



# **ANNUAL REVIEW** April 2021-March 2022

The Princess Royal Trust Borders Carers Centre  
known as The Borders Carers Centre



“

Doctors diagnose,  
nurses heal  
...and caregivers  
make sense  
of it all.

”

BRETT H. LEWIS

## 2021 - 2022

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# Caring for Carers in the Scottish Borders

The Borders Carers Centre is an independent expert charity dedicated to supporting young adult and adult carers in the Scottish Borders since 1995. Through engagement in a Carers Support Plan, carers are recognised, enabled and sustained in their caring role, as well as supported to have a life outside caring. In addition to emotional and practical help, the Carers Centre offers intensive support whilst going through hospital admissions, discharge and palliative care and beyond, as well as access to support groups, workshops, funding, counselling, therapies, respite, and advocacy. Carers tell us repeatedly that our holistic approach, which places carers at the centre of everything we do, really does make a positive difference to their lives. We hope that this year, if nothing else, has proven that we will always strive to continue to deliver a robust service, even when faced with enormous challenges and that we firmly believe in the importance of recognising, listening to and valuing all carers throughout the Scottish Borders.

## Welcome message from the Vice-Chair

2021-2022 saw a further unprecedented year of activity for Borders Carers Centre in terms of workloads, increased support to, and engagement with carers.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the staff team for their continued dedication and tireless efforts to ensure that carers in the Scottish Borders have timely access to support, information, advice and emotional support as and when they need it. Thanks also go to our funders, our statutory and third sector partners and our fundraising committee. Without the support and co-production of our partners we would not be able to continue to provide a robust service to carers throughout the Scottish Borders and for this we are indebted.

This year has once again been a year of significant challenges as we have continued to cope with the implications of Covid 19, which has undoubtedly resulted in a reduction to health and community services and consequently, an inevitable increase in stresses and pressures for unpaid carers. Never before have we seen such a high number of carers caring for loved ones with such a high level of need and struggling to access the services to support them. This not only a local but also a national issue and we have been working both with Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership and Scottish Government

to raise and address these issues ensuring that the voice of unpaid carers is heard and listened to. This has been achieved through our forum for carers, Carers First

and the Carers Workstream, facilitated by the Health and Social Care Partnership and we are grateful to be delivery partners. Carers have not only struggled with their emotional and physical well-being throughout this year but also financially and this year alone we have provided carers in our area with over £100k in grants for breaks, activities, white goods and crisis payments etc. We are grateful for the support of Scottish Government and Shared Care Scotland who have provided us with a large proportion of this funding.

We have consulted widely with carers this year to ensure that services meet their needs and we were delighted to hold our first Borders wide online event in October 2021 “A Change is as Good as a Rest” to look at the respite needs of carers. This was attended by 56 participants and consisted of unpaid carers, health and social care and third sector professionals. The findings from the event have been widely shared and will be used to inform the ongoing future design and delivery of services to ensure that resources are directed appropriately to meet the needs of carers and those they care for.

We also consulted widely with carers on the re-establishment of our face-to-face carers support groups. Carers were keen to meet face-to-face again and following a scoping event 4 groups have been restarted in localities throughout the Scottish Borders. Our online support groups also continue.

We have moved this year to our hybrid model of working following consultation with staff and carers. Many staff have chosen to continue to work from home with a limited number of hours based in the office. We will also be moving to face-to face team meetings on a tri-monthly basis. Lessons learned from the pandemic and the enforced home working have influenced our decision making. Our outputs have increased and staff and well-being has improved with the new way of working and we look forward to further developments.

My final words I would like to dedicate to all of the unpaid carers who tirelessly support and care for their loved ones up and down the Scottish Borders and without whom the social care and health system would simply not be able to function. We genuinely hope that you feel supported by the service we offer and rest assured that we will always strive to meet your needs whether directly or indirectly and ensure that your voices are heard both on a local and national level. Thank you for all that you do.

*Mairhi Trickett*  
Vice Chair

## Our Mission

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, mental health problem or an addiction, can't cope without their support.

The purpose of the BCC is to provide support, advice and information to adult carers and young adult carers in order to enable people who are carers to have the same quality of life as non-carers.

