



# Carers' News

From VOCAL | June 23



## Welcome

Welcome to Carers' News, VOCAL's newsletter which features the latest news, updates and information for unpaid carers.

In this edition, you can read about the health and social care challenges impacting carers; VOCAL's partnership with Lothian Buses; our free will writing service; funding to take a Wee Break from caring...and more!

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# Urgent need to bridge the gap between promises and reality

At a time when the health and social care sector is facing serious cuts to budget and services, a growing number of carers and families are being left to pick up the pieces of a broken system which is unable to deliver on policy commitments.

Five years on from the Carers Act, VOCAL is hearing from an increasing number of carers who are finding it impossible to get any supports or services in place for the person they care for. More and more responsibility is being pushed on to carers and families to fill the gaps in care provision and it is coming at a cost, in terms of their health, finances and personal lives.

There is now a pressing need to set out new directions that will bridge the implementation gap and address what is an immediate and longer-term issue for carers. The need to strengthen foundations, transform thinking and redesign systems – as recommended in the Independent Review of Adult Social Care (2021) – is urgently required.

VOCAL is working with carer centres across Scotland to push for greater responsibility in all areas of society - education, employment, leisure as well as health and social care - to provide good quality care. As the cornerstone of social care support, the contribution of carers needs to be resourced, and the primary responsibility for providing care, which was knocked off balance throughout and following the pandemic, needs to be rebalanced.

Over the coming months we will be sharing more on these issues through our social media and news channels. If you would like to be kept informed and support these efforts, make sure you are signed up for our e-bulletin and follow VOCAL's social media pages.

**Subscribe to our e-bulletin for carers**



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# 30 years of VOCAL carer support

In 1993, a group of Lothian carers came together to address a growing need for recognition and support for unpaid carers. They formed VOCAL – Voice of Carers Across Lothian – and over subsequent years, supported the development of key agencies such as Carers of East Lothian, Carers of West Lothian, MECOPP and Edinburgh Young Carers. As well as shaping an infrastructure of carer support across Lothian, this advocacy movement also influenced local and national carer policy and strategy and helped to change the way in which unpaid caring is viewed in our society.

At the end of March, we held an event to celebrate 30 years of carer-led advocacy and ensure that this legacy continues to shape future directions. The event also marked the retirement of VOCAL's long-standing CEO Sebastian Fischer and the appointment of Rosemary McLoughlin!

It was a fantastic evening, filled with memories shared over the past 30 years, and we were delighted to be joined by Alan and Sheila Fletcher, two of VOCAL's founding members.

As well as reflecting on how carer support has developed, we also looked to the future, discussing the need for better carer support in Edinburgh and Midlothian.

Carers deserve more, and we would like to thank Sebastian for inspiring our staff, volunteers, and board members across the years. We know that we have much work to do, and we hope you will join us in speaking up for carers, loud and clear for all that need to hear it.



# Lothian Buses choose VOCAL as their next Charity partner!



We are delighted to share the exciting news that Lothian's staff have selected VOCAL as their Charity of Choice for the next two years! Our partnership includes a new specially designed charity bus and is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of unpaid caring and encourage carers to access the support they need.

Please tag us on social media when you spot it!

We are very grateful to Lothian's staff for their support and look forward to working together over the next two years.



# What do you see?

In 2022, we were chosen as Baillie Gifford's Charity of the Year. As part of our partnership, their film team recently embarked on an exciting project for VOCAL. They have created a new film called **'What do you see?'** which highlights the journey to identifying as an unpaid carer and how difficult this can sometimes be. We hope this will help more carers recognise their role and access support.

To watch **'What do you see?'**, scan the QR code or visit:  
[vocal.org.uk/news/what-do-you-see](https://vocal.org.uk/news/what-do-you-see)



Please share this with friends, family members and colleagues!  
Thank you to the Baillie Gifford team for producing this short film.

## Take a break from caring

Our Wee Breaks service provides funding for unpaid carers to take a break from caring.

It can be easy to forget about your own wellbeing when you are busy caring for someone. Our Wee Breaks service is flexible to what a break means to you.

