Carer Engagement Officer

**POST** Carer Engagement Officer (0.8 FTE)

**EMPLOYER** VOCAL

**SALARY** £29,390 (pro rata)

VOCAL will match up to 6% pension contribution

**HOURS** 28 hours per week with some evening and weekend work; 32 days paid leave plus 6 statutory holidays (pro rata)

**LOCATION** The postholder will be working across Edinburgh based at VOCAL Carer Centre.

**Purpose of the post**

The postholder will support carers contribute to the design and review of carer support across Edinburgh. The role involves developing support to mental health providers to engage effectively with their carer community, obtaining, collating and disseminating views of carers across Edinburgh. It also includes working with VOCAL Edinburgh carer support team to enable more effective engagement with carers to support their participation.

The postholder will be part of the Edinburgh Carer Support Team and will play a key role in developing VOCAL Edinburgh’s approach to carer engagement, utilising a range of participatory and co-design methods to create an ethos of active carer involvement.

This post is funded through the Thrive collaborative of the Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership. The contract began on 1 December 2020, initially for five years with a possible extension for a further three years.

**Improved outcomes for carers**

The postholder will contribute to the following outcomes for carers, with a particular focus on improving carer confidence to shape services and support:

Carers will report

* being better informed about issues linked to their caring role
* improved confidence in their ability to shape services and support
* improved confidence in managing their caring role
* improved physical and mental wellbeing
* improved confidence in their ability to deal with the changing relationships
* improved economic wellbeing
* improved social wellbeing
* improved personal safety

# VOCAL’s approach to carer support

VOCAL supports carers using conversational techniques that support an asset based approach and build resilience. We support 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 focused and outcomes based practice across all carer support and interventions, supporting 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**

The postholder will work to provide a central point of contact for carer engagement in the design, delivery and review of mental health services across Edinburgh. Drawing on their participatory skills, they will co-design a range of methods to enable carers to easily offer their views on mental health provision across Edinburgh. They will utilize their volunteer management experience to recruit, train and support a group of carer engagement volunteers to support this project.

This will involve:

1. Development, analysis and dissemination of digital, paper based and face to face opportunities for carers e.g. provision of locality based consultations, postcard returns, digital access such as on-line polls and use of videos.

In turn, findings regarding how to effectively involve carers, and issues raised, will be developed into information via briefings and reports which will be disseminated widely via mixed media methods.

1. Development of a bespoke resource to Thrive providers enabling them to better engage with carers involved with their services. This will allow an independent way of obtaining carer feedback as part of the service development and review lifecycle with recommendations given to providers as to how to better engage carers in future. This service will enable specific carer feedback to be obtained for individual services looking to engage with carers more effectively.
2. Working with VOCAL carer support workers to enable them to capture carer views of services, record unmet needs and identify the extent to which carers believe their ability to shape services has improved.
3. Provision of basic carer support to carers, with onward referral to further support, where required.

Person Specification

The postholder is expected to evidence:

# Knowledge

* A sound knowledge of health and social care issues and structures, particularly regarding the needs and situation of people with mental health conditions and their carers and a demonstrated commitment to supporting carers
* Working knowledge of participatory approaches, including practices, standards and policy
* A good understanding of what is necessary for a carer to be able to contribute their views effectively and how to facilitate this
* A good knowledge of how the statutory, voluntary and private sectors work and an ability to undertake outcome-focused networking with other agencies and practitioners
* A good understanding of equality and diversity issues and a commitment to supporting people from marginalised groups

**Skills**

* Excellent interpersonal and conversational skills that allow effective communication with all
* Participatory and co-design skills and experience, enabling effective involvement of members of the public
* The ability to listen effectively, understand needs, research and present options
* Ability to deal with carers, practitioners and members of the public in a sensitive and person-centred manner
* Good literacy and writing skills with ability to write accurate case notes and reports
* Ability to work collaboratively to coproduce positive outcomes in a timely manner
* Skills and ability and willingness to use social media and web-based tools
* Proven ability of organising, prioritising and managing own work
* Effective research skills and ability to effectively disseminate findings

**Experience**

* Experience of person centred outcomes focused work
* Experience of participatory, coproduction and involvement methods
* Volunteer management e.g. recruitment, training and support
* Experience in delivering group work or training
* Experience of research or monitoring/evaluation and summarising complex data

Experience of maintaining detailed electronic records

Experience of working effectively in a team

Experience using Outlook, Word and Excel and other software on both desktop and mobile devices

**Qualifications**

* 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.

**Desirable**

* Project management or coordination skills
* Experience of working with carer or mental health service
* Experience of working in voluntary sector support services
* Experience of solution focussed practice
* Presentation skills

Job Description

**Carer identification**

* To assist with the identification of carers by working with primary and acute health and social care practitioners to establish simple and effective systems for this purpose
* To establish and manage systems encouraging carers to participate, including receipt of referrals from primary and acute health care staff, community care staff and from any local agencies, including self-referrals
* To work with carer support team colleagues to identify relevant carers, develop skills in encouraging carer participation and record unmet needs
* To participate in a number of activities to raise awareness around both carers and participation in a variety of settings e.g. within mental health or community settings, relevant networks or through the media.

**Carer engagement and support**

* To co-design and deliver a range of mechanisms and promote carer engagement across and within mental health services
* To recruit, train and support a group of approximately 10 carer engagement volunteers and actively pursue opportunities for their involvement in mental health services
* Devise a rolling training programme to upskill carer engagement volunteers to perform evaluation activities and undertake carer consultations
* Work with practitioners to identify carer engagement opportunities and support volunteers to work alongside mental health providers to engage their carer community
* Collate and disseminate findings from engagement activities
* Produce regular articles and reports on carer engagement in VOCAL publications such as on the website and ‘Carers News’ and for a variety of partner communication activities
* To provide basic carer support to carers presenting as in urgent need of support and to actively refer onwards for carer support as required

**Monitoring and evaluating carer outcomes**

* Comply with VOCAL’s practitioners’ framework and casework model, specifically the use of the Carer Outcomes Evaluation tool used to shape casework and measure impact
* Be responsible for the accurate and timely recording of all carer contact and casework on VOCAL’s web based case management system,
* Produce statistical information on carer feedback, unmet needs and carer outcomes

**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:

* To work with and support development of volunteering approaches at VOCAL, liaising with others who manage volunteers.
* Comply with Carer Centre policies and procedures such as data protection and confidentiality, 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 planning meetings
* 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.

##### 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 postholder will be answerable to a Senior Carer Support Worker.

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 Edinburgh Carers Centre, but will be expected to carry out a range of duties at different locations in Edinburgh, with occasional full team meetings in Midlothian.

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 post is initially advertised at 28 hours per week over 4 days. There may 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 6 statutory UK holidays on a pro rata basis.

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

VOCAL offers childcare vouchers and a Cycle to Work Scheme.

The postholder will be expected to become a member of the Protection for Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme (Adults).