We do this through:

- The provision of advice, information and training opportunities to carers
- Support for carers on an individual basis and mutual support through carers groups
- Provision of advocacy for carers
- Provision of opportunities for volunteers to become involved in the work of the Borders Carers Centre
- Ensuring carers have a voice in the planning and provision of health and social care services of the Scottish Borders.





## Our Board

Linda Jackson – Chair

Mairhi Trickett – Vice Chair/Treasurer

Elspeth Critchley – Secretary

Gordon Paterson – Trustee

Colin Hood – Trustee

Jan Davies – Trustee

Ann McKerracher – Trustee



*Linda Jackson, Chair*



*Mairhi Trickett  
Vice Chair/Treasurer*

## Getting to know the Board

### MAIRHI TRICKETT

‘After working as a Carers Centre Manager in Orkney for 15 years I felt I wanted to continue helping make life easier for Carers when I moved to the Borders. Being a Board member is different to hands on managing but equally rewarding. A good Board needs people with different talents - finance, people skills, leadership experience - but most of all Caring Experience or at least a knowledge of what it is like to be a Carer! I think we are a good team and I enjoy working with the others on the Board and our dedicated staff members’

### GORDON PATERSON

‘Having attended numerous fundraising events for the Borders Carers Centre over many years I decided to volunteer to serve on the Board

in response to a plea for new members at the Kelso Races Day in 2017. I have enjoyed being part of a small and congenial group of Directors and have been most impressed by the valuable work undertaken by the Carers Liaison Workers and the excellent administrative support team’

■ We are continually on the lookout for new Board members, if you would like to join Mairhi and Gordon and the other trustees, please contact the Carers Centre on 01896 752431 for more information.



## Our Team

Lynn Gallacher – Centre Manager

Kirsty Finlayson – Team Leader

Sanchia Douglas – Administrator and Finance Officer

Debbie Rutherford – Information and Training Officer

Laura Kerr – Carers Liaison Worker

Angela Ramage – Carers Liaison Worker

Catriona Strivens – Carers Liaison Worker

Alix Jones – Carers Liaison Worker

Andrea Harkness – Parent Carers Liaison Worker

Heather Fullbrook – Hospital Liaison Worker

Jackie Coombes – Administrative Assistant



*Andrea and Alix try their hand at some creative crafts.*

## The Challenges

This year has been yet another unprecedented year for both the Carers Centre and unpaid carers. The on-going challenges of the COVID pandemic together with the subsequent but also pre covid pressures within the Health and Social Care System has had huge implications for our service but also the carers we support.

Referrals peaked in the first three months of 2021, reaching for the first time a total of 167 – this trend has largely continued with an average of between 12 and 15 new referrals per week.

We have seen increased demands for breaks from caring through replacement care and

increased demand for our counselling service as well as requests for crisis funding and other sources of financial support.

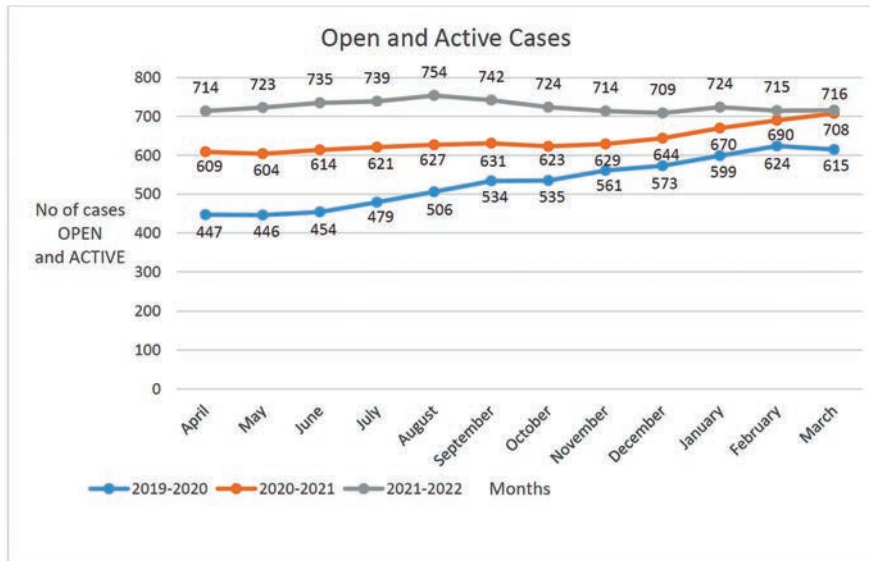
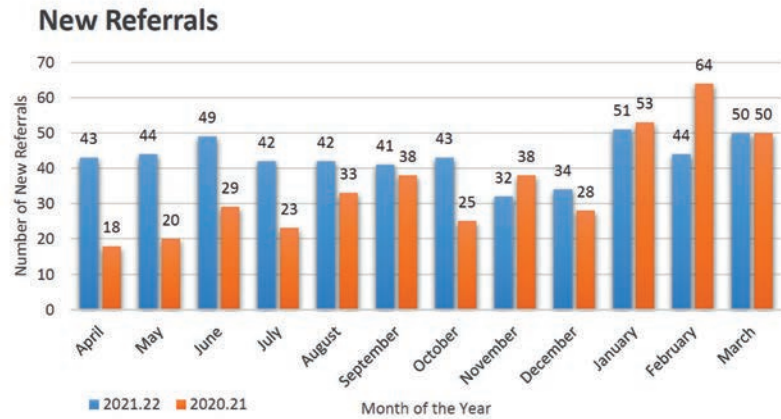
We have continued to deliver the service to the best of ability whilst at the same time managing expectations and the needs of the staff team, who have all gone above and beyond to ensure that carers receive a robust service and that we do everything possible to support them with the demands of their caring roles.



