



Annual Review

April 2006 - March 2007

Carers Link, East Dunbartonshire Annual Review, April 2006 - March 2007

Welcome to the Third Annual Review of Carers Link, East Dunbartonshire - a celebration of the impact our Volunteers have had on Carers Link and Carers!

Please note that throughout these pages, names of Carers have been changed to protect their identity.

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OUR VISION

Carers want to see the person they care for have the best possible quality of life.

Carers Link wants to see the Carers of East Dunbartonshire also have the best possible quality of life.

This quality of life encompasses help and support for their caring role, and the opportunity to pursue their own needs, interests or work.

Carers Link wants to see that the Carers of East Dunbartonshire are informed and involved.

Carers Link wants to see that the Carers of East Dunbartonshire are respected and valued.

Office: Enterprise Centre, Ellangowan Road, Milngavie G62 8PH

Tel: 0141 955 2131 **Email:** enquiry@carerslink.org.uk **Web:** www.carerslink.org.uk

CHAIR'S REPORT

The previous year has proved to be another demanding year for the organisation, bringing significant challenges and pressures but also many successes and positive growth and development for Carers Link.

In particular, the year was very important in terms of our continued financing and resourcing when we revisited discussions with our key funders, East Dunbartonshire Council. At the beginning of 2007, our funding discussions with EDC concluded with a commitment to renew and improve the core funding of Carers Link. Our capacity has since been further improved with the welcome news that Carers Link had secured additional funding to develop a post, specific to needs of Carers of people with Mental Health problems, and it is anticipated that the post will be filled in the Autumn.

Carers Link's 3-year Big Lottery Award expired in August 2007, however a new application has been submitted. The Big Lottery Award has supported Carers Link's Volunteer activity and is therefore a vital part of our service provision, indeed an external evaluation was very positive.

On behalf of Carers Link I'd therefore like to thank East Dunbartonshire Council, East Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership and the Big Lottery for their financial support of the organisation.

As anticipated over the past year, the number of new Carers seeking support has grown by more than 60% from our first full year of service delivery. As I write in October of 2007, albeit beyond the scope of this Annual Review, we have already exceeded this statistic. The staff team have done a fantastic job in responding to these ever increasing demands, particularly when "hands on the deck" were reduced, due to ongoing staff absences through ill health. During these periods it was necessary to recruit some additional short-term support, which was crucial in maintaining our service

delivery and I'd like to make particular reference to, and thank Julia and Carolyn, for their valuable contributions at those times.

I am particularly pleased to report that following our commitment at last year's AGM to create a trust in memory of the late David Campbell, the Trust recently made its first grant awards. I am sure there is an enormous shared feeling of satisfaction, within Carers Link and David's family, that David's memory and the great personal commitment he gave to Carers Link continues to support local Carers.

I'd like to thank the Carers Link Board Members for their continued and valuable shared governance of the organisation against an ever-growing legislative climate. A special thanks goes to our Treasurer, Dorothy, for her careful monitoring and guidance of our financial needs.

On behalf of the Board, I'd once again like to thank Jennifer, the staff team and our growing army of Volunteers, for another year of effort and commitment. Feedback and responses from local Carers shows that their support is making a positive - and often vital - difference.

Finally, I would like to especially thank Christine, one of our newest Volunteers. In a report that celebrates the achievements of Volunteers through their stories and - importantly - the stories of Carers, it is fitting that her journalistic experience of interviewing and writing has been instrumental in bringing this Annual Review together.

David Delaney
Chairperson

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS



The summer of 2007 saw the end of our funding from the Big Lottery, so we have chosen to celebrate the achievements of our Volunteers over the last 3 years by illustrating throughout this Review some of the many ways in which Volunteers have impacted on Carers Link or the Carers we support. A new funding application to the Big Lottery to further develop Volunteer Services to support Carers has since been submitted with the hope that we can continue to go from strength to strength!



*In 3 years, our Volunteers donated 3340 hours, worth £41,182.20**

***Scottish average gross wage 2006**

In the last year alone, Volunteers have donated an average 30 hours per week - almost the same as another full-time staff post!

Supporting Volunteers	42% of donated hours
Office & Web Support	38%
Receiving Training & Support	13%
Raising Awareness & Events	7%

A BRILLIANT IDEA

Marie's life fell apart when her practical and very able husband died. Left to care alone for her 25-year old daughter who has complex needs, Marie found herself isolated in her own home. When she met Volunteer Jon, little could she have imagined just how much her world was to open up and bring a new lease of life to both herself and her daughter.

