



A Little Oaklands Guide to: Family and Emotional Wellbeing

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Introduction: Looking after yourself

This guide has been compiled for the families of Oaklands School, who often face barriers, difficult decisions and feelings along the way, when caring for children and young people with complex needs. Being a parent/carer can be very demanding, as not only are you a carer but you are also often an advocate for the whole family. This guide aims to give basic information on how you can look after yourself and your family, as well as signpost you to relevant support and information. Please contact Amy Steele, with any comments or suggestions you may have at Amy.Steele@oaklands.edin.sch.uk or by telephone at 07591986980/ 0131 315 8100. Amy will be happy to help.

This guide has been updated in December 2022. Thank you to the original author, Kirsti Willis.

Becoming a carer affects all of us in different ways. Whether we felt we had a choice about it or were thrown into it because of circumstances, there is no doubt that caring can be difficult. There is not usually any training, so most people muddle through as best as they can, learning as they go. The daily responsibility of attending to someone else's needs may mean that your own needs and those of the rest of the family can get neglected. The day-to-day pressures of being a carer can be both physically and mentally draining (Vocal 2022).

Many people do not recognise themselves as a carer and miss out on support and services that they are entitled to and the opportunity to meet other carers who may be in a similar situation and understand what it's like to be a carer (Vocal 2022). Are you supporting a family member, partner, relative or friend, of any age, who needs help to manage a long term condition, disability, physical or mental health problem or addiction? If the answer is yes – you are a carer. You can't always tell if someone is a carer but those providing care and support to family members and friends need support too. You may see yourself as a doing what any wife, husband, partner, son, daughter, parent, relative or friend would do. You are also a carer (Vocal 2022).

Leisure time is often the first thing that disappears for carers and yet is one of the best ways to relieve stress. If possible, try to take some 'time out' each day. Joining a carer support group can be a way of getting both practical and emotional support. No matter what you are struggling with, there is usually someone with a similar experience who can understand how you feel (Vocal 2018).

Many organisations, such as LCiL, Kindred and VOCAL offer events, workshops and courses for carers which can help with understanding and dealing with the challenges of caring.

Courses, Activities and Support Groups for Carers

LCiL Peer Support Group for Parents/Carers of Children with Additional Support Needs

<https://www.lothiancil.org.uk/how-we-help/peer-support-and-learning/>

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living
Norton Park Conference Centre
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh
EH7 5QY

Tel: 0131 475 2350

Email: sds@lothiancil.org.uk

The team offers monthly peer support groups, online sessions, and workshops.

VOCAL

<https://www.vocal.org.uk/how-vocal-can-help/for-carers/>

VOCAL Edinburgh Carers' Hub
60 Leith Walk
Edinburgh
EH6 5HB



Tel: 0800 196 6666

Email: centre@vocal.org.uk

VOCAL delivers support through two carer centres in Edinburgh and Midlothian, and through staff based in the community.

VOCAL's carer support teams work individually with carers to identify a plan of support which can include:

- access to information
- referral to benefit, legal or power of attorney surgeries
- access to a range of training and lifestyle management opportunities
- referral to the VOCAL carer counselling service
- work with other agencies.

VOCAL has a huge range of support available which can include help with practical support, like access to benefits, emotional support with access to counselling as well as carer support groups and peer mentoring to allow you to meet others in similar circumstances.

Family Life

Looking after your relationship

Relationships matter. When they work well, they are a vital source of support and protection against life's stresses and strains. All relationships go through periods of change and challenge. Parents caring for a disabled child must adjust to new roles and may have different expectations about their child. They also have to cope with significant emotional, social, physical, and financial pressures. Many parents find these experiences bring them closer together and make their relationship stronger. Some couples, though, are overwhelmed by the experience and struggle to stay together (Contact 2021), however, with the right support both parents can play an active and important role in their child's life.

Just as each of you needs looking after, so does your relationship. These are some ideas that could help to build up your relationship, especially during difficult periods.

- Talk to your partner about your feelings and concerns, equally, let your partner know that you are listening to them and their thoughts.
- Find ways you can share the workload, even if your tasks are different, and above all, recognise each other's contributions.
- Recognise that you may have different ways of coping and don't let this stop you giving each other the support you need. Often just a small change can make a big difference.
- Make time for your relationship, for example, by watching tv together. If possible, try to have a date day/night – whatever you manage just enjoy your time with each other.
- Talk about your expectations and how things have turned out- what about the future? Share your hopes and wants.
- Think about when you first met. What attracted you to each other? What made you fall in love with one another? – hold on to those memories and reinforce them.
- Try to think the best of one another- grant each other the benefit of the doubt wherever possible.

Managing your differences

Differences can be exciting and bring new things to a relationship, but differences can also become troubling. Discussing differences is an important element of managing them.

- Try not to drag out old disputes or argue for longer than necessary. A good rule is to keep it under an hour, agreeing to talk at another time if the issue remains unresolved.
- Give each other 15-20 minutes to explain their point of view without interruptions or criticism.
- Judging, accusing, and criticising are damaging to a relationship- you'll have to work hard to put things right if rows become acrimonious. It is difficult to take back hurtful words once spoken.

- Try not to argue after drinking or act aggressively or shout. Always stop arguing if it appears to either of you that an argument may escalate into violence.
- Remember that what a row is about is often not the real, underlying cause. Try to work out what it is and address that.
- Most couples argue and it is normal to not agree on everything. Be prepared to compromise.

