



Annual Review

April 2004 - March 2005

HISTORY

2001 - Funding awarded from East Dunbartonshire Council Social Work Dept to Council for Voluntary Services (EDCVS) to research support to Carers within voluntary sector, identify gaps in services and make recommendations.

Development Worker employed to carry out research and facilitate objectives.

MAY 2002 - EDCVS Carers Organisations Development Project Report published and circulated. Report recommends single organisation to provide support and services to Carers throughout East Dunbartonshire.

Steering Group established by local Carers and officers/staff of local services/organisations with an interest in carer support to develop Area Wide Carers Project.

AUTUMN/WINTER 2002 - EDC approve proposal of independent organisation to provide support services to Carers throughout East Dunbartonshire. The new body becomes known as Carers Link.

Steering Group formalise as a Management Committee with office bearers, bank account and start work on constitution to apply for charitable status.

East Dunbartonshire Council provide funding for a 6-month Development Worker post to provide support to the Steering Group and develop Carers Link to the stage of being ready to deliver services to Carers.

SPRING 2003 - Development Worker starts employment in March and initial six-month business plan established. Proposed Strategy for East Dunbartonshire Council submitted.

WINTER 2003/SPRING 2004

- Joint Carers Strategy written and subsequently ratified by EDC
- Funding awarded by EDC
- Funding Application to Big Lottery successful
- Premises chosen and CEO appointed
- Final 'start-up' phase of development begins

AUTUMN/WINTER 2004

- Carers Link moves into new Enterprise Centre in Milngavie
- New employees start work
- Carers Link 'opens' to start service delivery in September

WINTER 2004/SPRING 2005

Official Launch held in January 2005

"A breakthrough in partnership working between social work and the voluntary sector"

SUE BRUCE
then Strategic Director
now Chief Executive of
East Dunbartonshire
Council

CHAIR'S REPORT

This is our first Annual Report, another key milestone in the relatively young history of Carers Link.

Our launch in January, and AGM in September 2005, are further milestones marking points on a journey that began back in 2002 with the formation of a steering group of local individuals and organisations sharing an interest in building better services for Carers. This shared interest was the start of genuine partnership working between Carers, the local voluntary sector, Greater Glasgow NHS and East Dunbartonshire Council. Joint working continues at both operational and strategic levels, and some broad and strong partnerships are beginning to emerge.

These important milestones are ones that we couldn't have reached without the commitment, energy and industry invested by a lot of people. I thank the Board of Management for their time, experience and commitment and also all the past members of the Carers Link Steering Group, from whom our current Board has evolved.

I also extend the Board's thanks and appreciation to our very industrious staff team. Our Chief Executive, Jennifer, has been with us for over two years and has been a key architect not only in Carers Link's evolution but also in the development of the Joint Carers Strategy. In August 2004 we recruited the rest of the staff team: Moira, Neil and Sharon. They have certainly risen to the challenges before them. The hard work and enthusiasm of all the staff team are significant to the impact that Carers Link is making.

We are also grateful to all those who have shown their support by becoming members and, although our team of 8 volunteers did not begin until after the period of this Annual Report, their eagerness and contribution to our success must also be mentioned.

Finally, I would also like to thank East Dunbartonshire Council, Greater Glasgow NHS and the Big Lottery (formerly the Community Fund) for their financial support of Carers Link.

It is enormously satisfying and fulfilling for everyone involved to see an idea borne out of significant need now come to fruition. We now have a new organisation and new services which are already making a significant difference to the lives of Carers.

David Delaney
Chairperson

"I am very proud of what Carers Link has achieved in such a short time and look forward to future successes..."

DAVID DELANEY
Chairperson

LAUNCHING CARERS LINK

Friday 28th January 2004 was an important date for the Carers of East Dunbartonshire, ending a week of open days with the official launch of Carers Link.

