

Our priorities for the future

Carers and their needs and aspirations are at the heart of VOCAL's work.

In 2015-16 we will invite 6,500 carer households in Edinburgh and Midlothian to contribute to a survey to identify priorities for future carer support and to evaluate their satisfaction with VOCAL services. With the support of two researchers, VOCAL will identify key carer messages to shape a new five-year business plan.

VOCAL's Business Plan 2016-2021 will also be informed by national and local strategic priorities. It will set out directions for the organisation to build carer resilience, health and wellbeing and safeguard and support carers' interests in a fast-changing public sector environment.

Increasing demand for care support, changing expectations and growing financial pressures threaten to shift the balance and the 'burden' of care further to families and friends. The Carers (Scotland) Bill will therefore be a major focus for our campaigning work with other carer organisations.

VOCAL, in partnership with local and national carer organisations, will seek to persuade the Scottish Government to create a national framework of

eligibility criteria for carer support and entitlements for carer support, especially for breaks from caring. Carers across Scotland should have same rights to support to end the current postcode lottery.

Locally in Edinburgh and Midlothian, VOCAL will implement new contracts and seek additional funding to consolidate and expand carer support. As in previous years, early identification and referral of carers is a key priority and a pre-condition for shifting support from crisis provision to prevention. Our work with employers and colleges is now supported by new contract funding from Edinburgh Council and will contribute to helping a growing number of carers to balance employment with the caring role.

VOCAL will continue to strengthen the focus on therapeutic support for carers to manage the emotional and physical impact of the caring role and the range of support to secure financial planning and economic wellbeing at a time of major welfare reforms.

To these ends, VOCAL will develop new and deeper partnerships with key organisations to deliver support more locally and to more people who experience multiple health and social challenges.

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Our funders and supporters

VOCAL's carer support services are funded by several major contracts with NHS, Edinburgh and Midlothian health and social care partnerships and the Big Lottery. VOCAL raises additional project funds from over 20 different sources including a range of trust funds and from many individual donations and fundraising initiatives.

We gratefully acknowledge all financial support, in particular the many donations we receive from trust funds and from carers and supporters in cash and kind. Many of these help VOCAL fund new initiatives as funds are not tied to specific projects.

VOCAL's audited accounts are submitted annually to all main funders, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and Companies House. They can be accessed by the public through these agencies.

We thank all our supporters for their invaluable help!

About VOCAL

VOCAL is governed by a Board of Directors primarily consisting of carers and former carers. Carer services are managed and delivered by a team of 35 part-time and full-time staff and over 70 volunteers, including those who run the VOCAL Carer Centre reception areas, facilitate carer courses and peer activities and who work with carers as counsellors.

Our finances for the year ending 31 March 2015

Statement of Financial Activities		2015	2014
Total incoming resources		1,210,530	1,170,923
Total resources expended		1,149,967	1,086,880
Net income for year		60,563	84,043
Net gain on investments		540	(7)
Net movement in funds		61,103	84,036
Funds at 1 April 2014		592,642	508,606
Funds at 31 March 2015		653,745	592,642
Balance sheet at 31 March 2015			
Fixed Assets	Tangible	318,275	325,705
	Investments	47,132	46,592
		365,407	372,297
Current Assets	Debtors	11,261	4,989
	Cash at bank	488,776	459,953
		500,037	464,942
Creditors due within one year		211,699	244,597
Net current assets / (liabilities)		288,338	220,345
Net assets		653,745	592,642
Funds	Restricted	126,724	137,736
	Designated	498,275	425,705
	General fund	28,746	29,201
Total funds		653,745	592,642



**VOCAL's work in 2014-15
and our priorities for the future**

10,652 carer contacts

Over the course of the year VOCAL recorded 10,652 one-to-one carer contacts. Our carer centres provide free, confidential support on all aspects of caring including benefits, financial support, short breaks and community care.

3,048 carers

VOCAL provided individual support to 3,048 carers, offering a person-centred service delivered through home visits, appointments at our carers centres and local support in the community.

718 carers attended VOCAL's legal and benefits surgery appointments, including support for setting up Power of Attorney.

