

EAST

SUTHERLAND

COMMUNITY CARE

FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT

2002- 2003

EAST SUTHERLAND COMMUNITY CARE FORUM

Membership and Background Information

Current membership remains steady at 66, with more Service Users and Carers becoming involve in a more active way. Many other organisations and individuals are working with the Forum, but maybe doing so in a differently so the figure of 66 doesn't fairly represent the extent of the ESCCF network.

Members of the **Sutherland Access Panel** members are not included in the above figure, but are presently 28. Very few of the Access Panel members are also members of the forum. This represents the strong feelings the Panel members have relating to access issues.

The Forum meetings are held in different villages to encourage participation by those who may have transport problems. The Facilitator produces newsletters biannually. We also have articles included in the Voluntary Groups-East Sutherland newsletter as necessary. Flyers, phone calls, e-mails and letters are also used as and when required.

Local contacts have been established and built upon in all the communities throughout the area. Strong links have also been established with local Health Service Providers, Health Care Groups and Professionals. Voluntary Organisations and Social Work Services in Sutherland have a good working relationship with the Forum too.

A Service Level Agreement for HCCF is now in place, which provides a more secure financial future until March 2004. The 14 hours are for core work and Web training work is set at 8 hours per week, which is funded by the Connecting Communities Budget, accessed through HCCF's Community Fund grant. During the year the Sutherland Access Panel workload increase and the Connecting Communities budget was transferred to cover the work.

☺ **East Sutherland Community Care Directory of Services – 2002 –2003 edition.**

The updated version is free for Service Users and Carers. For this edition we included a new chapter “Services for Young People and Children with Special Needs” which provides much needed information for parents and Carers. The directory, which has been requested by many Service Providers, allows them to keep up to date with the services other providers offer. When we applied to Awards for All for the funding to produce the book we included provision for tape versions and some large print editions. As time progressed we realised we had under estimated the demand for the large print copies. Most of these copies were requested from Older Adults.

☺ **ESCCF Website**

With funding from the Connecting Communities budget we had 8 hours per week dedicated to producing our own website for the Forum. As time progressed and other work commitments grew a decision was taken to transfer the hours to Sutherland Access Panel work. Presently the site is available through the HCCF website.

☺ **Sutherland Access Panel**

Having had our second AGM this is the second full year I have been Secretary of the Sutherland Access Panel.

- ☺ The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) held an information day, with individual consultations available with their lawyer, in Brora in May 2002. It was the first time the DRC had come to Sutherland. Similar events had been held in other parts of Highlands. Those who attended the day found it to be of great benefit.
- ☺ We applied and were successful in receiving funding from The Camelot Foundation to carry out an Access Audit of public premises in Sutherland. Adapting a questionnaire provided by another Access Panel, over 400 questionnaires were sent to Business and Service Providers in Sutherland. We used the local Enterprise directory and local knowledge for the contacts, but the Access Panel realised that not all businesses were approached. The response was excellent (57%) and we then employed a local Statistician to compile the data.
- ☺ The next stage is to apply for funding to produce an Access Guide for Sutherland. Some panel members were very involved with the audit and are pleased with the percentage of returns. We asked for

comments at the bottom of the questionnaire and were encouraged by the number of groups/businesses who have improved their services so far and others who have put money aside to improve their facilities.

- ☺ As a knock on effect the Access Panel has been approached to carryout more access assessments on premises in Sutherland. Three panel members in particular are keen to conduct these and play a large part in compiling the report which is sent to the premises, local Planning and Building Control Officers in case future permission is sought. The Highland Councillor serving the area is also informed of the assessment, this request made and approved by panel members, and a copy of the report is offered to them.
- ☺ Representatives from Sutherland have attended the Highland Access Panels Forum meetings to discuss access issues Highland wide. Panel members who are disabled have offered to attend these meetings and have reported back to Sutherland Access Panel.
- ☺ One member took the opportunity to attend a 3-day training course on disabilities.

