





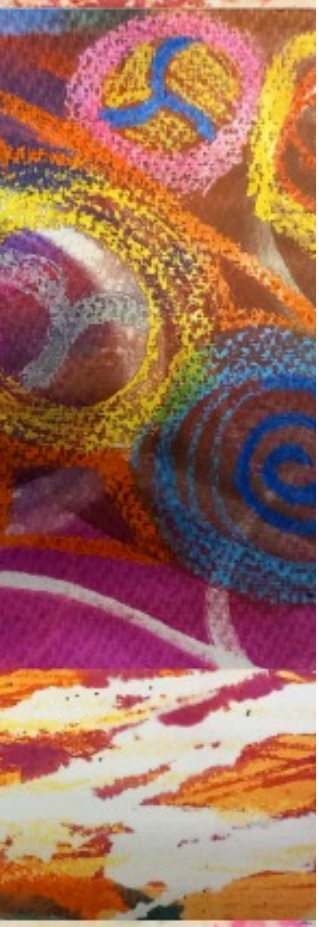


Carers of East Lothian

Supporting people who care for family and friends

ANNUAL SUMMARY

2025-26


Carers of East Lothian (CoEL) Annual Summary 2025/26

“The ongoing support of the CoEL workers [helped me] to rationalise, to demystify the maze of rules and regulations, and make me feel more like a person again.”

- We directly supported 1,568 individual carers over the year including 625 carers who were referred to us for the first time during the year.
- We signposted 1,021 carers to other organisations.
- At the end of the year, we were in contact with over 7,557 carers in total.
- We supported carers from across the whole of East Lothian for a wide range of reasons, with the most common being carer wellbeing, finance / benefits, short breaks / respite, and social care.

The Support we provide for carers:

We offer person-centred support to carers including:

- **One to one information, advice and emotional support** – for example linking an isolated parent carer with other parents or supporting carers to complete their Adult Carer Support Plan.

- **Time for Me**: small grants to support breaks from caring – we focus on helping carers take breaks from their caring role and last year we provided breaks to 344 carers through our Time for Me Fund, which is supported by both Shared Care Scotland and East Lothian Council.

- A range of **workshops, events and support groups** for carers attended by over 1497 carers over the year.

- **Legal Advice Clinics** offering free legal advice on a variety of issues for carers.

- **Welfare Rights Service** - We supported 432 carers, and the people they care for, with specific welfare benefit claims in the last financial year, with a total financial gain of £783,348.07

- **Counselling Service** – Our specialist counselling service offers carers the chance to explore and express the thoughts and feeling they have around their caring role, to support them to feel better able to cope. In 2025/26, we delivered 366 hours of counselling to 30 carers. 100% of people completing our feedback survey said that they would recommend the service.



- **Counselling Service** – we supported 2 students through their practical counselling placement to qualification. Funding from Shared Care Scotland enabled us to to increase accessibility for carers as well as wait times.

- Our **Carers' Panel** has continued to meet throughout the year. This group of carers and former carers come together regularly to discuss relevant issues and solutions. Much of their focus has been on improving professional awareness of unpaid care/ carer support and supporting identification of carers.

- **Think Carer** – We ran 8 training sessions with following attendees:

    - 21 mixed Health and Social Care Professionals
    - 18 Hospital Ward Volunteers (East Lothian Community Hospital
    - 12 staff from the Community Learning Disability Team
    - 60 1st year occupational therapy students at Queen Margaret University
    - 6 staff from North Berwick GP Practice

These sessions support professionals to recognise carers as equal partners, understand their rights and how they can access support.

- Our **social media** following and **mailing list** subscriptions continued to grow, ensuring we have a range of platforms through which to keep carers informed about our support services and other relevant information. Alongside word of mouth and our website, these channels help us reach and engage with carers effectively.

The outcomes from our support to carers:

Carers continue to tell us our support makes a real, positive difference for them.

- 87% of respondents said our support left them feeling more confident in their caring role
- 86% said they were better able to cope with their caring role
- 71% felt they had a better balance between caring and other areas of their life following our support.

New Projects and Services

We continued to receive 'Creative Breaks' funding via Shared Care Scotland, enabling our fabulous 'Care To Sing!' Choir to keep singing together on a weekly basis. 42 sessions were held over the year.