**Active cases** – The number of referrals received each month have continued at an all-time high throughout the whole pandemic resulting in an increase in the number of active cases both due to the complexity of need and the lack of services within the community.

## Our Year – The figures

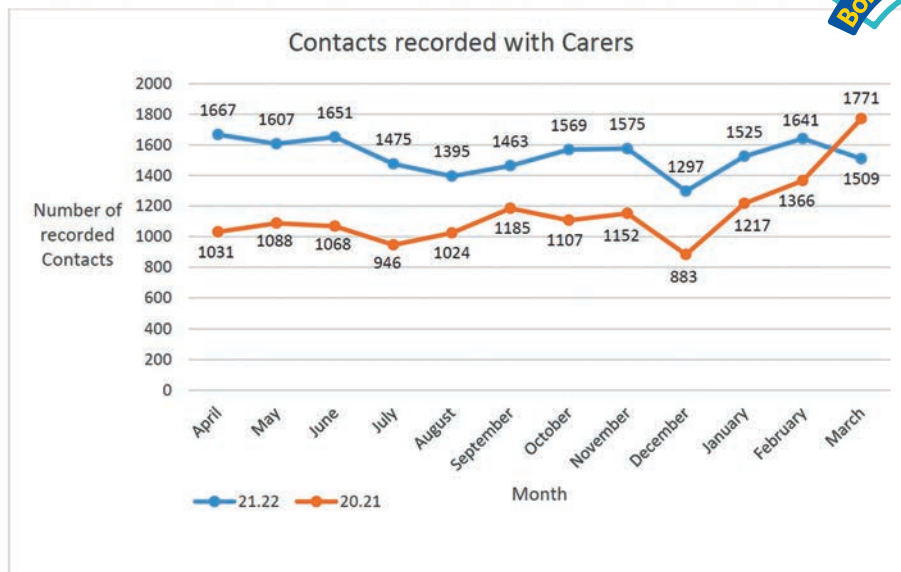
*This chart showing the number of new referrals highlights that we are consistently receiving an average of 44 referrals per month.*



