



# VOCAL's work in 2020-21 and our priorities for the future



# Our priorities for the future

## Identifying and supporting carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian

As the lead agency for carer support in Edinburgh and Midlothian, VOCAL was successfully awarded enhanced carer support contracts in 2021. In Edinburgh, the launch of new Carewell and counselling partnerships bring together multiple third sector organisations and will deliver increased support to carers in the city. We look forward to continuing this focus on positive collaboration. In Midlothian, VOCAL will also build on local success and new contracts to expand the infrastructure to support more carers than ever before.

## Tackling inequalities, supporting carers in greatest need

VOCAL is committed to tackling all forms of discrimination and inequality. In 2021-22, we will sharpen our focus on supporting carers in greatest need to overcome economic, health and social inequalities. We will do this, by working closely with third sector partners, employers, local communities and health and social care professionals to identify carers who may not be identified through traditional means or connected to support.

## Contributing to the changing health and social care landscape

Covid-19 has had a severe impact on carers. Services shut down overnight, leaving carers to bear the brunt of the pandemic. The number of carers has increased markedly and pressurised systems continue to falter in the face of the pandemic fallout. VOCAL will expand and diversify our carer offer and advocate for a rethinking of how services are delivered to ensure carers have the support they need at this challenging time. As a voice of carers, we will engage with national and local government to implement radical proposals of the Feeley report and contribute to the development of a National Care Service.

## Responding flexibly to carers' needs

VOCAL has gradually reopened the doors of its Edinburgh Carers' Hub and Midlothian Carers' Centre, following national lockdowns and our staff have returned to provide public service from public places. We enhanced our services to include online support and will continue to expand our training programme and counselling services on Zoom, via telephone and other platforms.

Building on new opportunities, we will provide a flexible approach to carer support, enabling carers to access support in a way that best suits their situation. We will also build on our community links, as hubs open up again throughout Edinburgh and Midlothian, to make sure we are a visible partner at the heart of local communities.

## Expanding and developing our short break offer

In early 2021, with funds donated by Edinburgh-based charity EMMS International, VOCAL purchased a property to provide short breaks for unpaid carers and people with life-limiting conditions, and of limited means.

New approaches such as this will help transform how carers access short breaks and we will build on this significant development to increase short break provision through carer-led social enterprising activity.



## Our funders and supporters

Midlothian



Commissioned by the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership and the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership, VOCAL reaches and supports well over 10,000 carers in all 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, for the purchase of a carer holiday 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 ranging supporters for their time and commitment to carers. Your support continues to make a big difference to carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian. We are particularly grateful to all donors, who maintained and often increased their support during the pandemic to help VOCAL relieve the impact of Covid-19 on carers. 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 2021*

Statement of Financial Activities	2021	2020
Total incoming resources	£1,605,709	£1,440,027
Total resources expended	£1,550,482	1,332,146
Net income for year	£55,227	£107,881
Net gain on investments		
Net movement in funds	£55,227	£107,881
Funds brought forward	£1,078,009	£970,128
<b>Funds at 31 March 2021</b>	<b>£1,133,236</b>	<b>£1,078,009</b>

### Balance sheet at 31 March 2021

Fixed Assets	Tangible	£1,211,712	£1,221,306
	Investments	£1	£1
		<b>£1,211,713</b>	<b>£1,221,307</b>
Current Assets	Debtors	£60,480	£86,457
	Cash at bank	£853,797	£204,060
		<b>£914,277</b>	<b>£290,517</b>
Creditors due within one year		£709,847	£119,870
Net current assets / (liabilities)		£204,430	£170,647
Creditors due after one year		£282,907	£313,945
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>£1,133,236</b>	<b>£1,078,009</b>
Funds	Restricted	£79,061	£72,691
	General Fund	£1,054,175	£1,005,318
<b>Total funds</b>		<b>£1,133,236</b>	<b>£1,078,009</b>

# 12,690 carer contacts

Over the course of 2020-21, VOCAL recorded **12,690** individual one-to-one carer contacts.

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



# 4,496 carers

VOCAL provided support to **4,496** carers, offering a person-centred service delivered through home visits, appointments at our carer centres and online and local support in the community.

Over **740** 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.



