

Carers news



Energy advice and support

Stan and Anne's journey:

50 years of marriage
and over 20 years of
caring

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Welcome

Dear carers,

Being an unpaid carer is a role that often goes unseen and unrecognised. At VOCAL, we work alongside carers to change that. Founded by carers in 1994, VOCAL has a long tradition of campaigning for better support for carers and those we care for, and I am proud to oversee this in my role as Chair of the VOCAL Board.

I have cared for my son Euan for 30 years, advocating for his needs and dealing with the complex systems of health, social care and welfare benefits. I've seen significant changes since I first started caring, and I joined VOCAL's Board 11 years ago as we were preparing for the Carers Act and the shift from carer recognition to carers' rights. In my role as Chair, I work with my fellow board members (who are also carers) to ensure that VOCAL is, first and foremost, carer-led.

In the current environment, it is vital that the diversity of carers' voices are heard. By sharing your story and participating in conversations – whether it's policy discussions, local community forums or simply with family and friends – you not only advocate for yourself but help keep carers visible everywhere.

Engagement doesn't just bring change; it brings understanding. It's essential that the challenges you face, the support you need, and the positive aspects of caring are heard loud and clear. Every time you speak out, it makes a difference.

There are many opportunities to formally and informally represent carers, and to ensure carers inform decision making and planning. Edinburgh and Midlothian's Integrated Joint Boards are looking for carer representatives and we can support carers to apply. There are also opportunities to engage in national forums or within your local community. Or you may be interested in joining VOCAL's Board. If you would like to get more involved, we would be happy to support you.

For more information, please contact social@vocal.org.uk.

Warm regards,
Douglas Hendry,
 Chair, VOCAL Board

Write to us

As we embark on our new magazine format, we would love to build a network of carer contributors who can share their caring journey and advice and practical information for unpaid carers.

Whether it's how you manage daily tasks, balance your caring responsibilities with employment, or support your wellbeing, your contribution can provide much-needed support and make a difference to other carers.

For more information or to share your story, please email social@vocal.org.uk

News in brief

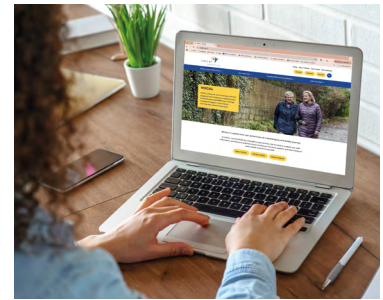


Thanks to our skydivers!

In January, a team of seven brave VOCAL staff and supporters undertook a fundraising skydive!

Thank you to Carrie, Anne, Lily, Nina, Anne, Lewis, and Rachel, who raised an amazing £5,260 for VOCAL, and to Skydive St Andrews for helping organise this exciting challenge.

If you would like to part in another skydive or future fundraising opportunity for us, visit: vocal.org.uk/donate.



VOCAL's new website

VOCAL's new website is an online hub for unpaid carers, providing 24/7 access to essential information and advice. Explore articles and videos on a range of topics to support you in your caring role, from benefits and legal rights to emotional wellbeing and taking breaks. Visit vocal.org.uk today to discover this resource!

Two-year Lothian Buses partnership comes to an end

This February marked the end of our 2-year partnership with Lothian Buses, as their Charity of Choice, raising £11,500 towards our support services for local carers!

While we are sad to say goodbye to Gus the Bus, we are proud to leave a lasting impact for the Lothian Buses team through their new Carers Passport scheme. This is a document which allows carers at Lothian Buses to have supportive conversations about their caring role with their manager.

Partnering with employers helps us raise awareness of unpaid caring and vital funds. If you work for an organisation who has a charity programme, we would love to hear from you: fundraising@vocal.org.uk.



Stan and Anne's journey

Stan has shared his experience as a full-time carer for his wife, Anne, who battled Primary Pulmonary Hypertension (PPH) for over two decades before passing away in January 2024.

Stan, originally from Harare, Zimbabwe, cared for Anne after she was diagnosed with PPH in 1999. As her condition deteriorated over the past eight years, he took on increasing caring responsibilities, particularly after his retirement nine years ago. He became her full-time carer for the last 18 months of her life.

PPH is a rare and serious condition that causes high blood pressure in the lungs. Its exact cause is often unknown, and symptoms tend to progress slowly. Anne required multiple medications, which managed the condition but also led to additional health complications.

In June 2022, the couple decided to move to Edinburgh to be closer

Stan and Anne





“I was just doing what any husband would do for their wife.”

to their daughter, Shelley. Their move had been planned earlier but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as Anne’s health required her to shield. Unfortunately, after the move, Anne’s health began to decline further. Their son, Ian, also moved from Australia to Edinburgh for two years to assist in caring for Anne and later to support Stan following her passing.

It was Shelley who encouraged Stan to seek support from VOCAL. Until that point, Stan had not fully considered his role as an unpaid carer or recognised that he too needed help.