In East Dunbartonshire, one person in eight is a family or 'informal' Carer - someone who looks after a member of their family, or a friend or neighbour who cannot manage without help because of an illness (including mental health), addiction, frailty or disability. However, most people don't even think of themselves as 'Carers', they are simply looking after family or friends out of love or sense of 'duty'. As a result, many go without any other support.

It is the aim of Carers Link to provide support and advice to Carers in the local area to enable them to have the best quality of life for themselves within their caring role.

With this in mind, open days for Carers preceded the formal Launch. These days in Kirkintilloch and Milngavie were designed to showcase for Carers the services and support available to them from Carers Link and from some of the other local organisations with whom we work in partnership.

The Launch took place at Milngavie Enterprise Centre where Carers Link have their office, and was attended by nearly 70 delegates including John Lyons, MP at the time for Strathkelvin and Bearsden, MSP Dr Jean Turner, and MSP Des McNulty from Clydebank and Milngavie constituency. Also in attendance were local councillors, including Provost Pat Steel and Councillor Fiona Risk who - as Convener of the Social Services Committee - 'officially launched' Carers Link.

There was also strong support and representation from many health and social work professionals, local and national charities and from Carers themselves.



"No matter a person's walk in life they can find themselves in circumstances that make them vulnerable. That is why we need organisations like Carers Link."

GORDON THOMSON
EDCVS Chairperson,
speaking at the
Carers Link Launch



Guest Speakers included David Delaney, Chair of Carers Link and Gordon Thomson, Chair of East Dunbartonshire Council for Voluntary Services, both of whom spoke positively about the partnership working that contributed to creating Carers Link. Fiona Collie from Carers Scotland provided an insight into the bigger picture, followed by Alex Mackenzie, Assistant Director of Planning and Community Care with the Health Board who outlined the strategic role that Carers Link would play locally. During her launch address, Councillor Risk added a personal comment from her own experiences as a Carer, reminding the audience that many Carers can often feel isolated and overwhelmed.



Although Councillor Risk was the final guest speaker before lunch, there were other voices that deserved recognition. The Launch therefore closed with a powerful presentation of stories from Carers, narrated by other Carers and volunteers.

RAISING AWARENESS

Carers Link is concerned that many Carers are 'hidden' in the community. This means they are not known as Carers to any agencies or services - statutory or voluntary - and therefore receive no support in their caring role. Many Carers do not even think of themselves as a Carer.

Carers tend to become identified when they approach a statutory, health or voluntary service provider - an approach usually made at a time of crisis or when the Carer is no longer able to cope or to manage their role. Some people, of course, do not want to access services and wish to remain 'hidden' - managing on their own is their choice. However, for the majority - by being 'hidden' - this choice has been taken from them.

Since starting delivery of services Carers Link has dedicated time and effort to raising awareness about our services, and about Carers and the range of issues that might be facing them. By raising awareness we hope to reach many of the 'hidden' Carers and ensure that all Carers are aware of their rights. Our activities to the end of March 2005 include:

- Spoke to 317 people at 23 events
- Hosted 'open days' with invited local organisations at Kirkintilloch and Milngavie
- Started a monthly outreach surgery at Townhead Clinic, Kirkintilloch
- Designed and printed promotional leaflets and posters
- Distributed leaflet racks and posters to all Doctor Surgeries, Health Clinics and key public buildings throughout East Dunbartonshire
- Made presentations and introductory talk to many health, voluntary and statutory organisations
- Made presentations to Council Strategy Groups for Older People, Addictions, Learning Disabilities and Mental Health
- Became involved in organising the Big Get Together - a showcase of nearly 30 local groups
- Worked with Voluntary and Statutory partners to facilitate a training event on Elder Abuse
- Held an official launch of Carers Link in January 2005 - attended by over 70 guests and Carers
- Hosted a stand at the Older Person's Event in Bishopbriggs Memorial Hall
- Hosted a stand at the Local Health Care Co-operative (LHCC) Open Evening
- Attended Merkland School Coffee Morning

"I've been caring for 15 years. Carers Link are the first to provide me with any support"

INFORMATION

"In the past when I had attended review meetings for my son, I had felt overwhelmed by all the professionals sitting round the table. I had contacted Carers Link for advice and felt very supported as a member of staff attended the next review meeting with me. I felt that I wasn't on my own."

