

Guidance for Applicants

2021/2022

A. General information

VOCAL's Wee Breaks Fund aims to benefit carers and the people they care for and seeks to support carers who provide unpaid care to someone in Midlothian to stay in good health, despite the pressures of their caring role. It is anticipated that average grant awards will be in the region of £250-£350, however for those with the most significant needs the panel can consider grants awards of up to £750.

Applications can be submitted at anytime (dependent on funds being available). Grants must be spent within three month of receiving the funding and receipts returned within four weeks of completing the break. The Panel will meet monthly to review applications. The Panel is made up of former carers with a wide range of caring experiences, as well as representatives from Health & Social Care, Children & Families and VOCAL.

B. What can be funded?

The Panel is keen that the fund is used as creatively and flexibly as possible to help carers achieve the kind of break that will be most effective for them. Please see the list at the end of this guidance for some examples of how other carers have organised a break from caring. However, you do not need to restrict yourself to these examples and we encourage carers to be as creative as possible when considering what would be the ideal break.

C. Who can apply?

The Panel is keen to support as many carers as possible, but due to limited funds, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria. The panel will also consider some priority areas when making grants.

D. Eligibility criteria

Applications must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ The carer must provide care for someone who lives in Midlothian (out with a long-term residential care setting) A carer is someone who provides unpaid care to a family member, partner, relative or friend who needs help to manage a long term condition, disability, physical or mental health problem or addiction.

- ✓ The carer **cannot** apply for something that should be provided by statutory services.
- ✓ The application should complement, and not replace or duplicate, services which local authorities, the NHS and other agencies already fund or provide.
- ✓ The application must be supported by someone who has supported the carer and/or the person they care for in a professional capacity e.g. a GP, District Nurse, OT, Social Worker, CPN, Carer Support Worker, Teacher, Community Worker.
- ✓ Carers must demonstrate that they are **NOT** able to fund the break themselves and are willing to provide a breakdown of their household income/expenditure, if necessary.
- ✓ The health and wellbeing of the carer or the person receiving care is under strain and is likely to be improved by a wee break(s).
- ✓ The balance of caring and a life outside caring is seriously compromised and a wee break will assist the carer to re-dress the balance.
- ✓ The relationship between the carer and the person receiving care, or the wider family, is under strain, and relationships are likely to benefit and improve with a break(s).
- ✓ Only one VOCAL Wee Breaks grant will be made to the same household in a twelve month period.
- ✓ If the request is for a holiday or overnight stay then the holiday or overnight stay must be taken in the UK and the carer will not have had support from VOCAL to have a holiday or overnight stay within a 24 month period.

Please Note: VOCAL has a broader Wee Breaks, Respite, Grants and Goods Policy which sets out the level of support carers can receive from VOCAL over specific periods of time. The eligibility criteria outlined above is governed by this broader policy.

E. Priority areas

The panel will consider applications against some priority areas, which include:

- ✓ Carers who have not received financial support from the fund previously.
- ✓ Carers who are unable to fund the break themselves, due to low income or those living in areas of Midlothian which fall into the most deprived 20-30%.
- ✓ Applications that can evidence a long term benefit of the award.
- ✓ The carer has been providing support for more than 2 years.

- ✓ The carer has required hospital or sudden medical treatment in the last 12 months, or supports someone who has been in hospital within the last 12 months.
- ✓ The carer receives little or no break from caring in an average week.
- ✓ The demands of the caring role threaten the balance with the carer's work or social life and a break is likely to improve this balance.
- ✓ The break will help to foster family relationships – spending some quality time together or apart. This may be attendance at important family or social occasions i.e. weddings, birthday parties, family visits or weekend breaks.
- ✓ The carer finds it difficult to cope and may be unable to continue in their caring role without intervention.

F. Desired Outcomes

A Short Break should help to achieve at least one or more of the following outcomes and your application should demonstrate to the panel how this will be achieved.

- ✓ The carer and the person receiving care will benefit from improved physical and emotional wellbeing.
- ✓ The carer will be better able to sustain their caring role.
- ✓ The carer will be better able to balance the caring role with a life outside of caring.
- ✓ The carer will be more confident dealing with the impact of the caring role on their relationships.

G. Completing the Form

The following sections relate to the questions on the application form:

G1 – Question 1: Information about the carer

Please ensure that you provide accurate contact details and that they will continue to be so for at least a month. Please remember to notify the panel if there are any changes to your contact details. Where possible, please give your mobile phone number and email to help the Panel make contact if they have any queries.

G2 – Question 2: Is this fund for me?

Please ensure you answer all questions to ensure you meet the eligibility criteria and priority areas required.

