

# THINK CARER

## RESOURCE PACK FOR GP PRACTICES

This resource pack has been designed by Carers of East Lothian Carers Panel - a group of carers and former carers established to strengthen the collective voice of carers in East Lothian.

[www.coel.org.uk](http://www.coel.org.uk)



**Carers of  
East Lothian**

Supporting people who  
care for family and friends



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## **Additional:**

- Suite of Carers of East Lothian leaflets
- Hospital Discharge Leaflet – Carers of East Lothian and East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
- Adult Carer Support Plan Leaflet - Carers of East Lothian and East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
- Questionnaire for completion and stamped addressed envelope

Dear Practice Staff,

I hope that you do not mind me requesting that you take some time to consider the issues and solutions offered in this pack. It is my experience that it definitely will save your practice time and resources in the long term.

I am a full-time unpaid carer for my husband. It took me a long time to recognise myself as such and it was only when I felt that I was drowning in anxiety and depression that I reached out to my GP, who was very supportive and suggested some mental health support from the CWIC team, for which I was very grateful. However, it was another worker from an outside peripheral agency who recognised my symptoms of distress from a brief engagement with her and gave me the number for Carers of East Lothian with the suggestion that I call them.

Once I engaged with CoEL, I immediately felt understood and supported. This was a lesson for me, and it may be for some of your staff team, to learn that there is a super local resource, staffed by a team of specialist support workers. I had struggled for over a year, blinded by my own determination to just get on with it, feeling very isolated, powerless and invisible.

However, having got support from a CoEL support worker, I began to sort out my priorities and I am now in a much better place, mentally, physically and socially, while my husband has gained a better carer. I am so passionate about what the CoEL team have done for me and can do for others that I am now on the Carers' Panel and I am a member of the Board, so my advocacy is sincere.

Referral to CoEL's support team is as simple as giving an unpaid carer a phone number or by making an email referral, with the carer's consent. It is a national target to identify and support all unpaid carers. Most importantly, it will free up time and resources which could be deployed elsewhere. The carer and the cared for will both benefit.

Yours sincerely,

Dorothy Bartholomew, Carer



## **Carers of East Lothian**

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### **Information Sheet**

- The East Lothian Carers Strategy outlines that there are an estimated 20,000 carers locally looking after a friend, neighbour or relative. It is estimated that there are between 700,00 and 800,000 carers in Scotland.
- Cared for people are people of any age who could not manage to live independently or whose health or wellbeing would deteriorate without this help.
- The labour that unpaid carers in Scotland provide in their role saves the economy £15.9 billion each year. (This figure comes from a report “Valuing Carers: 2022, Scotland” by Carers Scotland and the Centre for Care, which analyses statistics from Scotland’s Census 2022.)
- There are a variety of specific rights and entitlements that carers hold. However, it is common for individuals in caring roles not to identify themselves as carers. This lack of recognition can prevent them from seeking the help and support they are entitled to.
- Professionals can play a key role in actively informing individuals in caring roles about their rights. Raising awareness helps ensure carers can access the support they need, protecting their wellbeing and enabling them to continue in their role sustainably.

Please see page 3-4 for an outline of carers rights and relevant information relating to these rights for carers in East Lothian.



## **Carers in Scotland have the right to:**

- **Access a local information and advice service.**

The local service is Carers of East Lothian who are based at East Lothian Community Hospital. Please see page 5 for an outline of a carers support journey with Carers of East Lothian.

- **Request an Adult Carer Support Plan if over the age of 18.**

All unpaid carers have the right to request an Adult Carer Support Plan. The plan is an opportunity for the carer to express their feelings and needs as a carer and talk about how caring affects them. The aim is to find out what impact caring responsibilities are having on their life and to explore the support that can be offered.

Carers can complete the form with the help of a Carer Support Worker at Carers of East Lothian, with help from the Local Authority (East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership) or by themselves. The process starts with a conversation about caring and sets out the carers' support needs and personal outcomes. It also covers emergency and future care planning and whether support should be provided as a break from caring. If you would like more information on the adult carer support plan, please contact Carers of East Lothian on [centre@coel.org.uk](mailto:centre@coel.org.uk)

- **Be included in the hospital discharge of the person they care for.**

It is the responsibility of the health board discharging the person being cared for to involve the carer in the hospital discharge process.

