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## **Guidance for Applicants**

### **Parent Carers Wee Breaks Fund**

**2020/2021**

#### **A. General information**

VOCAL's Parent Carer Wee Breaks Fund is available to carers who provide care for a child/young person with a disability and/or additional support needs. The Fund is targeted at parents who are **not** already receiving funding or support from Midlothian Council or any other agency and aims to give parent carers the opportunity to plan, design and purchase services and activities that will give them a break from 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 parent carers as possible, but due to limited funds, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

#### **D. Eligibility criteria**

Applications must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Applicants must be a carer and providing care for a child or young person aged 20 or under who has a disability and/or additional support needs.
- ✓ The parent/carer must provide care for a child or young person who lives in Midlothian (out with a long-term residential care setting).
- ✓ The parent carer **cannot** apply for something that should be provided by statutory services.
- ✓ The application can complement, but not replace or duplicate, the services which local authorities, the NHS and other agencies already fund or provide.
- ✓ The application must be supported by someone who has supported the parent/carer and/or the child/young person you support in a professional capacity e.g. Children & Families Worker, Social Worker, Carer Support Worker, Teacher, Youth Worker.
- ✓ The health and wellbeing of the parent 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 parent carer and the person receiving care, or the wider family, is under strain, and relationships are likely to benefit and improve with a wee break(s).
- ✓ Only one VOCAL Wee Breaks grant will be made to the same household in a twelve month period (this includes the main Wee Breaks Fund and the Parent Carer Wee Breaks Fund).
- ✓ 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:

- ✓ Priority will be given to those who have **not** received an allocation from the fund previously.

- ✓ The parent carer receives little or no break from caring in an average week.
- ✓ The demand of the caring role threatens the balance with the parent/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 parent carer finds it difficult to cope and may be unable to continue in their caring role without intervention.
- ✓ The parent/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.
- ✓ Parent carers who are unable to fund a break/support themselves, due to low income or those living in areas of Midlothian which fall into the most deprived 20-30%.

#### **F. Desired outcomes**

A Wee 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 parent carer and the person receiving care will benefit from improved physical and emotional wellbeing
- ✓ The parent carer will be better able to sustain their caring role.
- ✓ The parent carer will be better able to balance the caring role with a life outside of caring
- ✓ The parent 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 child/young 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 support 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, over and above expected age and stage parenting responsibilities.
- ✓ 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, at school 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: Information about 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 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 the [weebreaks.com](http://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. Children & Families Worker, Social Worker, 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 by **the carer**. In signing 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 the form the carer is confirming that the information they have provided is accurate and correct.