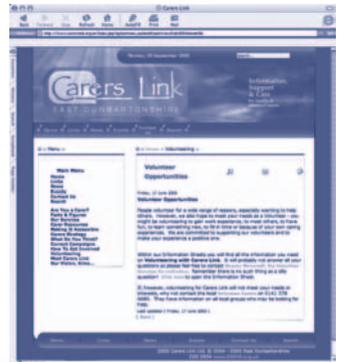
Carers Link took its first enquiry from a Carer on Wednesday 8th September 2004. Indeed Carers began finding ways of contacting us even before we had confirmed our telephone number. Since then, the telephone hasn't stopped ringing...

By the end of March 2005, we had responded to 159 enquiries from Carers and professionals on a range of topics from how to access services, to getting practical support or respite, to enquiries about benefits and finances.

Many Carers also sought information and support in their own dealings with statutory agencies such as with Social Work, Housing or Education. Being able to talk over issues and prepare for meetings has given Carers a stronger voice in making sure that their own needs, as well as those of the person they care for, are being met. Through ongoing advocacy and support in often complex and long-term situations, we provided in depth help to a further 41 Carers.

Key achievements in the first seven months of our Information and Advocacy Service include:

- Launch of our Website
- Publication of our Information Pack
- Establishment of a Resource Library within our offices
- Production of monthly newsletter and e-bulletin



SUPPORT AND CARE

Due to generous funding from the Big Lottery, Carers Link received funds to involve volunteers in our work by assisting in raising awareness and in providing a 'supportive and listening ear' to Carers.



BIG
LOTTERY
FUND

These services were originally planned to be developed over the three years of funding, but as early as November 2004, Carers started to request Befrienders - a service not planned until early 2006. To meet this growing demand our plans were brought forward although this naturally increased the initial preparation work.

By end March 2005, all the preparation work for involving volunteers was almost complete and a recruitment campaign had begun. Of the initial enquiries that March, 3 of our current 8 volunteers had made contact. We are now looking forward to recruiting more volunteers and expanding our Carer Befriending Service.

A further support service was the introduction of 'Carers Call' - regular telephone calls to Carers whose information or advocacy support needs had already been met. This has already proved to be a popular service.



"To know that there are people like you, to care, at the other end of a telephone, gives us hope"

"I don't have any confidence. I have looked after my son for 20 years full time. When I do get a break I don't have any friends to talk to and even if I did I wouldn't have anything to talk to them about apart from caring. I feel so alone, sometimes I feel like I'm going mad and want to run away then I feel guilty for even thinking such things. I'm living on an emotional roller coaster."

"You have seen me through the darkest times... you have been like a friend to me"

GETTING INVOLVED

"I think a wide-ranging debate is needed about what people mean by respite and the various ways in which the appropriate support needs to be made available."

"Being a Carer has given me a different outlook on life-more patience, more compassion...and more courage to fight for other Carers like myself."

Carers now have the right to be seen as 'Key Partners' and should be involved at all levels, from individual assessments and care planning to reviews of local and government policies on community care. It is hoped that Carers Link will grow as the voice of Carers within East Dunbartonshire, either raising issues on their behalf or helping Carers to raise issues directly.

One productive method of getting involved has been the establishment of a quarterly forum. Our initial meeting was in December, followed in March with guest speaker Julie Haslett, Project Manager from the Scottish Executive 'Care 21 & Futures Project' which was researching the 'Future Needs of Unpaid Carers in Scotland'. Opinions from Carers and Care organisations were fed back to the Scottish Executive and we are delighted that Care 21 have promised to later return and present the research findings and recommendations.

