



ANNUAL REVIEW April 2023-March 2024

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



2023 - 2024

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.

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Our Chair's Report

It is fair to say that 2023-24 has been one of the most difficult years ever faced by the Carers Centre, but with the robust team spirit and commitment we have come to expect, testing challenges were met head on, led admirably by our Team Leader, Kirsty Finlayson and our Acting Senior, Debbie Rutherford who were responsible for covering the long-term absence of the Chief Executive early on in the year. On top of this the wider team worked tirelessly delivering an excellent service throughout, whilst at the same time covering for other long-term staff absences, managing an increasing number of referrals, and completing the highest number of Carers Support Plans on record. I wish to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our incredible staff team for their efforts, unwavering strength, determination and commitment, without whom we would not have been able to continue to provide the right support at the right time to carers engaged with our service, many of whom face difficult challenges on a daily basis.

In our partnership working there were also a significant change in terms of process, which was not without its own challenges but together we found a new way of working

which has ultimately strengthened our relationship and we thank our partners for their on-going support and commitment to joint working.

As well as challenges, we do however also need to celebrate our successes, which as usual were many. We are grateful to the Health and Social Partnership for providing us with the sum of £20,000 to enable us to continue to provide our free counselling service to carers, open to all carers over the age of 18 years. This service is delivered by our highly skilled counsellor, Shona Dickey who has been with us since her days as a student. Shona is now fully qualified as a supervisor, which has enabled us to take on a new student expanding the number of counselling hours we are able to offer to carers. This service has been very positively received, making a genuine difference to the lives of carers.

In April last year following a successful interview process, Lynn Archibald joined our team. Lynn has taken on the role of Carers Liaison Worker primarily for the Cheviot area and is a very welcome addition. We now have eight members of staff in total delivering direct support to unpaid carers – Kirsty who is also our Team Leader (Eildon outlying), Andrea Harkness

(Parent Carers), Laura Kerr (Eildon), Catriona Strivens (Berwickshire), Heather Fullbrook (Hospital Liaison), Angela Ramage (Tweeddale) and Jo Bennet (Teviot). The organisation is led by Lynn Gallacher our Chief Executive Officer and also includes our Finance Officer Sanchia Douglas, Training and Development Officer, Debbie Rutherford and our administrative team Jackie Coombes and Chloe Morrison.

Milestones for the year included Carers Coronation Hampers provided by Fortnum and Mason to mark the King's Coronation, a well-attended and enjoyable Carers Week Event held at Kingsknowes Hotel Galashiels, two overnight retreats to Peebles Hydro, numerous lunches and special days out including trips to the Chocolatarium in Edinburgh and a Gin Experience. Breaks and days out were funded through Creative Breaks and were planned in partnership with carers as once again this year we remained true to our mission of keeping carers at the centre of our work.

This year also saw the trialling of a Dementia Carers Hub at the Borders General Hospital delivered in partnership with NHS Borders Dementia Consultant Nurse, Christine Proudfoot and Alzheimer's Scotland as well as the restarting of our Carers First Forum to enable carers to have a strong voice in the design and delivery of services and to inform decision

makers. Our thanks go to John Barrow, Carer Lead who attended the inaugural meeting.

I cannot end this report without a special thanks to our statutory partners who have supported the growth and development of our organisation, our Board of Trustees for their continued engagement and commitment, our hardworking Fundraising Committee and most importantly to you the unpaid carers, who even in the most challenging of times continue to tirelessly care for loved ones and are our most valued and equal partners.

Linda

Chair

Board of Trustees



Our Mission

The Borders Carers Centre will become the first port of call for carers and recognised as such by all stakeholders. We will achieve this by working alongside carers and their families throughout the Scottish Borders to ensure that their voices are heard, and that they are recognised, valued, and supported to manage the impact of caring on their lives.

Our Vision

The vision of the Borders Carers Centre is:

- To raise the profile of carers and the caring role
- To empower and support carers in their caring role
- To strive to improve outcomes for carers
- To establish and maintain strong collaborative working relationship with carers and all local partners to give carers a strong voice and to shape robust support services for carers

Our Values

Our core values are at the heart of everything that we at BCC set out to achieve and our values underpin our work with the carers we support, our staff team, trustees, volunteers, and our partners.

