



Golf In Society



NATIONAL
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PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 22nd May 2018

Pioneering dementia friendly golf community set to launch in Scotland

A pioneering new golf project that enables people to continue enjoying their golf when diagnosed with dementia is set to launch in Scotland.

With the support of Life Changes Trust and Mearns Golf Academy, Golf In Society will be piloting golf days that keep people living well at their local golf club.

Anthony Blackburn, Founder of Golf in Society said: "In November we tested the water with a four week golf programme at the Mearns Academy in partnership with Sporting Memories. The results were amazing to witness and made us realise there was demand for our service in Scotland"

"Securing the support from Life Changes Trust was crucial. Without it we would not have been able to start our project in Scotland. As a small social enterprise it's often very difficult to gain funding and support for your social mission. When we met with the Life Changes Trust team, they "got it" straight away and signposted us to the right funding sources for our project".

Golf In Society is a social enterprise with a mission to improve the lives of an ageing population by introducing them to golf and putting golf clubs at the heart of their local community.

The Scottish pilot is based on two years of practical experience of delivering dementia golf sessions in Lincoln, the UK's first dementia friendly golf club.

Anthony explained, "We find that many people who have enjoyed golf throughout their life often leave the game once diagnosed – we are passionate about changing this. We are extremely excited about the Scottish pilot. We firmly believe that once proven there is the opportunity to create a network of dementia friendly golf clubs across Scotland"

The pilot will run for a year and include a holistic evaluation of the impact of the golf days on people living with dementia and their families as well as considering the wider social and community benefits.

The golf sessions consist of socialising, golf activities and coaching new skills. People get the chance to play sport, make new friends and socialise in relaxed surroundings. At the same time carers get the chance to enjoy a much need respite break.

"Golf was invented in Scotland and is part of the country's rich sporting history. We want to prove how much golf can play a part in improving the lives of families living with dementia," Anthony added. "The beauty of our work is that you don't need to have played golf before to enjoy our sessions. Our unique golf engagement programmes allow people of all backgrounds and abilities to enjoy golf. I suppose you could say that we give people the right to play golf – enable them - even when dementia tries to get in the way"

"We adopt a person-centred approach that allows us to create a "golfing journey" for everyone, allowing them to keep enjoying the game for as long as they want to. After a while we find that the golf becomes secondary, it's more about people feeling a sense of belonging to something special – something to look forward to. Having the sessions weekly also allows the carers to plan their breaks too."

Anna Buchanan, Director of the Life Changes Trust dementia programme said, "By funding a diverse range of dementia friendly communities throughout Scotland, we are developing a deeper understanding of how to meet the needs of people with dementia and their families. Many people living with dementia stop taking part in activities that may have given them pleasure in the past, or which allowed them to mix with their peers. This project brings people together in a dementia friendly community of interest, where they have opportunities to be part of something that is meaningful to them, as well participate in healthy, stimulating activities. We are very happy to be funding Golf In Society and look forward to watching the project grow."

QUOTES AND IMAGES (image available as attachment)



Quotes from individuals involved in the Lincoln project:

The golfers

"I love the company and the banter – I've had an awful game of golf today but it didn't matter."

"It's being outside in the fresh air and being able to participate."

"I find speaking hard from the illness – I can't get the words – so this is important as I practice my talking – and here it doesn't matter we are all similar."

"Camaraderie – the golf gets me to do things for other people – it's a great thing – we help each other – it keeps me going."

"It helps my wife – it gives her time of her own – a good break – I've won a couple of trophies – it all has the purpose of making you feel better."

The carers

"He wasn't a golfer but now he rarely misses a shot and absolutely enjoys it... It's the only time he comes out."

"It gives him his own social life he says it's my thing' where he feels he's not reliant on other people so gives him a sense of independence rather than illness"

"The best way of describing it is that it makes him buoyant, he lights up when he comes here, it brings him alive again."

"They help each other on the golf course so you have this chap with dementia helping another chap with dementia.....they know how each other feels."

"To see the look on his face when he did play golf again, was an experience that will stay with me for a long time."

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.

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Golf In Society (CIC) is a social enterprise with a mission to improve the lives of our ageing population by introducing them to golf. The project has been supporting families living with dementia for over two years. For further information about the positive impact the project is having on families living with dementia go to Golfinsociety.com or contact Anthony Blackburn.

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