Future forums will provide Carers with opportunities to comment on Carer Assessments, the new Respite Strategy for East Dunbartonshire and the development of new services such as emergency planning and support.

Feedback from all forum events, or even from conversations over the phone, are used to shape the Carers Strategy, a document that outlines how policy and services for Carers will be developed over the next few years. Carers Link supports the Steering Group of organisations and Carers that co-ordinates and monitors the Strategy and plays an integral part in its delivery.

KEY STATISTICS

These are statistical snapshots of our work from September 2004 to end March 2005.

Responding to enquiries from Carers and Professionals: Total 159

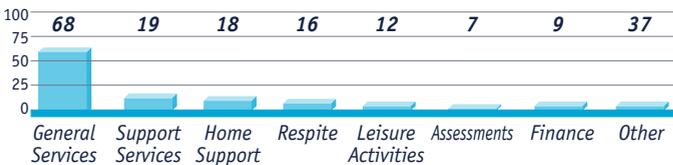
These are enquiries or cases that have taken less than a week to complete:

Where have enquiries come from?	
Within East Dunbartonshire	123
Glasgow	18
Other Scotland	18

Who is enquiring?



What do they want information on? (Most people wanted information on more than one issue)



Raising Awareness of Carers Link and Carers' Issues:

Total 317 people at 23 events	
Bishopbriggs 2 events	Kirkintilloch 6 events
Lenzie 1 event	Milngavie 6 events
Pan - East Dunbartonshire 6 events	

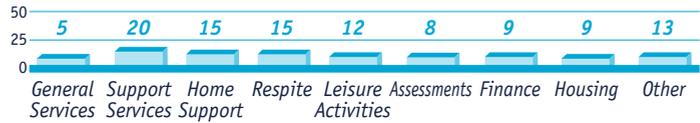
"When you first become a Carer, you try and cope by yourself until you reach breaking point and then you wonder, who can I contact for help?"

KEY STATISTICS continued

Providing ongoing emotional and/or advocacy support: Total 41 Carers

These are more complex enquiries or cases in addition to the above. Support can last from a few weeks to many months.

About which issues do they require support?
(Most people wanted information on more than one issue)

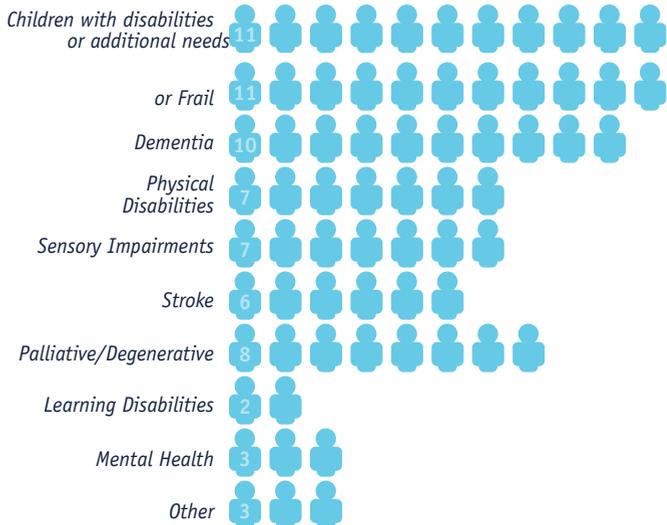


How long have they been caring?



Who are they caring for?

(Some people have got more than one disability or condition)



3 out of every 5 people in the UK will become a Carer at some point in their lives

Caring can have a negative impact on your health: 52% of Carers are treated for stress-related illnesses and 51% are treated for physical injuries

There are over 6 million adult Carers in the UK

LOOKING FORWARD

Now that Carers Link and its services have started, we are looking forward to an exciting future. We will continue to provide support and information to Carers and will endeavour to reach those not already known to statutory services.