Marie had recently bought a computer to try and bring a new interest into her daughter's life, forgetting that her husband was no longer there to help her take her first tentative steps on the net, a dilemma she mentioned to Jon. By good fortune he

held an HND in Computer Studies and was delighted to help.

We began at the very beginning and soon Marie was creating folders, booking travel and taking up photography which she learned to download from the camera. Both Marie and her daughter were having great fun - and so was I!

E-mailing her far-flung family members on a daily basis lifted Marie's spirits beyond her wildest dreams and this prompted her to surprise Jon by announcing the purchase of a web cam. Would he help her set it up because she had a brilliant idea?

After mastering telephone calls via the internet, Marie's "brilliant idea" was put to the test. She wanted to have dinner with her sister in Canada via the web. The idea was, they would decide on the menu, cook the food and then sit down in their respective dining rooms on either side of the Atlantic and enjoy a meal together! It really has turned her life around!

RAISING AWARENESS

In East Dunbartonshire, at least 1 person in 8 is a Carer and nationally, 3 out of 5 people will become a Carer at some point in their lives. It is important that we continue to identify those Carers who may not be known to other services to ensure that they are aware of their rights and entitlement to support.

In addition to distributing posters and leaflets to over 100 venues across East Dunbartonshire, we attend public information events and raise awareness of Carers' issues through participation in the training of over 250 Health and Social Work staff. Carers' issues are also strongly represented by Carers Link within strategic developments and partnerships.

35% find out about us through our publicity activities - so thanks to all our Volunteers who help with distribution!



HOW CARERS SAID THEY FOUND OUT ABOUT US IN 2006-07	
Carers Link Publicity	35 %
Health & Social Work Referral	20 %
Voluntary Organisation Referral	18 %
Unknown	17 %
Word of Mouth	10 %

Over the last 3 years, we have had enquiries from Paris, America and now Japan!

“Bringing the service to a wider community” that's what prompted Louise to join the Volunteer team. She also needed an incentive to get out and walk more, so when she spotted a poster inviting people to consider volunteering for Carers Link two years ago in the library she recognised the opportunities open

to her... *When I put in a request to be out and about rather than in an office, delivering leaflets was suggested. It suited my needs perfectly and guaranteed my commitment to regular exercise. My patches cover Kirkintilloch, Bishopbriggs, Twechar and Milton of Campsie and I've met some lovely people along the way!*

WHERE THESE CARERS HAVE COME FROM

Bearsden	26 %
Bishopbriggs	17 %
Lenzie	8 %
Kirkintilloch	13 %
Milngavie	15 %
Other East Dunbartonshire	15 %
Outwith East Dunbartonshire	6 %

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Providing care and support to someone can be very rewarding but it can also affect other areas of a Carer's life such as their job, relationships, family life, and even health. Carers Link staff can make a difference by offering information, support and advocacy.

WHO DO CARERS LOOK AFTER?

Spouse or Partner	35 %
A Parent	31 %
Their Child	18 %
Other Family Member	16 %

WHY IS CARER SUPPORT NEEDED?

Note that people may have more than one care need

Dementia	22 %
Medical Condition	19 %
Elderly/Frailty	16 %
Child with Additional or Complex Needs	9 %
Mental Health	8 %
Palliative/Degenerative Illness	7 %
Physical Disability	7 %
Stroke	6 %
Substance Misuse	4 %
Learning Disability	2 %

NOTHING TO LOSE

Desperate and despairing, Alistair spotted a Carers Link leaflet in his G.P.'s surgery and thinking little of it at the time he took it home and eventually read it. Little did he know the impact it would have on his family's life.

Alistair's mother has had long-standing severe mental health problems but had now recently also been diagnosed with dementia. She had reached a point where she refused to wash, hid her clothes and wouldn't eat. Receiving no help he thought there was nothing to lose by making a call to Carers Link. And so Paul Peter, the Support & Development Officer, entered his world *"I called Social Work to organise an assessment and then the Benefits Agency who went on to award her Attendance Allowance which enabled her to purchase laundry services."* Following her assessment - which Paul had attended with the family - Social Work introduced Home Care who attend to her bathing needs and supply a Sitter Service 3 times a week for a couple of hours for a chat and help with her housework. *"Alistair's visits have become a social event which they both enjoy."*

"The most satisfying aspect of all of this is hearing Alistair talk about the change everything has brought to his mother. As one who staunchly refused all help other than that which her son could provide, she's built up confidence and enjoys the company of the various visitors to her home. When I felt it was time for me to take a back seat I introduced Alistair to Carers Call with whom he now has regular contact. But he knows I'm always there for him."



"You are the only person who seems to listen, get back to me and really know what I want."

A large portion of Support & Development Officer Paul Peter's working day is spent building relationships.