Carers of East Lothian have 2 Hospital Link Carer Support Workers who are based on ward 3,4,5 and 6 of East Lothian Community Hospital who can provide support to carers in this setting.

- **Be consulted on services for them or the person they are caring for.**

Local Authorities and Health Boards must take steps to involve carers and carer representatives in the planning and evaluation of services that support carers.

- **Request a Young Carer Statement if under the age of 18.**

Young carers or family members can make contact with the East Lothian Council Young Carers Service via [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/young-carers](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/young-carers)

- **Access additional support if they have eligible needs.**

If an Adult Carer Support Plan identifies needs that cannot be met by universally available support, carers may be eligible for additional support.

- **The right to up to 5 days unpaid leave.**

The Carers Leave Act came into effect in 2024. This law enables carers to gain access to specific employment rights regarding taking time off work.

- **The right to a free flu vaccine.**

Carers are eligible for a free flu vaccination through the NHS if they receive a carers' allowance or are the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if the carer gets sick.

- **The right to a break**

The Care Reform Bill passed in the Scottish Parliament in June 2025. It marked a pivotal moment for Scotland's unpaid carers as it passed into law the legal right to a break from caring.

The bill received royal assent in July 2025 and work is underway on the implementation plans for the right to a break.



## Carers of East Lothian

Supporting people who care for family and friends

### Carers of East Lothian

Carers of East Lothian is the local information and advice service for unpaid carers. The service can provide anything from a bit of practical advice when needed through to much more support for carers who are struggling to cope with the physical and emotional demands of caring. They offer a variety of support for carers, including 1:1 carer support, information around welfare rights, training, events and peer support groups. On page 6 of this pack, you will find a diagram detailing the support journey for a carer referred to Carers of East Lothian.

#### Carer of East Lothian Contact Details:

 Carers of East Lothian  
East Lothian Community Hospital  
Alderston Road,  
Haddington, EH41 3PF

 [centre@coel.org.uk](mailto:centre@coel.org.uk)  
 01316650135  
 [www.coel.org.uk](http://www.coel.org.uk)

#### To make a referral for support for a carer from Carers of East Lothian:

Carers can ask for our support directly by a self-referral or a friend, family member or professional can refer them to the organisation. Please use the link below where you will find the referral page on the Carers of East Lothian website. You will need to choose either the self-referral tab or the professional referral tab depending on who is completing the referral. Please fill in as many fields as possible.

Please note, while all information Carers of East Lothian receive will be treated confidentially, information via the on-line form is sent via the internet so they cannot guarantee it's confidentiality. If you are concerned about this, please telephone the CoEL office between 10 am and 4pm to make the referral.

[www.coel.org.uk/contact-us/online-referral-form](http://www.coel.org.uk/contact-us/online-referral-form)



**Carer Identified and referred to Carers of East Lothian**



\*Carer can refer themselves for support or a professional can refer them.

**1:1 Carer Support Work**

**Carers' support needs established and appropriate support offered.**

- Support could involve:
- Completion of Adult Carer Support Plan
  - Information and advice about health and social care services
  - Support with housing concerns or adaptations
  - Planning for the future.
  - Support around employment issues.
  - Emotional Support.
  - Onward referral to any other CoEL service.
- \*Carer support work can be delivered in person at venue of choice/ over the telephone.

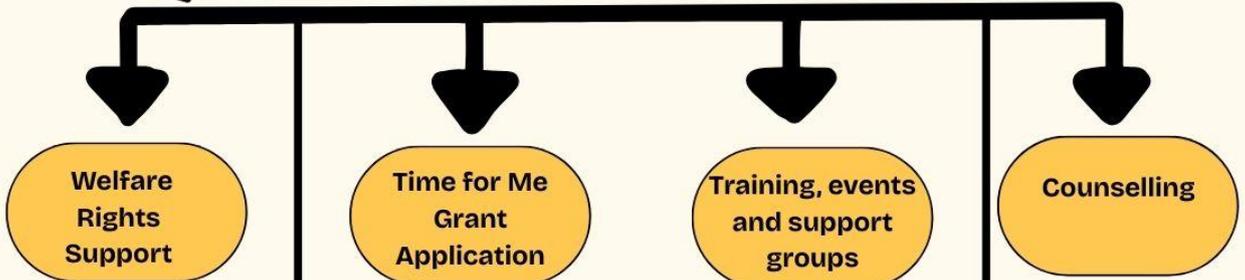
Carer could be offered any of the following support options.

