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**Carers Panel Terms of Reference**

**Version:** Final

**Panel Endorsement:** Jan 2023

**Review due:**  Jan 2025

**Implementation:** With immediate effect

**Purpose of panel**

* The Carers Panel exists to strengthen the collective voice of carers in East Lothian. Membership is open to those who are currently in an unpaid caring role and former carers with an interest in improving the lives of carers.
* The focus of the Carers panel is to discuss potential solutions to common problems, comment on service provider’s proposals and lobby for changes to improve the lives of carers and the people they care for.
* The Carers Panel are committed to upholding the priority of increasing their membership to ensure the panel can represent the views of carers from a variety of different caring situations.
* The Carers Panel are committed to identifying methods of representing the collective voice of carers.
* Carers have contact with a wide spectrum of services, therefore the Carers’ Panel will identify ways of engaging with many partners in order to have their views heard in relevant conversations, eg housing, dementia, complex needs, mental health etc. The Carers Panel are committed to championing the view that Carers contributions need recognising in all forums.

**Facilitation of the panel**

* The Carers Panel will be supported by a member of CoEL staff. Their role will be to:
  + Organise relevant administration for the panel, including: organising a venue/ digital platform, circulating invitations
  + Draw up an agenda for the meeting
  + Circulate minutes to panel members.
  + Identify engagement opportunities and support the panel to plan and execute their engagement
  + Enhance communication between Carers Panel and wider organisation
  + Support the Carers Panel to stay aware of legislation that affects carers
  + Amplify the voice of the Carers Panel
* Membership is open to any unpaid carer over the age of 18, including carers who no longer have an active caring role, or who have been bereaved, but who wish to use their experiences to help others.
* **Frequency and duration of meetings** – The Carers’ Panel will aim to meet every 4-6 weeks. Where there are opportunities to engage with national and local strategies and priorities, Panel members may be invited to additional meetings. Meetings will run to a standard 90 minutes and last for a maximum of 120 minutes. Meetings will follow an agenda that reflects this time frame.
* **Quorum:** The quorum for this group would be three members.
* **Papers and minutes**: Paperwork to be submitted no later than one week prior to a meeting. Minutes to be completed two weeks after.
* **Admin and Expenses**: Expenses will be covered by CoEL. Travel expenses will be covered at the public transport mileage rate, of 45 ppm cars 20 ppm m/c, along with reasonable and receipted expenses that have been agreed in advance. Forms are available on request and should be e-mailed to [gemma@coel.org.uk](mailto:gemma@coel.org.uk)

**Values**

* The Carers Panel will maintain the following agreed values within their meetings:
  + **Respect differences of opinion.** We can disagree – a range of views is healthy – but we will do it respectfully. If something is presented as fact, we can ask for evidence to test its accuracy or universality. But we are each the experts in our own experiences.
  + **Be attentive.** We will support each other to participate by listening and taking it in turns to speak. We believe everyone has something to contribute.
  + **Be constructive.** We will focus on what we can do now to make things better in the future, acknowledging that we all need to vent at times. We recognise that small things can make a big difference.
  + **Be understanding.** We will be patient with, kind to and understanding of each other, acknowledging that discussions may bring up strong feelings and touch on difficult experiences.