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**Carers Panel Terms of Reference**

**Version:** Draft

**Panel Endorsement:**

**Review due:**  January 2027

**Implementation:**

**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.

**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 CoEL
  + Amplify the voice of the Carers Panel
* **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.
* **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 and uploaded to the Carers Panel Area on CoEL’s website <https://www.coel.org.uk/for-carers/carers-panel/> no later than two weeks after the meeting.
* **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 expenses that have been agreed in advance. Receipts should be provided. Forms are available on request and should be e-mailed to [gemma@coel.org.uk](mailto:gemma@coel.org.uk)

**Group Agreement**

To help everyone feel safe and comfortable during our meetings, CoEL ask members to keep to the following agreement:

* **Respect confidentiality.**

Personal information that members share should be treated asconfidential. Please do not share anything personal that has been discussed during a meeting with anyone outside the group. If you have concerns for someone’s safety, please speak to the CoEL panel facilitator.

* **Be non-judgemental.**

All carers and former carers are welcome to become members of the Carers Panel, no matter what their life experiences are outside of caring or how big their caring role is. What connects us is caring.

* **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**

* **Be attentive**

We will support each other to join in by listening and we will take it in turns to speak. We believe everyone has something to offer.

* **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.

**Online/ Hybrid Nature of Meetings**

Carers Panel meetings will be held as hybrid meetings to support as many people to participate as is possible. This means that some people will be joining online and some in person. Please note the following points:

* The digital platform for Panel meetings will be Zoom.
* The Zoom link will be sent to members at least 1 week before the meeting.
* A waiting room will be used, and remote attendees will be let into the meeting at the meeting start time. Please remember that the facilitator will be welcoming people in person and online and this may lead to short delays letting people into from the online waiting room.
* The panel facilitator will use NHS wifi to host the meeting using CoEL’s organisation Zoom account. They will hotspot from their work mobile phone if there are any issues with the NHS wifi.
* If there are interruptions to the internet service, the facilitator will do their best to manage these as smoothly as possible. Please be patient as they try to restore the meeting. Conversations related to panel topics will pause between people who are attending in person to ensure remote attendees can access the discussions.
* ELCH meeting rooms provide access to technology that supports hybrid meetings. The camera and speakers track the person who is speaking. If you are attending the meeting online, please alert us as soon as possible if this does not seem to be working and you are unable to engage with the meeting.
* If you are attending the meeting remotely:
  + please support the meeting facilitator by using the raise hand reaction in zoom, or by physically raising your hand if you would like to speak.
  + please do not use the chat box to communicate with the group unless instructed to do so, as this will not be monitored throughout meetings (this is to ensure the facilitator can focus on those who are speaking).
  + please be mindful of your environment – please do not have anything private within view.
  + please ensure that no-one else is present in the space where you are participating in the meeting.

**We also wish to remind everyone that:**

* You can keep your mobile phone on during a meeting, but please take calls outside of the room so that you have the privacy you need and the group is not interrupted.
* The Panel is open to members only. Please do not bring anyone who is not a member. If you know of another carer who would like to join, please ask them to contact Gemma on 07483052182 or [gemma@coel.org.uk](mailto:gemma@coel.org.uk).

If you think that any of these points are not being followed, please speak to the panel facilitator.