

Midlothian Carer Support Practitioner (Welfare Rights)

POST	Midlothian Carer Support Practitioner (Welfare Rights) (2 posts)
EMPLOYER	VOCAL – Voice of Carers Across Lothian
SALARY	SJC scale SCP50, £14.91 - £27,986 per annum (pro rata) VOCAL will match up to 6% pension contribution 32 days paid leave plus six fixed public holidays (pro rata)
HOURS	Post 1: 21 hours per week over 3 days with occasional evening and weekend work Post 2: 21 hours per week over 3 days with occasional evening and weekend work Note: Flexibility of hours and days can be considered.
LOCATION	The postholder will be working across Midlothian from VOCAL's Carers Centre at Eskbank, with occasional meetings in Edinburgh

Purpose of the post

The postholder will support unpaid carers to access person-centred information, advice and support with a specific focus on income maximisation, money advice and welfare benefits. In addition, the postholder will also support carers to access a range of additional interventions and services to achieve agreed personal outcomes.

Improved outcomes for carers

The post-holder will contribute to Midlothian's ten carer outcomes and undertake carer evaluation to ensure carers report:

- Maintaining my health and wellbeing
- A life of my own
- Changing relationships
- Feeling financially secure
- My choices in caring, including the limits of caring
- Feeling informed, equipped and safe in my caring role
- Feeling confident and able to continue in my caring role
- Feeling actively involved in shaping support
- Quality of life for the person I care for

- Plans for the future care of the person I care for

VOCAL's approach to carer support

VOCAL supports carers using conversational techniques and an asset based approach. This supports carers to identify and build on their skills and knowledge and the connections and resources within families and communities, rather than focusing on problems and deficits.

VOCAL applies solution focussed and outcomes based practice across all carer support and interventions. This supports carers to reflect and identify areas for improvement, change and prioritisation. This approach recognises that carers are the experts in their situation and places them 'in the driving seat'. It allows carers to shape the content and nature of the support provided, with VOCAL staff acting as knowledgeable facilitators.

Practice expectations

Carer support is time limited and offered on a flexible, person-centred basis through personal contact by appointment, telephone, video, email and web-based tools. Staff are required to manage their own caseload, ensuring that client support is structured, with baseline assessment, support, outcome review and closure.

SMART outcomes are identified at the beginning of carer support. Personalised solution-focussed support and information follow. The conclusion of support is planned, includes a review of personal outcomes and leaves the carer empowered to move forward independently.

Staff are responsible for ensuring their work with carers is methodically and accurately recorded. All contact with carers is recorded in real time, electronically on a web based case management system.

VOCAL has defined essential data which is captured and includes demographic information and baseline, key actions and review information indicating the carer's progress to their self-defined outcomes.

Building carers' digital confidence and skills is an integral part of supporting carers to continue in their caring role, and to build and maintain a life outside the caring role. Digital tools also offer flexible and creative options when tailoring and delivering person-centred support for carers. VOCAL staff are expected to use a range of web based tools and social media to support and engage with carers, and to encourage carers to develop new skills.

Person Specification

The postholder is expected to evidence:

Knowledge

- A sound knowledge of health and social care issues, the needs and situation of carers and a demonstrated commitment to supporting carers
- Extensive knowledge of welfare rights and benefits entitlements for carers, older people, children and people with disabilities or long term conditions
- Experience of welfare rights work and supporting the completion of applications in order to access a wide range of benefits and funds, this should include paper and online applications

- A good knowledge of how the statutory, voluntary and private sectors work and an ability to undertake outcome-focused networking with other agencies and professionals
- A good understanding of equality and diversity issues and a commitment to supporting people from marginalised groups
- A sound knowledge of health and social care issues, the needs and situation of carers and a demonstrated commitment to supporting carers

Skills

- Excellent communication skills and ability and willingness to use social media and web-based tools
- Good listening, verbal and written skills with ability to write accurate case notes, applications and reports
- Ability to deal with carers, professionals and members of the public in a sensitive and person-centred manner
- Proven ability of organising, prioritising and managing own work