Protecting your child from conflict

Difficulties between partners can leave children feeling vulnerable and anxious. You can help ease this by bearing in mind some of these suggestions.

- Children are sensitive to their environment and know when things are not right. Be aware of any changes in your child's behaviour.
- If you get caught in an argument in front of your children, let them see you make up or tell them you made up. This helps to teach children about forgiveness.
- Do not try to get your child to take sides and remain united with your partner on discipline.
- Don't lavish lots of attention on them because things with your partner aren't working out.
- Take time to help your child explain how they're feeling. Be sensitive to changes in their behaviour and make sure they know they aren't to blame for an argument – This is especially true with children with additional needs who may not know how to express their feelings or ask questions.

Relationships Under Strain

- Talk to other parents to see if they have any tips to offer- visit our parent support group pages.
- Don't be shy about asking for help from friends and family. It's better to get a little support early.
- Think about what professional support is available, for example a relationship counsellor. Speaking to someone outside the situation can help to shed light on new ideas.
- If your partner is not willing to attend counselling, attending on your own might give you some strategies to support your relationship.

Siblings (Contact 2018)

Supporting Siblings

Parents often talk about the importance of siblings and the difficulties that can arise for the siblings of a disabled child. These challenges rarely stop the relationship siblings have with their disabled brother or sister being one of the most important in their lives.

Below, we highlight some of the issues that may crop up for siblings of a disabled child and give tips on how to respond to them.

Limited time and attention from parents

- Every so often put the needs of the siblings first and let them choose what to do.
- Try to arrange short term care so you can attend important events with siblings, like sports day.
- Decide on certain times you'll dedicate to siblings, for example, bedtime or day trips once a month.

Confusion about their sibling's disability

- Talk to your children about disability so they know that no one is to blame for their brother or sister's disability or challenges.
- Encourage them to see the similarities they share with their sibling. Draw pictures of each family member and look at their strengths and weaknesses.
- Meet other families who have a child with disabilities so that your other children see disability is an everyday part of life and not something that only affects their family.

Worry about bringing friends home

- Talk with your child about how they might explain their brother or sister's disability to a friend.
- Encourage, but don't expect siblings to always include the disabled child in their play or activities.

Stressful situations at home

- Encourage siblings to develop their own social lives.
- Some siblings find it helpful to meet other young carers to share difficult emotions in a supportive environment. There are a number of young carers support organisations across the UK.
- Some siblings may prefer to talk to someone outside of the family. Your GP may be able to recommend a suitable counsellor, or you can visit the Counselling Directory website.

<https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/>

Sibling tips from other parents

- Don't get down about sibling troubles- your children can gain and learn from difficult experiences.
- Join a parent group- they really help.
- Tell the child's school if they're having trouble adapting to having a disabled sibling.
- Keep the siblings informed about their brother or sister's disability.
- Allow children to speak their mind, even if you're not always comfortable with what they say.

- Don't put pressure on your non-disabled children – it might take them time to fully understand the situation.

Young Carers (Carers Trust 2022) <https://carers.org/about-caring/about-young-carers>

A young carer is someone aged 25 and under who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support. Older young carers are also known as young adult carers, and they may have different support needs to younger carers.

What might a Young Carer do?

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care, such as helping someone out of bed.
- Emotional support, such as talking to someone who is distressed.
- Personal care, such as helping someone to dress.
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions.
- Helping to give medicine.
- Helping someone communicate.
- Looking after brothers and sisters.

Being a Young Carer can have a big impact on the things that are important growing up

- It can affect a young person's mental and physical health, social life and self-confidence.
- Many young carers struggle to juggle their education and caring which can cause pressure and stress.
- Young Carers are likely to have a significantly lower educational attainment than their peers.
- 1 in 20 young carers miss school because of their caring role. With the added complication of the COVID-19 pandemic, young carers have missed out on even more school than before.
- In a survey, 39% said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring role.
- 26% have been bullied at school because of their caring role.

Caring can be an isolating experience but having the correct support in place can give young carers a better chance of succeeding in all aspects of their lives.

Contacts

Childline

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Tel: 0800 1111

Childline is a free, private and confidential service for children and young people. Childline is there to listen to any worries or thoughts, online, on the phone, anytime. 1:1 chat and email services are accessible through the website.

Sibs

<https://www.sibs.org.uk/>

Sibs is the only UK charity for children and adults who are growing up with or have grown up with a sibling with a disability. They provide information, support and training on sibling issues for adult siblings, young siblings, parents and professionals.

Young siblings

Children and young people growing up with a disabled brother or sister often get less attention from parents and have more worries and responsibilities than their peers. Many young siblings experience daily challenges in their lives such as public prejudice and finding it hard to get schoolwork done. They also need recognition for the positive aspects of their family lives, such as learning new skills and being supportive of their brothers' and sisters' needs.

Direct support for young siblings

www.sibs.org.uk – an online information service for children and young people aged 7-17, who have a brother or sister who is disabled, has special educational needs or a serious long-term condition.

Young siblings can:

- Get information about disability and conditions, and tips for enjoying life and dealing with feelings.
- Get help from our team with sibling issues at home and at school.

Adult siblings

Adult siblings, in particular those with a brother or sister with a lifelong learning disability and/or autism, provide support, advocacy and care for their brothers and sisters, at the same time as juggling support and care for their elderly parents, their own children, and their work. They rarely receive any acknowledgement of their role or expertise, information about service provision, or support for their own needs. As a result many adult siblings experience isolation, reduced wellbeing and negative effects on their work and finances. Many adult siblings just want to enjoy social time with their brother or sister rather than time together being focused on care tasks.