"It's often about the Carer wanting help but the person being cared for doesn't, and sometimes it can take a while to make a difference."

JEANETTE'S STORY . . .

. . . being a typical case in point. At the end of her tether she picked up a Carers Link leaflet in her local library in the hope it could offer some support for her in dealing with her husband's dementia. Her husband had started to wander throughout the night and she had little or no sleep.

"When we first spoke she was very down and shared many things she would not normally have divulged to others. This job teaches you never to judge anyone for their worst thoughts and feelings. Unless you've been in the situation you have no idea of the pressures. You help people to find an inner strength and to rationalise the feelings they may have of letting their relative down if they seek outside help."

Through Paul's support, Jeanette was granted 14 nights respite a year starting immediately.

"It's situations like this that spell job satisfaction."

"Before speaking to yourselves I felt like a broken down record when I was talking to these people and felt as if they saw me that way too. Just knowing that there is someone to back me up if I need it, someone on my side, I feel as if things have been balanced out a bit."

Carers Link and Ceartas received joint funding from East Dunbartonshire's Choose Life Strategy to enable both organisations to provide effective and enhanced support during crisis situations that may affect either the Carer or the person being looked after.

JUST LIKE ANY OTHER

To the world at large Alan is just like any other 30-year old man. Married to Lucy, Dad to 7-year old Sam and 4-year old Lisa, he has a responsible 9 to 5 job. You can visualise them bustling about the house, doing the weekly shop, enjoying each others company on a day out and going to church as a family at the weekend.



Following the birth of their second child

their world crashed and life has never been quite the same since. Lucy developed mental health problems in the form of self-harming and Alan almost overnight became her Carer.

Initially Lucy was taken into hospital where she received treatment for 6 weeks. During that time I had to learn and master all the skills she employed every day in the running of our home and family; cleaning, cooking and attending to the children's routine. Before long my day was beginning at 5.30 am and finishing at 11 pm. Our families were very supportive and gave me a lot of help but it was wonderful to have her back home again.

Alan imagined that the *“happy, outgoing, compassionate girl that I married”* would slip back into her old routine and the whole episode would fade into the past. Sadly this did not happen. On 2 further occasions Lucy reverted to harming herself and she was once again admitted to hospital. This time however her treatment lasted for almost a year and, delighted as he was to have her home, the pressures on him were mounting and Alan took leave from work to care for her.

It was never knowing what we would waken up to - what would I come home to - that was so worrying and as much normality as was possible had to be maintained for the children. Getting them to and from school and the childminder was a huge exercise every day, while trying to run the house and help Lucy to face the day and get something out of it. It was like walking on eggshells. I was afraid to do anything that might put her back in hospital. There was no chance to relax and I was in a constant state of tiredness.

Clearly Alan needed professional support to enable him to cope and also to return to work eventually but this was not forthcoming. *“Had I not contacted Carers Link we would never have had a chance to move forward. They have given me access to people who understand what I'm going through”.*

Many Carers say that they feel isolated, or even forgotten about. Carers Link keeps in touch by regular telephone calls providing a unique service that maintains relationships with Carers through the help of our Volunteers.

Kaye and Bill were the liveliest of couples. Bill in particular was always the life and soul of whatever gathering he chanced upon and all in all, life was good to them. Having recently returned from a holiday in Portugal, Bill complained of feeling unwell. That was just 18 months ago, today he is barely recognisable as the man he once was. Kaye still finds it hard to come to terms with all that has happened.

To cut a long story short Bill was diagnosed with liver disease, diabetes, encephalitis and more recently, Alzheimer's. He becomes extremely confused and sometimes doesn't even know his own name. This is a second marriage for both of us and although we have a family of four he only wants me to look after him - 24 hours a day. If I'm lucky I manage to sneak out, but if I'm more than a couple of hours he's in a terrible state.

Kaye is not in great health herself now and she says that to maintain her pride and dignity she won't tell people how ill he is, but because of Carers Call she can unburden herself to someone she's never met but feels a close bond with.

He has episodic total confusion during which I have to lift him from the chair and take him to the toilet because he can't remember where it is. These bouts can last for up to 4 days. Much of the time he doesn't understand what I say to him but pretends he does. That drives me mad. His list of medication is long and in addition I have to give him 4 injections a day. It's relentless and quite overwhelming.

Carers Link
NHS CHARITABLE TRUST

If you would like a
Blether
try . . .
CARERS CALL

A telephone support service for people who provide care & support to a family member or a friend because of their health, addiction, frailty or disability.

You might want to chat about your caring experiences, ask any questions or just have a blether!

You can receive a telephone call every month or more frequently if you prefer. We have a team of experienced volunteers to provide a listening ear.

