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# **Time for Me Fund - Guidance Note for Applicants**

**Background**

Carers of East Lothian (CoEL) has been awarded a grant from the Scottish Government, administered by Shared Care Scotland, for the purpose of increasing the range and choice of breaks from caring opportunities for unpaid carers. This funding is topped up by East Lothian Health & Social Care Partnership.

With this funding, CoEL has set up a Time for Me Fund which provides small grants to unpaid carers across East Lothian who need support to get a much-needed break from their caring role.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 defines a carer as anyone who “provides or intends to provide unpaid care and support to another person”. The people they care for may be family members, friends or neighbours affected by disability, physical or mental ill-health, frailty or substance misuse.

**Aims of the Fund**

* Carers will have more opportunities to enjoy a life alongside their caring role
* Carers will feel better supported to sustain their caring role
* Carers and the people they care for will have improved wellbeing

**Eligibility**

* All unpaid carers are eligible to apply for a Time for Me grant – including adult carers, young adult carers, parent carers and young carers
* All applicants must either live in East Lothian or live outside the area and care for someone who lives in East Lothian
* Applicants **do** **not** need to be living at the same address as the person they care for
* Applicants **do** **not** need to be providing a minimum number of care-giving hours
* The grant is not means-tested and applicants **do** **not** need to be in receipt of Carers Allowance or other benefits
* Applicants must be in an active caring role; the exception to this is where there has been a recent bereavement

**Guidelines**

* Applicants can take the funded break with or without the person they care for. Ideally the break should also benefit the cared-for person, even if indirectly
* **Only one grant will be awarded per household in any 12-month period** unless there is a clear and evidenced need for each carer in the household to have funding in their own right, in which case the total amount of grants awarded to the household will not exceed a maximum of £600.
* The exception to the above rule is Young Carers (up to age 18) and Young Adult Carers (19-25) who can apply for a grant even if an adult carer in the household has had a grant within the year
* Applicants must be **in real need** of a break from caring and willing to tell us what difference a Time for Me grant would make to them
* Applicants are required to provide **receipts and feedback** after they have taken their break; failure to do so may affect future applications
* If we are made aware of extreme extenuating circumstances (e.g. terminal illness of carer or cared-for person or risk to health due to severe stress caused by caring), we will do our best to treat the application as urgent and deal with it more quickly wherever possible
* The amount of grant awarded will vary according to needs and circumstances of applicants, intended purpose of grant and the number of carers in the household who would benefit
* As a rough guide, the average grant awarded is around £350 and maximum is £500-£600 (usually where 2 or more carers would benefit from the grant or there are extreme extenuating circumstances)

**What you can spend a Time for Me grant on**

The funding can be used flexibly to pay for a range of activities or items that can give carers a break from the caring situation. The following is not a definitive list, just examples of some popular types of breaks:

* Break away from home or day trips (with or without the cared-for person)
* Entertainment e.g. meals out, theatre, cinema or concert tickets
* Relaxation or complementary therapies e.g. spa days, massage, beauty treatments
* Leisure or fitness activities or memberships
* Fees for classes, courses or activities
* Hobby equipment, craft materials, subscriptions e.g. films, books, TV, magazines
* Equipment or adaptations (so long as these contribute to a break from caring in some way)
* Anything else that will give the carer a break from their caring role
* ***We cannot pay for breaks that have already been taken, or breaks/activities/items that have already been bought and paid for*.**
* ***We also cannot guarantee a grant will be awarded in time for your chosen break although we will always do our best***

**The Application Process**

Carers can refer themselves to the service or be referred by a professional (with the carer’s consent). Referrals can be made over the phone or online: <https://coel.org.uk/contact-us/online-referral-form/> Carers must wait **at least 12 months since their last grant award** **before re-referring themselves** to the service and we may need to prioritise first-time applicants if funding is running short.

Waiting times from date of referral to contact by our worker can be **up to 12 weeks** depending on current demand for grants and staff capacity. Carers will be offered the option of either a conversation with our Building Better Breaks Development Worker or completing an application form. We may have to pause the application process from time to time if the waiting list becomes too long or funding runs out.

Grant applications will be considered by CoEL senior staff and applicants will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible. If the Time for Me grant application is successful, we will ask for the carer’s bank details to enable payment. We will ask carers to provide receipts and feedback after taking their break.

Our Building Better Breaks Coordinator will support you to consider what kind of break will provide the most lasting impact in your personal circumstances. Decisions are made **on the basis of need** and we cannot guarantee that a grant will be awarded; however If an application is unsuccessful, we will explain the reason why and try to help the carer find other sources of funding. Carers who are not satisfied with the outcome of their application can make a complaint which will be dealt with by our senior management team.

An Advisory Group meets regularly to look at strategic issues, monitor progress, discuss any challenges that arise in connection with the Time for Me grants scheme and agree on any needed changes. Advisory Group members include carers, senior staff within East Lothian Health & Social Care Partnership, a CoEL Board member and senior CoEL staff.

***To find out more: Phone Carers of East Lothian on 0131 665 0135***

***or email:*** [***centre@coel.org.uk***](mailto:centre@coel.org.uk)