

# Our priorities for the future

Edinburgh's Joint Carers' Strategy (2014-2017) and Midlothian's Carers' Strategy (2012-2015) form important frameworks for the development of carer support. VOCAL contributed to both strategies, particularly through carer engagement and consultation and now play a major part in their implementation.

Year on year, the number of carers and families seeking support from VOCAL continues to increase. Last year, over **6,000 carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian** received support through our carer centres and local outreach. Over 25% (1,593 carers) approached us for the first time.

**Identifying carers:** We have done well identifying and attracting carers early to provide them with information and support. We want to do even better. VOCAL will develop a social media strategy to reach carers in new ways with information and opportunities for peer support. We have teamed up with new partners to reach a growing number of citizens from Central and Eastern European countries and other minority communities, to support them in their caring roles.

**Information:** 22,700 people obtained information from VOCAL's website last year. We will further improve our websites and plan to invest £30,000 to improve accessibility and to allow other agencies to list their events and training courses.

**Carer Health and Well-Being:** Preventing stress and ill-health through appropriate support and forward planning ultimately strengthens independent

living and reduces ill-health, dependency on care services and the collapse of caring relationships. VOCAL will increase health-focused initiatives and expand the carer counselling, introducing couple and dementia counselling to meet growing carer needs.

**Balancing employment and caring responsibilities:** As demand for family care grows, carers of working age find it increasingly difficult to balance paid employment with caring for parents, relatives or friends. The new 'Carer Positive' kitemark for employers, launched earlier by Carers Scotland and the Scottish Government, supports employers to focus on carers in the workforce. VOCAL will work with employers to offer support to their carer employees in Edinburgh and the Lothians

**Short Breaks:** Jointly with Midlothian Council, VOCAL developed a successful Short Breaks Bureau with benefits for carers and health and social care staff. We advocate a similar approach for Edinburgh and will make representation with Edinburgh Council to shift resources to allow for a similar approach.

**Partnerships:** VOCAL already works with many partner agencies for better outcomes for carers. We will develop several new partnerships to strengthen support for carers and older people, parent carers and carers in work.

Only the best is good enough for carers!

Statement of Financial Activities		2014		2013	
Total incoming resources	1,170,923	1,059,677			
Total resources expended	1,086,880	987,772			
Net income for year	84,043	71,905			
Net gain on investments	(7)	221			
Net movement in funds	84,036	72,126			
Funds at 1 April 2013	508,606	436,480			
Funds at 31 March 2014	592,642	508,606			
<b>Balance sheet at 31 March 2014</b>					
Fixed Assets	325,705	6,381			
Tangible	46,592	6,381			
Investments	279,113				
Current Assets	4,989	52,980			
Debtors	4,989	17,952			
Cash at bank	459,953	694,475			
Current Liabilities	464,942	712,427			
Creditors due within one year	244,597	256,801			
Net current assets / (liabilities)	220,345	455,626			
Funds	137,736	162,550			
Restricted	137,736	162,550			
Designated	425,705	331,381			
General fund	29,201	14,675			
Total funds	592,642	508,606			

## Our finances for the year ending 31 March 2014

VOCAL is governed by a Board of Directors primarily consisting of carers and former carers. Carer services are managed and delivered by a team of 30 part-time and full-time staff and over 60 volunteers, including those who run the VOCAL Carer Centre reception areas and who work with carers as counsellors or advocates.

## About VOCAL

We thank all our supporters for their invaluable help! VOCAL's audited accounts are submitted annually to all main funders, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and Companies House. They can be accessed by the public through these agencies. VOCAL's carer support services are funded from over 30 different sources and funding streams, mostly through NHS Lothian and Community Health Partnerships, City of Edinburgh and Midlothian Councils, the Big Lottery Fund and a range of trust funds, donations and fundraising initiatives. We gratefully acknowledge all financial support, in particular the many donations we receive from carers and supporters in cash and kind. Many of these help VOCAL fund new initiatives as funds are not tied to specific projects.

## Our funders and supporters



# VOCAL's work in 2013-14 and our priorities for the future



# 8,308 carer contacts

Over the course of the year VOCAL recorded 8,308 one-to-one carer contacts. Our carer centres provide free, confidential support on all aspects of caring including benefits, financial support, short breaks and community care.

