

Carers of East Lothian
East Lothian Community
Hospital
Alderston Road
Haddington
EH41 3PF

Telephone: 0131 665 0135
Email: centre@coel.org.uk



Summary of Results

Carers of East Lothian (CoEL) Next Steps Survey 2021

Thank you to everyone who took part in our Carers of East Lothian (CoEL) Next Steps Survey distributed in August 2021.

We received 118 responses this year compared to 256 responses last year. We changed the distribution method this year, sending carers who had given us consent to use their email address for correspondence an online rather than a paper copy of the survey, which may account for the reduced response rate. However, more carers completed this year's survey online (66 responses) than on paper (52 responses). This suggests other factors such as carer fatigue, with the pandemic and/or with surveys, may also have had an impact on levels of engagement.

Just over 80% of respondents felt safe, comfortable and confident to accessing our services by telephone as restrictions eased. There was also strong support for a reintroduction of face-to-face services, in particular one-to-one appointments and home visits. Roughly half of respondents wanted to be able to access appointments in the office or another community location (54%) or home visits (50%). These have been available to carers since the summer in situations where support cannot be delivered remotely; however, due to high rates of Covid-19 infections in the community, our peer support groups have still been meeting online or outdoors (weather permitting!).

In free text comments, several respondents noted maintaining confidentiality and responding quickly were also important to help carers feel safe, comfortable and confident when accessing our services.

In terms of service developments, the vast majority of respondents (92%) had no preference for which weekday evening we should run an information and advice service to support carers who find it difficult to make enquiries during office hours. We are currently recruiting more staff and will announce details of the service we will be trialling once the team is back to its full strength.

Almost equal numbers of respondents were interested in being a befriender or buddy (n=23) as having a befriender or buddy (n=20). We aim to launch a telephone-based befriending service in early 2022. We will be contacting everyone who expressed interest in being on a steering group to oversee the project in the coming month (November 2021).

In relation to breaks from caring, the barriers most frequently cited by respondents to accessing a break were 1) a lack of replacement care and 2) a lack of knowledge about the options available or who to speak to about a break. Respondents' answers highlighted that choice and personalisation were key to enabling carers to take a break. We will be reflecting this feedback in our response to the Scottish Government's National Care Service consultation on a right to respite for unpaid carers. We will also be making it clear that any right to respite will be of limited value unless social care services, including replacement care options, are available to people when and where they need them.

There was continued support for workshops for carers, with 84% of respondents signalling an interest. The two most popular topics were "caring for yourself" and "information about managing specific conditions". We are delighted to have recruited Catherine Cain to the newly created post of Training and Volunteer Coordinator to focus on developing and delivering events programmes for carers in future.

Four out of five respondents said they would value a Carer's Card. Respondents mostly wanted the card to function as an emergency card (to alert emergency services that they were a carer and that the person they cared for would need alternative support urgently if anything happened to them) and/or as an ID card with their name and photograph. We are currently working with the Coalition of Carers in Scotland (CoCiS) to build a business case for a national Carer's Card. If the scheme does not go ahead at a national level, we will explore what can be achieved locally instead.

Several respondents suggested that we should lobby local political representatives and the Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to raise awareness of carers' issues. We acknowledge that much of the work we do in engaging with authorities to improve support for carers is not directly visible to the public and/ or does not deliver immediate results. Our Carers' Panel organised an online hustings with constituency candidates in advance of the Scottish Parliamentary elections earlier this year (you can view a recording of the event here: <https://youtu.be/AiydTm4EX6s>). We will continue to raise carers' issues with providers and political representatives at all levels. Nevertheless, we appreciate the frustration individuals have expressed at the lack of support available now and the slow pace of change.

In the survey, we invited carers to help us develop a new business plan for the organisation by participating in strategy development sessions. We were delighted that 16 respondents took part in this activity, 11 in person and 5 online. Our new business plan will be published in early 2022.

Thank you once again to everyone who responded to our survey. We always welcome feedback so please tell us about your experiences of our services, or what we could do differently or better to support you, at any time throughout the year by calling us on 0131 665 1035 or emailing us at centre@coel.org.uk.