

## 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 Midlothian 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 peer mentoring with a trained carer
- Parent Peer Support Group – join on Facebook
- Welfare rights advice and support
- Counselling
- Training, activities and events
- Help to shape care packages and support
- Short breaks funding

## Wee Breaks Fund

Funding is available to enable you to take a break from your caring role. Over the last 18 months in particular, we found that 'a break' looks different to different people and because of this, we have been providing flexible solutions to carers which meet their need for a Wee Break.

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.

Our Carer Support Team can advise on the types of breaks you can seek funding for and how to apply. Visit the Wee Breaks website for more information: [weebreaks.com/funding-your-break/](https://weebreaks.com/funding-your-break/). You can also contact us by calling 0131 663 6869 or emailing [midlothian@vocal.org.uk](mailto:midlothian@vocal.org.uk).



## **Festive opening and support**

It has been great to see more carers at our Midlothian Carer Centre 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 telephone and online support, and online events.

On Wednesday 29 December and Thursday 30 December, you can call us for telephone support or use our Webchat function on the VOCAL website. 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/](https://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.

## **Choose VOCAL Midlothian as your local Co-op cause**

Do you shop in a local Co-op? VOCAL Midlothian is one of the causes that you can choose to support! You can sign up to become a Co-op member for £1 and it only takes a few minutes to set up: <https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/62743>.

VOCAL Midlothian will receive 1p for each pound spent by someone who has chosen us as their cause (as long as they scan their card when shopping) between now and next October. Card holders earn points like a normal store card, so there is a benefit to you too! If you are unable to sign up online, you can call the membership team on 0800 0686 727.

Spend and scan your card at your local Co-op and help us raise money for local carers.

## **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 0131 663 6869 or email [midlothian@vocal.org.uk](mailto:midlothian@vocal.org.uk).

## **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 can't wait to share what's coming up. 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](https://carerstraining.co.uk), or by calling us on 0131 663 6869.

## **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,



Laura Hill  
Head of Carer Support, VOCAL Midlothian