If information and advice is critically required, carer will be contacted on the day or next day.

1:1 Carer Support Work (There is a waiting list for this service - urgent needs will be prioritised)

Or if 1:1 Carer Support Work is not required...  
Onward referral to any other CoEL service.

# Support Journey



**Welfare Rights Support**

A specialist worker providing support with:

- understanding financial options and benefit entitlements
- completing forms
- advice around income maximisation
- advice around employment and caring
- applications to trusts and grant-making bodies for essential items.

\*There may be a waiting list for this support.

**Time for Me Grant Application**

Small grants funded by the Scottish Government and East Lothian Council.

Carers can apply for financial support to enable them to enjoy some time for themselves and have a break from caring responsibilities.

A specialist worker can support carers with application process if needed.

\*Waiting list in operation.

**Training, events and support groups**

Programme of events and training runs all year round for carers. Topics are defined by demand. All designed to support carers to care confidently.

A programme of regular support groups runs around the county.

\*Training and events can be accessed immediately. There may be a waiting list for some carer support groups.

**Counselling**

- 1:1 counselling service for carers.
- Sessions are delivered by fully trained, volunteer counsellors.
- Programme overseen by CoEL's Counselling Service Manager.
- Up to 12 sessions.
- In person or online.

\*Waiting list in operation.

**Telephone Befriending**

Weekly telephone befriending sessions delivered by a trained volunteer from CoEL.

This service is for carers who are experiencing loneliness and/ or isolation.

\*There may be a waiting list for this support.

**Volunteering**

Volunteer and Training Coordinator offers opportunities for carers and former carers to volunteer with the organisation.

## Staff Training from Carers of East Lothian

### THINK CARER TRAINING SESSION

Do you come into contact with unpaid carers in your work? If so, this training session will provide you with up to date information on how to ensure they are getting the best support available to them.



#### SESSION CONTENT

- legislation and carers rights
- the challenges faced by carers and the potential impact of a caring role
- information about CoEL's services
- the benefits of involving carers as collaborators in care

Think Carer training sessions can be delivered on line or in person at a venue of your choice or at CoEL offices, East Lothian Community Hospital.

**Duration:** 45 mins - 1hr

If you would like to book a session for your team, please contact **Catherine Cain** on [Catherine.Cain@coel.org.uk](mailto:Catherine.Cain@coel.org.uk)



Would you benefit from a training session for your staff team? The training session will support your team to:

- feel more confident identifying unpaid carers
- understand the potential impact of a caring role
- understand up to date legislation around unpaid care and carers' rights
- have up to date knowledge about the support that Carers of East Lothian can offer to unpaid carers
- Identify a member of the practice as a 'Carer Champion' who can help share and co-ordinate information and liaise with CoEL

Carers of East Lothian can offer a 60-minute Think Carer training session that covers all of these topics. This can be delivered in person or online at a time of your choosing. You may wish to identify key staff to complete this session. Alternatively, if you have a time that your practice ordinarily engages in whole team training, Carers of East Lothian could come along to one of these sessions.

If you would like us to bring this training to your practice, please include this in the questionnaire at the end of this pack and return it to Carers of East Lothian in the stamped addressed envelope included OR contact Catherine on [Catherine.Cain@coel.org.uk](mailto:Catherine.Cain@coel.org.uk) or [centre@coel.org.uk](mailto:centre@coel.org.uk)



# Do you look after a family member or a friend?

## We are here to help

Carers of East Lothian supports people who provide unpaid care to others.

### What we offer

- + Experienced carer support workers and counsellors to talk to in confidence
- + Information on all aspects of social care and guidance on accessing other relevant services
- + Assistance with claiming welfare benefits
- + Help with setting up a Power of Attorney
- + Support to arrange breaks from caring
- + Carer support groups, workshops and social events
- + Opportunities to have a say in how local services are run

All of our services are free, confidential and are available to any carers over the age of 18.



If you would like to refer yourself or someone else for support, please scan this QR code...