# 2,663 carers

VOCAL provided individual support to 2,663 carers, offering a person-centred service delivered through home visits, appointments at our carers centres and local support in the community.

341 carers attended VOCAL's legal and benefits surgery appointments, including support for setting up Power of Attorney.

Over 6,000 carers were supported through regular e-bulletin and newsletter communication, and personalised information on training and events.

# 22,700 visitors

22,700 people visited VOCAL's website [www.vocal.org.uk](http://www.vocal.org.uk)

# £1.4 million

VOCAL assisted carers in receiving a total of £1.4m in additional financial support.

# 1,593 new carers

We identified and supported 1,593 new carers during 2013-14. VOCAL works in partnership with GPs and health and social care teams to improve early identification and referral of carers.

# 1,158 counselling hours

Our counselling service offered 1,158 hours of counselling to carers. Demand for counselling and emotional support is increasing and VOCAL continues to seek long-term funding to secure the continuation of this valuable service.

# 467 carers (training)

467 carers registered for our *Caring with Confidence* training programme which offers courses, seminars and workshops designed for carers in different caring situations. We supported several hundred carers to access leisure and healthy living courses and events.

# 111 carers (advocacy)

Our advocacy service provided intensive support to 111 carers experiencing complex difficulties with their caring role. This included support at meetings and formal complaint procedures.

# 63 carers (groupwork)

63 carers registered for groupwork sessions on dealing with guilt, changing relationships, loss and bereavement and stress management.



## VOCAL Carer Centre

Registered address: 8-13 Johnston Terrace,  
Edinburgh EH1 2PW T: 0131 622 6666  
E: [centre@vocal.org.uk](mailto:centre@vocal.org.uk) W: [www.vocal.org.uk](http://www.vocal.org.uk)

## Introduction to VOCAL

VOCAL manages two Carer Centres in Edinburgh and Midlothian and local carer support services in South Edinburgh and Wester Hailes. Our services include:

- person-centred support, information and planning for the future
- emotional support, stress management and counselling
- training and learning opportunities
- benefits, legal, long-term care and power of attorney surgeries
- carer advocacy service
- support for people affected by someone else's addiction
- health, social and leisure activities
- gateway to many other services.

## Positive impact for carers

The number of carers reporting positive outcomes following support from VOCAL increased to 826 from 647 the previous year.

Health and well-being and economic well-being were identified most frequently as issues carers wanted to address. Over 70% of carers reported **feeling more informed** about their caring role and **more confident** in their ability to shape services and support.

In addition, 513 carers undertook service evaluations following attendance at VOCAL training and surgery events including legal and power of attorney surgeries. Over 80% of these carers reported feeling more informed about their caring role, **more confident** in caring and their ability to shape services and support, and **improved health and well-being**.

## Carers in employment:

### Flexible working to support a caring role

Alex (60) and his wife care for both their adult son with autism and his wife's mother with dementia. He approached VOCAL for support having requested a reduction in his working hours which his employer, a local authority, had rejected.

Alex was anxious about this decision and felt that his employer was not taking into account his length of service or his caring commitments. By reducing his working hours, he would be able to provide more support for his wife by caring for his son and allowing her more time to support her mother.

VOCAL supported Alex to identify that, as well as support with his employment issues, he would benefit from exploring ways of managing his stress levels and from some emotional support. He was referred to VOCAL's carer counselling service and registered on a stress management course.

Alex was advised by his carer support worker of his statutory rights as a carer in employment, in particular his right to request flexible working and the importance of doing this in writing. He was given information about relevant employment legislation and referred to a specialist employment advisor at Citizens Advice Scotland.

Within six months of his initial contact with VOCAL, Alex had successfully negotiated reduced working hours, having made a formal request for flexible working with his employer and discussing his caring role openly with his line manager. He reported feeling more knowledgeable about his rights as a carer and felt that the referral to Citizens Advice had provided him with the platform to get his needs as a carer met by his employer. He also felt increased confidence in dealing with issues at work relating to his caring role in the future.

Alex also reported that the reduction in his working hours had improved both his and his wife's health and that he felt able to continue caring as well as sustaining his employment, thereby maximising his economic well-being. He felt that his son and mother-in-law had also benefitted as he and his wife could give them more of their time and care, and his relationship with his wife had improved as they had more time to spend together.

Alex continues to be supported by VOCAL and receives regular email updates.