Support for adult siblings

- Sibs provide email support for adult siblings.
- They run a network of peer support groups for adult siblings of people with a lifelong disability.
- Sibs produce guides for adult siblings of people with a lifelong learning disability and/or autism on issues such as future planning and managing care.
- And run workshops and events for adult siblings.

Edinburgh Young Carers

<https://www.youngcarers.org.uk/>

Edinburgh Young Carers
Norton Park
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh
EH7 5QY

Tel: 0131 475 2322

Email: info@youngcarers.org.uk

Edinburgh Young Carers project offers individual support, groups, residentials and day trips (time out of home), information and support, and a young carers forum.



Children First

<https://www.children1st.org.uk/>

Children 1st
83 Whitehouse Loan
Edinburgh
EH9 1AT

Tel: 0131 446 2300

Email: cfs@children1st.org.uk

Children 1st is Scotland's National Children's Charity.

Children help Scotland's families to put children first, with practical advice and with support in difficult times. And when the worst happens, we support survivors of abuse, neglect, and other traumatic events in childhood, to recover. Children 1st works to prevent abuse and neglect, to protect children and keep them safe from harm. They help children in Scotland live in safe, loving families and build strong communities, and help survivors of abuse, trauma and other adversity to recover, and we work tirelessly to protect the rights of children in Scotland.



Parentline Scotland (Children 1st)

<https://www.children1st.org.uk/help-for-families/parentline-scotland/>

Tel: 08000 282233

Chat online (available during opening hours: Mon-Fri 9am-9pm, Sat/Sun 9am-12noon)

Text: 07860 022844 and Parentline will call you back.

Email: parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk

Parenting can be hugely rewarding, but everyone who cares for a child, whether a family friend or part of the child's extended family can find it challenging from time to time. When you need advice on something specific, or simply an impartial and non-judgemental listening ear, Parentline is there to help.

Space at Broomhouse Hub

<https://www.spacescot.org/youthandfamilies/>

Space at The Broomhouse Hub
79-89 Broomhouse Crescent
Edinburgh
EH11 3RH

Email: admin@spacescot.org

Tel: 0131 455 7731

Young Carers Services:

Space at Broomhouse hub have a number of services which provides a range of support to children and young people caring for their family members. We support young carers aged from 5-25, across the locality of South-West Edinburgh, and their families. There is one to one support, school-based support, group support and other opportunities for young people with a caring role. We provide help, support and advice as well as activities for young-to-young adult carers, including residential trips.

Adult Carers Services:

Information and Support, part of Edinburgh Carers Support Team, in South-West Edinburgh. This is a service for anyone who is a carer, which offers support, information and advocacy to carers on a one-to-one basis as well as monthly Carer Support Group, and a Carer Peer Support Group. We can also signpost and provide mental health and wellbeing support to help with any challenges you might face.

Capital Carers

<https://capitalcarers.org.uk/>

The Prentice Centre
1 Granton Mains Avenue
Edinburgh
EH4 4GA



Tel: 0131 315 3130

Email: admin@nwcarers.org.uk

Capital Carers (formerly known as North-West Carers Centre) is a small organisation, formed by local Carers who wanted more local support. They offer services to Carers of all ages living in the North-West of Edinburgh. The areas we cover are the four Neighbourhood Partnerships: Inverleith, Forth, Western and

Almond. These include Trinity & Boswell, Granton, Pilton, Drylaw, Muirhouse, Silverknowes, Davidson's Mains, Cramond & Barnton. Clermiston, East Craigs & Corstorphine, Blackhall, Murrayfield, Roseburn & Ravelston. Comely Bank & Craigleith. South Queensferry, Kirkliston and Ratho Station.

Care for Carers

<https://www.care4carers.org.uk/>

Email: enquiries@care4carers.org.uk

Phone: 0131 661 2077

Care for Carers
Room 4.25
St Margaret's House
151 London Road
Edinburgh
EH7 6AE

Care for Carers provide support services to all carers, regardless of age, gender, disability or relationship of the person they care for. They deliver services and specific short breaks to carers from across Scotland.

Multi-Cultural Family Base (MCFB)

<https://www.mcfb.org.uk/>

Multi-Cultural Family Base
50 Coburg Street
Edinburgh
EH6 6HE

Email: hello@mcfb.org.uk

Tel: 0131 467 7052



MCFB in Edinburgh works with children and their families who are experiencing difficulties. Some of these are practical, such as housing or financial problems, others are more personal, such as dealing with discrimination or emotional issues. They work in a therapeutic way and offer time and tailored support to help people make sense of the difficulties in their lives and work out how to deal with them. MCFB work with children and parents by themselves, together as a family and with children in groups.

iThrive

<https://ithriveedinburgh.org.uk/find-a-service/>

iThrive Edinburgh Support Directory- can help you find support, for those living/working in Edinburgh.

Edinburgh Women's Aid

<https://www.edinwomensaid.co.uk/>

Tel: 0131 315 8110



Edinburgh Women's Aid support women and young people who have experienced, or are at risk of, domestic abuse.

