



A group of carers relax after completing VOCAL's 'New Year, New You' course in January, with refreshments kindly donated by Starbucks, Lothian Road.

## Peer mentoring

VOCAL offers a peer mentoring service which brings together a carer with a volunteer mentor who has lived through a similar experience or situation and is willing to share their story. This is a useful way to help carers reflect on their own situation and make decisions about their next steps.

**To discuss whether a mentor could help you, please contact the VOCAL carer support team on 0131 622 6666.**

**Congratulations to 63 newly elected councillors on City of Edinburgh Council! Elected members face many challenges and demands – including high expectations from 47,000 carers in the city to provide improved support for their caring role.**

Councillors will soon decide how the Carers' (Scotland) Act 2016 will be implemented in Edinburgh to ensure new resources directly reach carers and carer-led support agencies. The Act comes with new funds for carer support, replacing all traditional funding streams from April 2018.

Carers expect open, transparent processes for the allocation of these funds to replace some bad practice of recent years. Pre-occupation with Council and NHS integration should make room for a new partnership focus with carer organisations to deliver the Carers' Act successfully and strengthen the excellent work already done in the city.

City of Edinburgh Council has just completed an independent review of the 2014-2017 Edinburgh Carers' Strategy. Some disturbing messages emerged from the consultation with carers on the impact the strategy had

on carer support. Edinburgh urgently requires a new, more effective Carers' Strategy for the city.

To make a difference to carers, the Joint Integration Board needs a level playing field: less competition through arbitrary procurement; much more collaboration and co-production; and a thorough review of the NHS and Council's joint in-house carer services using the same criteria, scrutiny and transparency applied to the voluntary and third sector.

**Will the winds of change blow...  
fairer for carers?**

Without fair play and openness, well-meant intentions of the Carers' Act and scarce resources may get absorbed in bureaucracies, failing to reach those they should benefit most to make a difference to carers' lives.

**VOCAL extends an invitation to all newly elected councillors: "Come and visit our Edinburgh Carer Centre at the top of the Royal Mile and speak directly to carers and carer-led organisations on the key issues we face."**

## ABOUT VOCAL

VOCAL supports carers in all family or relationship settings, be they defined by kinship, partnership, friendship, affection or obligation.

### What do we do?

Carers can access the following:

- Information & advice
- Individual support
- Legal & financial surgeries
- Training & groupwork
- Social & leisure opportunities
- Family Support (Addictions)
- Carer counselling service

### Connect with VOCAL:



**Email:**  
centre@vocal.org.uk



**Website:**  
www.vocal.org.uk



**Twitter:**  
@EdinburghCarers



**Facebook:**  
www.facebook.com/  
VOCALCarers

## VOCAL Carer Centres

### VOCAL Carer Centre

8 - 13 Johnston Terrace  
Edinburgh EH1 2PW  
Tel: 0131 622 6666

### VOCAL Midlothian Carer Centre

30/1 Hardengreen Estate  
Dalhousie Road, Dalkeith  
EH22 3NX  
Tel: 0131 663 6869

### Additional services:

Family Support  
Addictions (FSA) 0131 622 6262  
Counselling 0131 466 8082  
South Edinburgh 0131 672 0987  
South West Edin 0131 449 8606

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

Dear carers,

As one election chases another, we need to double our efforts to keep carer support at the heart of all political campaigning – before and after elections.

In the local government elections all parties promised more carer support. Carers now rightly expect new councillors to deliver on their promises. We at VOCAL will do what we can to act as a voice for carers and a constructive partner for elected members to aid them in this task.

At the same time, we carefully check our own performance. At the April board meeting, members reviewed VOCAL's performance in the first year of our 5-year business plan. We successfully adjusted our internal management structures, shifting more resources to supporting carers. And we have laid important foundations to launch three major new projects this year to provide more local support, improve economic wellbeing for carers through a new social enterprise and take radical new initiatives to offer carers a wider range of short breaks. Watch this space for further announcements!