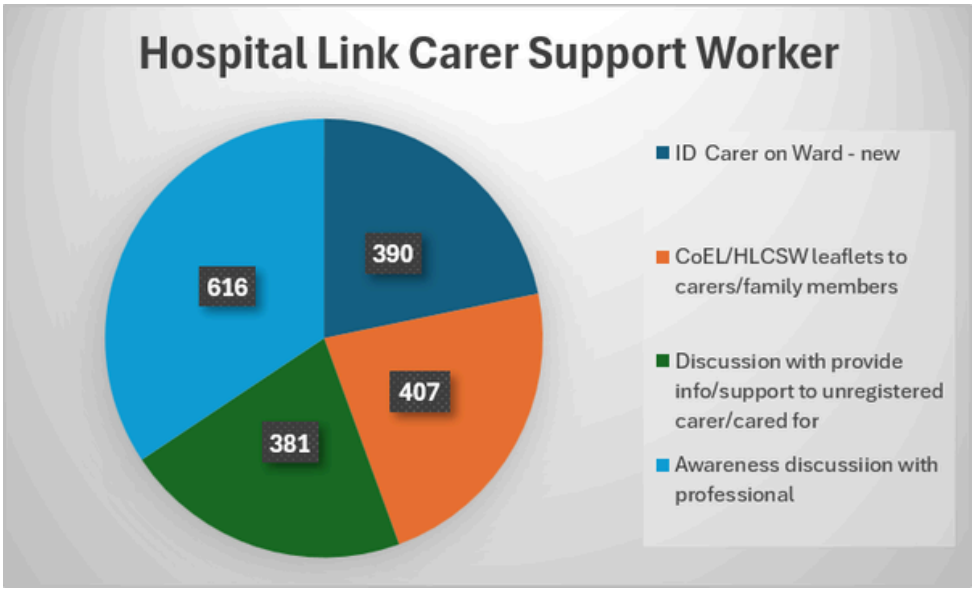
We continued our partnership with Art in Healthcare, who also received 'Creative Breaks' funding, to support monthly local and online art groups across the Lothians for carers with a monthly group operating in East Lothian.



Hospital Link Service

Following a highly successful pilot year, we secured the funding needed to keep this service operating. This continuity is all thanks to the generous support of the East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership for 2025–2026, and NHS Lothian Charities, who will be backing the project from 2026 through to 2028. This incredible support ensures we can keep providing dedicated care across Wards 3 and 4.

But the good news doesn't stop there! Thanks to extra funding from the East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership, we were also able to expand the service into Wards 5 and 6 and welcome an additional Hospital Link Carer Support Worker to the team at East Lothian Community Hospital. A graph demonstrating the breakdown of our work in the hospital link service is below:



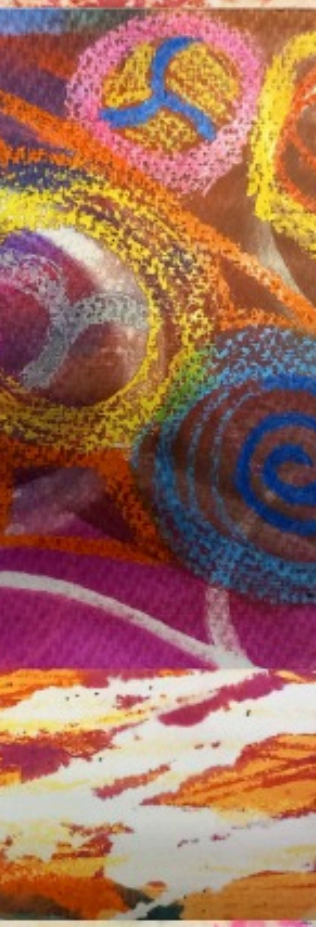
Men who care - Therapeutic Work

Following the initial 1-year pilot project we were successful in securing 4 years funding from the National Lottery Community Fund under the Fairer Life Chance Programme. The support group continues to expand, fostering deep friendships and resilient peer networks among male unpaid carers. The project combines peer support with input from a specialist support worker from Carers of East Lothian. Members have reported a significant boost in their overall confidence and emotional resilience.

The group have engaged in diverse positive activities together, ranging from cultural visits to New Hailes House and the Summerlee Heritage Museum to outdoor archery and bushcraft sessions.

“Time away from caring is invaluable and just meeting and talking to other guys in the same boat. Also, the adventures we’ve had have been fantastic”







Welfare Rights Accessibility Project

Starting on 1st March 2026, this project aims to support carers with a range of accessibility needs. The project offers clients an opportunity to have face-to-face visits or telephone calls, having smaller bite sized conversations. Using this approach, we are continuing to offer special benefits enquiries, benefit checks, welfare advice, eligibility checks, assisting in claims and reviews, and benefit gains and income maximisation.

Innovation and Improvement

This project started on 1st March 2026 and will lead the development and implementation of strategies, processes, and procedures to ensure that Carers of East Lothian delivers high-quality services for carers. Working closely with the new Carer Support and Caseload Manager, the role will review and enhance the carer pathway across the organisation, including the introduction and integration of digital technologies to improve efficiency and carers experience.

Our Financial Resources

Carers of East Lothian saw an overall increase in total income in 2025/26. Expenditure increased significantly as a result of spend of reserves brought forward from previous year and therefore there has been an overall reduction in reserves at the year end.

You can see our full Accounts on the governance and accounts section of our website here or just ask us for a copy.

EXCELLENCE FOR CARERS
Carers Trust Quality Award















CARER FEEDBACK

"I think that the service you provide is fantastic and the advice I've received has been really helpful."

"CoEL is an invaluable resource, that provides professional and caring support of high calibre."

"I am delighted to have a befriender who rings me once a fortnight for a supportive chat. I am also a member of the singing group which is great fun, good for the mind and body, and offers chat with others in a caring role."

"I really value the support I have received from the mental health carer support worker. She has been a real lifeline for me in times of acute stress"

"COEL has provided myself and my partner with invaluable support over the last 3 years, and we are incredibly grateful.
COEL is an efficient and excellently run organisation doing an invaluable job. We wouldn't have coped without them in the last few years. Thank you."

30 YEARS
Carers of East Lothian
Supporting people who care for family and friends

Photo credits: Mixed with some from Louise Anne Kennedy