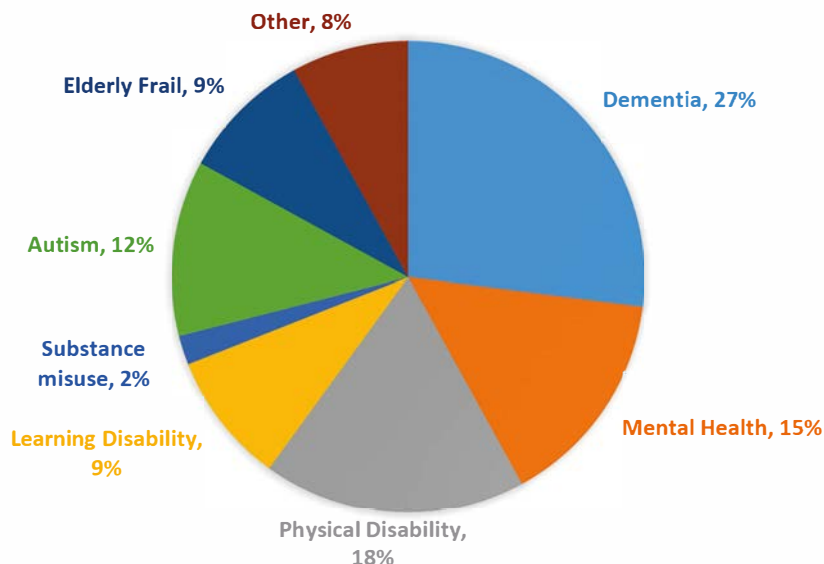
*The chart on the left displays the rise in number of active cases.*



*The chart on the right displays the rise in Contacts*



## CARED FOR ILLNESS/DIAGNOSIS



*The pie chart here displays the percentage of specific illness/diagnosis of the cared for person – there has been high demand for our services from parent carers caring for children with additional support needs and those caring for someone living with dementia.*

*(continued overleaf)*

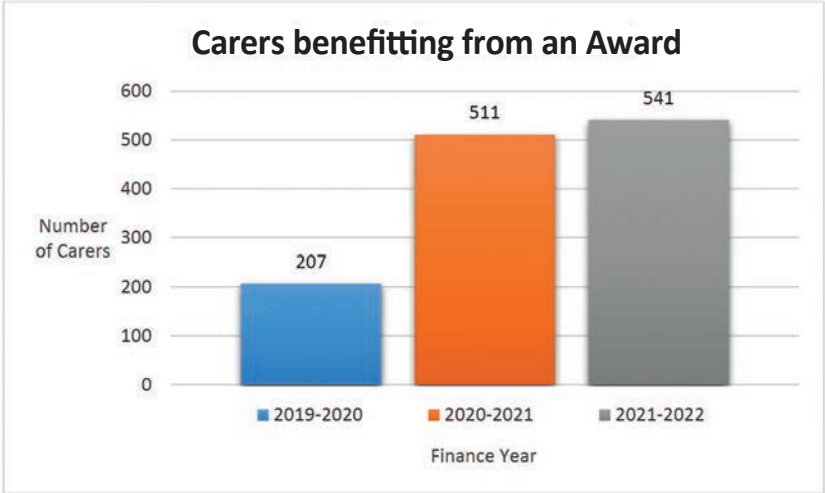
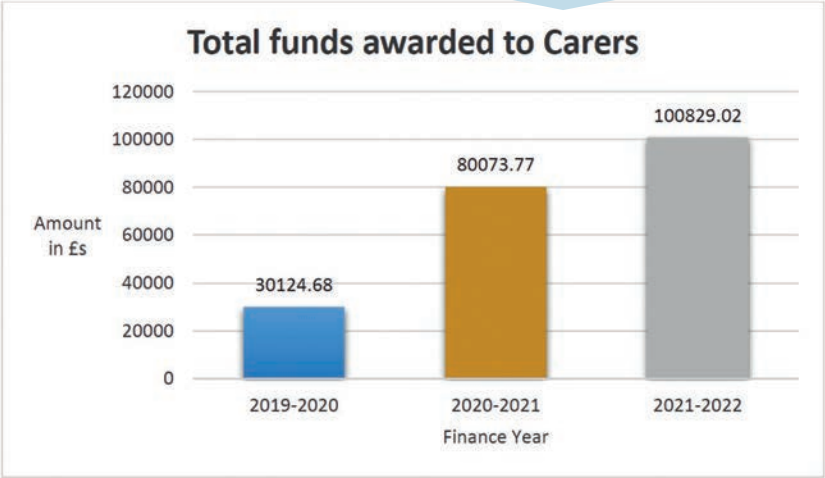
**Funding allocated** – In response to the pandemic the Government awarded all Carers Centres Winter Hardship Funding to go directly to unpaid carers to support them through these difficult times. This was a higher level than we had ever been required to manage before, a single sum of £64314 to be allocated by the end of March 2022. The staff team worked above and beyond to ensure grants were passed on to carers in a timely fashion and payments were made within 5 days of grant approval. In addition we still continue to manage funds from Time to Live, Shared Care Scotland and make individual applications for carers to organisations such as Radio Bauer incorporating Radio Borders (Cash for Kids), Cleveland Forbes, Blackstock Trust, Borders Childrens Charity and Carers Trust to name a few.