## Quotes from carers about support they have received:

“I’ve received excellent support from CoEL and participated in wonderful activities. I’m now a volunteer and a member of the Carers Panel. I’ve no doubt CoEL have hugely contributed to me finally coming off antidepressants. GP surgeries signposting carers like me to CoEL can be an absolute lifeline.”

“It is not an exaggeration to say that getting in touch with CoEL saved my life, because they enabled me to see that I had given my life up, that my depression and anxiety were the normal results of intensively caring for someone else but they helped me to rebalance and refocus on my own needs too.

Support from CoEL allowed me to emotionally unburden myself for the first time and without feeling the guilt which had pervaded my close relationships.”

"The care and support I receive from CoEL allows me to handle my mental and physical wellbeing without having to take up valuable GP resources. "

“When my GP invited me to recognise myself as my husband’s carer – and handed me a CoEL leaflet, it felt like a lifeline that started to reunite me with myself.”

“Once I contacted CoEL and had an allocated support worker, I breathed a huge sigh of relief – she just got me – and there was a tangible upturn in my health and wellbeing.”



## Other Useful Information and Helpful Services for Carers

### Carers of East Lothian

 East Lothian Community Hospital  
Alderston Road  
Haddington  
EH413PF

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

 0131 665 0135

 [www.coel.org.uk](http://www.coel.org.uk)

### Young Carers

#### East Lothian Council Young Carers Service

There are also services in East Lothian for young carers. The East Lothian Council Young Carers Service employ Young Carer Youth Workers in schools. The service supports young carers to identify themselves, as well as to prepare their young carers statement. The service also run regular activities for young carers.

Young carers can complete a short questionnaire and someone from the service will get in contact with them to talk about local support: <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/young-carers>

#### East Lothian Young Carers (charity)

East Lothian Young Carers is a local charity established in 2002 to provide support to Young Carers aged 0 to 24 living in East Lothian.

They provide information, support and breaks from caring to young carers and their families.

 [www.eastlothianyoungcarers.org](http://www.eastlothianyoungcarers.org)



## **Other Useful Information and Helpful Services for Carers (ctd)**

### **Carer Support for South Asian Unpaid Carers in East Lothian**

Milan Senior Welfare Organisation offer support for 50+ older people from Indian Pakistani, Bangladeshi & Mauritian communities in Edinburgh and the Lothians. The organisation runs a support group for South Asian unpaid carers in East Lothian. If you would like to know more about this group, please contact Rukhsana Ali, Senior Day Care/ Carers Engagement Officer on [rukhsana@milanswc.org](mailto:rukhsana@milanswc.org)

### **Venturing Out**

Venturing Out run an adventure wellbeing group for unpaid carers. Activities include rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, paddleboarding and orienteering. Carers can register to join the group by emailing Claire Mackenzie on: [claire@venturingout.org.uk](mailto:claire@venturingout.org.uk)

### **NHS Education for Scotland training modules**

We would also like to signpost you to a variety of online learning resources from NHS Education for Scotland resources for health care professionals. These can be found on TURAS and include E-Learning modules on topics such as:

- Identifying unpaid carers
- Breaks for carers
- Equal Partners in Care
- Young carers

### **Carers ID Card**

An East Lothian carer ID card scheme will be launched in 2026 by East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership. Carers said that a carer ID card is important for three reasons:

1. **recognition:** carers can feel that places and services don't recognise their role and it would be helpful for them to have something to show that recognises the support they provide and encourages others to think carer
2. **in case of emergency:** carers worry about what might happen to the person they care for if something was to happen to them, the carer ID card will give two emergency contact numbers that should be used in case of emergency

## Other Useful Information and Helpful Services for Carers (ctd)

3. **creating a carer friendly community:** our local carer support organisations already have great relationships with many local businesses and carers would like to use their cards to access discounts or special offers

Young carers can already apply for a carer ID card by registering with the young carers service and letting them know they would like an ID card.

Please follow this link to find out more information:

[https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210558/social\\_care\\_and\\_health/12931/carers\\_identification\\_cards](https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210558/social_care_and_health/12931/carers_identification_cards)

### Digital version of this pack

You can find a digital version of this pack on the following page of the Carers of East Lothian website: <https://www.coel.org.uk/professionals/>