

Short Breaks, Respite, Grants and Goods for individual carers Policy and procedures

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This policy and procedures set out how VOCAL will ensure equity and fairness of support to individual carers seeking support in the form of short breaks, respite, grants or goods.

The policy applies to carer support in Edinburgh and Midlothian.

It is the responsibility of individual staff members to apply this policy and the procedures to ensure that carers fully understand the nature and level of support that can be offered and the criteria and process for accessing it.

1. Policy

VOCAL is committed to improving the quality of life for carers and will support carers who meet specific criteria to gain access to breaks or raise funds required to provide items or services to meet identified needs. In all such situations, VOCAL seeks to increase provision not to replace or reduce carers' entitlements to statutory provision.

2. Background

VOCAL recognises that carers need regular breaks from caring, but are often unable to access breaks and may receive insufficient support from statutory or other sources.

VOCAL recognises that many carers also experience financial hardship as a result of their caring role. This leaves many in a position where they are unable to afford breaks from caring or to pay for items or services which would support their caring role.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 placed a duty on Local Authorities to create Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) to identify carers' needs and personal outcomes. Local Authorities also have a duty to provide support for carers based on needs identified which meet local eligibility criteria.

Across all of its work VOCAL considers carers' personal outcomes and captures them in ACSPs. Carer and carer support staff will discuss the carer's situation and the outcomes and support they seek as part of developing an ACSP.

Carer outcome conversations always explore a range of supports including whether a break, service or item may be an appropriate method to move towards their chosen outcomes. This includes exploring suitable and appropriate breaks from caring and how these can best be provided through statutory or third sector services, self-directed options, respite opportunities, fundraising for items, short breaks grant applications or by other suitable means.

The ACSP will record agreement reached on the most appropriate method(s) to access and benefit from breaks and items and how best outcomes will be achieved.

3. Short Breaks, Respite, Grants and Goods Interventions

VOCAL has developed a range of interventions specifically to support carers to address financial hardship and the need for a break(s). These include;

- Respite opportunities
- Individual fundraising
- Allocation of grants from funding streams administered by VOCAL

In order to ensure equity and transparency of support, VOCAL has set out guidelines, criteria and procedures about the volume and frequency of support that can be offered.

It is important to note that the above does not include resources allocated by the Local Authority following the identification of needs and personal outcomes that meet local eligibility criteria. These resources are governed by guidance outside VOCAL's policy and the procedures outlined here.

4. Language and definitions

Personal outcome	the difference that the carer seeks to achieve
Intervention	is used to describe instances where a VOCAL staff member provides support to assist a carer in the achievement of personal outcomes. This could be researching options of support, the provision of information, the giving of funds, items or services directly or support to access funds, items or services from other sources
Individual fundraising	the act of a staff member seeking a financial resources on the behalf of a carer to meet and fund identified personal outcomes
Respite	a word which describes the combination of respite & hospitality , denoting a break from caring donated by the hospitality, tourism or leisure sector. These can be overnight stays, meals, spa days, beauty treatments, etc. for VOCAL to allocate to carers identified as requiring a break
Grant	a sum of money given by VOCAL or a third party for a particular purpose
Holiday	a funded overnight stay of one or more nights away from the family home. When counting the number of holidays a carer has been supported to achieve a one or two night break will count as one holiday as would a five or 10 day holiday. We do not count the number of nights that made up the break but the number of periods of overnight stay.
Shared caring role	a situation where more than one person provides support to/cares for one individual

5. An outcome based approach

VOCAL seeks to support carers to make a positive difference to their life or caring situation, through a variety of interventions. An understanding of the difference that the carer wishes to make underpins all our work.