Available to Carers who live at home within local boundaries. You can also blether with other Carers over coffee.

For more information please call: **0141 955 2131**

or visit: **www.carerslink.org.uk**

Supported by



Unfortunately, owing to the prime cause of his illness being episodic he cannot be admitted to hospital on a long-term basis, only when immediate care is needed. It was during one of these spells that Kaye received a call from Carers Link who had been informed of her case by Social Work from whom she was pursuing help.

That was my first contact with Sharon (Volunteer Services Co-ordinator). She came to see me and understood all my problems. What a difference that made! She contacted Social Work for me and a home carer was allocated for 6 hours weekly plus respite care if and when I want to apply for it. But whether I feel sad or angry or lonely knowing Carers Call will listen means such a lot.

68% of our Volunteers have caring experience enabling them to empathise or share their experiences

Giving and receiving comfort sums up Julie's role as a Volunteer. On the one hand she is herself a Carer who has been supported by Carers Link.

And on the other, she likes to spend her respite time staffing the phones and reassuring others that they are not alone in either their plight or their feelings.

"I have watched my husband's health deteriorate at a gradual pace, and I want to shout and scream about my unhappiness. Yet if people were to ask me how I feel, the answer would be 'I'm okay, just fine'. And that's usually the response I get from the lady I now call each week."

In the last year, Volunteers have made 1507 telephone calls to Carers

Acutely sensitive to the state of mind and despair of the Carer at the other end of the line, Julie can quickly assess whether or not they are coping with their situation. *"The bigger the problem, the brighter and chirpier they sometimes sound."*

She would never push a reluctant Carer to open up and sometimes it takes a few calls to build trust. *"Sometimes (when I feel the time is right) in response to the 'I'm fine' line, I comment that they don't sound fine which prompts a shaky 'I'm not'. Then a long silence will ensue and silence is very important. I know the powerful calming effect it can have on a worried mind."*

Carers are often afraid to open up for fear of appearing inadequate or complaining and are loathe to accept help. Some harbour great guilt about their feelings and caring abilities. *"These feelings are completely natural. I think every Carer in the land probably feels they're not doing enough and what they do is less than perfect. You torture yourself over imagined inadequacy. I let them know I understand exactly how they're feeling."*



Talking to others in a similar situation to her own is a great comfort for Julie and she relishes the times when she can hear from the Carer's voice that she's helped in a small way. *"I'm energised when I finish a shift and just wish I could give volunteering in this area more of my time. It helps me to cope as well."*



SOMETIMES A LIFELINE

Carers Call - the telephone contact that can sometimes be a lifeline for Carers - covers a range of issues at the heart of caring but primarily it is for those whose life is devoted to maintaining a quality of life for the people they care for.

Sonia makes up to 15 calls on her afternoon shift once a week. . .

"They are so nice when they call you up - it lifts me a wee bit because they are so friendly."

... I always start off by enquiring about how things are. Generally, women will tell you exactly how they're feeling, be it remarks like 'You wouldn't treat a dog like this' or 'My life is awful' to 'I longed for freedom from my situation and now I have it, I'm consumed with guilt and loneliness.' Men on the other hand often don't like to show vulnerability and keep the conversation brief. They recoil from sympathy but if given space and time they will usually start to talk."

The one person whom Sonia never mentions during the conversation is the person being cared for. *"I'm there for the Carer. All humans must feel loved and wanted. It's their needs and worries that are of prime importance to me. If however they want to talk about the person that's fair enough."*

Giving a Carer the opportunity to release their thoughts takes time but Sonia realises that conversations come to a natural end where no more can be said that will benefit the Carer.

There is an art to concluding a conversation - a point at which I just know they have got something from the call and it would be the right time to say goodbye. I always bring it to an end by enquiring if they want me to contact them the following week. Through time Carers Call friendships develop even though we never meet."

"They are there for you and nothing is a bother to them. It's good to have someone outwith friends and family. Family can be too close."

"It's even better when they are Volunteers. People who volunteer deserve a feather in their cap."



A GROWING FRIENDSHIP . . .

Born with Cerebral Palsy, troubled with an arthritic hip and for 21 years acting as Carer to her father and now her mother, Mary was fast losing touch with anything resembling 'me-time'.

"Three years ago I was falling into the clutches of depression but thanks to my doctor, Carers Link came into my life and turned it around."

