



Carers' News

From VOCAL | May 2021



Welcome

Welcome to Carers' News, VOCAL's newsletter, which shares the latest updates, news and stories from across our charity. From wee breaks and new partnerships, to planning our reopening and fundraising challenges, it's been a busy start to 2021! Over 1,400 new carers have joined us across the past six months, and we have welcomed 12 new team members too.

We are delighted to be appointed as the lead service for unpaid carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian. Working with our third sector partners, the Edinburgh and Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnerships and many of the large employers in the region, we can't wait to welcome more carers than ever before.

2020 was a challenging year for many and as we move out of lockdown, we are carefully restarting our in-person services. Our online and telephone services continue, including our wide programme of events and training opportunities.

News in Brief



- We are currently finalising VOCAL's Business Plan for 2021-2026 and we are looking forward to sharing our ambitious plans for the next five years. Keep an eye on our website for the latest news!
- 10-year-old Alice Daly (pictured) raised £670 for VOCAL, [walking over 400,000 steps in March](#). Thank you Alice!
- At the end of January, we received funding from the Scottish Government to help support carers in accessing short breaks. Hundreds of carers and young carers across Edinburgh and Midlothian were able to receive equipment, from laptops to tablets to garden items and toys.

Colin's February Fundraising Challenge

Colin Orr set himself the challenge of running every day in February to raise money for three charities, including VOCAL, Scottish Mountain Rescue and the British Liver Foundation.

A friend of Colin's recently had a liver transplant and VOCAL supported his family. Colin is also involved with VOCAL, recently joining our [peer mentoring programme](#).

[Colin raised over £2,500 for his chosen charities](#) and encouraged a friend or family member to take part in a run each day, either virtually or in-person. People joined across the world, from Edinburgh and Sydney to Philadelphia and London!

A huge thank you to Colin and his global crew of runners for their fantastic fundraising efforts.

“ *With so many people across the world in lockdown, I thought this challenge would be a great way to help people get out of the house, and improve their physical and mental wellbeing – all while raising money for good causes.* – Colin Orr

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Ahead of Carers Week

Every year, we take part in [Carers Week](#). This year's campaign will take place from 7-13 June and represents a unique, collective opportunity to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face, and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK.

2021's theme is 'Make Caring Visible and Valued'. In support of this, we have a whole host of activities planned for carers in Edinburgh. We will also be sharing good news and stories across our social media, so be sure to follow us!



Book at carerstraining.co.uk

8 June
10:00-11:30am

[Benefits for school age children](#)

An outline of the benefits available to you and the child you care for including Carers Allowance and DLA.

9 June (4 weeks)
10:30-11:30am

[Caring for a child with learning difficulties](#)

Mindroom and VOCAL present this course for parent carers, to learn about the conditions and meet other carers. 4 weeks: 9, 16, 23 and 30 June.

9 June (3 weeks)
10:00-11:30am

[Introduction to caring in Edinburgh](#)

Aimed at those new to caring, or carers new to Edinburgh, offering information on accessing support, money and welfare rights and VOCAL services. 3 weeks: 9, 16 and 23 June.

9 June
2:00-3:00pm

[Participation and self-advocacy for unpaid carers](#)

Understand how to speak up for yourself and your rights. We will cover carers' rights, developing the skills of successful self-advocacy and powerful participation.

Book at weebreaks.com

8 June
11:00am-12:00pm

[V&A Dundee Night Fever virtual tour](#)

Explore how early nightclubs arose, relive the fashions made popular on the dancefloor and explore how club culture is evolving around the world.

9 June
2:00-3:00pm

[Virtual afternoon tea](#)

Join other carers and our Carer Support Worker Claudine for a virtual chat and afternoon tea. We will organise tea delivered right to your door!

VOCAL Services

Carer Support

VOCAL has supported carers in Edinburgh for over 25 years. Today, we have our Edinburgh Carers' Hub based on Leith Walk and carer support practitioners based in local communities. This means you can [access support](#) through a variety of different ways. You can find us at community bases across Edinburgh, or you can contact us by telephone, video call, through social media and coming soon...through webchat.

Our team of dedicated carer support practitioners provide one-to-one support to carers regardless of the age or condition of the person being cared for. We can support you in any caring situation, and our specialties include:

Support and information on carer rights and entitlements | Self-directed support and sourcing services | Creating an Adult Carer Support Plan and Emergency Plan | Welfare rights and financial support | Short breaks | Addictions (Alcohol and Drugs)

Carer Training

Our rolling programme of free training includes events and workshops on health and wellbeing approaches such as emotional resilience, stress management and mindfulness. We also cover condition-specific topics such as Dementia, Stroke and MS. Find out more and book at carerstraining.co.uk.

Peer Support Opportunities

We recognise the importance of [speaking to other carers](#) who have gone through similar situations and experiences.

We run a peer support group for carers of children with additional support needs, a group for carers who enjoy doing crafts together and a SMART recovery group for carers of those affected by alcohol or substances. We are expanding our groups and will be starting these in each locality in the next few months.

One-to-one peer support is also available. You can be matched with a trained peer mentor volunteer who is also a carer. They will share their tips and experiences about what worked for them as a carer.



