist services for people with dementia and their carers. We offer personalised support services, community activities, information and advice, at every stage of the dementia journey. Developing exciting and innovative and exciting new projects for people living with dementia is a central to our work, and Dementia Dog has been at the heart of our development activity for the last four years.

Dogs for Good was set up in 1986 with the vision of helping disabled people by training assistance dogs. Dogs for the Disabled was registered as a charity in 1988. Over the years, they have used this insight to bring independence and companionship to many people through their highly trained assistance dogs for physically disabled children and adults and for families with a child with autism. Their experience of training and working with assistance dogs inspired them to explore other ways dogs can help individuals, families and communities.