Services for adults include:

- Crisis counselling
- Support, information and choices concerning domestic abuse, such as housing options, benefits, welfare rights and legal issues.
- Refugee service offers temporary accommodation for women and any accompanying children.
- Resettlement Service, for women moving into permanent accommodation.
- Outreach Service, for people who cannot make it to the central office.
- Court Advocacy through EDDACS service. This offers support and advocacy for female victims of domestic abuse crimes going through the court process.

Children and Young Peoples support is also available. This can include:

- Outreach support in schools
- Group Programmes for women and children

If domestic abuse is happening to you, please remember, it's not your fault and there is help. If you can contact Edinburgh Women's Aid safely, please get in touch.

Behaviour Support

What is challenging behaviour? (Scope, 2022)

Challenging behaviour used to be called 'problem behaviour', 'difficult behaviour' or 'socially unacceptable behaviour'. It means behaviours that are a challenge to parents, carers, teachers and professionals.

A person with challenging behaviour is not a 'problem' to be fixed and is not doing something 'wrong'. But behaviour is a sign that something isn't working. It shows that there is some unfulfilled need or a problem with communication.

Behaviour is challenging if it causes harm or if it stops people fulfilling some aspect of their lives, such as:

- Someone cannot go to school because they show some aggressive behaviour.
- Someone cannot go swimming because they tend to run off.

It is the impact of these behaviours that makes them challenging. Challenging behaviour can be:

- Self-injurious: head-banging, scratching, pulling, eye-poking, picking, grinding teeth, eating things that are not food.
- Aggressive: Biting and scratching, hitting, pinching, grabbing, hair pulling (all of these can also be self-inflicted), throwing objects, verbal abuse, screaming or spitting.
- Stereotyped: Repetitive movements, rocking, repetitive speech and repetitive manipulation of objects.
- Non-person directed: Damage to property, hyperactivity, stealing, inappropriate sexualised behaviours, destruction of clothing, incontinence, lack of awareness of danger, withdrawal.

Disability and Challenging Behaviour

Challenging behaviour is more likely if a person is disabled. A mix of impairments, environment and interpersonal relationships make it more likely that a person with a disability may develop a behaviour to meet their needs. For example, a person with autism may learn that hitting people takes them out of their personal space. Remember, each behaviour has a purpose for the person displaying it.

Mental Health, Disability and Challenging Behaviour

People with learning difficulties may have the same mental health and emotional difficulties that others do, but they may be less well equipped to deal with them. It can be difficult to deal with anxiety if you do not have the words to describe what you are experiencing. It can be difficult to cope with depression if you do not have the social support to help you.

Sometimes challenging behaviour can be a sign of a wider problem with someone's mental health. Refusal to eat may be a sign that the person is feeling down, or aggressive behaviour could be a sign of high anxiety. It's important to see the problem from the perspective of the person showing the behaviour.

Contacts

DiBSS (Disability Behaviour Support Service)

DBSS supports families to explore behaviour strategies and offer practical supports. A referral can be made to them through the Children Affected by Disability Team (details below).

Children with Disabilities Team
25 North Fort Street
Edinburgh, EH6 4HF

Tel: 0131 200 2327

Email: cf.socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk

The team assess the support needs of children who have a disability and their families. To be eligible for a service from the Disability Practice Team: - The disability of the child/young person must be substantial and be the primary reason for the referral, and without support being offered there will be serious risk to the child or others and there may be a high risk of family breakdown. The team also works with children who meet their criteria, who are involved in the Child Protection process, are involved with the Children's Hearing system, are Looked After or Looked After and Accommodated and who need support to transition to adult services and children who need support due to the impact of their disability.

Sleep Scotland

<https://sleepscotland.org/>

60 Ravenscroft Street
Edinburgh, EH17 8QW

Tel: 0131 651 1392

Email: enquiries@sleepscotland.org or sleepscotland@sleepscotland.org



Sleep Scotland provide support for families including sleep counselling for parents and carers of children and young people with additional support needs, a 'listening ear' support call service workshops for parents.

Sleep Scotland's free Sleep Support Line provides on-the-spot guidance to parents and guardians struggling with their children's and teenager's sleep problems. The line gives all families across Scotland access to free support from Sleep Scotland's experienced sleep counsellors where they can get tailored advice on sleep for their children. To access this support please call 0800 138 6565.

Positive Paths

<https://positivepathscic.com/>

CENTRE

2a Hopetoun Street
Edinburgh
EH7 4ND

HUB

Beaverhall House
27 Beaverhall Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4JE

BASE

16/3 Timber Bush
Leith
EH6 6QH

Tel: 07903 962 450

Email: staff@positivepathscic.com

Positive Paths offers behavioural and emotional support – counselling, behavioural programmes and networking, as well as providing short-term respite.

Tailor Ed Foundation

<https://tailoredfoundation.co.uk/>

Tailor Ed Foundation

18 Forth Street
Edinburgh
EH1 3LH

Tel: 07842 104 368



Tailor Ed was set up in 2009 to support families who have a child with autism. Their main focus is to increase the development of daily living skills. They accept referrals for children up to the age of 12 who have a confirmed diagnosis of autism. Their interventions are based on the Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), which is a therapeutic approach developed from the study of human behaviour. At the assessment stage, the project worker will suggest which type of intervention would best suit you and your family's needs. The services are designed to help you with specific problems your child and/or family are facing.

The Richmond Fellowship

<https://www.trfs.org.uk/>

The Richmond Fellowship Scotland is unique within social care in Scotland in having a Positive Behaviour Support Team, who provide innovative, specialist support for people with complex behaviours and additional support needs.