Meeting Jan, a Volunteer Befriender, was the beginning of a friendship that just keeps growing. *"I really look forward to her fortnightly visit. Unless you've experienced it it's hard to say just how low and isolated you feel in this situation and how marvellous it is to talk to someone who wants to blether about the little everyday things that most people take for granted but Carers don't have the opportunity to do."*

Mary's mother is 97 now and is very limited in her mobility. *"When she does move about the house she just walks round and round and I have to watch her every move in case she falls. The only pleasures she has are having her back scratched and hair brushed. The rest of the day she spends sleeping in a chair. I can't even concentrate on watching TV anymore, I have to keep my eye on her all the time."*

"It's very important for me to get out into the wider world and keep in touch with all that's going on. Jan takes me to lots of different places. I can talk to her about absolutely anything and know she'll understand. If possible I don't like talking about caring for my mother because it's all I think about between her visits, but if there's a problem we do discuss the best way to deal with it. She's also the only person I have a really good laugh with!"

"I do know I've done and continue to do all I can for my parents but I worry about the future. Jan however has assured me that herself and Carers Link will always be here for me and she will still visit me when my mother is no longer with us. That's a huge comfort and reassurance."

"SHE KNOWS I'M THERE FOR HER . . . for 3 years, retired nursing sister Esther has been the lifeline that's pulled Morag from the brink of despair on many occasions.

"Morag is a classic case of someone who had every cause to believe that life really wasn't worth living. Her 27-year old son has complex needs and Morag is his main Carer. She also cares for her mother. Over the years her isolation began to wear her down and when I met her she was at the point where she would still be in her dressing gown and pyjamas at five in the afternoon. She had never been out by herself for years."

As a former nurse Esther understood Morag's depression and knew it would take time to gain her confidence and re-awaken her interest in life. *"Once I could persuade her to leave the house*

Although most Carers prefer the anonymity of Carers Call some Carers like their support over coffee...

we took trips to places like People's Palace, the Cathedral and so on and she always bought a postcard which was the start of a collection she proudly displayed in a scrapbook. She also liked to shop and most importantly to chat.

"When we met, I assessed Morag to be much older than she was but these days having changed from a withdrawn woman into a much more confident and capable person, the years have slipped away. Her whole life has changed. There's no going to bed in the middle of the afternoon anymore. She's more likely to be dialling a bus and going off to visit her sister or her mother. She's very house-proud and loves seeing her grand-daughter every weekend. What's so rewarding for me is how much she now appreciates being out and about and she regularly remarks on how far she has come."

BRINGING VOLUNTEERS TOGETHER

SHARON MONCRIEFF, Volunteer Services Co-ordinator knows a thing or two about how the other half live, having volunteered with various organisations during her working life. More importantly, she realises the huge benefits and bonuses that can be gained by those who do begin on the employment ladder via volunteering.

I began as a parent helper in the local primary school and for 5 years loved every minute of it despite never being able to see the children I was working with. Living with severe visual impairment puts great demands onto skill forming, and I wanted to acquire organisational and people skills in order to progress so I asked the Society for the Blind if they could find some volunteer work for me.



Armed with boundless energy and good communication skills, Sharon predictably rose through the ranks and acquired her first salaried administration post. This led to her being offered a post as Youth & Family Worker with the now named Visibility, from where she moved into her current post with Carers Link.

I never really thought that anyone would want to employ me. Very few people with a disability get work. It completely changed my outlook on life.

She now actively encourages people with disabilities to volunteer and a few of our Volunteers have some form of disability. Sharon is also a firm believer that voluntary work is a gateway to employment that many unemployed people should follow.

Through our range of training and commitment to support, Volunteers have the opportunity to gain new skills and confidence and several have already used their experience to go onto further education and employment.

“We attracted 4 Befriending Volunteers at the beginning, and now 3 years later more than 42 Volunteers - ranging in age from 17 to over 70 - have joined us. Qualifications are not necessary, and time commitments are flexible. More importantly, you need enthusiasm and a desire to help!”



Joining Carers Link in 2004 was probably the greatest career challenge Sharon has ever faced. It meant starting from scratch - identifying Carers, encouraging people to volunteer, designing training programmes and generally getting the show on the road.

23 YEAR OLD CAROLYN, a student PE teacher, is a Carers Link Volunteer who says that *“training in issues such as Befriending, Mental Health, and Suicide Intervention have given me more confidence and a greater ability to deal with people, and the experience is proving to be advantageous in my search for work.”*

“What I feel is that Carers Link have given me is an insight into the well-being of people, a sense of caring about the whole being and an insight into good citizenship. Volunteering with Carers Link is one of the best things I have done to prepare for the future.”