The VOCAL board also welcomes two new members: Pam Russell and Rose Wawrzyniak were co-opted as trustees on 18 April. Both live in Midlothian and will strengthen VOCAL developments there and across the Lothians. At the same time, we are starting a training programme for seven new volunteers and we thank all our volunteers for their tremendous contributions to make VOCAL what we are: carer-led and carer-focused!

We are delighted that 27 VOCAL supporters have registered for this year's Rotary Club Forth Rail Bridge Abseil on 28 May to raise funds for carers.

We are also seeking volunteers to support several collections, having been chosen by Dobbies Garden Centre in Midlothian (4/5 August) and offered two collections at TESCO on 16 June at Corstorphine and 28 July at Broughton Road. Please note also the fundraising events flyer which is inserted in this issue of Carers News. If you can lend a hand or would like to get involved in fundraising, please contact Francesca Greaves at [fundraising@vocal.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@vocal.org.uk) or call **0131 622 6666**.

With best wishes,

Patrick Layden, VOCAL Convener

## NHS Lothian award for carer-friendly practice

NHS Lothian received a Highly Commended Award in the Scottish Top Employers for Working Families Awards 2017 on 9th March in Glasgow. The awards celebrate employers that have successfully embedded family friendly and flexible working practices across all sectors and sizes of organisations.

VOCAL has played an integral part in the work which was celebrated by this award including a focus on support for NHS Lothian staff who are also family carers, and the development of face-to-face and e-learning 'Think Working Carer' training for line-managers and supervisors.



# Terrified of technology? Learn to love it with VOCAL!

VOCAL offers lots of opportunities to learn new skills within its carer training programme. Over the next few months we have a focus on technology and the digital world - why not give one of these courses a try:

- **Podcast Lounge** – learn how to find and download podcasts, and discuss what you find over coffee.
- **Computer for beginners** – take your first steps into the digital world. Learn how to use computers and online services safely.
- **Starting your family tree** – discover how to start researching your family tree online plus a visit to the Scottish Genealogy Society.

One carer who recently attended a 'Making the most of your tablet' course told us:

*"My family bought me a tablet for my birthday, I didn't want to tell them that it just sat on my cabinet as I didn't know how to use it. Now, I am able to browse the internet safely and even make a skype call to my family!"*

To book a course online visit the Carer Events website - [www.carerstraining.co.uk](http://www.carerstraining.co.uk) - or you can call Debbie on **0131 662 6666**.

### Are you interested but worried about the cost of buying a computer, tablet or smartphone?

VOCAL's short break fund could be the answer. Fill in the application form to see if you could get funding to cover the cost of these devices. Call VOCAL on **0131 622 6666** to request an application pack.

## Carer Conversation Cafés

VOCAL is pleased to announce a new addition to our Carer Conversation Cafés in Gilmerton from 30 May.

Conversation Cafés are open, drop-in sessions where carers can share thoughts and ideas on a theme over a coffee in a relaxed and informal space.

The new Café will be held in Morrisons Café on the last Tuesday of the month from 10am-12pm. For details of all the Conversation Cafés, times and dates visit [www.carerevents.co.uk](http://www.carerevents.co.uk) or call VOCAL on **0131 622 6666**.



## Caring in the City: the one-stop shop for Edinburgh carers

Come along to our one day drop-in events for carers to find out more about local support and services. Staff from VOCAL and many other organisations will be there to answer questions, and carers are invited to attend free workshops including stress management, meditation and short breaks for carers.

The next two Caring in the City events are:

- 10 May - West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre
- 11 June - Gilmerton Society Hall

For more details visit the Carer Events website:

[www.carerstraining.co.uk](http://www.carerstraining.co.uk)

## Join Carers@Work - the Facebook group for working carers



Are you working and also providing care for a friend, partner or family member? Carers@Work is a new Facebook group set up by VOCAL and Marie Curie to provide support and resources for carers who are juggling work and caring responsibilities. The group goes live in May and aims to:

- Encourage peer support, build resilience and information sharing amongst working carers.
- Identify themes and issues for use in discussion with employers as part of VOCAL's work to encourage carer-friendly workplaces.
- Inform legislation and employer policy and practice through engagement with the group on key issues.

