

Wee Breaks and Fundraising Policy

Version 1.2, April 2020

This policy and procedures sets out how VOCAL will ensure equity and fairness of support to individual carers seeking support and access to opportunities under the remit of Wee Breaks which includes short breaks, gifted opportunities, individual funds, grants and goods.

The policy applies to carers supported in Edinburgh and Midlothian.

It is the responsibility of VOCAL 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 enhance 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 places 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, gifted opportunities, fundraising for items, Wee Breaks grant applications or by other suitable means.

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

3. Wee Breaks Interventions

VOCAL has developed a range of interventions specifically to support carers to address financial hardship and the need for a break(s) under the remit of Wee Breaks. These include but are not exclusive to;

- Gifted tickets, trips and group events
- Overnight breaks
- 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. 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 VOCAL's work.

Support through VOCAL Wee Breaks service will only be used in circumstances where the carer and the Carer Support Worker and or supporting Professional identify that this enables the carer to meet their identified outcomes. When considering which, if any, Wee Breaks opportunities will be used, VOCAL Staff and/or supporting Professionals and carers should discuss and consider the following areas:

- The item/service, the cost, timing, etc.
- What difference would the item/service make?
- Is there a statutory requirement for support from the local Health and Social Care Partnership?
- Personal histories of the carer and cared for person i.e. date of birth, occupation, health
- Income and expenditure information
- Terms and conditions of interventions and the agreement

5. Criteria for accessing Wee Breaks

VOCAL Wee Breaks interventions offer carers many opportunities to access support. To ensure that support is fairly distributed allowing as many carers as possible to benefit, the following criteria has been established to define the volume of support that can be offered to any individual carer.

Wee Breaks as a whole

- All carers accessing Wee Breaks must be registered with VOCAL and be willing to engage with a Carer Support Worker or Supporting Professional (i.e. Social Worker/Health Professional/Community Worker) to discuss and identify outcomes which will be achieved by accessing a Wee Breaks. This is also a requirement of VOCAL staff who are carers.
- 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 at any one time.
- Interventions may be combined to achieve one break/item e.g. an overnight break may be combined with individual fundraising to cover the cost of travel expenses to the break.

- Resources are limited and to ensure that opportunities are fully utilised, carers must contact either the Edinburgh or Midlothian centre to cancel any awarded Wee Breaks opportunities. Carers may be asked to return a grant or cover any costs associated with booking a break if we do not receive 48 hours notice when cancelling a break.
- Any Wee Breaks applications/requests will be scrutinised by the Wee Breaks panel.

Gifted tickets, trips and group events

- Up to a maximum of eight ticketed events, trips and group events can be accessed over a two year period
- If VOCAL invites a carer to use unallocated tickets or attend a specific trip or event then this will NOT count towards the limits set within this policy.

Overnight breaks

- A maximum of two overnight breaks can be accessed within a two year period and only one of these overnight breaks can be accessed from VOCAL's Wee Breaks grant scheme
- Trips abroad will NOT be supported
- Overnight breaks can range from one night to a combined maximum of ten nights

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 in the attempt to secure funding to meet an identified need.
- VOCAL will pursue individual fundraising to external trusts, charities and grant giving bodies no more than four times for the same carer in a two year period. VOCAL will NOT complete more than two applications on a carer's behalf in the pursuit of the same item (this may be the completion of a form or the writing of a letter).
- Individual fundraising can include, but is not exclusive to, accessing condition specific grants, household goods and specialist equipment
- Crisis/ welfare grants are accessed in times of financial hardship and are NOT counted within this policy but will be recorded with the individual carer's electronic record.

Allocation of grants from funding streams administered by VOCAL

- The allocation of funds held by VOCAL is subject to individual eligibility and priority criteria determined by funders which may change from time to time. Individual fund criteria supersedes this policy.
- Each application for funds held by VOCAL will be counted within the limits of this policy. This also applies whether the application was supported by a member of VOCAL staff or not.

6. A special note on shared caring roles

In situations where a carer has benefited from a Wee Break 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.

Exceptional circumstances will be considered and must be agreed by VOCAL's Lead Officers in advance.

7. Frequently asked questions

7.1. What happens if a Wee Breaks 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 Wee Break opportunity 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 carer contributions
- If deemed appropriate by the Carer Support Worker, contact those trusts successful in securing monies from, to potentially secure additional funding for any shortfall
- Exploring if a less costly item will bring similar outcomes
- Returning all funding received

Gifted tickets, trips and overnight breaks

If no suitable break is available at the 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 electronic record to indicate an interest in Wee 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.

7.2. How will I receive and spend financial 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 will usually provide the carer with funds so they can make any payment directly to companies providing services/ items 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 in Edinburgh or Carers Centre in Dalkeith to collect the payment and sign a statement confirming they have received the cash payment and the amount and that they will submit all appropriate receipts.

Carers must provide receipts for ALL items or services purchased and return any underspend to VOCAL, who in turn, will return unspent funds to the organisation/ trust or allocate funds to another carer.

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

In most situations accessing Wee Breaks will require the disclosure of the carer's personal information. VOCAL will seek the carer's consent to do so, ensuring that the carer is given and understands the following information;

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

Once consent has been received VOCAL will proceed with the intervention and record all applications made and outcomes on the Carer's electronic record.

Wee Breaks & Fundraising Agreement:

This agreement covers a two year period from date of signing

As part of the Wee Breaks application process, you will have a conversation with a Carer Support Worker or a supporting Professional to identify what you need and the difference it will make to you as a carer.

VOCAL cannot guarantee the success of any application and no payments will be made until total funds have been raised.

Over a two year period, Carers can expect to access the following level of support:

- Up to a maximum of eight ticketed event, trips and group outings can be accessed over the two year period
- A maximum of two overnight breaks can be accessed within a two year period and only one of these overnight breaks can be accessed from VOCAL's Wee Breaks grant scheme
- VOCAL will pursue individual fundraising no more than four times in a two year period.
- Each successful application for funds held by VOCAL will be counted within the limits of this policy, whether the application was supported by a member of VOCAL staff or not.

The information I have given to VOCAL is correct and I have not withheld anything.

VOCAL can share information about me and my caring role to agreed organisations for the purpose of applying to Wee Breaks.

I will provide receipts for all services, support and equipment purchased with my grant.

I will provide feedback to VOCAL or other organisations about what difference the intervention has made and give my consent for this to be used by VOCAL to secure future Wee Breaks and for marketing purposes.

VOCAL has the right to withdraw support if this agreement is broken.

If I break this agreement in any way, I will not be able to apply to Wee Breaks or access fundraising support from VOCAL again in the future.

I will provide at least 48 hours notice if I am no longer able to use my grant or break and understand that I if no notice is given, I may be asked to return the grant or cover any costs associated with the cancelled break.

Name (carer)

Name (VOCAL worker)

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

If you require more detailed information about the terms of the above agreement, please ask to see the full VOCAL Wee Breaks & Fundraising policy.