■ Inclusivity

we involve, we value contributions, we listen

■ Empathy

we are compassionate, and people centred, we work together as one team and for the well-being of unpaid carers, we value and respect each other

■ Integrity

we are ethical, open and transparent, we do what we say we will do, we listen and we act

■ Professional excellence

we have a professional approach, we are positive ambassadors for Borders Carers Centre, we are accountable and responsible for the support and services we provide

■ Collaboration

we build trusting and professional relationships and are transparent and honest about decision making even when this is challenging

Our Development Plan 2024 to 2029

In January 2024 the board and staff team worked together to create a revised five year plan, in which we identified 4 key priorities which we believe not only embody our mission, vision and values but will ensure that we achieve our strategic aims and are fit for the future.

The four key priorities are as follows;

PRIORITY 1	Carers are supported and empowered
PRIORITY 2	Carers are well informed and involved
PRIORITY 3	Sustainability
PRIORITY 4	Centre of Excellence

There is more detail on how we intend to realise our priorities in the Implementation Plan contained within the development plan document which is available as Appendix 1.

Our Financial Activity

This year saw a welcome uplift to our core funding via Carers Act Funding allocated to Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership by Scottish Government. This will enable us to continue to deliver our service to an ever-increasing number of unpaid carers throughout our area. Overall our income in 23/24 increased substantially due to a number

of additional funding streams, including £10,000 additional monies from the Health and Social Care Partnership to create a Hardship Fund to support carers with the cost of living crisis and additional winter pressures, funding in the sum of £53,595 from Shared Care Scotland for our Time to Live project as well as a further £12,005 in additional monies to support carer hardship.

This year more than ever carers have been struggling to meet everyday living and household costs and we are grateful that this has been recognised at both a national and local level. The Hardship Fund was allocated at record speed to individuals, indicative of the significant financial pressures carers are currently facing. At the Carers Centre we have continued to manage our budgets efficiently and have made savings where savings can be made including reducing our rent, using best value utility providers and minimising our mobile phone costs.

This year we are also pleased to report that we have been awarded £40,000 as a test of change, to reduce the pressure on the Replacement Care Budget held within Social Work. This award will enable us to run a short-term pilot scheme and will be known as "The Flexible Support Fund", the purpose of which, will be to award eligible carers a budget of up to £500 to support them in their caring role. The fund will be operational from July 2024.

Spotlight on our Fundraising Committee

Every year our dedicated Fundraising Committee led by Chair, Andrew Deans go above and beyond to raise essential funds which enable us to keep the Centre going. Without the tireless efforts of the Committee, we would not be able to continue to deliver the service in the robust way that we do, and it would undoubtedly mean a reduced service. This year over £22,500 was raised through the annual event at Kelso Races, a summer drinks party and a Christmas Fair. The Centre owes it heartfelt thanks to all involved and we are delighted that the Committee remain an integral part of the organisation. Final words from Andrew "The members of the fundraising committee are delighted to support the valuable work of the Borders Carers Centre and do so by organising a number of fundraising events and personal and corporate donations each year. We are looking forward to our race day at Kelso and once again hearing directly from a carer about the support they have received from the Centre"



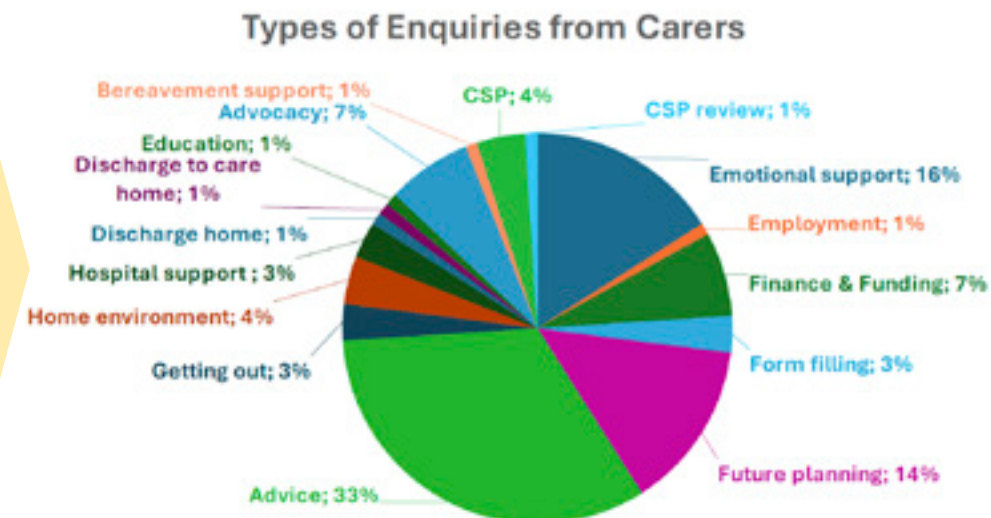
Our Performance Highlights... The Facts & Figures

