

PKAVS Adult Carers Service

A Gannochy Trust #CharityStory



The
Gannochy
Trust



As we look to build on the legacy of our founder A.K Bell - one of the great philanthropists of his time – The Gannochy Trust continues to invest in a wide range of local projects that not only address poverty and disadvantage, but also seek to improve wellbeing, health and opportunity, especially for young people. Our latest #CharityStory highlights the important work of PKAVS in shaping the future of so many people across the region.

Now celebrating its 50th year, PKAVS is a Perthshire based charity that improves the quality of life of many thousands of local people including adults with mental ill health, young and adult unpaid carers, minority communities, volunteers, the local Third Sector, and older people. Through a range of support services, PKAVS is helping individuals to overcome personal barriers and ensure they have every chance to achieve their goals in life, particularly at the times when they need it most.

The Gannochy Trust has recently provided three years of additional core funding to support PKAVS' adult carers service, which offers a range of innovative emotional and practical support services to non-paid carers. The service has seen a 40% increase in registrations from adult carers this year, largely driven by the impact of Covid on traditional support service provision and the resulting rise in the non-paid carer population. According to the Scottish Government, the number of adult carers has increased by more than 50% in two years from 729,000 to 1.1 million.

Non-paid carers are essential to the caring system, but many find it difficult to take a break, putting their own health at risk. Caring for a loved one can be a positive and sometimes rewarding experience, however carers need support to continue their role. Those that don't often suffer a downturn in their health and wellbeing, relationships, employment opportunities and financial security. This is why the work of PKAVS is so critical.

Raymond Jamieson, PKAVS Carers Hub Manager said: "We have witnessed a spike in non-paid carers seeking support as more people have taken on the role during lockdown, with little outside support. The resulting impact on carer's physical and mental wellbeing has been significant, with some people now unable to cope on their own. With so much demand for our services, our capacity has been stretched. This is why funding from organisations such as The Gannochy Trust is vital, as it allows us to build capacity quickly and deal with this unprecedented level of demand."

The Gannochy Trust has funded two full time support workers - Donna and Anna - enabling the charity to increase their telephone support capacity, process more registrations and upscale service provision. Once registered, carers receive an Adult Support Plan should they wish, which includes a bespoke programme of support activities and sessions over an agreed period. The plans are a critical tool in providing person centred support to carers and with each support officer working on between 8-10 support plans per month, having Anna and Donna on board significantly increases PKAVS service provision capacity.

Raymond continues: "Having Anna and Donna has been a real asset to us. We are now helping in the region of 1,500 adult carers with 40-50 referrals coming in each month. One critical service we provide is our telephone support network, an open line where carers can discuss their needs with one of our trained officers. This is an important tool to build trust with the carers, as well as giving our officers the opportunity to understand their needs. Having access to more staff means we can process a higher volume of calls and reach more people, as well as giving us the capacity to do all the follow up work which is so critical to our service."

Mr Adams is one of many adult carers to benefit from PKAVS' services over the years, and his story mirrors the struggles of many people across the country. Over the past five years, he has provided support for his partner, who suffers from a range of challenging mental health issues. As her condition deteriorated, Mr Adams had to give up his job as a long-distance lorry driver to become her full-time carer. He is now responsible for managing her food and fluid intake, helping with medication, and providing emotional support. It is a 24/7 job, leaving little time for Mr Adams to see friends or have a break to look after his own wellbeing. As a result, the role has left him feeling tired, stressed, and isolated.

Mr Adams has never received any support until he discovered PKAVS. Today he receives regular advice, support, and information from a dedicated support officer, and engages in a range of activities and groups to help with his own wellbeing. He now knows he is not alone and can get regular support from PKAVS and his peers when he needs it.

Mr Adams said: “The advantage of being with PKAVS is that it has opened the door to a range of support facilities and services when I need them. For this reason, I feel and know that I'm not fighting this battle on my own. Since the first meeting with my PKAVS support worker, I've been able to meet and talk with other carers and arrange to go to a trip, which has been so beneficial to my wellbeing and mental health. I have another trip planned to Glasgow, which I'm sure that will be a great day out.”

Raymond concludes: “Mr Adams' story is typical of so many carers that we see and help daily. Without support, it is incredibly hard for many carers to cope on their own – we find that men find it particularly difficult to reach out, so we are working hard to raise awareness of our services within the male community.

Now the worst of the Covid pandemic is behind us, we are focusing on a range of new projects, such as setting up satellite branches across the region, enabling us to deliver our services direct to the community. We will continue to build our carer support capacity as demand continues to rise. It's heart-warming to hear how our support has helped improve the lives of many people, but we are conscious there is much work to be done.”

If you are an unpaid carer and want to know what support may be available to please contact PKAVS on 01738 567076 (Choose Option 2) or email carershubadmin@pkavs.org.uk.

To find out more about The Gannochy Trust, apply for a grant, or read more of our #CharityStories, visit www.gannochytrust.org.uk