

Message from VOCAL

As 2021 comes to an end, we thought it may be helpful to share information on VOCAL's support and services over the festive period. This includes opportunities you can access now and early next year to support you in your caring role.

At this time of year, we encourage you to consider your friends and neighbours and whether they may have a caring role for a partner, parent, relative or friend. Please pass this information on to them!

On behalf of Edinburgh Carer Support

We know 2021 was another challenging year for many of us, and the results of our 2021 Carer Survey suggest that carers are facing increasing challenges with their mental and physical wellbeing and financial situation. Thanks to the Scottish Government's Carers Act funding, VOCAL now offers a wider range of support than ever before and can work with you to help you in your caring role.

Here is a summary of some key supports and resources which you may want to access:

- Individual support with an experienced practitioner
- Carer support groups
- Individual mentoring with a trained carer
- Welfare rights advice and support
- Counselling
- Training, activities and events
- Help to shape care packages and support
- Short breaks funding

Grants and funding

VOCAL recently launched the Carers' Recovery Fund in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, to support carers recovering from the impact of the pandemic. VOCAL also holds funds from the Scottish Government and other sources to enable small grants for carers in greatest need.

Applications can now be submitted by any carer seeking support, who would benefit from opportunities to improve their personal health, enable them to obtain a break from caring or improve their financial wellbeing.

To help your personal health, we can support you in accessing mindfulness, Tai Chi or yoga classes, or even fitness equipment to help you keep fit at home.

To improve your financial wellbeing, you may need support to pay for additional costs associated with caring, purchase essential furniture or white goods, or to cover costs associated with obtaining employment.



Costs towards breaks can include day or residential trips in the UK. For some carers, a break is time outside to do some gardening. For others, it is the funds to buy an iPad to help them access Netflix or another hobby. We can also support you with a more traditional break such as a night away.

Applications are invited from carers of all ages and caring situations, including young carers and young adult carers, parent carers of children with additional support needs and carers of minority communities.

Our Carer Support Team can advise on what you can seek funding for and how to apply. Visit the Wee Breaks website for more information: weebreaks.com/funding-your-break/. You can also contact us by calling 0808 196 6666 or emailing centre@vocal.org.uk.

Festive opening and support

It has been great to see more carers at our Edinburgh Carers' Hub and in their local areas over the last few months, and we are looking forward to welcoming even more of you in 2022. Across the festive period, we will be offering in-person, telephone and online support and events.

On Wednesday 29 December and Thursday 30 December, you can call us for telephone support or organise a face-to-face appointment at our Carers' Hub. You can also join our festive activities, including a coffee morning, Christmas quiz and meditation sessions. Visit the news section of our website for the full programme: vocal.org.uk/category/news/.

Caring at Christmas

Recognising the increased financial pressure faced by carers, VOCAL has created the Caring at Christmas Fund. We are asking employers in Edinburgh and Midlothian to contribute to this new fund to help us make a difference to carers.

The Fund will be accessible in the form of small grants to assist carers who are facing financial pressures and have found themselves unable to manage their day-to-day expenses. With the festive season around the corner, your employer may have a budget for charitable giving, or seasonal activities for staff to help fundraise for local causes. Please consider putting VOCAL forward to help us support carers further.

Counselling and emotional support

If you are experiencing isolation, stress and anxiety, VOCAL has range of therapeutic and emotional supports that can help you to improve your wellbeing. VOCAL's Counselling Service offers a confidential and non-judgemental space where carers can talk to a counsellor who will listen and provide emotional support. Talking to someone outside of the situation can be extremely helpful and we can currently offer counselling via video calling, face-to-face or by phone. Please call 0808 196 6666 or email centre@vocal.org.uk for details.

2022 January - March training and events programme

Keep an eye out for our next training, events and activities programme! We are finalising the details now and this will land on your doorstep at the start of January. We will have events to help you start the New Year positively and opportunities to help you in your caring role. All events can be booked on our Carers Training website, carerstraining.co.uk, or by calling us on 0808 196 6666.

Do you know someone with a caring role?

Please help us to identify other carers who are not yet in touch with VOCAL! There are thousands more people with caring responsibilities who may not realise they are a carer or know there is support to help people like them. You do not have to be providing a certain number of hours of caring or have specific responsibilities to be considered a carer. Maybe you once thought you weren't a carer either! Your story might encourage others to come forward and join our wonderful community of carers.

With all best wishes to you and your families, stay well and please remember we are here if you need us!

Yours sincerely,



Carole Kelly
Head of Carer Support, VOCAL Edinburgh