



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 Midlothian. We will also be sharing good news and stories across our social media, so be sure to follow us!



8 June
10:30-11:30am

[Coffee morning with afternoon tea](#)

Join VOCAL staff and other carers at our Carers Week coffee morning. We will deliver an afternoon tea directly to your door!

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.

10 June
1:00-2:30pm

[Carer relaxation session](#)

De-stress, switch-off, rejuvenate and relax with Alison, our yoga instructor/complementary therapist.

Wee Breaks

[Family tickets for Conifox Adventure Park](#)

Lots of outdoor fun for adults and children of all ages. Almost all equipment can be used by parents and children playing side-by-side.

[Complimentary coffee/tea and cake for two](#)

Take some time off from caring and enjoy a hot drink and cake with a friend or companion at one of Midlothian's best restaurants.

[Family tickets for Fort Douglas Adventure Park](#)

Explore the Sky Maze, the most magical turreted treehouses, zip wires, suspension bridges, slides, climbing walls and secret tunnels of this brand new playground. A space where the whole family can play together, yippee! Let the adventures begin...

Book at carerstraining.co.uk

Book at weebreaks.com

VOCAL Services

Carer Support

VOCAL Midlothian has delivered support from its Hub in Dalkeith since 2013. During this time, much has changed including a rapid increase in Midlothian's population. As a result, access to carer support has evolved and as well as the Hub, carers can [access support](#) through a variety of different ways. You can find us at community bases across Midlothian, 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:

Self-directed support | Addictions (Alcohol and Drugs) | Hospital discharge | Welfare rights | Support and information on carer rights, entitlements and accessing an Adult Carer Support Plan and Emergency Plan

Carer Training

Our rolling programme of free training opportunities 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 being able to speak to other carers who have gone through similar situations and experiences. This is why we established further [peer support opportunities](#) throughout 2020.

Join our monthly coffee morning to hear from guest speakers who share information and advice on areas such community safety. Our craft group and parent carer peer support group also meet monthly. All groups are meeting virtually at the moment.

One-to-one peer support is also available. You will be matched with a trained peer mentor volunteer who is also a carer, and understands the impact that caring can have, particularly on health and wellbeing.



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 Midlothian.

We aim to support carers in expressing their thoughts and feelings about what is happening in their life. It isn't about telling you what you should be doing, it is an opportunity for you to talk about and reflect on your life as a carer.

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 | Welfare Rights/Benefits | Power of Attorney | Legal - Wills, Guardianship and Trusts | Long-term Care | Accessing Wee Breaks



Wee Breaks

The responsibility of attending to someone else's needs may mean your own needs are neglected. Leisure time is often the first thing that disappears for carers and the last thing they have time for.

Wee Breaks Midlothian is open for applications and can support any unpaid carer providing support to someone in Midlothian to get a break from their caring role. Everyone's idea of a break is different and we can support you with planning, accessing funding and applying for grants. A break could be anything from a few hours a week in the gym to a weekend away.

We have a range of breaks on our website designed to provide activities for carers and their families as they come out of lockdown. Breaks include:

Family ticket to Fort Douglas Adventure Park/Conifox Adventure Park | Coffee/cake vouchers | Roslyn Chapel Tour | National Mining Museum Tour

For more information, visit weebreaks.com or call us on **0131 663 6869**.

Staff Feature: Peter Horn

Peter Horn first started at VOCAL Edinburgh, then joined the Midlothian team in 2018. He's one of our Carer Support Practitioners, specialising in support for carers affected by alcohol or drugs misuse. Addiction can often be a taboo topic, with a lot of stigma attached, which can make caring and receiving support a complex journey with no distinct path.

“No situation is the same and the carers we work with can have ranging needs. Because of this, we can offer different types of support, from information and advice to counselling and peer mentoring. We also work with a network of partner organisations including MELD, SFAD, AL-ANON, Midlothian Access Point and Anam Cara, which means we can point carers in the most relevant direction.”

Peter recently trained in the CRAFT approach, which focuses on developing communication and positive reinforcement strategies. He also leads on Emergency Planning activities, and delivers a monthly surgery where carers can access support to create an Emergency Plan.

To find out more about VOCAL Midlothian's Family Support Addiction Services, look to the VOCAL Services feature on the previous page, or visit [our website](#).



Carer Action Midlothian

At the heart of VOCAL Midlothian is our carers' group, Carer Action Midlothian (CAM). This group meets bi-monthly and provides the opportunity for carers to come together with local services and share their experiences, knowledge and ideas. If you would like to know more about attending CAM, please email midlothian@vocal.org.uk



British Red Cross

Following the successful outcome of new contracts, VOCAL Midlothian and the British Red Cross will be working in partnership to provide support to carers across Midlothian. The first step in this exciting collaboration will be the new post of Community Link Worker. This will not only strengthen early carer identification, but also connect carers to community networks.

“This is a very exciting partnership between VOCAL and the Red Cross who have worked together successfully for many years to benefit carers. This new post will support the further development of early identification of carers and provide advice, information and practical support to enable carers to build their community networks, with VOCAL continuing to provide their invaluable specialist service.” – Lorraine Dilworth, Service Manager, British Red Cross

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 at 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.

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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.