Individual fundraising, grants administered by VOCAL and Respite breaks will only be used in circumstances where the carer and the Carer Support Worker identify that this will help the carer to report feeling one or more of the following (as per Edinburgh Council's Wellbeing Wheel):

Active	having opportunities to take part in activities, such as sport and recreation activity, which contribute to health and well being
Respected	having the opportunity to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them
Responsible	having opportunities and being supported to take an active role in their own lives and in their communities. Being enabled to make decisions about issues that affect them. Being enabled to promote the wellbeing of those who rely on them.
Included	having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the communities in which they live, work and learn
Safe	protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at work or in their community, protected from causing harm to others or themselves
Healthy	having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health. Having access to suitable health and dental care. Supported to have or make healthy and safe choices. Being enabled to make healthy diet choices.
Achieving	having opportunities and support to continue to learn and develop skills throughout life. Being confident about themselves and having positive self – esteem
Nurtured	having a safe, secure and comfortable place to live where people look out for them

6. Identifying appropriate short breaks, Respite, grants or goods

All work with carers must begin with an understanding of the carer’s personal outcomes. The carer and Carer Support Worker will identify an appropriate method to move towards their chosen outcomes.

VOCAL offers a person-centred service based on the personal outcomes of an individual carer. When considering which, if any, of the short breaks, respite, grants or goods interventions will be used, carer support staff and carers should discuss and consider the following areas:

- The item/service, the cost, timing, etc.
- What difference would the item/service make?
- May a statutory duty apply for the break, service or goods to be provided by the NHS or local authority?
- Personal histories of the carer and cared for person i.e. date of birth, occupation, health issues
- Income and expenditure information
- Terms and conditions of interventions and the agreement

7. Criteria for accessing short breaks, respite breaks, grants or goods

VOCAL’s short breaks, respite, grants or goods interventions offer carers many opportunities to access support. To ensure that support is fairly distributed to allow as many carers as possible to benefit, the following criteria and restrictions have been established to define the volume of support that can be offered to any individual carer.

Short Breaks, Respite, Grants and Goods as a whole

- No more than eight interventions over the course of a five year period
- No more than two holidays/ period of overnight stays in a five year period will be supported
- No single intervention with a cash value of over £1,500
- Interventions may be combined to achieve one break/item. E.g., a Respite break may be combined with individual fundraising to cover the cost of travel expenses to the break
- If a Carer Support Worker and/or the Panel feel that special circumstances may apply, they may discuss this with their line manager. The Lead Officer's decision is final.
- In addition, if the carer is eligible, VOCAL will support no more than three Scottish Welfare Grant applications in a five year period.

Individual fundraising

- To limit the circulation of sensitive information, prevent similar applications on behalf of other carers and to carefully manage limited staff time, VOCAL will approach a small, but realistic number of agencies/trusts possible to achieve a positive outcome.
- VOCAL will pursue individual fundraising for any one carer or shared caring situation no more than three times in a five year period.
- As a single intervention VOCAL will not complete more than three applications on a carer's behalf (this may be the completion of the form or the writing of a letter)
- VOCAL will raise no more than a maximum of £800 towards the cost of a break or services and no more than £1,500 towards specialist equipment.
- In addition, if the carer is eligible than VOCAL will support no more than 3 Scottish Welfare Grant applications in a five year period'.

Respite

- In a 12-month period a carer may access Respite up to four times including only one holiday/break which includes an overnight accommodation.
- Over the course of five years a carer may access no more than ten nights of Respite accommodation over one or more break. This could be made up of one break of ten nights or two breaks of five. It would not be possible to have a break of seven nights and second break of nine nights as this totals more than ten.

Allocation of funds held by VOCAL

- The allocation of funds held by VOCAL is subject to eligibility and priority criteria determined by funders which may change from time to time.
- Each successful application for funds held by VOCAL will be considered as an intervention, whether supported by a staff member or not.

8. A special note on shared caring roles

In situations where a carer has benefited from a short break, respite break, grant or goods awarded in the name of another carer, this will be considered/counted towards the maximum interventions supported. This is most likely to occur in spousal relationships, but not exclusively so, and will be applied to any shared caring role.

9. Frequently asked questions

9.1. What happens if a short break, service or item is not available currently?

VOCAL will make every effort to ensure that interventions are successful. However, there may be times when an appropriate short break, service or item is not available. Below is an explanation of how to proceed in these circumstances.