WORKING TOGETHER . . . *The role of Carers Link in the continuing growth and success of Afasic East Dunbartonshire is ongoing. Since the formation of this group in 2005 when parents of children with speech, language or communication impairments first met, the level of support has been maintained and Afasic has blossomed into a very active branch of the national network.*

In the earliest days Carers Link provided a place to meet, access to office resources and publicity. As the group has grown to a membership of 70 families plus a further 60 on the mailing list, the partnership between the two ensures that Parent Carers have a wealth of information available to them.



In the summer of 2006, Carers Link and Afasic East Dunbartonshire were joint hosts to Ashley Robertson, a student on placement from the University of Glasgow. Ashley spent the summer working with parents to develop an information resource on www.carerslink.org.uk plus an introductory leaflet designed to address feelings and issues that may affect Parent Carers.

Chairperson Patricia Atkinson is greatly encouraged by the response to the charity's tireless efforts to raise awareness amongst parents desperately seeking help but unaware of their existence.

There is a lot of public ignorance about Aphasia and speech or language difficulties, and as the only group in the West of Scotland we are constantly striving to raise our profile. We are delighted that we will now be able to produce a much needed newsletter, thanks to continued support from Carers Link and an award from the David Campbell Trust.

TIME FOR YOU

Endorsing the maxim that people really do need people, Time For You is a good example of the oaks and acorns theory. Following a training event for Carers in 2005, it was noted that those who attended continued chatting to each other in the car park at the end clearly still having much they wanted to say to each other.

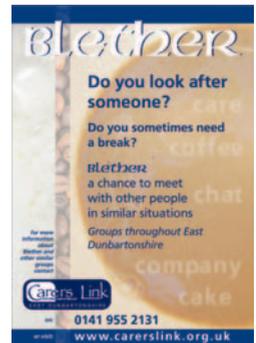
Carers Link offered a room for them to meet up and form an informal group. Initially their meetings were held on a monthly basis but owing to increasing numbers attending these now take place fortnightly. The Group is totally Carer-led with Carers Link providing coffee and an ear to bend for questions and answers should this be required.

PARENTS

In September 2006, the Parents' Group was established in collaboration with PAMIS and SENSE geared specifically towards the parents of children living with a wide range of complex needs. The monthly meetings run for two hours and deal with the very individual needs of this particular group. Speakers have included Cath Barclay, Head of Children & Families with East Dunbartonshire Social Work Department.

Parents attend for a variety of different reasons: to obtain more information about their children's condition and the help available to them, to meeting up for a chat or simply having a couple of hours to chill out and relax, all of which are at the heart of **Blether's** principles.

Do You Look After
a Child with
Additional Support Needs?

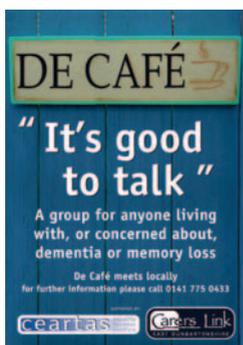


Carers Link works with a range of other voluntary and statutory organisations to either raise awareness about issues affecting Carers or to provide help and support. During the last year we have worked closely with Ceartas to develop and organise 2 rather different groups....

For many men the loss of their wife/partner leaves a frightening gap in their lives. Already trying to deal with the depression that can sometimes be a major part of the grieving process, they may be confronted with a very unfamiliar lifestyle that demands a range of skills they do not believe they possess. Likewise, the diagnosis of a degenerative illness, or social isolation through caring can occasionally lead vulnerable men to despair.

Every day around 2 people die by suicide in Scotland, and around 3 out of 4 suicides are by men. Choose Life is a Scottish Executive initiative geared to reducing the risk of suicide across the population. In East Dunbartonshire, particular focus has been placed on older men who may rarely open up about how they feel. Through joint funding between Carers Link and Ceartas, a pilot project will run to provide opportunities for men to get together for a **Blether** -perhaps over a game of pool. Milngavie Youth Centre is the venue and in line with the general philosophy of talking and sharing, there's the chance to try out new activities and learn some life skills along the way.

Pending feedback from the men involved it is hoped to develop the group the group throughout 2008.



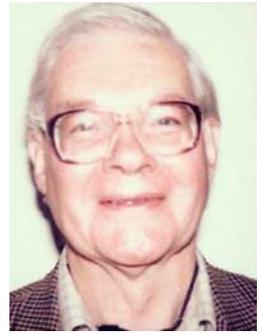
DE CAFÉ, with its open door policy to everyone involved in both the caring for and living with Dementia, continues to grow. Monthly meetings attract a healthy number of participants who agree there are many benefits to be gained through the informality and sharing created by Carers Link and Ceartas. The move to bring everyone together for discussions and events is proving very fruitful for all concerned. Paul Peter, Support & Development Officer with Carers Link, is greatly encouraged by the response. *"It's good to see people speaking freely and openly knowing they're being listened to and not being judged. The advantages of meeting others in a similar situation are immeasurable."*

These café styled get-togethers enjoy a wide range of relevant guest speakers who inform and answer questions in a relaxed and informal way that's not possible in the wider community. Issues such as benefits, respite care, nursing home costs and legal matters like power of attorney can all be explained while the Fire Brigade, Alzheimer's Scotland and Community Safety Officers deal with the day to day matters that could be problematic for families.

