

VOCAL's work in 2021-22 and our priorities for the future



Our priorities for the future

The year ahead presents significant challenges for unpaid carers including increased poverty risks, with little prospect of home based supports, breaks from caring and alternative care arrangements. VOCAL will continue to work with carers to address these pressing issues and we will adapt our services in response to carer need.

The National Care Service Bill heralds a change in Scotland's approach to paid and unpaid caring. VOCAL will help ensure that unpaid caring remains prominently on the national agenda. We will help to shape local and national Carer Strategies and consider carers' changing needs to ensure these strategies deliver for carers. Our key priorities for 2022-23 are:

Reaching carers in their communities

Building on the *20-minute neighbourhood* concept, we will continue to make support accessible to carers digitally and within a short walk or bus ride, and increase our reach by 20%, enhancing visibility to more carers than ever before.

Supporting carers through financial crisis

Carers are at high risk of poverty but the pandemic and high cost of living have thrown many into outright crisis. With all attention on coping financially, there is even less opportunity for carers to think about their own health and wellbeing.

As Edinburgh's lead community anchor organisation for carer support, we will continue to develop enterprising partnerships to distribute the Carer Assistance Fund and reach those in greatest need.

Alongside this, we will provide holistic, person-centred, preventative support to help build resilience and enable carers to continue caring, whilst advocating locally and nationally for more carer rights, employment support and benefits reform.

Developing our approach to volunteering

Volunteers are central to VOCAL's work, enhancing our services and enabling VOCAL to reach more carers. Emerging from the pandemic, VOCAL has refocused its volunteer strategy and will be enhancing the volunteer offer, seeking to double volunteer contributions to support our work for carers.

Unlocking mainstream short break opportunities

The National Care Service Bill recommends an amendment to the Carers Act to provide unpaid carers with a right to respite and short breaks. A key challenge in preparing for this rights-based approach is to widen access to and variety in short breaks provision. We will contribute to growing demand through capital fundraising to purchase additional short break properties, alongside Hawthorn Brae – making mainstream short break opportunities available for carers and their families, who could not otherwise afford them.

Using digital tools to connect carers to support

Ensuring carers are identified and connected to support at the earliest stage, is crucial for preventing crisis in the longer term – yet many carers can be overwhelmed by the different options and services available to them. In collaboration with Edinburgh and Midlothian partners, we will develop an online tool which is tailored to individual need and connects carers to local carer support agencies.

Our funders and supporters



Commissioned by the Edinburgh and Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnerships, VOCAL reaches and supports well over 10,000 carers in local communities and localities of Edinburgh and Midlothian.

VOCAL is supported by the Scottish Government, National Lottery Community Fund and several trust funds and foundations, to deliver new projects and innovations, ensuring that carer support continues to develop based on carers' needs. We thank EMMS International and the Swinton Paterson Trust for their generous donations leading to the purchase of a carer cottage in support of our short breaks enterprising developments.

VOCAL relies on individual donations from carers and supporters and we are grateful to our staff and volunteers who support our fundraising appeals and efforts. We also work with legal and professional specialists who donate their time and expertise to our programme of free information surgeries. A huge thank you to local businesses who continue to support VOCAL.

We express our sincere gratitude to our huge range of supporters for their time and commitment to carers. Your support continues to make a big difference to carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian. We are delighted to have been chosen as Baillie Gifford's Charity of the Year for 2022-23. Annual partnerships have a significant impact on our charity and if you would like to support VOCAL's work, please consider choosing us as your personal or employer's Charity of the Year.

VOCAL's audited accounts are submitted annually to all main funders. They can be accessed by the public through the websites of Companies House and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator.

Our finances *for the year ending 31 March 2022*

Statement of Financial Activities	2022	2021
Total incoming resources	£3,255,650	£1,605,709
Total resources expended	£2,380,050	£1,550,482
Net income for year	£875,600	£55,227
Net gain on investments		
Net movement in funds	£875,600	£55,227
Funds brought forward	£1,133,236	£1,078,009
Funds at 31 March 2022	£2,008,836	£1,133,236

Balance sheet at 31 March 2022

Fixed Assets	Tangible	£1,563,909	£1,211,712
	Investments	£1	£1
		£1,563,910	£1,211,713
Current Assets	Debtors	£25,779	£60,480
	Cash at bank	£1,237,062	£853,797
		£1,262,841	£914,277
Creditors due within one year		£695,008	£709,847
Net current assets / (liabilities)		£567,833	£204,430
Creditors due after one year		£122,907	£282,907
Net assets		£2,008,836	£1,133,236
Funds	Restricted	£791,298	£79,061
	General Fund	£1,217,538	£1,054,175
Total funds		£2,008,836	£1,133,236

16,831 *carer contacts*

VOCAL's carer centres provide free, confidential support on all aspects of caring including benefits, financial and emotional support, short breaks and community care.