*The chart here displays how many carers and their families benefitted from grant awards*

# Our Year – The figures

(continued)

*The chart below displays total funds secured and processed over a three year period, and the dramatic increase during the two years of the pandemic is very evident.*



## Counselling

We continue to source and secure funds to support the counselling service provided to carers by our in-house counsellor. All counselling is free of charge to unpaid carers.

**250 counselling sessions have been delivered this year, with 47 carers benefiting from the service.**

Carers are able to access up to 8 sessions with the counsellor and we have seen an increase in the number of sessions required for each individual since the pandemic due to critical need.

On line and telephone counselling still remain an option for carers to access counselling but face-to face within the centre has also been resumed.

Feedback from carers has been positive and there is a waiting list for the service.

*"Helped me through a difficult time"*



*"It has been a very positive experience. I now understand how negative thoughts have affected my ability to cope"*

*"It's been helpful to discuss my changing role as a wife/carer"*

*"Counselling has allowed me to accept feelings are ok and how to deal with them"*

*"I feel more confident, positive and energised"*



## A Change is as Good as a Rest

We recognised last year the ever increasing demand and need for carers to have breaks from caring and the huge difficulty in accessing breaks due to the availability of local provision for the cared for person. We felt it was important to bring people together to look at the issues, the gaps, what was working well and possible solutions, so in partnership with Scottish Borders Council and facilitated by Emma McGregor, Consulting Services, we held our first online event, “A Change is as Good as a Rest” in October 2021.

The event was designed for unpaid carers, Scottish Borders Council and NHS staff in order to come together to feed into the discussion which aimed to explore;

- What is working well in terms of the current respite offer within the Scottish Borders Council?
- What improvements are needed in terms of respite provision in the future and what needs to be prioritised locally?

There were four engagements during the event including two participant polls, breakout

## Our Year – The Highlights

rooms for small group discussion and a main room discussion.

The event stimulated a broad and meaningful discussion around the importance of getting respite right in the Scottish Borders and demonstrated a depth of understanding surrounding the complexity of the topic.

The event highlighted the need for service designs to ensure that the views of the end users (the cared for and the unpaid carers) are heard prior to the design and commissioning of services. The findings highlight that there is a risk that if services are designed in isolation from unpaid carers then it could result in the needs of families in the area not being met.

The importance of continuously involving the service users at a ‘systems level’ in order to make improvements in the locality in the future was evident from the discussions and there was a willingness from both the unpaid carer community and the professionals involved to continue to support this journey and to work

alongside the Borders Carers Centre Team and Scottish Borders Council to shape a better future for respite.

On-going work identifying the needs of carers is being continued through the Carers Workstream.



## Moving on from the pandemic

### Hybrid – the new normal

In February of this year in consultation with staff and unpaid carers who use our service, we officially adopted a hybrid model of working going forward, with the staff team working a blend of at home and office working.

The decision was based on the need to create

additional capacity within the organisation, the changing culture within statutory services with a move to on-line meetings and also to maintain the evidence based benefit to staff in terms of work/ life balance and health and well-being. The team have adjusted well to this new way of working.

### Carers Support Groups reimagined

Following the pandemic and given the vulnerability of carers and cared for in relation to COVID 19, in February of this year, we undertook a scoping exercise to look at the changing needs of carers and the appetite for the reintroduction of face-to-face Carers Support Groups.

Without doubt the impact of COVID in terms of isolation, fatigue and a general sense of low mood had left carers feeling that they would benefit from some time to themselves and, to meet with others but there was also a strong emerging need to feel replenished and cared for in a safe environment. With this in mind and following feedback from carers it was decided to reinstate the groups but in completely new settings and with “extras”.

So, it was out with village halls and tea and biscuits and in with Ednam House Hotel Kelso,



Eyemouth Golf Club, the Coffee Tree Galashiels and Heart of Hawick with all venues providing a relaxed setting, freshly brewed coffee and tea and fresh home baking. Feedback so far has been very positive - groups are growing and long lasting friendships are forming!