# 1,904 new carers

The impact of the pandemic significantly reduced carer referrals from health and social care partners. Through VOCAL's intensive investment in alternative ways of reaching and identifying carers, **1,904** carers who were new to caring or had not previously used VOCAL support, sought VOCAL's help.



# £1,280,000

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



# 49,102 unique users

**49,102** people visited VOCAL's websites in 2020-21, including the VOCAL website [vocal.org.uk](http://vocal.org.uk), Carers Training website [carerstraining.co.uk](http://carerstraining.co.uk) and our short breaks website [weebreaks.com](http://weebreaks.com).

VOCAL's Edinburgh and Midlothian Facebook pages reached **80,871** people across 2020-21 and our Twitter accounts achieved **170,331** impressions.



# 2,203 counselling sessions

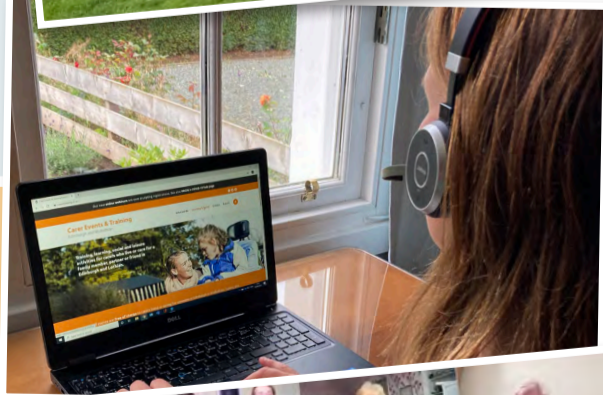
VOCAL received **311** referrals for counselling and offered **2,203** counselling sessions to **173** carers in 2020-21.

**83%** of carers said that their mental wellbeing had improved and **84%** said that they felt more confident in managing their caring role since starting counselling. **96%** would recommend VOCAL's counselling service to other carers.



# 1,270 carers

**1,270** carers registered for our carer learning, activities and leisure programme in 2020-21. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, VOCAL had to transform its approach to these opportunities, and was quickly able to offer online learning for carers. In line with restrictions, we were also able to offer in-person activities. VOCAL works with numerous delivery partners to create its programme, and the Carewell Partnership was a key aspect of this in 2020-21.



# 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 Plan
- 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
- Addictions (alcohol and drugs)
- Treasure Tree, a social enterprise which supports the economic wellbeing of unpaid carers and their families

## Our positive impact

Over 1,700 carers reported positive outcomes following support from VOCAL:

**85%** reported improvements in feeling better informed about issues relating to their caring role

**78%** reported improved confidence with their caring role

**79%** reported improved confidence in their ability to shape services

**75%** reported that their physical and mental wellbeing had improved

**61%** reported improvements in their ability to deal with changing relationships resulting from the caring role

**71%** reported improvements in their economic wellbeing

**59%** reported improvements in their personal safety

**58%** reported that their social wellbeing had improved

## Case study: Parent and carer

Rachel\* is a single parent and carer for her teenage son, Owen\* who experienced a brain injury at birth, resulting in multiple conditions being diagnosed. Owen is also a full time wheelchair user.

Initially, Rachel refused support for herself, identifying herself as a parent, rather than a carer. In July 2020, four months into the first Covid-19 lockdown, Rachel realised she needed help and reached out to VOCAL. Rachel and her son were shielding together in their home leaving her to provide 24/7 care for Owen. There was no other outside support available, with Owen's school closed and his medical appointments moved online. Rachel hadn't been able to visit her mum in months. She felt isolated and exhausted.

Rachel was given time and space to talk through her situation, using her Adult Carer Support Plan as a tool. She identified that she wanted to connect with other parent carers. Following this conversation, Rachel joined our VOCAL Midlothian Parent Carer Facebook group and she has since formed a strong friendship with another parent carer who lives near but that she had never met previously. She also joined VOCAL's online Parent Carer Support Group in the evenings.

As they were isolating at home, Rachel also mentioned that being able to do a little gardening or simply sit in her garden with her son made a big difference. Following discussions on self-direct support and breaks, work was completed to improve her garden's accessibility. Rachel and her son are now able to use their garden to its full potential. The combination of these solutions were described as a 'lifeline' by Rachel during this challenging period, and illustrates VOCAL's commitment to improving carers' health and wellbeing in creative and sustainable ways.

\* Names have been changed to protect the carer and cared for person's anonymity