**Important Information**



This document contains background information on:

* Carers Link
* The Breakthrough Project
* Our Location
* Equalities
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* **Coronavirus/Pandemic Response**

**About Carers Link**

For every eight people living in East Dunbartonshire, one person is a carer. A carer is a person who, without payment, provides regular help and support to a partner, relative, friend or neighbour, who could not manage without their help because of an illness (including mental health), addiction, frailty or disability. This includes parents of children with a disability or additional needs.

Carers Link began service delivery in September 2004 after several years of development. A history of our development can be found on our website www.carerslink.org.uk - our most recent Annual Report is also available to download. Since starting, we have supported over 5000 carers. During the course of the last year over 1,489 carers received support through at least one of our services. These services comprise of Advocacy, Information, Training and Support (both 1-1 and through a range of Groups) for any Carer. We also work with Young Adult Carers and Young Carers from age 8 upwards.

A Board of Management manages Carers Link through the Chief Executive Officer. The current Board comprises of 10 members and three-quarters of our Board Members are either carers or former carers in their own right. At time of writing there are 14 members of staff and almost all have current or former experience of caring. We are also supported by a team of over 50 volunteers.

Further information on Carers Link, our staffing structure, services and caring can be obtained from our website – [www.carerslink.org.uk](http://www.carerslink.org.uk)

**Breakthrough Project**

Carers provide care for a family member or friend who cannot manage without their support. They may care for the person as a result of illness (physical or mental ill health, substance abuse), specific condition, accident, disability or frailty. Caring can be rewarding, but can also be a huge responsibility. The Scottish Government stated that *“unpaid caring is a significant predictor of poor mental well-being”*; and in their State of Caring in Scotland 2018 report, Carers UK found that 75% of carers said they had suffered poor mental health as a result of caring, and 63% had suffered physical ill health. Many carers experience both.

Currently we play a key role in helping carers apply for much needed respite support, but we are powerless to help carers awarded respite with what can be one of the most difficult times and hardest decisions of their life. Supporting carers through the maze of obtaining and arranging overnight respite has made us acutely aware of how carers are struggling to understand the process and find the lack of support off-putting. As a carer said at a recent dementia group *“when it comes to respite we don’t have the time, energy or the knowledge to sort it. What we really need is a one stop shop. Someone to give us the “how to” about arranging it. Someone we can trust to provide us with all the details that will allow us to choose when and what works best for us”.*

The postholder will therefore become that one-stop shop, working with carers individually so that they can make informed decisions and choices on available support options and pathways, in particular accessing respite care. They will also co-ordinate the project network of Carer Cafes and support groups, offering peer support, social opportunities, information and importantly, a short break or time out from caring.

“Break Through” will:

* offer carers **a break through** attendance at a carer café. We will deliver a network of Carer Cafes, support groups and other social/information sharing opportunities. These will provide carers with a break from caring, but will also reduce isolation, build supportive friendships based on shared experience and facilitate exchanges of ideas, ‘tips’ or other useful information. The postholder and a volunteer(s) will be present to ensure that carers are welcomed to the group and involved in conversations. *Naturally, during the pandemic, these groups have moved online using ZOOM and via Closed Facebook Groups. The postholder will still be expected to develop and facilitate these groups as a means for keeping in touch should actual get-to-gethrs not be viable.*
* provide carers with a one stop shop for support, information and advice on caring for somene in its many forms. There are services and support available to carers, and to those that they care for, but many carers do not know what is available, and don’t know what they don’t know! The postholder at the Carer Cafes (see above) will pass relevant information on to group members, and will also be able to support individual carers as required, referring them to services provided by Carers Link or other organisations as appropriate. The information will support carers’ health and wellbeing and help make caring more sustainable, as well as to have a life alongside their caring role. This could be life-changing for some of our carers.
* help carers experiencing challenging circumstances **break through** perceived red tape relating to accessing respite or a short break through 1-1 support. The postholder will help carers plan for their respite and have support to select the best option for both them and the person they care for so that the outcome is beneficial to both. It will make the allocation of respite a positive experience rather than something that carers are unable to contemplate due to the additional work involved in making the arrangements. Recently an increasing number of carers have contacted us because they are struggling when they are awarded respite. Carers are advised that they have a certain amount of hours/days to use but, with the exception of day care arranged directly by social work, they are then expected to make enquiries and arrangements with potential providers without any guidance as to what is involved or even how or where to start.
* provide immediate support to carers faced with the agonising decision to have someone admitted to immediate respite in the case of an emergency, or where the decision has been made by medical staff that the person they look after cannot go home following a stay in hospital. This would greatly relieve the pressure on families involved and result in a better outcome for all.

