



February 2013

Hi, I am writing to you to introduce our organisation, Grampian Family Support Forum. We are a voluntary organisation and a registered charity. Our aim is to be a representative voice for families affected by drugs in the Grampian region. The majority of our members have been affected by a family members substance misuse, either now or in the past.

Our 3 founding members met at a Scottish Families Affected by Drugs (Scottish Families) event in Aberdeen 3 years ago. We wanted to use our negative experiences to help others; 'parent power' In those early days we all wanted to make a difference but hadn't a clue where to begin. Since then our Forum has gone from strength to strength and progressd beyond our wildest expectations.

With advice and support from Scottish Families we started our journey on the 'Achieving Community Empowerment programme', which built up our confidence and introduced us to our main stakeholders (the 3 Alcohol and Drug Partnerships in the Grampian Region). We followed this with our participation in the Community Partnership Project with the Scottish Parliament last year, which was hard work and very challenging but it raised our profile considerably, and put Grampian on the map.

However, I must add that our journey has not been easy, we have been faced with many challenging situations which meant that we have had to step out with our 'comfort zone' on several occasions. Sometimes we felt like we were facing a brick wall but instead of using a sledge hammer, we removed one brick at a time. We were strangers from across a wide geographical area, and are now firm friends – passionate, committed and with a purpose!

From humble beginnings, we are now a serious and legitimate group. Our membership has increased from 3 to 21 throughout Grampian, however we are still under- represented especially in Moray and Aberdeenshire and are hoping to increase our membership to around 60. We are constituted, committee elected and registered as a charity. As well as the financial support we receive from the Grampian ADPs we were awarded £8000 at the end of last year from the Big lottery 'Awards for All' fund to enable us to reach out to more family members across Grampian. We hold bi-monthly Forum meetings in Aberdeen which are well attended by forum members, ADPs (Alcohol and Drug Partnerships) and the CEO from Scottish Families.

Our Forum meetings are held in Aberdeen for ease of access. However, if our membership in Moray, for example, should increase, we would consider holding some of our meetings in Elgin. **We must stress at this point that membership of our Forum does not mean that you have to attend our Forum meetings.** Our meetings are normally held bi-monthly from 11am to 2pm in central Aberdeen. Members will be asked if they want anything added to the Agenda, and we will bring their issues to the ADPs on their behalf. Members will also be sent a copy of the Minutes of each Forum meeting. We have many contacts and are on several mailing lists and as a result we receive information on a daily basis, as well as details of events, training courses, newsletters etc. We will forward anything of interest to our membership. We are also asked for our opinions on various matters and we always consult our membership for their contribution.

If a member does not want to be identified, any information will be sent to their individual email address and not as part of a mailing list.

Our main aim is to help establish more peer support groups throughout Grampian and support those that already exist. Here is a list of our main aims and some of our recent activities which reflect these aims.

- ***A voice for families affected by drugs*** – Engagement with the media, particularly contributing to local newspaper articles.
- ***Promoting and co-ordinating family support groups*** – We have just helped establish a new family support group in Buckie (Moray).
- ***Harnessing lived experience*** – We work closely with AiR, a recovery group from Aberdeen, several members of which attend our Forum meetings and we learn from each other.
- ***Working with families and recovering addicts*** – We work to maximise on every opportunity to voice the opinions of our Forum and the families we represent to decision and policy makers.
- ***Education and Prevention*** – Raising awareness of the dangers of ‘legal highs’ and pro-actively working with the Grampian Police to tackle the problem in our communities. We recently emailed all local councillors in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire to make them aware of the ‘Crew’ training sessions on legal highs which were being held at the beginning of December 2012, suggesting that they might like to attend.
- ***Influencing Policy*** – Our members work closely with the policy makers in the Public and Voluntary Sector to influence how local and national drug and alcohol policy is shaped;
- ***Building Partnerships*** – Continuously working to develop strategic partnerships to the benefit of our membership and the families in Grampian that we represent.

Our Forums membership is open to:-

- Any family member (aged 16 and over, living in Grampian) of someone affected by addiction now or in the past.
- Any support group for families in Grampian
- Any other individuals aged 16 and over and organisations in Grampian who share the values and aims of the Forum.

If you would like to be a member of our Forum please complete and return the attached membership form. Or if you know of anyone who might be interested in joining us, please pass on the information. Our contact details are on the attached flyer. **Again we must stress that membership of our Forum does not mean that you have to attend our Forum meetings**, however, if you do decide to come along, you will be made very welcome.

We are proud of our achievements over the last 3 years and we want to inspire other family members to unite, gain strength from each other, and have their voices heard and their opinions valued. At last, the support of family members is widely recognised as integral in the recovery process.

‘Built into every trial we face in life, every trial that forces us to grow, are the answers that other people need’

Sheila McKay,

Chair, Grampian Family Support Forum

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