

Meeting with Cabinet Secretary ...

Assynt House, Inverness **19th July 2013**

I live in East Sutherland and seven years ago when my husband was diagnosed with vascular dementia we had absolutely no support. After 4 years of an isolated and lonely journey, I heard about the government's Dementia Strategy and realised it was simply not reaching grass roots. NHS Highland not only listened but more importantly:

- gave me a platform at last year's Annual Review to speak out about the strategy and what we needed from professionals for better support;
- helped us grow the East Sutherland Dementia Friendly Community initiative which now has its own identity together with a flourishing Collaborative comprising some 18 local agencies, service providers, voluntary groups and businesses who share our vision of a dementia friendly community;
- joined a number of working task groups, including
 - publicity
 - developing awareness raising programmes,
 - reducing isolation via varied social inclusion events,
 - putting our local care home at the heart of the community

But our greatest challenge still remains: while NHS Highland recognises we need to move from a crisis ethos to one of prevention - particularly for carers and their family members in the early stages of dementia - there is simply not statutory funding to do this. A time bomb waiting to happen ...

Ann Pascoe
Portgower
6th July 2013