Mental Health

When you have a busy life full of multiple daily anxieties, pressures and obligations, it can take a toll on your health. Whereas your body may often react to excessive stress by showing physical symptoms of illnesses, aches and pains, your mind responds in different ways. You may feel increasingly tired, irritable and/or a bit down. Perhaps your appetite and sleep have changed. Or maybe you are not socialising like you used to or do not enjoy your favourite hobbies anymore. Whatever the symptoms, it is best not to ignore them, as chances are, they will get worse. The following chapter offers some tips and resources for the maintenance of good mental health. It is vitally important for you to take care of yourself first, so that you can be the best parent/carer you can be.

Tips for coping with stress and reducing it

Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure. It's when we think a task is too big for our resources. Sometimes we are so stressed we forget what not being stressed feels like (Contact 2022). Short-term stress is not a bad thing, but long-term it can be harmful. It is important to work out how stress affects you. The first step of trying to reduce stress is recognising when you are getting stressed.

Tips to reduce stress

- Plan your time; trying to cram in too much will end up making you feel stressed when you do not achieve everything.
- Reduce your to-do list- try delegating tasks or, if they are really not essential, cross them off your list altogether.
- Just say no- know your limits and stick to them.
- Avoid people who stress you out. If you know a particular person pushes your buttons, limit the amount of time you spend with them.
- Take control of your environment. If trips to the shops are really difficult, look at ways around it, for example, shopping online, having a friend or family member help you out.
- Be more assertive. If someone calls and you really do only have five minutes, tell them, and be firm when time is up.
- Be positive. If something goes wrong, try to find a more positive way to view it. Reframing can help our mindset. Instead of focusing on the one thing that went wrong, focus on the five other things that went well.
- Take notice of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on the experiences of the day will help to appreciate the things that matter to you.

Looking After Yourself

- Learn how to let go of anger and resentment and forgive others.
- Keep active- exercise is proven to improve mental health and can be as simple as a walk around the block or dancing to a song on the radio.
- Eat healthily. Try to have your 'five a day' and eat breakfast. Cutting down on caffeine can help and eating with the family can reduce stress for some. See NHS Choices website for more information.
- Make sure you get enough sleep.
- Keep learning. Set yourself a challenge you will enjoy achieving – learning something new will make you feel more confident as well as being fun.
- Make time to regularly do something for yourself. Just ten minutes everyday or an hour or two every week can really help.

All these things are easier said than done but trying to implement a couple of them into your routine can help and you will feel better for it.

Help from Others

- Express your feelings – tell your family, partner or friends how you feel and don't keep it bottled up (if you don't feel like you can say things aloud, try writing a letter to share). Take time to build and develop your connections with the people around you.
- If you have a partner, make sure you make time for each other and for your relationship. Set aside five minutes each day for you to talk to each other or spend half an hour at the end of the day watching TV together.
- Ask a professional for help if you need to. Speak to your GP, health visitor, social worker or other professionals you know for information about counselling or therapy.
- Think about joining a parent support group to meet with other families with disabled children who live close to you.
- Do something nice for a friend or a stranger, such as volunteering. Seeing your happiness linked to the wider community can be really rewarding.

Counselling (VOCAL 2022)

Often carers find themselves in situations where their wishes and needs take second place to the person they care for. They can find caring both rewarding and frustrating. Carers sometimes feel they cannot talk to their family and friends about how they feel about their caring situation. Talking to someone outside of the situation can be extremely helpful. Counselling aims to support someone in expressing their thoughts and feelings about what is happening in their life. By exploring all these things counselling can help you to understand more about how you deal with your thoughts and feelings and the situations you find yourself in. Counselling is not about telling you what you should be doing. It is an opportunity for you to talk about and reflect on what is happening in your life as a carer.

The first thing a counsellor will do is listen to you and what you have to say about your situation. They will try to understand your situation from your point of view. The counsellor can then:

- help you to explore your feelings and thoughts about your situation
- they can help you to look at how to deal with your feelings
- they can help you to explore your feelings about your relationship with the person you care for and others
- they can help you to explore how you might deal with things differently in the future

Counselling isn't a magic solution – but it can help you to understand what is happening to you and explore different ways of dealing with things in the future.

Contacts

Counselling Directory

<https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/>

A comprehensive database of UK counsellors and psychotherapists, with information on training and experience, fees and contact details.

Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

The Mental Health Foundation exists to help people survive, recover from and prevent mental health problems.

VOCAL

<https://www.vocal.org.uk/>

VOCAL Edinburgh Carer's Hub
60 Leith Walk
Edinburgh
EH6 5HB



Email: centre@vocal.org.uk
Tel: 0131 622 6666

VOCAL's COSCA recognised counselling service is open to unpaid carers who require emotional support. The counsellors are all qualified or in the final year of their training. They have all been selected by the project because they have a particular understanding of the needs of a carer and the difficulties they can experience. They all receive regular supervision.

The first step is to contact VOCAL's Counselling service manager (Edinburgh carers email counselling@vocal.org.uk or call 0131 466 8082 or Midlothian carers can email midcounselling@vocal.org.uk or call 0131 663 6869) to arrange an intake session.

For carers living in Edinburgh or Midlothian, financial contributions are agreed at a level to suit your individual circumstances.