Over 6,500 carers were supported through regular e-bulletin and newsletter communication, and personalised information on training and events.

24,987 visitors

24,987 people visited VOCAL's website www.vocal.org.uk

£750,000

VOCAL assisted carers in receiving a total of £750,000 in additional financial support.

1,532 new carers

We identified and supported 1,532 new carers during 2014-15. VOCAL works in partnership with GPs and health and social care teams to improve early identification and referral of carers.

1,778 counselling sessions

Demand for counselling continued to increase. VOCAL received 300 referrals for counselling and offered 1,778 counselling sessions. 131 carers were added to the waiting list. VOCAL also introduced dementia counselling with additional funding from a local trust fund.

619 carers (training)

619 carers registered for our *Caring with Confidence* training programme which offers courses, seminars and workshops designed for carers in different caring situations. We supported several hundred carers to access leisure and healthy living courses and events.

138 carers (advocacy)

Our advocacy service provided intensive support to 138 carers experiencing complex difficulties with their caring role. This included support at meetings and formal complaint procedures.

124 carers (groupwork)

124 carers registered for groupwork sessions on dealing with guilt, changing relationships, loss and bereavement and stress management.



VOCAL Carer Centre

Registered address: 8-13 Johnston Terrace,
Edinburgh EH1 2PW T: 0131 622 6666
E: centre@vocal.org.uk W: www.vocal.org.uk

Introduction to VOCAL

VOCAL manages two Carer Centres in Edinburgh and Midlothian and provides local carer support in communities across Edinburgh. Our services include:

- person-centred support, information and planning for the future
- emotional support, stress management and counselling
- training and learning opportunities
- benefits, legal, long-term care and power of attorney surgeries
- support for people affected by someone else's addiction
- health, social and leisure activities
- gateway to many other services.

Positive impact for carers

The number of carers reporting positive outcomes following support from VOCAL increased to 988 from 826 the previous year.

Nearly 60% of carers reported an improvement in their **economic well-being** whilst 89% reported feeling **more informed about their caring role**. 93% of carers reported either an improvement or no deterioration in their **health and well-being**.

In addition, 585 carers undertook service evaluations following attendance at VOCAL training and surgery events including legal and power of attorney surgeries. Over 80% of these carers reported feeling more **confident in caring and their ability to shape services and support**, more informed and improved **health and well-being**.

Supporting a Polish carer to achieve positive outcomes

Katarzyna* (56) is originally from Poland and has lived in Edinburgh with her two teenage children, Mateusz and Dominik, for three years. Both her sons have schizophrenia and when Katarzyna first contacted VOCAL, Mateusz was in hospital. VOCAL's carer support worker met with Katarzyna and an interpreter to explore her needs as a carer and to identify the issues that were important to her.

Katarzyna's caring role was affecting her health and well-being and she was feeling very stressed. Finances were a struggle as she was only able to work part-time due to her caring commitments, and she was spending a lot of money on buses traveling to the hospital to see Mateusz each day. With no time for anything other than work and caring Katarzyna's relationship was suffering and she was becoming increasingly isolated.

Limited English language skills made it difficult for Katarzyna to access benefits for herself and her children and she relied on friends to assist her. With support from VOCAL's benefits surgery the benefits she was entitled to were put in place, improving her financial situation and alleviating some of her concerns.

Katarzyna was also referred to VOCAL's complementary therapy service and had three sessions of relaxing massage to enable her to take some time out for herself and manage her stress. With help from the carer support worker she applied to VOCAL's short breaks fund and was awarded £250 to pay for further treatments with a private therapist who would visit her home.

At this point Mateusz was discharged from hospital and Katarzyna was worried about what support might be provided for him. She was also concerned that the language barrier would make it difficult for her to liaise with her child's support team. The carer support worker helped her to discuss these concerns with the mental health team and to arrange for her child to resume counselling. Katarzyna started to feel more confident in shaping services for Mateusz and reassured that she now knew who to contact in future if she had any concerns.

Katarzyna was also supported to engage with the services of the Polish Family Centre and now uses the centre and their counselling service regularly.

(*All names have been changed)