“I was just doing what any husband would do for their wife,” Stan shared. “Anne and I were married for nearly 50 years. She was my ‘5-foot giant warrior.’”

Sadly, Anne passed away just a month after Stan first reached out to VOCAL. However, he continued to access support for a year, attending peer support

groups where he connected with other carers.

“It was comforting to meet other men who were also caring for their wives,” he said. “It made me realise I wasn’t alone in this journey.”

Stan also benefited from VOCAL’s Wee Breaks service, including a discounted gym membership and a free ticket to a whisky-tasting event.

Reflecting on his experience, Stan acknowledged the emotional challenges of being a carer.

“It was frustrating to watch Anne in pain and be unable to control it,” he admitted. “But I’m grateful for the support I received. It helped me see my role as a carer and that I needed to care for myself too.”

A huge thank you to Stan for sharing his caring story. If you would like to share your journey, please get in touch:

social@vocal.org.uk 



Carer support close to home

Our drop-in services and community-based support for carers have recently expanded, meaning we're in more GP surgeries, libraries and community centres near you!

These services are designed to provide accessible information and advice when you need it, where you need it.

Our drop-in sessions offer a relaxed and welcoming space where you can talk to a carer support practitioner. Whether you need advice on financial support, information about taking a break from caring, or simply a friendly chat, we are here for you. 🇬🇧

Edinburgh community locations

We offer appointments in community locations across the four areas in Edinburgh. To book an appointment near you, please visit our website: vocal.org.uk

1 Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre

30 Harvesters Way,
Wester Hailes,
Edinburgh, EH14 3JF

2 West Pilton Gardens Neighbourhood Centre

3 West Pilton Gardens,
Edinburgh, EH4 4DP

3 Libertus Services

20 Gracemount Drive,
Edinburgh, EH16 6RP

4 Eric Liddell Community

15 Morningside Road,
Edinburgh, EH10 4DP



5 Allermuir Health Centre

79 Allermuir Crescent,
Edinburgh,
EH14 9AD

6 The Haven

4/6, The Loan, South
Queensferry, Edinburgh,
EH30 9JP

7 North East Recovery Hub

Turning Point
Scotland, 5 Links Place,
Edinburgh, EH6 7EZ

8 South East Recovery Hub

(Gilmerton) 13 Newtoft
Street, Edinburgh,
EH17 8RG



14 The Beacon

Gorebridge, EH23 4TT

15 Penicuik Medical Practice

37 Imrie Place, Penicuik, EH26 8LF

16 Food Facts Friends

42 John Street, Penicuik, EH26 8AB

17 Loanhead Library

The Loanhead Centre, George Avenue, Loanhead, EH20 9LA

18 Highbank Intermediate Care Service

9a Bonnyrigg Road, Dalkeith, EH22 3EY

19 Danderhall Library

59 Edmonstone Road, Danderhall, Dalkeith, EH22 1QL

20 Midlothian Community Hospital

70 Eskbank Road, Bonnyrigg, EH22 3ND

21 The Steading

Carnethie Street, Rosewell, EH24 9AA



For our opening times, please check our website or scan the QR code.

22 Edinburgh Carers' Hub

60 Leith Walk, Edinburgh, EH6 5HB

23 Midlothian Carer Centre

30/1 Hardengreen Estate, Dalhousie Road, Dalkeith, EH22 3NX



9 Thistle Foundation

Centre of Wellbeing, 13 Queen's Walk, Edinburgh, EH16 4EA

10 Craigmillar Medical

Group 106 Niddrie Mains Road, Edinburgh, EH16 4DT



Midlothian drop-in service

Our drop-in locations are listed below, but these can be subject to change. Please check our website or call us on **0808 196 6666**

(option 2) for the latest information.

11 Bonnyrigg Rose Pavilion

44 Dundas Street, Bonnyrigg, EH19 3AS

12 Newtongrange Development Trust

67 Gardiner Place, Newtongrange, EH22 4RT

13 Mayfield & Easthouses Development Trust

15 Bogwood Road, Mayfield, Dalkeith, EH22 5DG

Safe and Warm project with SGN

We're delighted to launch VOCAL's Safe and Warm project, in partnership with SGN and led by Lyndsay McGhie, Carer Support Practitioner.



This project supports carers struggling with energy costs through 1-2-1 support, workshops, and training. We can help with reviewing energy efficiency, managing energy debts, and planning for future bills.

Carbon monoxide safety

Every home in Scotland with a fixed combustion appliance must have a

Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm. Despite regulations, CO poisoning still affects thousands of people each year. High CO levels are deadly, but low-level exposure causes breathlessness, dizziness and headaches. If you or anyone in your household is experiencing these symptoms, contact your GP.

We offer free CO alarms and can help you recognise CO risks. If buying your own alarm, look for the British kite quality mark or the EN50291 code, which confirms that the alarm is up to the UK standard. 🇬🇧



For more information on our support, visit: vocal.org.uk/warm



Write your will with VOCAL and Bequeathed

VOCAL has partnered with Bequeathed to offer free will-writing services for carers. Writing a will ensures your money, property and possessions are distributed according to your wishes.

