

# 23,476 *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 2023-24, VOCAL recorded 23,476 individual one-to-one carer contacts.

# 6,920 *carer beneficiaries*

VOCAL provided support to 6,920 carers, offering a person-centred service delivered through home visits, appointments at our carer centres, and online and local support in the community.

1,688 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.

# 2,920 *new carers*

VOCAL identified and supported 2,920 carers who were new to caring or had not previously accessed VOCAL support or services.

# 88,886 *website visitors*

88,886 people visited VOCAL's websites in 2023-24, including the VOCAL website [vocal.org.uk](http://vocal.org.uk), Carers Training [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 371,600 people across 2023-24 and our Twitter accounts achieved 115,315 impressions.

# 2,681 *carers*

2,681 carers registered for our carer learning, activities and leisure programme in 2023-24, including group work and peer support groups.

# 4,289 *counselling sessions*

VOCAL received 686 referrals for counselling and offered 3,195 counselling sessions to 314 carers in 2023-24. 98% of carers reported that the counselling was helpful and 92% confirmed that they are more aware of the things that affect their emotional health and wellbeing. 99% would recommend VOCAL's counselling service to other carers.

In Midlothian, the counselling service continues to grow - we offered 1,094 counselling sessions to 99 carers in 2023-24. We've seen an overall increase in referrals for counselling of 48%. Our Carers Survey of 2023 confirms that this type of support is in high demand from carers.



# VOCAL

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@centre@vocal.org.uk vocal.org.uk

## 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:

80% felt better informed about issues relating to their caring role

75% reported improved economic wellbeing

74% felt more confident in their ability to shape care services

75% reported that their physical and mental wellbeing had improved

65% felt that they had more choices in their caring role

72% reported that their social wellbeing had improved

63% reported improvements in their ability to deal with changing relationships resulting from the caring role

62% reported improvements in their personal safety

## Case study:

# Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP)

Sam and Hannah care for their 7-year-old daughter, Emilia, who was diagnosed with epilepsy. Sam was referred to VOCAL by a Community Link Worker based at Pilton Community Health Project.

Caring for their daughter has a big impact on their family. Emilia tends to experience epileptic seizures at night, so one parent always sleeps in the same bed with her. If Emilia has a seizure during the night, one of her parents also needs to stay at home with her the next day. With VOCAL's Carer Support Team, Sam talked about how difficult it is to juggle his caring role with his new job. He also struggled due to a lack of information about his daughter's rare condition.

Sam was supported to create an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP). This helped him and his partner to accept that their daughter's condition would change their lives for the foreseeable future. Another important part of the ACSP was identifying that Sam and Hannah could benefit from some financial support. They were referred to the benefits team for help with understanding the eligibility and making a claim.

After the ACSP was completed, Sam shared it with the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership. This was part of a request for an assessment for respite, and a Self-directed Support budget for a care package.

Sam has also shared the ACSP with his new employer, to help them understand the impact of his caring role.

Scottish Charity: SC020755 Company Registration: SC183050



# VOCAL's work in 2023-24 and our priorities for the future



## Our priorities for the future

Our Business Plan 2024-27 sets out the future directions for VOCAL, heavily influenced by current economic and political pressures, the legal requirements of the Carers Act and the central principles of the Independent Review of Adult Services: shift the paradigm, strengthen the foundations and redesign the system. Over the next year, we will:

### Increase support for carers impacted by poverty and the cost of caring

VOCAL will build on its extensive work around income maximisation, developing partnerships which encourage a more holistic view of financial wellbeing and highlighting the significant financial challenges carers are facing. We will seek to establish more direct giving funds to help with the costs of caring and provide more support in the areas of energy, transport and food. Through our carer training programme, work with employers, and partnerships with care providers, we will encourage carer employability options, employment of carers and support for those balancing paid work and care.

### Strengthen access to breaks from caring

Time away from caring is now the most requested type of support, yet carers face significant barriers to accessing a break (2023 Edinburgh and Midlothian Carers Surveys).