CoCo Counselling in Communities

<http://www.cocoed.org.uk/>

CoCo Counselling in Communities
Greyfriars Charteris Centre
140 Pleasance (Access through Brown Street)
Edinburgh
EH8 9RR



Email: info@cocoed.org.uk
Tel: 07724152557

Counselling in Communities (CoCo) is a safe and confidential space to access one-to-one counselling with a trained and qualified counsellor. Please contact them if you feel that it may help to speak to someone about personal or professional challenges that are affecting your lives.

CoCo offer support in areas such as:

- Relationship difficulties
- Unemployment, homelessness
- Bereavement, loss or pregnancy
- Isolation, anxiety, depression or stress

- Self-confidence or self-esteem
- Abuse or violence
- Childhood issues
- Workplace issues
- Trauma
- Gender Identity

If you feel that you want to go ahead with counselling, you will be offered a weekly 50-minute session on an agreed day and time every week for up to 12 weeks. Within the fee-paying service, you have the option of long-term counselling.

CoCo offers sessions on Mondays and Wednesdays between 10am-4pm and on Tuesdays and Thursdays between 10:30am-8pm. Sessions are by appointment only.

TLC Service at Dr Bell's Family Centre

<https://drbells.co.uk/therapy-linking-counselling/>

Email: tlc@dbfc.org.uk

Tel: 0131 553 0100



Therapy, Linking and Counselling (TLC) is a counselling service for Leith parents with young children, under 5 years. They may offer a service to those living in immediate surrounding areas of Leith, where there is an identified need for counselling and the person cannot access an alternative service. At your first session you will be involved in an assessment to try and work out the best kind of therapy for you. You will be actively involved in this. There are no minimum or maximum number of sessions you can receive. However, your counsellor will review your therapeutic needs regularly with you and make agreements. The counselling service is free but, donations are welcome from those who can afford to do so. You can self-refer to the service by emailing or coming into the centre for a referral form.

Dr Bells Family Centre Crèche

<https://drbells.co.uk/what-we-do/creche/>

Email: creche@dbfc.org.uk

Dr Bells crèche facility is key to the success of the centre. It allows parents to attend groups and counselling; it supports families facing challenging circumstances through the provision of regular spaces. Due to funding restrictions, they only offer spaces to families living in Leith, with an EH6/7 postcode. They offer spaces from 6 months – until your child's 5th birthday.

Their waiting list is currently open to new referrals for over 2's only (as of December 2022).

Samaritans

<https://www.samaritans.org>

Samaritans
25 Torphichen Street



Edinburgh
EH3 8HX

Email: jo@samaritans.org
Tel: 0131 116 123

Samaritans provides confidential non-judgemental support, 24 hours a day, for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair. Volunteers offer support by responding to phone calls, emails and letters. Alternatively, people can drop into a branch to have a face-to-face meeting.

Richmond's Hope

<https://www.richmondshope.org.uk/>

Richmond's Hope
Richmond Craigmillar Church
227 Niddrie Mains Road
Edinburgh
EH16 4PA



Email: info@richmondshope.org.uk
Tel: 0131 661 6818

When someone has died, Richmond's Hope is a place where children and young people aged 4-18 years can explore their feelings and find ways to cope with their grief.

Crossreach Counselling

<https://www.crossreach.org.uk/>

Crossreach Counselling
Charis House
47 Milton Road East
Edinburgh
EH15 2SR

Email: info@crossreach.org.uk
Tel: 0131 657 2000

Lower cost counselling in Edinburgh. Fee donations are based on how much you can afford, so sometimes will only be a couple of pounds or even free.

Saheliya

<https://www.saheliya.co.uk/>

Saheliya
125 McDonald Road
Edinburgh



EH7 4NW

Tel: 0131 556 9302

Email: info@saheliya.co.uk

Saheliya is a specialist mental health and well-being support organisation for black, minority ethnic, asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women and girls (12+).

Wellspring – Lower Cost Counselling and Psychotherapy

<https://www.wellspring-scotland.co.uk/>

Wellspring Scotland Ltd
13 Smith's Place
Edinburgh
EH6 8NT

Tel: 0131 553 6660

Email: mail@wellspring-scotland.co.uk

Wellspring is a leading centre for the provision of affordable high-quality psychotherapy and counselling to individuals, couples, groups, families and young people.

Charities, Information and General Support for Parents/Carers

Disability Information Scotland

<https://www.disabilityscot.org.uk/>

Disability Information Scotland
Norton Park
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh
EH7 5QY

Tel: 0300 323 9961

Email: info@disabilityscot.org.uk



This is an information service funded by the Scottish Government to provide reliable, accurate and accessible information to disabled people, their families, friends, carers and those working in this area. Find information guides on a wide range of topics from benefits to travel concessions and respite care. The Scottish Disability Directory provides information on thousands of disability organisations and support groups, both local and national and includes further information on debts and budgeting, grants and trusts as well as welfare benefits.

Parentline Scotland

<https://www.children1st.org.uk/help-for-families/parentline-scotland/>

Call free on: 08000 28 22 33

Chat online: start a webchat using the chat window on the webpage (available during opening hours)
Or Text 07860 022844 (standard network charges apply) and they will give you a call back.

Email: parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk

Open 7 days a week: Mon-Fri 9am-9pm, Sat-Sun 9am-12pm

Whatever it is that affects your family, you can talk it over with Parentline. They will listen to you with kindness, give you time to think things through and support you.

