

Funding hits all the right notes for Scotland-wide dementia friendly choir network

Submitted by: Life Changes Trust

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A funding award of £225,000 has been announced by the Life Changes Trust and the Baring Foundation to support new and existing community choirs across the whole of Scotland to become dementia inclusive. The funding has been awarded to creative ageing organisation Luminate to oversee the project. They will be supported by Age Scotland, Scottish Care and Making Music.

People with dementia have a right to take part in cultural activities and the new nation-wide network will offer opportunities for them and their families and friends to join within the wider community to sing and develop a wider social network through the choir.

Research has already shown the benefits of participation in community singing, which include improved mental, social and emotional well-being, increased confidence and improved quality of life.

Choirs also be a place for fun, friendship, feeling happier and feeling valued. Singing in a choir can foster a sense of belonging as well as a sense of pride in the group and its achievements, and individuals can do something they enjoy, where dementia is not the focus.

Anna Buchanan, CEO of the Life Changes Trust, said, "With this funding, Luminate and their partners will create a strong, nationwide network of people with shared values and purpose, and a love of singing. Many people living with dementia stop taking part in activities that may have given them great pleasure in the past, or which allowed them to mix with their peers. Dementia can also prevent people trying new things – like singing. This choir network will support the sharing of resources and ideas, linking up newer choirs with more experienced choirs so they can be mentored. It will increase the public profile of dementia inclusive choirs and create opportunities for the abilities of people with dementia to be recognised and celebrated."

The Life Changes Trust and the Baring Foundation have already funded a number of projects that enable older people and people with dementia to participate in the arts. These projects challenge assumptions and stereotypes, address discrimination and provide an opportunity for people to thrive in later life.

Anne Gallacher, Director of Luminate said, "I am thrilled that Luminate will be working with Age Scotland, Scottish Care and Making Music – and with the support of community music specialist Stephen Deazley, on this exciting new initiative. Research shows the wide-ranging benefits of community singing, and we want to ensure that the opportunity to sing in a local choir is available to people living with dementia across Scotland. There are some wonderful inclusive choirs across Scotland already, and I'm looking forward to learning from the great work that's already going on, and to sharing experiences across Scottish communities. Above all, it's vital to us that the views and wishes of people living with dementia and their carers help us to shape our work over the next two years.

Brian Sloan, Chief Executive of Age Scotland, said, "We are absolutely delighted to be supporting this exciting project and it is testament to Luminate's commitment to driving forward arts initiatives for older people in Scotland that they are spearheading it. We are absolutely committed to improving the

quality of lives of people living with dementia and those who are lonely or socially isolated in Scotland. This ambitious project will help to achieve that mission.”

The Life Changes Trust was 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.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Our work with people with dementia has shown that the phrase “Dementia sufferers”, or using the word suffering to describe dementia has a strongly negative view from people with the condition. We would request that you avoid using the phrase in headlines or in any article you publish to combat the negative way that people with dementia feel the condition is described.

The Life Changes Trust was established by the Big Lottery 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.

The Baring Foundation is an independent foundation which protects and advances human rights and promotes inclusion. They believe in the role of a strong, independent civil society nationally and internationally. The Baring Foundation use their resources to enable civil society to work with people experiencing discrimination and disadvantage and to act strategically to tackle the root causes of injustice and inequality.