Experience

- Experience of working with carers
- Experience in welfare rights and benefits work, including completing benefit checks
- Experience in working in a person-centred manner
- Experience of brokering support from range of sources
- Experience of maintaining detailed electronic client records
- Experience using Microsoft 365 and web browsers on both desktop and mobile devices

Desirable

- Knowledge and experience of wider income maximisation issues
- Knowledge and/or experience of supporting clients to appeal decisions
- Experience in recognising debt issues and signposting for support accordingly
- Experience of supporting clients to access hardship/ welfare grants and loans
- Experience of solution focussed client practice
- Experience of using person centred tools or tools for care planning
- Some experience in group work or training
- Educational qualifications which may include qualifications in counselling or person-centred training, community development, adult education, social work, education to university degree level, or other relevant qualifications.
- Given the geography of Midlothian a current driving license and access to a car are desirable

Job Description

Carer identification

- To assist with the identification of carers by working with health and social care services and other welfare rights agencies to establish simple and effective systems for this purpose
- To receive referrals for carers from health and social care staff, community care staff and from any local agencies, including self-referrals

Carer support

- Through a mix of one to one and group support, the post holder is required to support a minimum of 150 carers per annum and have an open case load of up to 20 carers at any given time
- Support carers to access person centred information, advice and support which is outcome-focused and sensitive to their particular caring situation
- Support carers to maximise their income by accessing the full range of welfare benefits available to them and people they care for
- Identify, plan and broker person-centred care solutions by navigating the statutory systems, the use of spot purchase budgets and applications to trusts
- Provide one to one income maximisation support to carers through the delivery of weekly surgeries
- Support carers to access and complete Adult Carer Support Plans
- Keep VOCAL staff informed of any changes to the welfare rights system
- Contribute to training and events for carers across Midlothian

Carer engagement

- Support carers to participate in consultation and planning structures within Midlothian
- Support local developments of carer support services
- Inform and consult carers on relevant issues by assisting in the organisation of carer events and the production of 'Midlothian Carers News'

Monitoring and evaluating carer outcomes

- Comply with VOCAL's casework model and outcomes focused working, specifically the use of VOCAL's web based case management system used to shape casework and measure impact.
- Be responsible for the accurate and timely recording of all carer contact and casework
- Assist in producing statistical information on carer support and income maximisation

General Duties

As a member of the Carer Support Team, the postholder will be expected to consistently and effectively perform a number of general duties:

- Work with and support any volunteers assigned to facilitate the work of the postholder
- Comply with Carer Centre policies and procedures such as confidentiality policy, telephone and recording procedures, lone working policies, etc
- Comply with and contribute to VOCAL's work of continuous quality improvement
- Participate in VOCAL staff team meetings and local planning groups as required
- Carry out other non-recurring duties as arise from time to time, and occasionally help cover carer centre duties during the absence of team members.
- Participate in the Duty rota as part of the wider Carer Support Team

Accountability, Management and Development

The postholder will benefit from a structured induction programme within the first month of appointment, followed by a six months probation period.

The post holder will ultimately be accountable to the Board of Directors. For line management, supervision and support the post holders will be answerable to the Senior Carer Support Practitioner, VOCAL Midlothian.

VOCAL acknowledges its responsibility to help identify training needs of staff and to allow reasonable time and resources for staff training, where such training furthers the duties and responsibilities of the post.

Emphasis is placed on team accountability and mutual support.

The post holder will be based at the VOCAL Midlothian Carers Centre, but will be expected to carry out a range of duties at different locations in Midlothian, with occasional meetings in Edinburgh.

The post holder will be expected to carry out the duties of this post with due regard to Equal Opportunities and non-discriminatory practice.

Conditions of Service

The posts are initially advertised at 21 hours per week over 3 days. There can be some flexibility over the distribution of hours which will form the normal working week.

The post holder qualifies for 32 days annual leave and statutory holidays on a pro rata basis.

The employer is committed to meet a 6% pension contribution.