Wee Breaks and Fundraising policy

Introduction

This policy sets out arrangements for applying for Wee Breaks at VOCAL, as well as other grants that may be available to carers. This includes funds provided through VOCAL, as well as grants which may be available from other agencies. To ensure as many carers as possible can benefit, VOCAL will also limit the number of short breaks and fundraising opportunities that can be accessed by each carer. This policy sets out how this will work.

This policy covers the following interventions:

- Tickets, vouchers, trips, and group events
- Overnight breaks including VOCAL's holiday homes
- Funding applications for grants

Wherever possible VOCAL aims to offer support to as many carers as possible, but sometimes funders set criteria that means only certain carers can apply.

As resources are limited, VOCAL aims to ensure opportunities are allocated to carers in greatest need and have not previously benefitted from Wee Breaks opportunities. Where opportunities are promoted publicly e.g., via the Wee Breaks website, carers are asked to initially 'request' these – there is no automatic right to receipt.

Carers in greatest need are carers at risk of isolation, exclusion or disadvantage, whose caring role and lack of support impact on their:

- physical, emotional mental health and wellbeing
- ability to balance the caring role with a life of their own
- financial wellbeing and ability to afford basic necessities

VOCAL allows carers to self-define need, by asking and assessing what difference the support they apply for would make to their lives. VOCAL does not apply formal means-testing, i.e., where a person is eligible for support only if their own financial means are below a threshold. VOCAL does, however, ask carers if they are in receipt of any welfare benefits.

Please Note: VOCAL has separate guidance for making Wee Breaks grant funding applications This sets out the specific criteria for applicants, the priorities the panel will focus on when considering applications and the desired outcomes we want carers to achieve from taking a break.

The VOCAL approach

VOCAL practitioners will consider carers' requests as part of their work to provide holistic support. Holistic support means the practitioner will explore with each carer what is important to them across various areas in relation to their caring role and records these outcomes, along with any support identified as needed, in a 'support plan' also known as an Adult Carer Support Plan.

Carers accessing support must be registered with VOCAL. You can do this here: www.vocal.org.uk/referrals or by telephone on 0808 1966666.

Role of 'supporting professionals'

VOCAL interventions will generally only be provided when both the carer **and** a carer support practitioner or supporting professional agree the support will enable the carer to meet their identified outcomes.

Some interventions will therefore require a supporting professional to endorse the application. This could be the carer support practitioner or another professional who knows the carer well.

Policy limitations

The following limits are in place for applying for VOCAL interventions covered by this policy. These include:

- VOCAL will raise no more than £800 towards the cost of a short break and no more than £2000 towards specialist equipment at any one time.
- No more than eight ticketed events, trips and group events can be accessed through the Wee Breaks website over a 24-month period.
- No more than two overnight breaks (of up to a maximum of 7 days) can be accessed over a 24-month period (only one of which can be obtained through making an application to VOCAL's Wee Breaks Fund).
- Applications for trips out with mainland UK will not be supported.
- VOCAL will not make more than two funding applications to external funders for the same item within a 24-month period.
- VOCAL will restrict the number of grants and support to the same household and will not accept different applications from carers sharing the same household. This is most likely to occur in spousal relationships, but not exclusively so, and will be applied to any shared caring role.
- Where more than one carer shares a caring role, VOCAL will consider a joint application from the same household and will also consider increasing the maximum award to support a joint application.

Exceptional circumstances will be considered but must be agreed by a member of VOCAL's Senior Management team in advance.

Guidance on average Wee Break grant awards

Items and opportunities applied for will be considered on their merit by the Funding Panel. The average Wee Break award will be in the region of £450 - £500, however for those with the most significant needs the panel can consider grant awards of up to £800.

Policy exclusions

VOCAL has separate guidance and criteria relating to its crisis or welfare grants, which can be accessed in times of financial hardship, and these are not restricted by this policy.
VOCAL recognises that there may be extreme circumstances when carers may be facing a crisis and, on these occasions, we may consider providing fundraising support beyond the limitations of its policies.

Successful awards

Carers will be informed in writing that their application for funding has been successful. Payment will be made directly into their nominated bank account or via a cheque. If carers do not have a

bank account, VOCAL will consider purchasing an agreed break or item on behalf of the carer, utilising agreed funding awarded. VOCAL will not, under any circumstances, make cash payments for grants awards or transfer grant payments to third party bank accounts. Any vouchers issued should be collected from the carers centre and signed for.

On most occasions carers will be responsible for purchasing the break or item themselves and are required to spend funds ONLY for the purpose set out in the original application. If carers are not able to use the award for its original purpose and want to use it for something different, they must contact VOCAL and seek permission to do so.

No payments, including deposits, will be made until awards have been confirmed and VOCAL will not provide funds retrospectively. If more than one fund is applied to, VOCAL will not pay any money until the agreed total has been reached.

Carers will also be asked to return evidence of spend within a three-month period, which will normally be in the form of receipts. If receipts are not returned, this may prevent carers from applying to VOCAL for financial support or interventions in the future. However, VOCAL understands there may be extenuating circumstances, which may prevent carers from returning evidence of spend and will treat every situation on its merits.

Lost or Misplaced Tickets and Vouchers

When tickets and vouchers for carers breaks or assistance funds cannot be sent by email, VOCAL will always recommend that carers pick these up from our Carers Centre in Edinburgh or Midlothian, as a preferred method of distribution. Any tickets or vouchers posted out, at the carer's request cannot be replaced or refunded by VOCAL if they get lost in the post. Similarly, any tickets or vouchers lost or misplaced by carers cannot be replaced by VOCAL.

Unsuccessful VOCAL awards or interventions

Where an application has not been awarded by VOCAL's Funding Panel, the carer will be informed in writing and will include information about the follow up support available to the carer.

Where insufficient money can be raised to purchase the identified item or break, a VOCAL staff member will discuss alternative options. These could include carers making personal contributions, exploring cheaper options, or returning all funding received.

Data protection

VOCAL staff will seek carer consent to record personal details to provide support with the fundraising process. Any personal information including payment details supplied, will be processed in line with VOCAL's Data Protection policy, and stored in a secure online recording system.

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Wee Breaks & Fundraising Agreement:

As part of the application process, you will have a conversation with a carer support practitioner or a supporting professional to identify what support and resources you need and the difference the break will make to you as a carer.

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

The information you give to VOCAL must be correct and an accurate reflection of your caring role.

You understand and accept that the information you provide while submitting any funding applications can be shared with our Funding Panel, the local authority, Shared Care Scotland, and any other funders.

VOCAL's Funding Panel will scrutinse all applications made and will award based on the information submitted and the desired outcome to be achieved.

You must provide proof of spend for all services, support and equipment purchased with any grants received within the designated timescales.

If you are taking a break in one of VOCAL's Holiday Homes, you must sign terms and conditions of stay in advance of any breaks being granted.

You must provide feedback to VOCAL or other organisations about what difference the intervention has made and give consent for this to be used by VOCAL to secure future funds and for marketing purposes. This information will be shared securely and where requested, anonymously.

You must provide at least 48 hours' notice if you are no longer able to use the grant or break provided and understand that if no notice is given, you may be asked to return the grant or cover any costs associated with the cancelled break.

If you break this agreement in any way, you may not be able to access fundraising support from VOCAL again in the future.

VOCAL has the right to withdraw support if this agreement is broken.
By signing the agreement below you are accepting all the terms set out above.

Name (carer)	Name (VOCAL worker)
Signature	Signature
Date	Date