Other key developments will include:

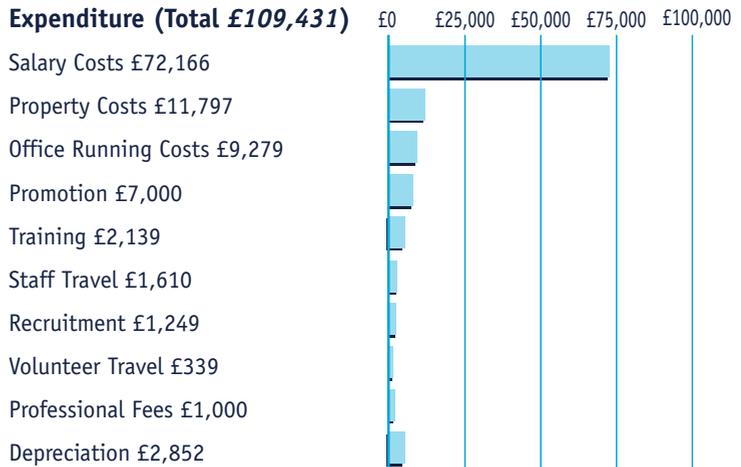
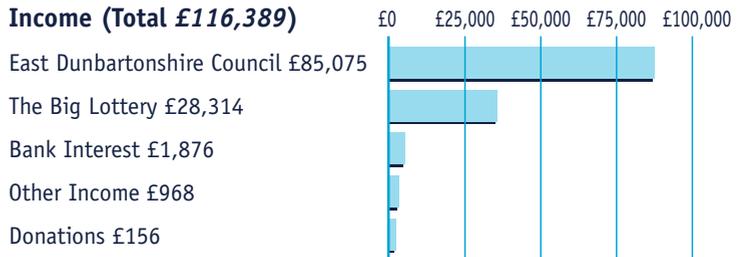
- Working with the Joint Carers Strategy Steering Group to develop a Respite Strategy
- Supporting Carers to become further involved in developing local services
- Increasing accessibility of all our services throughout all communities
- Consolidating frameworks for delivery of services
- Seeking funding for increased staff levels and services
- Expanding volunteer involvement
- Working towards achievement of Investors in People (IIP) status
- Starting a new 'Campaigning and Advisory' Group of Carers
- Developing the Carers Forum as a voice for Carers
- Seeking funding to create an interactive forum on our website
- Introducing relaxation opportunities and stress-management courses for Carers
- Exploring opportunities with Ceartas, Candlelight and EDAMH for new joint ventures
- Working with the Young Carers Network and Carers Strategy Group to produce a Strategy for Young Carers in East Dunbartonshire
- Designing and implementing a new database to increase efficiency
- Producing a new 3-year Strategy and performance indicators for service development

"Carers Link is already starting to make a positive difference and this is only the beginning."

COUNCILLOR RISK
Convenor of EDC
Social Services
Committee,
speaking at the
Carers Link
Launch

FINANCES

Summary of Income and Expenditure for the year 1st April 2004 to 31st March 2005



These are the first accounts of Carers Link since incorporation on 14th July 2004. This means that the formal accounts are split from 1st April-13th July and from 14th July 2004 to 31st March 2005. The figures in the graphs above represent total income and expenditure for the full financial year.

It is the policy of the Directors to develop a level of reserves representing 3 months running costs, and a detailed Reserves Policy is available on request. The total year surplus is £6958. Total Assets for the period to 31st March 2005 are £86,169, however of these, £82,793 are Restricted Funds.

The restricted funds from East Dunbartonshire Council are for the purposes of providing Carer Services throughout East Dunbartonshire, and related staffing and office costs, as detailed in the Service Specification. Additional restricted funds from The Big Lottery are for the purposes of employing a Volunteers Services Co-ordinator and related costs for recruiting, training and supporting volunteers.

Please contact us if you would like a full copy of our accounts for the year ended 31st March 2005.

Carers Link is Registered in Scotland as a Company Limited by Guarantee Number 270702
Recognised as a Scottish Charity Number SC 034447

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Supported by:



East Dunbartonshire Council
www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk

