

6 January 2021

Mr Christopher Cowdy  
49 Warrender Park Road  
Edinburgh  
EH9 1EU

Dear Christopher

I was passed details of this fundraising opportunity by some clients and staff members of VOCAL who receive the EH Direct publication. It is always great to have such enthusiasm from the carers that we help.

Therefore I would like to nominate VOCAL as a recipient of your charitable donation and can confirm that we will claim the Gift Aid element in line with our donor charter.

VOCAL – Voice of Carers Across Lothian - is a charity registered in Scotland (SC020755) established in 1994. Therefore we have been supporting unpaid carers across Edinburgh and Midlothian for over 25 Years.

## About Carers

Unpaid carers are people who look after partners, close friends or family of any age with additional needs including illness, disability, addiction, mental health challenges and conditions such as dementia. Carers often sacrifice social contact, careers and their financial resources in order to look after another person, whose needs are often complex and long term.

Examples of a carer include, but are not limited to, parents looking after a child with a disability, an adult looking after a parent with a condition such as dementia, someone looking after a person with addiction or mental health issues.

VOCAL has provided support for over 25 years to meet the evolving needs of carers of whom there are an estimated 1.1 million in Scotland alone (Carers Scotland) - up over 390,000 since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As well as growing in numbers, carers are providing more hours of care in increasingly intensive and complex situations.

However, the biggest challenge for any carer is to realise that they are a carer. Many feel they are simply doing what is their duty and do not realise that support is available. Social isolation, financial hardship, deteriorating physical and mental health are all challenges faced by carers who are looking after the most vulnerable in our society.



*VOCAL receives kind thanks from our clients which we cherish. We also gather formal feedback on the impact of our work from every carer and use this to shape future services.*

## About VOCAL

VOCAL is a charity providing person-centred support, learning opportunities, training, peer support groups, legal and financial surgeries, and emotional support and counselling for unpaid carers.

VOCAL aims to ensure that all carers become more resilient, knowledgeable and look after their physical and mental health while taking on caring duties. We support around 10,000 carers each year across Edinburgh and Midlothian. We have remained 'open' through the pandemic and adapted our services to online activity where feasible. We have also developed a telephone outreach schedule to keep in touch with vulnerable carers known to us.

We operate from two carers hubs (Leith Walk and Dalkeith) but have outreach workers based in key community and social care centres across Edinburgh including Libertus in Edinburgh East.

Our team of carer support practitioners speak directly to carers and can help them with the benefit applications, navigating social care systems, managing finances, managing wellbeing and mental health and providing learning and peer support opportunities through a dedicated programme of workshops and seminars. This includes parent carer peer support groups and also craft and relaxation groups, counselling and special 'surgeries' on legal and specific issues. The matrix of VOCAL services matches the complex and growing needs of carers.

In 2021 VOCAL is set to expand our work and this includes growing our team in localities within Edinburgh including a practitioner dedicated to east Edinburgh. This new role begins in February 2021 and will assist with the identification of carers and to receive referrals of carers from primary and acute health care staff, community care staff and from any local agencies, including self-referrals. This localised, partnership-building approach ensures that carers are aware of the person-centred help and support they deserve, especially during the pandemic.

## Your Donation

VOCAL is a Trusted Charity and we will use your donation to advance our mission in line with our charitable objectives. In this case we propose using your gift to support our local outreach and carer engagement in Edinburgh. A gift of £2,500 including Gift Aid with fund 10 peer support group meetings or 15 legal advice surgeries. It could also fund around 40 counselling sessions or a Spring programme of online learning courses.

I would be delighted if you wanted to find out more, not just to help decide on who should benefit from your philanthropy but also to enable you to spread the word about VOCAL's work to carers you may know.

I can be contacted directly on email: [jforster@vocal.org.uk](mailto:jforster@vocal.org.uk) or on mobile phone (as I am working from home) on 07703367586.

Yours sincerely  
Julie Forster  
Partnerships Development Officer