This year has seen De Café spread its wings in the form of outings. A visit to Stirling University's Iris Murdoch Centre proved to be an enormous success and plans are afoot to develop this aspect of support in the coming months.

DAVID CAMPBELL TRUST

We are delighted that the David Campbell Trust has now been established and is ready to make it's first awards. During the summer of 2007 applications were received from local groups that support Carers. The Trustees are pleased to announce that the first awards will be made to Afacis East Dunbartonshire and Huntly Court Group, Bishopbriggs during the Annual General Meeting.



David lived in Milngavie and was one of the founder Board Members of Carers Link, working hard for East Dunbartonshire Carers until he died in October 2005. As a former Carer himself, David's passion about supporting other Carers led to his involvement with Carers Link through the Bearsden and Milngavie Carers Group. David was one of our very first Volunteers and also worked tirelessly for a number of other local voluntary organisations.

Using a donation received from the Campbell family, the Trust offers annual small awards to help any local community groups, voluntary bodies or charities in East Dunbartonshire that promote and develop self-help initiatives and/or peer support for Carers. The Trust is particularly keen to help groups that are being set up by Carers. Assistance and in-kind support at the start-up stage is available to applicants whether or not they are successful in applying for the financial award.

Summary of Income and Expenditure for the year

1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007

Income (Total £1008.49)

Transfer of original donation	£850
Additional donations	£158.49

Expenditure (Total £17.05)

Registration Fees	£17.05
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TRUSTEES

Brenna Campbell

Dorothy Crawford

Susan Henderson

George Ross

LOOKING AHEAD

The evidence of need and current demand suggests that Carers Link is only beginning to scratch the surface of Carer support.

The raising awareness activities over the last two years in East Dunbartonshire has led to a growing demand amongst Carers for local and flexible support services. This has been reinforced by the raising of Carers' issues on the national agenda most notably through the new NHS Information Strategy and Care 21, which have both been reflected in the new Joint Carers Strategy (2007-10) for East Dunbartonshire.

"When faced with the day to day struggles, being a Carer can feel very isolating. Being able to express these feelings, seek advice and know that there is someone who listens makes a big difference. All I want is to be able to lift a phone in times of need, or when I have a question, and for someone to help me. The little things can make all the difference."

Sarah, A Carer, speaking at the launch of the Carers Strategy

A wide range of action points and responsibilities for their implementation were identified within the new Carers Strategy, launched on Carers Rights Day, December 2006. Carers Link was delighted to be an active participant in the development of the Strategy and will endeavour to meet our commitments - funding permitted!

In addition, we have identified further goals within Carers Link that we will aim to achieve over the next year:

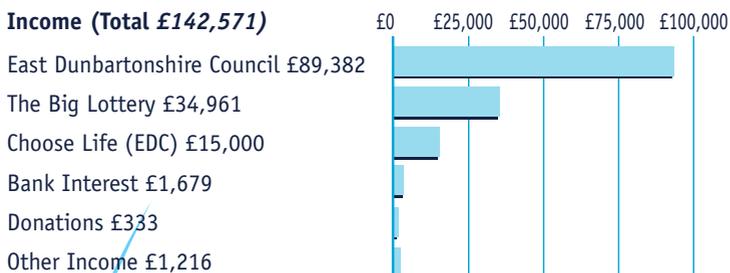
- Increasing membership on the Board of Management to fill vacancies and succession planning
- Writing our 3rd Strategic Plan to guide the development of Carers Link until 2010
- Developing a system to measure and evaluate the difference made to individuals
- Continuing to strive towards meeting the demand for Carers Call
- Piloting a Free-phone Support Line staffed by Volunteers
- Implementing the research and project planning linked to Choose Life Funding
- Seeking funding for an Information Service
- Seeking funding to develop specialist areas of skills, knowledge and understanding specifically to provide support to Parent Carers and Carers of Older People and people with Mental Health problems
- Seeking funding to further develop our network of Bletcher Groups
- Submitting a funding application to the Big Lottery to continue and further develop Carer support through the involvement of Volunteers