If you've experienced major life changes - such as marriage, retirement, having children, or buying or selling property - it may

be time to update your will. This is especially important if you have young children who need a designated guardian.

A well-planned will can also provide tax efficiencies, helping you to anticipate inheritance tax and avoid

unexpected tax bills. Additionally, you can choose to leave a gift to charity.

Taking the time to draft or update your will now gives you peace of mind, knowing those you care about are provided for. 🇬🇧



For more information on how VOCAL can support you, visit vocal.org.uk/wills



Prioritising your own wellbeing

Caring responsibilities can often take up a lot of time, making it hard to prioritise your own health and wellbeing. However, small steps can help.

Even if you only have a few minutes, you can find creative ways to follow the five aspects of wellbeing – get active, connect, learn, give, and be mindful – without added pressure.

Exercise doesn't have to mean going to the gym or for a hike. Simply moving in ways you enjoy, like walking, dancing, cycling, or stretching, keeps your

body active and helps shift your mind away from worries.

With spring coming, it's a great time to spend more time outdoors. Start small with a 5-minute walk today and then try to build up over time. Whether

alone or with the person you care for, this can be a meaningful way to connect.

You can also practise mindfulness while walking by focusing on what you see, hear, and feel, helping you to stay present and relaxed. 🌿



Get in touch

If you are experiencing acute mental health difficulties or a crisis and need immediate support, call:

- **Samaritans: 116 123**
- **Breathing Space: 0800 83 85 87**
- **NHS 24: 111**

Self-Directed Support



Caring for someone can be a rewarding experience, but it also comes with significant responsibilities.

Many carers and those they care for may want to explore support options provided by their local authority and within the community. This could include having a home care worker to help with personal care or going to a community day service.

It's important that those needing support are involved in arranging their own care. The carer's involvement can also be crucial and provides the person they care for with much-needed support.

Self-directed Support (SDS) enables

people to decide how they receive their care, providing them with control over their personal budget to achieve their agreed-upon health and social care outcomes. Essentially, this is how social care is delivered in Scotland.

For many, the first step is to request an assessment from your local authority, which will help you understand if the person you care for meets the eligibility criteria for support and what type of care is most appropriate. After the assessment,

a personal care plan will be created with you, the person you care for and a social worker. This plan will include details about the type of care they'll receive, as well as the frequency and duration of support. Make sure to request a copy of this plan for your records.

It's important to note that personal care is free for individuals aged 65 and older, regardless of income. You may want to consider having a conversation to explore the options for self-directed care, which provides more flexibility in how your funding can be used. This is often referred to as the 'four options'.

At VOCAL, we help you take the first steps toward accessing additional support. Funded by the Scottish Government, we also have two specialist Carer Brokerage Practitioners who can assist you in your Self-directed Support (SDS) journey. 🇪🇺



If you would like to find out more about SDS, you can contact VOCAL or go to vocal.org.uk/sds. Self-Directed Support Scotland has a very useful guide at handbook.scot/sds-handbook.



SDS top tips

- You don't need to have a social worker before requesting a needs assessment, but we do recommend getting advice from a third party like VOCAL or lothiancil.org.uk.
- You can bring someone along to meetings. This could be a friend or family member providing moral support, or a professional advocacy worker helping you to have your voice heard.
- It's best to contact your council's social work department in writing, or if you speak on the phone, note down what you discussed. It can be useful to have a record of what you asked for, who you spoke to, and when.
- If there is a significant change in your caring role or the condition of the person you care for, this might affect your eligibility for statutory support. Contact social work to update them.
- You can contact Edinburgh Social Care Direct on socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk or 0131 200 2324, or Midlothian Adult and Social Care on swccenquiries@midlothian.gov.uk or 0131 271 3900. 🇪🇺

About us

VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian) is 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

Edinburgh Carers' Hub

60 Leith Walk

Edinburgh, EH6 5HB

✉ centre@vocal.org.uk

Midlothian Carer Centre

30/1 Hardengreen Estate

Dalhousie Road

Dalkeith, EH22 3NX

✉ midlothian@vocal.org.uk

Websites

vocal.org.uk

carerstraining.co.uk

weebreaks.com

supportfinder.vocal.org.uk

Phone

0808 196 6666

Update your details



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

If you are no longer a carer and wish to stay in touch, you can become a Friend of VOCAL. This would mean receiving information about our developments, annual reports and fundraising events.

We appreciate your help in keeping your information up to date. More information is available in our privacy policy, at:

vocal.org.uk/privacy



[@VOCALMidlothian](https://www.facebook.com/VOCALMidlothian)

[@VOCALEdinburgh](https://www.facebook.com/VOCALEdinburgh)



[VOCAL Voice of Carers Across Lothian](https://www.linkedin.com/company/vocal-voice-of-carers-across-lothian)

vocal 
working *with* carers

Scottish Charity: SC020755
Company Registration: SC183050