These include the stress of organising breaks, cost, lack of replacement care, and feelings of guilt and worry. VOCAL's team of carer support practitioners work with carers to address the emotional and practical issues involved with organising a short break. Over the next year, we will expand our short breaks brokerage, work with replacement care providers and provide access to affordable breaks through our Wee Break Funds and holiday homes.

### Develop our caring in the community model

We will build innovative partnerships and strong community links across Edinburgh and Midlothian, ensuring services for carers are delivered closer to home and create capacity within community groups and partners to deliver carer support. In Midlothian, we will launch a new Caring in the Community fund, in partnership with the Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership, which will resource community groups to develop carer support initiatives.

### Increase digital resources for carers

Through the development of digital resources, we aim to build carer confidence and knowledge and enable more carers, particularly those in employment or facing barriers such as travel and disability, to access our support. We will expand our online training and information and launch a new

eLearning programme covering legal rights, information on hospital discharge and Adult Carer Support Plans. In addition to digital resources, we will continue offering face-to-face sessions, with an increased focus on delivering sessions in community locations.

### Support carer to access personalised care and support

VOCAL receives vital funding from Scottish Government's Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) fund for 2024-2027. The project supports carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian to broker support, manage care packages and become an employer. At a time of reduced local authority support and social care budgets, there is a critical need to enable carers to access the right support, navigate complex systems and ensure a human rights based approach to care provision. In Midlothian, VOCAL will continue work with the Health and Social Care Partnership to develop a care cooperative, to ensure people are proactively linked to support and to increase capacity within the system.

Funded by  
Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership

Midlothian Health & Social Care Partnership

thrive  
Edinburgh Alcohol & Drug Partnership

INSPIRING SCOTLAND

Support in the Right Direction

coalition  
of carers in scotland  
from recognition to rights

We're part of the  
Carewell Health & Wellbeing Partnership

We are a  
Living Wage Employer  
TRUSTED STANDARD LEVEL 2  
nco

SHARED CARE SCOTLAND  
Short BREAKS fund

CARER POSITIVE  
Employer in Scotland  
EXEMPLARY

## 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 of Edinburgh and Midlothian.

VOCAL is supported by the Scottish Government, and several trust funds and foundations, to deliver new projects and innovations, ensuring that carer support continues to develop carers' needs.

For example, we are grateful to Queensberry House Trust, whose generous donation allowed us to buy and install a new woodburner for our Wee Breaks holiday home, Hawthorn Brae.

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 Lothian Buses Charity of Choice for 2023-25. 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.

## Our finances for the year ending 31 March 2024

Statement of Financial Activities		2024	2023
Total incoming resources		£3,930,199	£3,584,998
Total resources expended		£3,450,007	£3,314,782
Net income for year		£480,192	£270,216
Net movement in funds		£480,192	£270,216
Funds brought forward		£2,279,052	£2,008,836
<b>Funds at 31 March 2024</b>		<b>£2,759,243</b>	<b>£2,279,052</b>
Balance sheet at 31 March 2024			
Fixed Assets	Tangible	£1,702,332	£1,553,745
	Investments	-	£1
		<b>£1,702,332</b>	<b>£1,553,746</b>
Current Assets	Debtors	£293,788	£7,665
	Investments	£788,771	-
	Cash at bank	£322,871	£1,350,005
		<b>£1,405,430</b>	<b>£1,357,670</b>
Creditors due within one year		£348,519	£632,364
Net current assets / (liabilities)		£1,056,911	£725,306
Creditors due after one year		-	-
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>£2,759,243</b>	<b>£2,279,052</b>
Funds	Restricted	£1,389,935	£1,022,619
	Designated	£12,208	£12,208
	General Fund	£1,357,100	£1,244,225
<b>Total funds</b>		<b>£2,759,243</b>	<b>£2,279,052</b>