Over the course of 2021-22, VOCAL recorded **16,831** individual one-to-one carer contacts.

4,983 *carer beneficiaries*

VOCAL provided support to **4,983** carers, offering a person-centred service delivered through home visits, appointments at our carer centres, and online and local support in the community.

1,425 carers attended VOCAL's legal and benefits surgery appointments, including support to set up Power of Attorney.

Over **10,000** carers received regular information through VOCAL's e-bulletins, printed newsletters and personalised information on training and events.

1,804 *new carers*

VOCAL identified and supported **1,804** carers who were new to caring or had not previously accessed VOCAL support or services.

£1,280,000

Carers reported receiving **over £1.28 million** in additional financial support as a direct result of assistance from VOCAL staff.

65,235 *website visitors*

65,235 people visited VOCAL's websites in 2021-22, including the VOCAL website vocal.org.uk, Carers Training carerstraining.co.uk and our short breaks website weebreaks.com.

VOCAL's Edinburgh and Midlothian Facebook pages reached **71,466** people across 2021-22 and our Twitter accounts achieved **149,032** impressions.

2,681 *carers*

2,681 carers registered for our carer learning, activities and leisure programme in 2021-22, including group work and peer support groups.

2,418 *counselling sessions*

VOCAL received **371** referrals for counselling and offered **2,418** counselling sessions to **205** carers in 2021-22. **95%** of carers reported that their mental wellbeing had improved and **87%** confirmed that they felt more confident in managing their caring role since starting counselling. **100%** would recommend VOCAL's counselling service to other carers.

VOCAL's counselling service was enhanced, launching new partnerships in Edinburgh with Saheliya to support carers in ethnic minority communities and with Bright Light to offer relationship counselling for carers. In Midlothian, VOCAL's counselling service was further developed, with dedicated resource to support the increasing needs.



VOCAL

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About VOCAL

VOCAL is an advocacy organisation, a provider of carer support and a social enterprise. With two carer hubs and locality bases across Edinburgh and Midlothian, we offer digital and in-person support, and our services and support measures include:

- Creating Adult Carer Support and Emergency Plans
- Carers rights and entitlements
- Extensive events and activities programme
- Emotional support, counselling and wellbeing
- Welfare rights, finance and legal issues
- Short breaks
- Support for employers and those working with carers
- Family Support Addictions (drug/alcohol)
- Treasure Tree, a social enterprise which supports the economic wellbeing of unpaid carers and their families

Our positive impact

Over 2,000 carers reported positive outcomes following support from VOCAL:

90% felt better informed about issues relating to their caring role

87% reported improved economic wellbeing

84% felt more confident in their ability to shape care services

83% reported that their physical and mental wellbeing had improved

81% felt more confident in their caring role

77% reported that their social wellbeing had improved

68% reported improvements in their ability to deal with changing relationships resulting from the caring role

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56% reported improvements in their personal safety

Case study: Supporting a friend

Aengus first heard of VOCAL through two of VOCAL's original founding members, Sheila and Alan Fletcher. When Aengus moved to Edinburgh, they told him about VOCAL and how we help carers. Aengus cares for his friend Alex, who has Multiple Sclerosis and he has received support from our carer support team over the last few months. He said:

"I remember discussing my caring role with VOCAL and I remember the enormous amount of relief I felt when I realised they recognised me as a carer. I knew myself that I was, but it really helped to have someone confirm my thoughts and feelings.

"Although we expected Alex's health to decline, unfortunately over the last six months she has deteriorated. This has meant I'm now providing 24 hours of care, 7 days a week. Our lives have been impacted in so many different ways, but VOCAL has been able to help us find ways to live as normally as possible at the moment, and consider the future."

Through VOCAL, Aengus has been successful in accessing a break from caring, travelling to see his family in Belfast. He has also been able to meet other carers through our training and commented that it was comforting to know he's not the only one in a similar situation.

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