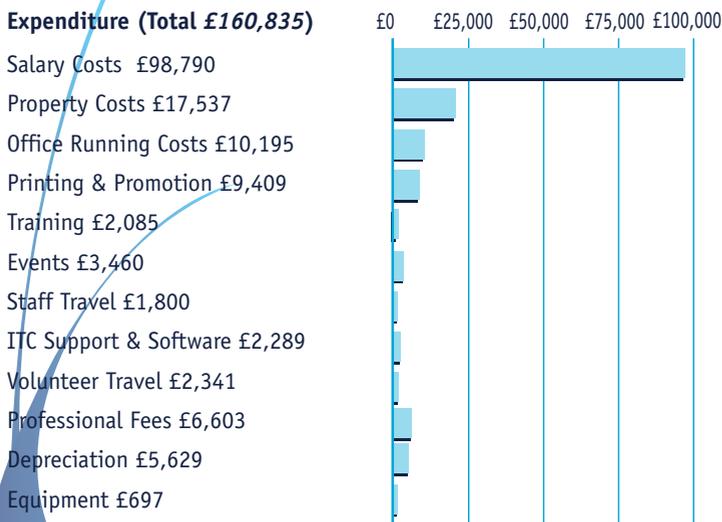
FINANCES

Summary of Income and Expenditure for the year 1st April 2006 to 31st March 2007

Income (Total £142,571)



Expenditure (Total £160,835)



Please contact us if you would like a full copy of our accounts for the year ended 31st March 2007.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows a deficit of £18,275 for the year to 31st March 2007. This was a **planned** deficit by the Board of Management as a result of the original funding agreement with our core funders. Total Net Assets at 31st March 2007 are £65,282, however of these, £54,412 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 are from (1) The Big Lottery are for the purposes of employing a Volunteers Services Co-ordinator and related costs for recruiting, training and supporting Volunteers and (2) East Dunbartonshire Choose Life Strategy for the purposes of providing support to Carers and Older People at risk.

Of the above expenditure £4,742 was spent on Governance Costs such as the cost of accountancy fees, Board and Annual General Meetings.

It is the policy of the Directors to strive towards a level of reserves representing 3 months running costs, and a detailed Reserves Policy is available on request.

MEMBERS

Having members ensures that as Carers Link grows, our services continue to meet the needs of Carers. A strong membership also helps demonstrate to our funders that we represent people who live, work or care in East Dunbartonshire. By the end of March 2007, we had 8 organisational members and 91 individual members.

In May 2007, Sonia became our 100th member, and as we approach the end of 2007 we are now supported by 125 members. Thank you to all for showing your support!

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

Of our Directors, 88% are Carers or have had previous caring experiences, and all Directors either live or work in East Dunbartonshire. During the year of this review, our Directors were:

<i>Dorothy Crawford (Treasurer)</i>	Appointed 14th July 2004
<i>David Delaney (Chair)</i>	Appointed 14th July 2004
<i>Susan Henderson</i>	Appointed 20th September 2004
<i>Catherine MacDonald</i>	Appointed 20th September 2004, Resigned 22nd May 2006
<i>Mike Molyneux (Vice-Chair)</i>	Appointed 20th September 2004
<i>Adrian Murtagh</i>	Appointed 24th November 2006
<i>David Paul</i>	Appointed 14th July 2004, Resigned 24th November 2006
<i>Jenny Proctor</i>	Appointed 14th July 2004
<i>George Ross</i>	Co-opted as Director 27th March 2006 Appointed 24th November 2006
<i>Gordon Thomson</i>	Appointed 19th September 2005

EMPLOYEES

<i>Moira Carrick</i>	Office Co-ordinator (Job Share)	<i>Employed 2nd August 2004</i>
<i>Margaret Coats</i>	Office Co-ordinator (Job Share)	<i>Employed 18th September 2006</i>
<i>Sharon Moncrieff</i>	Volunteer Services Co-ordinator	<i>Employed 2nd August 2004</i>
<i>Paul Peter</i>	Support & Development Worker	<i>Employed 18th July 2006</i>
<i>Jennifer Roe</i>	Chief Executive Officer	<i>Employed March 2003</i>
<i>Alex Sinclair</i>	Resource Worker (Part-Time)	<i>Employed 11th April 2006</i>

AUDITORS

Bell Barr and Company
2 Stewart Street
Milngavie
G62 6BW

BANKERS

Lloyds TSB
Glasgow North Business & Commercial
3rd Floor, 193 Bath Street
Glasgow G2 4HU

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

Registered Office:

Carers Link East Dunbartonshire
Enterprise Centre, Ellangowan Road
Milngavie G62 8PH

Telephone: 0141 955 2131

Email: enquiry@carerslink.org.uk

Website: www.carerslink.org.uk



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE



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East Dunbartonshire Council
www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk



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