G3 – Question 3: Information about the person you care for/caring situation

Please complete a different section for each person you care for who has a disability and/or additional support needs. All questions in this section should be completed as fully as possible, with emphasis on the following:

- ✓ It's important that you provide as much detail as possible so panel members are able to make informed decisions and don't have to return your application, asking for more information.
- ✓ It's particularly important that you provide as much information as possible about the person(s) you supports condition(s), how the condition(s) affect them on a day to day basis and what additional care and support you need to provide for them.
- ✓ You can provide any additional information, which may be useful to the panel, on a separate sheet and submit it with the form.

Please note, although this section asks about a diagnosis, carers supporting someone without a diagnosis are welcome to apply. If the person that you support does not have a diagnosed condition, it's important that you include the following:

- ✓ Provide as much information as possible about their condition, disability or additional support needs.
- ✓ The panel is primarily interested in how the person receiving care is affected by their condition(s) and what support or assistance they need in the home or in other areas of their daily life.
- ✓ Information about any support you and/or the person you care for already receive from the Council, the school or other support agencies.

G4 – Question 4: Proposed break

Please provide as much detail about your planned break as possible, and how you wish to spend the money you are applying for. Please ensure you indicate what you are applying for, where and when you plan to take the break and also provide a breakdown of the costs involved. It is important that you also include the difference the break will make to you, as a carer. You may wish to use the [Wee Breaks Planner](#), which is on weebreaks.com to help you think about the best type of break for you.

G5 - Question 5: Who have you spoken to (Supporting Professional)?

All applications should include the name and contact details of one supporting professional, preferably someone who knows the carer and the person receiving care in a professional capacity e.g. a GP, Nurse, OT, Social Worker, CPN, Carer Support Worker, Teacher, Youth Worker.

The role of the supporting professional is to confirm the description of the caring role is accurate and that a break would be of benefit to the carer and the person receiving care. As well as ticking the box, we also expect supporting professionals to say why they are supporting the application and how their organisation has supported the carer previously. **Applications without a statement from a supporting professional will not be considered.**

The Panel may not contact the supporting professional in all cases but reserves the right to do so.

G6 – Question 6: Terms & Conditions/Signatures

All applications must be signed or agreed by **the carer**. In signing or agreeing the form the carer is consenting to the sharing of all the information contained in the form with VOCAL's Funding Panel, Midlothian Council, Shared Care Scotland and any other funders supporting our Wee Breaks Fund. In addition, by signing or agreeing the form the carer is confirming that the information they have provided is accurate and correct.

Creative Wee Breaks

Time off from Caring

Driving Lessons

Peter used his short breaks grant to take driving lessons. This gave him more independence and quality of life. It also enhanced Peter's confidence in his caring role and had the potential to make his caring role more manageable, in terms of dealing with shopping, medical appointments and outings with his sister who had a physical disability and learning difficulties.

iPad

Shirley used her wee breaks grant to purchase an iPad, as she was feeling isolated during the Covid restrictions. The device allowed her to stay in touch with friends and family, while also allowing her to switch off and relax when she got the opportunity by watching movies and reading books. Shirley son had Autism, was very demanding and needed a great deal of care and attention, so the iPad could also be used to entertain him and allow the two of them to play games together.

Sitter Services

Linda used her short break to purchase a weekly sitter service from a local care provider. This allowed her to get out one day per week for three hours at a time. She used the time to catch up with friends, go to the cinema and swimming. Linda's husband had dementia and the sitter service allowed her to relax knowing her husband was being cared for by a trusted care provider. It also allowed her to recharge her batteries and sustain her caring role.

Gym Membership

Catherine used her wee break grant to purchase a membership for the local authority gym. This allowed her to attend the gym at times and dates that were suitable to her and could be worked around her caring commitments. Catherine's father was disabled and had recently suffered a stroke which meant he needed a great deal of care and support. The flexibility of the gym membership allowed her to attend gym sessions and exercise classes when other members of her family were available to look after her dad. She found this a great way to relax, destress and looks after her own health and wellbeing.

Garden Furniture

Donald used his short break grant to purchase a table, chairs and patio heater for the garden. His wife had dementia and could not be left alone in the house for any period of time. The garden furniture created an outside space where he could spend some time on his own relaxing, while still being close enough to care for his wife and ensure she was safe. The garden furniture also provided a valuable space for him and his wife to enjoy some time together.

Complimentary Therapies/Acupuncture

Claire used her short breaks grant to purchase a package of complimentary therapies and acupuncture treatments. Claire's daughter had cerebral palsy and was confined to a wheelchair, which meant Claire had little free time as she provided a significant amount of care for her daughter. The therapies were spread over a 12 week period and allowed Claire's time each week to completely switch off, relax and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of the treatments.

Outings, Theatre and Cinema

Rose used her short break grant to purchase a series of outings and visits to the theatre and cinema. Rose and her husband care for their adult son, who has a mental health condition, which significantly impacts on his mood and personality. He needs a lot of reassurance and emotional support, as well as one to one support with medication and personal hygiene. Regular outings for meals and as well as trips to the cinema and theatre allowed Rose and her husband to get some time away from their caring roles, where they could relax, unwind and spend some stress free time together.