*“What a treat – I’m so grateful for this and I really look forward to it!”*



## Carers Residential

The opportunity to take carers away for a relaxing break and to spend time with other carers has been very much missed throughout the pandemic and we were delighted when early this year we were able to offer this opportunity once again. Following feedback from carers in the planning of the event, and unlike on other occasions, we decided to forgo a formal information session and the purpose of the overnight was to rest, recharge, be pampered and spend time together.

On 8th February, we took a group of 6 carers to Peebles Hydro for 2 day/1 night of rest, relaxation and sharing. All Covid precautions were taken as all of the carers who came were caring for people with very high care needs, so it was incredibly important for them to

meet in this safe and supported environment.

We arranged for a massage therapist to give each carer an hour's massage and there was

plenty of time to chat and share. Lunch and dinner were provided, as well as teas, coffees and treats throughout the day and the pool, sauna and Jacuzzi was available for use too. All carers had their own double room, and we also had a crafting session, which was a great bonding experience. Not all of us were 'natural crafters' and it was the source of much giggling and fun. One carer was incredibly talented and it was lovely to see her confidence grow with the admiration of her peers. The break was very much needed, appreciated and enjoyed by all.

*"I want to thank you for the wonderful break at Peebles Hydro this week. It truly was amazing and so very relaxing. I had a fantastic time and it was just so lovely to meet everyone. It was a truly memorable day/night and it was so good to have a laugh, even if it was at ourselves. Sometimes life just seems to have got so heavy!"*





(above and right) Sanchia and Kirsty celebrate their half-centuries in style.

## Carers Centre Staff Celebrate '100 years'

Two members of the team this year celebrated very special birthdays with a combined total of 100 years and partied in style. It was a welcome opportunity to bring staff together now that we have adopted a hybrid model of working and a wonderful time was had by all.



## We couldn't have done it without you



As ever we would like to express our thanks to our wonderful fundraising committee who have again worked tirelessly in their fundraising efforts throughout very difficult times and have raised in total, **£18,777**.



Thank you as ever also goes to the staff team for all of their tireless efforts and valuable commitment to the Centre and last but not least to our statutory partners for their on-going and continued support.

*Pictured at the Carers Centre annual fund raising Kelso Race Day are (l to r) Linda Jackson (Chair of the Board), Sue Winters (carer), Debbie Rutherford (Information and Training Officer) and Mark Gilbert - Chair of the Fundraising Committee.*

## The final say...

We have been using flash surveys throughout the year to rate our service. In April '21...

**95%** rated our service as **good** or **excellent**



*"I can't thank you enough. There isn't anyone else I would talk about this to and I don't feel guilty about what I am expressing to you. I feel the frustration about being a carer has gradually crept in and I feel that I can express what I feel and start to explore this and I haven't mentioned it to anyone else. I come across as someone who's always got a smile and I am fine and you are the first one to see past that and see that I am not."*



(continued overleaf)

“ Thank you so much for your help, you were right where I needed you when I needed you.”

“ You have been so kind and I really appreciated all your help, and kindness. You're all doing a really good job and the Palliative services and support has made such a difference. The fact you have been there and have had my back has been so good. I knew where to get help and you were there to make sure I had what I needed when I needed it.”

“ I feel like you knew me and understood what I was saying and how I was feeling. You made such a difference.”

“ I am so grateful for the help from you and when I say you, I mean the Carers Centre. So often people say they understand, but they don't and I know you really understand that carers need support for themselves. You are like a light helping me out of a tunnel and I know you are always there and I am so grateful that you see me.”

“ Was fair pleased to get the Therapy Voucher – everything for me gets put to the back and this fair cheered me up. It will be a right nice treat for me as I don't get many of them.”

“ Thank you so much. I am so pleased that I can get out and I can even get a haircut. I am so happy and this is so good that I can have some time to myself.”

“ What made it so much better was the replacement care, it was like a god send. Being able to get out and see a friend and have a cry and a chat was a lifeline.”

“ I really appreciated the phone calls and support from the Carers Centre, it meant such a lot and made a really traumatic time so much easier. I am really grateful that you were there to help me.”

“ You can close me now knowing you helped me so much and made things better for me, you all do an amazing job.”



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**2021-2022**

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