A break looks different depending on your situation and can include the person you care for. We have provided some examples of breaks we can fund:

- Weekend away in the UK
- New iPad to watch Netflix and play games
- Equipment for a hobby such as fishing or golfing
- City day trip
- Visit to Edinburgh Zoo, with tickets, lunch and travel all catered for
- Gym membership
- Short course, such as knitting, painting or another craft

Norma, who is a carer for both her daughter and her gran recently received a break through our Wee Breaks service:

***"Our holiday made me realise how heavy everything can be at times in reality, and that I do deserve a break. Going forward I'm going to make more of an effort to give myself some breathing space."***

To make your break a reality, visit our Wee Breaks website:  
[weebreaks.com/funding-your-break](https://weebreaks.com/funding-your-break)



# The Action Group

The Action Group aims to be a constant for all parent carers and to them and their loved one(s), throughout life. In Edinburgh, the Action Group leads Parents Carewell, a partnership with VOCAL, FAIR and Edinburgh Development Group. Working together, we share knowledge, resources and specialisms to better support parent carers at every stage of their caring journey.

The Action Group also runs BEMAS: A service for Black, Asian and Ethnically diverse parent carers, recognising the additional barriers they can face. Their Edinburgh Carer services:

- Provide 1-1 support for parent carers to think through what could make life good or better and support them to achieve this.
- Check that parent carers (and those they care for) are getting all the benefits they are entitled to (including help to claim benefits and appeal decisions).
- Provide support at different times of life: from early months and years, to starting school, leaving school, leaving home and beyond.
- Connect parent carers with each other and with other sources of support (like funds, short breaks, activities, parent carer groups and wellbeing support).
- Help parent carers find their way with statutory services that could help (like Housing, Education and Social Work).

The Action Group will soon be able to provide Adult Carer Support Plans.

They will always provide interpreters when needed. For more information and to refer, please email [careradvice@actiongroup.org.uk](mailto:careradvice@actiongroup.org.uk) or call **0131 4752315** and ask to speak to a carer advice worker.

## Treasure Tree at Ocean Terminal

We are delighted to announce that VOCAL's social enterprise, Treasure Tree now has its own premises in Ocean Terminal making it easier for you to access affordable second-hand mobility and accessibility items.

We have a range of items in stock including mobility scooters, wheelchairs and rise and recline chairs. All funds raised through Treasure Tree are invested in our support and services for carers.

Pop along to see us between Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 10am - 3pm, and Wednesday 10am - 5.30pm. We are located on the east side of the shopping centre, next to the Boardwalk Roller Rink and Red Car Park on the ground floor. To keep up to date with the latest news and stock for Treasure Tree, please follow our Facebook page.



# Balancing caring and employment

Our working carer sessions are a space to explore the challenges of juggling work and your caring responsibilities alongside other carers. Each session offers guidance around your entitlements as a carer at work including flexible working rights and presents an opportunity to discuss strategies to approach conversations with your employer. We also cover topics such as emergency planning and your entitlement to Adult Carer Support Plans.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please email Beth: [bwylie@vocal.org.uk](mailto:bwylie@vocal.org.uk)

## Free will writing service

Writing a will is the only way to ensure your wishes are met after you're gone. It's a last chance to remember people and causes you cared about in life, and can help to take away some stress for family members at an already difficult time.

We have partnered with Bequeathed to enable you and your family members to create a will for free. The process is simple:

1. Complete an online form through Bequeathed.
2. Your form is sent to a solicitor.
3. The solicitor will then create the final document and send this to you.
4. You can have a 30-minute video call with a solicitor to discuss your particulars and to check the details.

We also partner with local legal firms and specialists to deliver monthly legal and Power of Attorney surgeries.

For more information about our free will writing service or our partnerships with local legal firms, please visit our website or contact us:

[vocal.org.uk/support-vocal/legacy](https://vocal.org.uk/support-vocal/legacy)



# Update your details

Has your caring situation changed or do you need to update your personal details?

You can do this on our website through the following webpage or by scanning the QR code below: [vocal.org.uk/update-my-details](https://vocal.org.uk/update-my-details)



## 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 condition or a substance dependency.

## Contact

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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.