Counselling

Becoming a carer affects us in different ways. Whether you had a choice to become a carer or it was circumstantial, there is no doubt that caring can be difficult at times. Our COSCA recognised [counselling service](#) is open to carers across Edinburgh.

Information and Advice Surgeries

Our [information and advice surgeries](#) are led by professionals in specialist areas. All surgeries are currently delivered by video or telephone with regular monthly appointments available.

Carer Health | Money Matters and Welfare Rights | Power of Attorney | Legal Matters | Long-term Care | Accessing Wee Breaks



Wee Breaks

We offer a range of support to help carers get a short break from their caring role. This can include help planning a break, sourcing funding towards a break or offering virtual and physical events and trips. Find out more at weebreaks.com.



Family Support Addictions

VOCAL offer [specialist support](#) to those affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use. Supporting someone with a drug or alcohol problem can be a very confusing, lonely, isolating and stressful experience.

Specialist one-to-one support

Our Family Support Addictions service offers one-to-one support that can respond to carers' immediate needs and concerns about their situations. This might be practical or factual information on addiction, or treatment services in their area.

Groups and connections

We offer ongoing groups and training events for friends and family, including SMART groups. This provides an opportunity to meet with people in similar situations and share experiences in a safe space.

Staff Feature: Megan Copely

Megan Copley joined the VOCAL Edinburgh team in February, in the new role of Parent Carer Support Practitioner. Megan works with parents of children with disabilities/additional support needs across the city. You may have spoken to her if you have phoned VOCAL - she's often the first point of contact for our carers! Megan also works with our partner organisations as part of the newly established Parent Carewell Partnership. She is currently developing a new peer support group for parent carers.

Like other carers, parent carers can often be so focused on meeting the needs of others they find it difficult to think about what might benefit them personally. However, taking time out from caring, talking to others and exploring ways to improve life satisfaction, can really help parents.

"I'm really interested in helping carers develop techniques and strategies to improve their mental wellbeing. I take this slowly, and at a pace the individual feels comfortable with, as I appreciate introducing good self-care routines isn't always easy."

To find out more about the support we offer parent carers, call **0131 622 6666** or visit vocal.org.uk.



Wee Breaks

We have been working with Shared Care Scotland and Visit Scotland to pilot virtual breaks through the Respite at Home project. Since April last year, over 140 carers and companions have benefitted from a virtual break with attractions and experiences including Edinburgh Zoo, Vegetarian for Life, Dynamic Earth and Edinburgh Arts Festival. If you are interested in accessing a break, visit weebreaks.com or call **0131 622 6666**.

Hawthorn Brae Breaks

Hawthorn Brae Breaks is an exciting new partnership with Edinburgh-based charity EMMS International to allow VOCAL to purchase a property for holiday breaks for carers and those they care for!

[Hawthorn Brae Breaks](#) will offer free short breaks to people with life-limiting conditions and their carers in Edinburgh, ensuring they can enjoy a high-quality short break in Scotland.

EMMSInternational
Health for Today, Hope for Tomorrow

Health, wellbeing and connection

Thrive

The Thrive Collaboration offers a fresh public health approach to mental health, aiming to promote and protect citizens' mental health, resilience, self-esteem, strength and joy. We are proud to be part of this exciting work. We will be speaking to carers of people with a mental health condition to understand their experiences of mental health services, and make recommendations to these services. Email involve@vocal.org.uk.

Carewell Health and Wellbeing Partnership

This partnership brings together five Edinburgh-based agencies to deliver a joint initiative which supports carers in the capital city. We want carers to feel in control of their lives, have a quality of life in their own right and have the tools to address their own health and wellbeing.

Carers@Work

Our [Carers@Work Facebook group](#) supports Edinburgh and Midlothian carers who balance employment alongside caring. The group shares information and provides a space for discussions around balancing work and caring. Search for Carers@Work on Facebook, and request to join.

Scottish Election

We would like to congratulate the new government on their success in the recent election. With an estimated 690,000 carers in Scotland, carers represent a huge part of our country's population. According to a 2020 report by Oxfam, unpaid care work is valued at £36 billion. These figures illustrate the enormous impact of carers in supporting our economy and public services.

Carer support must remain on the agenda. Carers need to be part of these conversations, to ensure your needs and views are represented at all levels. As the Voice of Carers Across Lothian, we will hold the new government accountable, ensuring you are supported to carry out your caring role with the necessary resources and services, with your own health and wellbeing protected.

We would like to thank all Scottish political parties for considering unpaid carers' needs in their manifestos. You can read the new government's commitments on vocal.org.uk in the Carers News section.



About Us

VOCAL is the Voice of Carers Across Lothian, a Scottish charity run by carers and for carers since 1994. VOCAL supports unpaid carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian, offering tailored support for all caring situations and relationships. This includes caring for a family member, partner, relative or friend, of any age, who might need help to manage a long-term condition, a disability, a physical or mental health problem or an addiction.

Contact

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Scottish Charity: SC020755
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VOCAL is an active member of the Coalition of Carers in Scotland and is affiliated to Carers Scotland, Shared Care Scotland and Eurocarers.