Individual fundraising

If VOCAL has completed the maximum number of applications (or all viable options) and not enough money has been raised, the carer will be invited to meet with the Carer Support Worker to discuss further steps. At the meeting a number of options will be considered;

- Identifying other methods for making up the short fall i.e. savings or contributions from family members or friends
- Contacting those trusts that have already agreed funding, asking if they could increase their donation – if the shortfall is small, if this is within the criteria set by the agency/trusts, if the Carer Support Worker feels this is an appropriate course of action
- Exploring if a less costly item will bring similar outcomes (this will require the trust's endorsement)
- Returning all funding received

Respite

If no suitable Respite break is available at this time and the carer and Carer Support Worker agree that there is a long term need for breaks, a note will be made on the carer's CISS record to indicate an interest in respite breaks and the type of break appropriate. The carer will then be contacted if an appropriate break becomes available.

Carers will be contacted annually (usually by email) to be asked if they have a continued need for breaks so that their record can be updated.

Allocation of funds held by VOCAL

If a grant is not awarded for any reason then the carer will be offered the opportunity to discuss if individual fundraising would be an appropriate intervention.

9.2. How will I receive and spend money grants?

VOCAL will not make payments, including deposits, in advance of confirmation of a grant being awarded.

If the total amount sought by a carer is going to be made up of a number of small contributions VOCAL will not pay any money until the agreed total has been achieved.

VOCAL prefers not to make payments direct to companies providing services/items and will usually provide the carer with funds so they can make the payment themselves.

If a carer does not have a bank account into which they may pay a cheque or receive a transfer, VOCAL will consider issuing cash payment. VOCAL never sends cash through the post. The carer must visit the Carers Hub to collect the payment and sign a statement confirming they have received the payment and the amount and will submit appropriate receipts.

Carers must provide receipts for the items or services purchased and return any excess to VOCAL, who in turn, will return unspent funds to the organisation or trust or allocate these to other carers.

9.3. Data protection - will my information be shared with others?

In most situations accessing funding or a break will require the disclosure of the carer's personal information. VOCAL will seek the carer's consent to do this, ensuring that the carer is given and understands the following information;

- The name of the organisations with whom the information is shared
- The information about the carer's situation which VOCAL will be required to share
- The way information will be shared, i.e. verbally, in writing.

Once consent has been gained VOCAL will proceed with the intervention and record all applications made and outcomes on CISS.

Short Breaks, Respite, Grants and Goods Agreement

By signing this agreement, you are confirming that you understand and will abide by the following:

- Before VOCAL can begin to explore short breaks, respite, grants or goods for you, agreement must be reached about the need for an item and the positive impact achieved by it.
- VOCAL can give no guarantee that the outcome of an intervention/application will be successful.
- VOCAL will make no payment until total funds have been raised.
- No single intervention with a cash value of over £1,500
- No more than eight interventions over the course five year period will be supported
- No more than two holidays in a five year period will be supported via any intervention
- In a twelve month period a carer may access Respite up to four times including only one holiday/break which includes an overnight stay.
- Over the course of five years a carer may access no more than 10 nights' accommodation through respite over one or more break.
- VOCAL will undertake fundraising no more than three times in a five year period
- In addition if the carer is eligible then VOCAL will support no more than 3 Scottish Welfare Grant applications in a five year period
- VOCAL reserves the right to terminate all short breaks, respite, grants or goods generation if the agreement is broken or it emerges that information has been withheld.

I (carer) will provide truthful, detailed and accurate information about my caring role and financial situation

I (carer) consent to the sharing of agreed information about me and my caring situation with selected and agreed organisations in order to apply for a short breaks, respite, grants or goods.

I (carer) will provide receipts or evidence of the expenditure (cf. evidence of expenditure policy)

I (carer) agree to provide feedback about the impact of the short break, respite, grant or goods

I (carer) understand that failure to provide feedback or satisfactory evidence of expenditure will exclude me from all future short breaks, respite, grants or goods opportunities

I (carer) may request a copy of VOCAL's Short Breaks, Respite, Grants and Goods Policy at any time

I (carer) understand and accept the above guidelines.

Name (carer)

Name (VOCAL worker)

Signature

Signature

Date

Date