☺ **Learning Disabilities**

Carers of people with disabilities attended a Mapping Exercise day in autumn of 2002 entitled "Cradle to Grave". It showed where the gaps are in some of the services in Sutherland and it has allowed Carers to have a stronger say in how their relatives are regarded. Since then a Local Implementation Group has been set-up and met on several occasions. One Carer is a committee member. Working with the "Health & Happiness" team Service Users are able to participate and say what they would like to be improved in Sutherland to suit their needs.

☺ **Health's Patient Information Booklet**

The LHCC Manager for Sutherland contacted both the East and the North & West Sutherland Community Care Forums requesting a booklet with information, which can be given to patients and their Carers. Although originally aimed at people requiring palliative care and their families this booklet will be assembled so that loose-leaf information sheets can be added to fit the individuals needs. The fact that the both Forums have been commissioned to produce the document proves the good working relationship and commitment with the Statutory and Voluntary organisations at a local level in Sutherland. Social Work Services have also been asked to contribute. The work started at the beginning of the 2003 financial year and will be completed by Spring 2004.

☺ **Alcohol Sub Group**

The Forum has been involved in a three-part study into the effects on alcohol in Sutherland over the last few years. The first part of the study – focus groups discussions was completed some time ago. We have just completed a questionnaire that was distributed through every Medical Practice in Sutherland. Over 1000 people completed the form and presently the results are confidential until the third part of the study is conducted. A Statistician was employed to collate all the data for the 2nd part of the study.

☺ **Dental Services in North Highland area**

I attended the first meeting arranged by NHS Highland discussing the problems of the workload of the dentists in our area. Further meetings are planned.

Other ongoing achievements in 2002- 2003

☺ **ESLHCC**

Regular attendance at the meetings and highlight Service Users and Carers concerns.

☺ **Carers Group**

In May 2002 we set up a Carer Group meeting. Although requested by Carers in the East Sutherland area this has proved unsuccessful.

☺ **Joined-Up Counselling**

A long break in meetings in 2002 meant the group didn't progress as well as planning with this project. Presently we are considering producing postcards to be delivered throughout Sutherland to gauge interest in this initiative.

☺ **Care of Elderly Services Review – Sutherland**

Meetings were held throughout the year. Money funded an outreach Physiotherapy programme held in Lairg and Helmsdale on a Fall Prevention scheme.

☺ **Mental Health Services LIG (Sutherland)**

Attendance at group and Service Users and Carers from East Sutherland serve on the committee.

Involvement of Service Users and Carers

- ☺ Attendees at Luncheon Clubs, Welcome groups keen to participate in discussions and enquire about services and gaps in services.
- ☺ One of the Key Housing residents has offered to produce a logo for the Forum.
- ☺ Members of the Access Panel want to carryout site visits to premises
- ☺ Members of the Access Panel carryout access assessments on premises and help compile report for owners
- ☺ Members of the Access Panel contributed to the Service Providers to contact re access Audit questionnaire

Service Users and Carers Representatives

- ☺ Members of Sutherland Access Panel have attended Highland Access Panels Gatherings
- ☺ A Sutherland Access Panel member has attended the Scottish Disability Forum meeting in Stirling expressing concerns affecting people living in rural areas and other concerns.
- ☺ Forum members and representatives from groups express concerns and those are taken forward to the appropriate agency. E.g. Housing, Transport

Main Issues affecting Service Users and Carers in East Sutherland

- Transport – Public and Patient Transport (operated by Scottish Ambulance Service)
- Improving Housing conditions
- Access concerns
- “Handyperson” to carryout small jobs around the house and garden

Plans for 2003 – 2004?

- Apply for funding to produce an Access Guide for Sutherland

- Continue to raise public knowledge on access to buildings and propose a disability awareness session in Sutherland.
- Host the Highland Access Panels Gatherings meeting in September 2003
- Continue to identify gaps in Community Care services and take necessary action.