



Mearns & Coastal Healthy Living Network (MCHLN)



By John Duncanson - Funding and Development Officer

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Mearns & Coastal Healthy Living Network (MCHLN) supports the voice, wellbeing, and health of the over-50s in Kincardine & Mearns – many of whom might be living alone, on lower incomes, in food poverty and/or experiencing mobility difficulties, be living with dementia, facing loneliness, isolation, etc. All of these individuals have a valuable contribution to make to society.

Celebrating 20 Years of Service

Celebrating its 20th year in 2022, the charity serves an area of approximately 300 square miles that's home to over 45,000 people. It's worth noting that, being rural, this catchment area is relatively poorly served by public transport – or affordable alternatives – further increasing the potential for isolation.

Since its establishment to address these issues, MCHLN has grown from a fledgling charity to one engaging some 200 older people a week. It also coordinates a volunteer network of around 90 individuals who recently gave over 3,000 hours of their time for the year – the equivalent of 83 working weeks.

Activities and Services

Running 550 groups, classes, and activities annually, MCHLN focuses on combating the negative effects of loneliness and isolation, as well as working against exclusions, such as digital. It focuses on the things that older people themselves say are important and regularly hosts open forums to ensure its activities are in line with the wishes of those it serves.

Its activities, services, and groups promote social engagement and both support and assist/enable individuals with the practical issues of day-to-day life whilst promoting inclusion, health & wellbeing, and reducing loneliness and isolation. The charity currently has over 500 registered clients and receives over 1,000 requests for support a year.

Transportation Services

A significant part of MCHLN's operation is transport – providing an affordable door-to-door service to facilitate attendance at healthcare and other appointments benefitting wellbeing. Last year, volunteers drove over 39,000 miles providing this service, making the lives of so many residents a little bit easier.

This was recognized by MCHLN being presented with two community transport awards by the Lord-Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire – one of which was for the organization itself, the other being for volunteer, KF (87) – to mark his 20th year of volunteering.

In 2023, the charity expects to have completed over 1,000 affordable, door-to-door transports for older people – helping ensure their health & wellbeing.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The charity is very well respected as an integral part of services in the locality and works closely with partners including AVA – Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action, KDP – Kincardine Development Partnership, CLD – Community Learning & Development, CMHT – Community Mental Health Team, AHSCP – Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership, Age Scotland – National charity for older people, Alzheimer Scotland – Scotland's dementia charity, Local Community Planning Group / Local Outcome Improvement Priority groups/Befriending organizations.

Testimonials

“The team of dedicated staff and volunteers at Mearns & Coastal Healthy Living Network are a significant asset to our **local older residents**.”

Sandra McGuigan – AVA Development and Children & Families Officer

“A great example of what can be done.”

Sue Briggs – CLD Evaluation and Improvement Officer

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