Scottish Family Information Service

<http://www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk/LocalChis.aspx?chisid=29>

Edinburgh Childcare Information Service
Waverley Court Level 1.2
4 East Market Street
Edinburgh
EH8 8BG

Tel: 0131 529 2103

Email: childcareinformation@edinburgh.gov.uk

A national website for the Family Information Services (FIS) in each of the local authorities in Scotland, providing parents, carers and professionals with information on childcare in the local area, including child minders, nurseries, out of school care and holiday provision.

Carers Trust

<https://carers.org/>

Carers Trust Scotland
Tay House
300 Bath Street
Glasgow
G2 4JR



Tel: 0300 123 2008

Email: scotland@carers.org

Carers Trust Scotland is the largest provider of comprehensive carers support services in Scotland. They reach around 30,000 adult carers and 2,400 young carers from all groups and communities, through a unique network of independent carers centres and young carers services throughout Scotland. They work with these centres to improve support, services and recognition for carers in communities across Scotland.

Salvesen Mindroom Centre

<https://www.mindroom.org/>

Suite 4/3 Great Michael House
14 Links Place
Edinburgh
EH6 7EZ

Tel: 0131 370 6730 or Text: 07747492755

Email: directhelp@mindroom.org

The Salvesen Mindroom Centre is a small Scottish charity that aims to help those with autism, ADHD and dyslexia to ensure that “no mind is left behind” and every person with a learning difficulty receives recognition and the support they need to achieve their potential. Mindroom works directly with families providing information, advice and one-to-one support and support and advocate for children and young people under 25. They can help to plan transition for secondary school pupils, and they produce literature, training and resources for parents/carers and professionals. They collaborate with organisations to raise awareness and reach more people in need of support.

Edinburgh Development Group

<https://www.edg-sco.org/>

Unit 16b, Castlebrae Business Centre
Peffer Place
Edinburgh
EH16 4BB

Tel: 0131 476 0522

Email: info@edg-sco.org

Innovative information and guidance for people with disabilities and their families/carers.

National Autistic Society

<https://www.autism.org.uk/>

The National Autistic Society Scotland
77 Renfrew Street
Glasgow
G2 3BZ

Tel: 0141 221 8090

Email scotland@nas.org.uk



If you have autism or are the family member of someone who does, National Autistic Society provide local specialist help, information and care across Scotland. They offer a wide range of personalised quality support at home and in the community, both in groups or on a one to one basis.

Branch Out Together

<https://www.branchouttogether.org/>

Unit 4, 38 Baileyfield Road
Portobello
Edinburgh
EH15 1NA



Tel: 0131 6613834

Formally known as Lothian Autistic Society, Branch Out Together are the provider of social activities for children and young people with autism throughout Edinburgh and The Lothians. They offer a supportive and understanding learning environment, and weekly events where the children can try new activities that are stimulating and challenging. These activities help them to gain coping skills while having fun and building friendships with their peers. Their aim is to help children and young people on the autism spectrum to be confident, to lead full and enriched lives, and to support families in their caring role.

Cerebral Palsy Scotland

<https://cerebralpalsyScotland.org.uk/>

Bradbury House
10 High Craighall Road
Glasgow
G2 9UD



Tel: 0141 352 5000

Email: info@cpscot.org.uk

Cerebral Palsy Scotland provides specialist intensive therapy for both children and adults. They work to bring the Cerebral Palsy community together through organising group activities for a range of ages and stages, and work to share Cerebral Palsy -specific information both online and face-to-face. They also advocate for policy change, pressing for everyone with Cerebral Palsy to have life-long access to knowledgeable, compassionate services and support.

Epilepsy Scotland

<https://www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk/>

Helpline: 0808 800 2200

Email: contact@epilepsyscotland.org.uk



Epilepsy Scotland offers information and support to adults with epilepsy and families of children with epilepsy.

Care for Carers

<https://www.care4carers.org.uk/>

Care for Carers

St Margaret's House (Room 4.25)
151 London Road
Edinburgh
EH7 6AE

Tel: 0131 661 2077

Email: admin@care4carers.org.uk

Care for Carers provide support services to all carers, regardless of age, gender, disability or relationship of the person they care for. They deliver services and specific short breaks to carers from across Scotland.

CHAS

<https://www.chas.org.uk/>

CHAS
Canal Court
42 Craiglockhart Avenue
Edinburgh
EH14 1LT



Tel: 0131 444 1900

Email: support@chas.org.uk

CHAS is short for Children's Hospices Across Scotland. They offer full family support service for babies, children and young people with life-shortening conditions. This includes palliative care, family respite and support- through their hospices, homecare services and hospital presence.

PAMIS

<https://pamis.org.uk/>

PAMIS support people with profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) and their families.



Scope

<https://www.scope.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 800 3333

Email: helpine@scope.org.uk

Scope is a charity which works to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else. They provide practical advice and emotional support whenever people need it most.

Kindred

<https://www.kindred-scotland.org/>

Kindred Head Office
Kindred



1 St Colme Street
Edinburgh
EH3 6AA

Tel: 0800 031 5793

Email: enquiries@kindred-scotland.org

Kindred at Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP)

Kindred
Family Support Corridor
Room G-K1-012
50 Little France Crescent
Edinburgh BioQuarter
Little France
Edinburgh
EH16 4TJ

Tel: 0131 312 0362

Email: enquiries@kindred-scotland.org

Kindred provides support to families of severely ill and/or disabled children. They provide practical information, advocacy, emotional support and guidance. They can help families to:

- Come to terms with their child's diagnosis and implications for the future.
- Understand their child's limitations - and/or pain – and/or challenging behaviour.
- Learn new skills to care for a disabled child at home.
- Apply for necessary disability benefits, equipment and home adaptations.
- Find the right school and learning support.
- Cope with bereavement.