The group is open to unpaid carers who are self-employed or in part-time or full-time employment, and who live or work in Edinburgh or Lothian.

To join the group first 'Like' the VOCAL Facebook page (see page 2), then email your name and postcode to [social@vocal.org.uk](mailto:social@vocal.org.uk) or use the sign-up form at: <http://eepurl.com/cFdIm5>

## Free learning for carers with the Open University

The Open University offers free online learning at OpenLearn with lots of resources on offer, from short videos to longer courses, on subjects ranging from Autism and Dementia to Maths and Spanish. Visit [www.open.edu/openlearn](http://www.open.edu/openlearn) to find out more.



### **Caring Counts - free course for carers**

The OU also has a free reflection course for carers called 'Caring Counts'. This is aimed at unpaid carers at a transition in their caring role who may be wondering about their next steps. Visit [www.open.edu/openlearncreate/caringcounts1](http://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/caringcounts1) to access the course.

*"When the course was offered I thought, it will make me reflect on what I've been doing. Caring Counts really opens your mind and gets you thinking about what you actually do and what your value is. It made me think I could do this and when I went to the interview, the words just flowed." (Jane, carer)*

### **Ready for more of a challenge?**

Enrolment is now open for formal OU modules starting in September/October. With the part-time fee grant, you can study for free if your personal income is less than £25,000 per year. Whatever level you choose to start learning at, it could be your first step on the path to a qualification. Go to [www.open.ac.uk/study](http://www.open.ac.uk/study) to find out all about courses, funding and enrolment.

## Classes, kiosk and more at Ca(i)re

The Ca(i)re programme offers free weekly drop-in classes for carers throughout the year including relaxation and yoga. All classes are suitable for beginners as well as those with more experience.

Based at the Eric Liddell centre, Ca(i)re also provide a carer information kiosk, mobile library, a carer befriending service, support with Self-Directed Support and regular free talks and trips for carers.

For more information visit [www.ericliddell.org](http://www.ericliddell.org) or contact Anna Reid at [reida@ericliddell.org](mailto:reida@ericliddell.org) or **0131 447 3321**.

## Join Carers & Co - the caring choir

The Carers & Co choir meets every Tuesdays during school term from 10am-12pm in St Andrew's and St George's Church on George Street. Singing is great fun - please come along and try it! No audition or experience is required and all ages are welcome to join. To find out more please contact Maggie on **07503 175418**.

## Spinning a merry tale!

Memory Spinners is a weekly group for people with dementia and their carers. Guided by staff from Scottish Opera, the group uses music, storytelling, movement and visual arts to get creative, relax, have some fun and form new supportive networks.

Former VOCAL board member Anne Anderson attended the group: *"Over 2 months a group of around 16 people had great fun singing and working together...come and join us, I am confident you will enjoy it!"*

For further information and to register please contact Audrey Blake: email [audrey.blake@scottishopera.org](mailto:audrey.blake@scottishopera.org). **uk** or call her on **0141 332 9559**.

If you would like to update or remove your details, or would like your name added to VOCAL's mailing list to receive Carers News, then complete this form and return to: FREEPOST RTJZ-RBZT-LHGH, VOCAL, 8-13 Johnston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH1 2PW

Title: ..... Name: ..... Add

Address: ..... Remove

Previous address (if updating): ..... Update

Postcode: ..... Tel: ..... Email: .....

Condition of person being cared for: .....

Relationship to person being cared for: .....

The information provided in this form will be stored on VOCAL's database. This will allow us to let carers know about events, training and other relevant opportunities. We may occasionally contact carers by telephone. We will add carers to VOCAL's carer email list. We will not share any personal information with a third party unless required to do so and will always seek to obtain consent first. Information is regularly checked to ensure it is accurate and up to date. If you wish to view the information we hold about you or if you wish your details to be removed, please contact VOCAL on 0131 622 6666 or email [centre@vocal.org.uk](mailto:centre@vocal.org.uk). Please tick here if you do not wish VOCAL to do this