**Our Location**

Carers Link is located in Milngavie Enterprise Centre on Ellangowan Road. The offices are less than five minutes’ walk from the pedestrian precinct of Milngavie centre and less than a ten-minute walk from the Railway Station and main bus stop. Milngavie itself is north of Glasgow and less than 5 miles from Glasgow’s Anniesland Cross.

Very limited parking is available at the Enterprise Centre; however, there is a large pay and display car park immediately opposite the offices. The rail service runs through Glasgow (including Partick, Anniesland, Westerton) and operates 3-4 times per hour. A train timetable is available from: www.scotrail.co.uk

The Enterprise Centre comprises 3 floors connected by lift, the upper 2 consisting of office space. Carers Link is based within 3 rooms on the first floor, consisting of the main open plan office, the CEO’s office and our own meeting/training room. The rest of the ground floor features meeting rooms, offices, washrooms (including wheelchair access) and reception area.

*Given current Pandemic Restrictions, our actual offices are closed and staff are required to work from home. We will discuss any individual needs that you may have to enable this. Moving forward, we envisage that all staff will work partly at home and partly in the office, so home working will remain a consideration.*

**Equalities**

The Enterprise Centre and Carers Link’s own offices are accessible to wheelchair users. There is a lift to all floors and wheel-chair accessible washroom on the ground floor.

Carers Link endeavours to hold all events in public buildings that are accessible to people with mobility problems or who use wheel chairs. However, our services are offered on an outreach basis and sometimes require visits to other venues or homes that may not be fully accessible.

Should the successful candidates have other requirements related to a disability or further mobility issues, we will work with them and the Access to Work/Disability Employment Advisor to improve accessibility.

**Key Terms and Conditions**

A full staff handbook is available for staff. The following is a summary of key terms:

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| Hours of work: | 35 hours per week. |
| Holidays: | The leave year runs January – December. Within a full year, full-time staff receive 32 days comprising 28 flexible days (Annual Leave & Public Holiday Allowances) and 4 fixed days (Christmas & New Year). A pro-rata equivalent is provided for part years. |
| Salary Payments: | Salaries are paid on a 4-weekly basis |
| Pension: | 5% pension of salary paid direct to personal pension (see policy for full details) |
| Probationary Period: | 6 months with formal reviews after 4 weeks, 3 months and 6 months |
| Travel: | Mileage is currently reimbursed at 45p per mile. |
| Screening: | The post is subject to two satisfactory references and Disclosure/PVG Membership. |

**Coronavirus/Pandemic Response**

Carers Link started moving to remote working from Monday 16th March so that all staff and volunteers were working from home by the end of the week (20th), just a few days before 'lockdown' was officially announced. Previously Carers Link provided support in a range of traditional ways tailored to the individual but usually via telephone or home/office visits for 1-1 support and via social groups/training sessions. Naturally this as changed following restrictions and social distancing.

Luckily our database had been moved to the cloud in 2018 and fortunately also, our staff team was supported by around 25 volunteers who provided telephone support. We were therefore quickly able to make contact with all our regular carers. Volunteers are contacting their usual carers and also those wanting more frequent calls due to isolation. This has freed staff time to focus on new carers, carers at risk (protection issues or risk of breakdown in ability to care), and the newly bereaved.

However once the initial couple of weeks had passed, we turned attention back to group support options – albeit online. We have now reintroduced some training course such as Mindfulness via Zoom and also providing a range of social groups for young carers and adult carers via Zoom, What's App and Facebook. One exciting aspect due to all these changes has been our move from monthly 'podcast' to weekly. Giving carers access to information in a completely different and more user-friendly means. As well as our website, these are also available via Spotify, ITunes and our local radio station.

We were fortunate to have a small project called ‘Switched On’ funded through a private donor to help older carers get online (10 hrs per week). Although computer classes are widely available in libraries etc., carers even before lockdown were not able to leave the home to attend. Through this project we provided Volunteer Tech Buddies to visit the carer to assist. This has obviously changed to support via telephone! There is so much activity available online but too many are being left behind and made even more isolated in terms of socialising and accessing information. We are therefore 'stepping up' our support and have introduced a Tech Helpline for carers so that they can access our online activities.

In essence, our support is continuing and indeed expanding - however it is all being done via digital means or by telephone. Amazingly, we are also sustaining the high level demand for our services that we were already providing – the difference between April/May this year and last year are negligible in terms of contacts made and new referrals. The key difference is in the complexity of support and high level of grief and trauma shared by Covid-19 bereaved carers. Amazing because our normal routes of referral (social work, GP, community health workers) are occupied elsewhere and the team of staff/volunteers are still adjusting to our new way of life. We have all been part of a catastrophic event - everything went up in the air and is still coming down – so to be delivering business as usual we consider to be high achievement.