FAiR Edinburgh

<https://www.fairadvice.org.uk/>

FAiR
95 Causewayside
Edinburgh
EH9 1QG

Tel: 0131 662 1962

Email: fair@fairadvice.org.uk

FAiR (Family Advice and Information Resource) is an information, advice and advocacy service for people with learning disabilities and carers in Edinburgh.

FAiR's advice workers can help you with benefit issues and money management:

- claiming new benefits
- re-applying for benefits
- help with benefit changes
- filling in forms

- supporting you through the whole process of assessment
- budgeting – managing how you spend your money
- getting you help to pay bills
- helping you get advice on debt
- opening bank accounts and savings accounts
- FAiR can refer you on to other support organisations

Contact

<https://contact.org.uk/>

Contact Scotland
The Melting Pot
15 Calton Road
Edinburgh
EH8 8DL

contact *For families
with disabled children*

Tel: 07458 046 071

Email: scotland.office@contact.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 808 3555

Contact support families with the best possible guidance and information, bring families together to support each other and help families to campaign, volunteer and fundraise to improve life for themselves and others. They have:

- Helpline
- Website and parent resources
- Workshops and information sessions
- Up-to-date and validated information on hundreds of disabilities and conditions, their symptoms, treatment and the support available.
- Parent support groups

VOCAL

<https://www.vocal.org.uk/>

EDINBURGH

VOCAL Edinburgh Carers Hub
60 Leith Walk
Edinburgh
EH6 5HB

Tel: 0808 196 6666

Email: centre@vocal.org.uk

MIDLOTHIAN

VOCAL Carer Centre
Hardengreen Estate
30/1 Dalhousie Road
Dalkeith



EH22 3NX

Tel: 0131 663 6869

Email: midlothian@vocal.org.uk

VOCAL's carer support teams work individually with carers to identify a plan of support, which can include:

- Access to information
- Referral to benefit, legal or power of attorney surgeries
- Access to a range of training and lifestyle management opportunities
- Referral to the VOCAL carer counselling service
- Work with other agencies

The Action Group

<https://www.actiongroup.org.uk/>

The Action Group
Norton Park Centre
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh
EH7 5QY

Tel: 0131 475 2315

Email: info@actiongroup.org.uk



The Action Group offers information, individual support and groups for children/young people and adults with additional needs and learning difficulties, as well as support for families.

Capability Scotland

<https://www.capability.scot/>

Main Office

Capability Scotland
Vantage Point
24 St John's Road
Edinburgh
EH12 6NZ

Tel: 0131 337 9876

Edinburgh Children's Services

1 Osborne Terrace
Edinburgh
EH12 5HG

Tel: 0131 347 1027

Email: ChildServices@capability.scot



Capability Scotland campaigns with, and provides education, employment and care services for disabled children and adults across Scotland.

Enquire

<https://enquire.org.uk/>

Tel: 0345 123 2303

Email: info@enquire.org.uk

ENQUIRE

The helpline is open Monday-Friday, 9:00am – 4:30pm.

You can also use an online form on the website to contact Enquire.

Enquire is the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. Their mission is to:

- Raise awareness of children's rights to extra support in school.
- Help families and schools work together to ensure children get the support they need.
- Provide advice to children and young people who might be struggling in school.

Enquire do this by:

- Providing easy to understand advice and information about additional support for learning legislation and guidance for families and professionals.
- Helping families find local education and support services.
- Sharing practical tips to help families and schools can work together and solve problems should they arise.

Enquire offer lots of ways to access our help including a telephone helpline, guides, factsheets and outreach work. All the information and advice we provide is independent and impartial.

LCiL

<https://www.lothiancil.org.uk/>

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL)
Norton Park Centre
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh
EH7 5QY



Tel: 0131 475 2350 (Opening Hours: Monday-Friday, 10:00am-4:00pm)

LCiL can help with all aspects of self-directed support (SDS), including:

- Preparing for an assessment
- Providing independent information on all the SDS options available to people in receipt of care/support.
- Helping to organise and manage your support according to the choices you make -e.g.
- to use a particular service provider
- to use an agency

- to recruit and employ Personal Assistants (incl. help with recruitment, contracting, managing all aspects of payroll, managing Direct Payments (DP) finances)
- to purchase equipment

They can support and offer information to people who are exploring how to meet their individual outcomes via Independent Living Support.

Learning and training opportunities available to:

- Disabled people, people with long term conditions, older people and carers.
- Organisations – from presentations, or input in discussions, to complete package to meet all organisations' training needs, LCiL can work with organisations and their staff or service users on a range of topics covering:
 - About us photo
 - Self-Directed Support options, including Direct Payments and employing Pas
 - Independent Living
 - Diversity/Disability Equality Training LCiL would charge at a very reasonable cost for this).

Sense Scotland

<https://www.sensescotland.org.uk/>

Sense Scotland
43 Middlesex Street
Kinning Park
Glasgow
G41 1EE

Tel: 0300 330 9292

Email: info@sensescotland.org.uk



Sense Scotland is a Scottish charity and specialised social care provider supporting people with communication support needs associated with complex and sensory disabilities, and their families, where individual needs and choices come first.

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