This year we received 562 new referrals in total

702 CSPs and CSPs reviews were completed

We had 16399 contacts with carers by phone, face-to-face and through groups, training and activities

1096 active cases which generated 8260 enquiries, made up as follows:



57 carers accessed 321 sessions of free counselling

500 carers attended Carers Support Groups

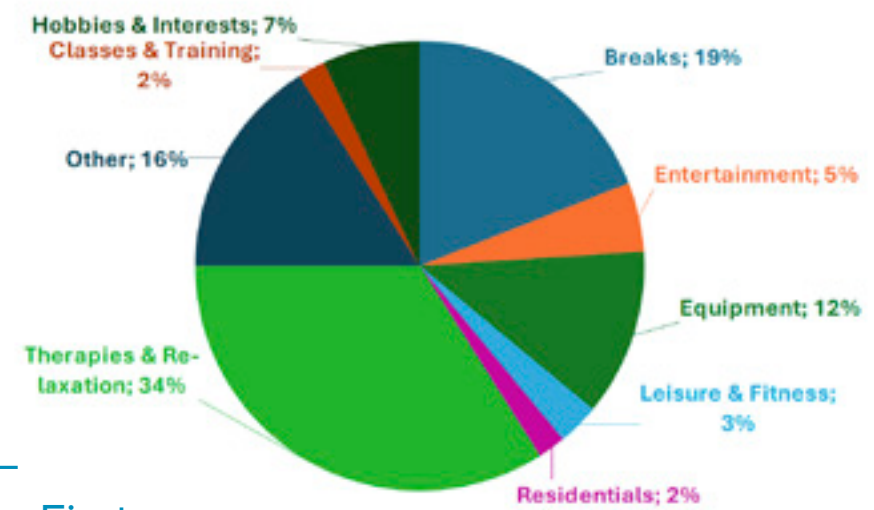
We allocated £111579 in grants to 565 carers

(continued overleaf)

(continued)

We supported 275 carers to access breaks from caring

Types of Breaks



We are Listening – Relaunch of Carers First

We are delighted to report that December 2023 saw the relaunch of our Carers First Forum held at Old Gala House, Galashiels. Carers First is a forum of carers, supported by our Carers Information and Training Officer to enable them to have a strong voice, to feed into the design and delivery of services and to inform decision makers. In these difficult times of reduced services both statutory and within the community as well as lack of respite opportunities, it is more important than ever that the voice of carers is heard and listened to. The Forum meets every six weeks and carers set the agenda and decide who to

invite. The meetings have been attended by both John Barrow, Carers Lead and Chris Myers, Chief Officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership. Carers have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the development of the new carers Strategy and the Equality and Impact Assessment.



"I think this meeting is very important – it's not getting any easier and things have to change. It's good to be listened to and this needs to be translated into actions"

New Website Coming

Carers have told us over the last few years that they have been struggling to use our website, which was designed in house and has outgrown its purpose. With this in mind and with due consideration to the local Carers Strategy which has identified accessible information for carers as a priority, we secured funding to engage a web design company to design a new website and logo.

A scoping exercise was carried out to enable the Board of Trustees to make an informed decision on the provider who could best meet our needs to create an inclusive, accessible, friendly website which incorporates our service priorities to provide support and care for unpaid carers.

The website design company Creatomatic, based in Lockerbie began this work in March 2024 with a view to launching the new website and logo in the autumn. The website will be launched at our AGM on 6th November following robust testing from carers.



NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHING 6TH NOVEMBER!

We pride ourselves on working in collaboration to develop our annual events and training calendar and consult widely to ensure that what we offer will best meet carers needs.

Following the challenges of COVID 19 carers were very keen to have more “fun” times with a desperate need to recharge and interact with others, so we duly took this on board and created a programme with something for everyone, the priorities of enjoyment and timeout as the key drivers. As a result, we had a reduced training programme on offer this year and focussed on Dementia and our much valued Managing Guilt Workshop, which we run on an annual basis.

Our Events

Dementia Hub at BGH – in partnership with NHS Borders (Dementia Nurse Consultant), Alzheimer Scotland and Social Work, we organised and ran 3 specialist dementia hubs (March, April and May) at The Tryst within the BGH. This was a drop-in session for carers caring for someone with dementia based at the hospital. Approximately 28 people were supported by this project.

Highlights of the Year... Events, Activities, Days Out and Training



Kingsknowes Carers Week Event – in June, we held a successful summer games and afternoon tea at Kingsknowes

Hotel to mark Carers Week. Approximately 40 carers attended this sunny, fun day and took part in croquet, giant Jenga and giant Connect 4. We enjoyed afternoon tea and there were gifts such as local handmade chocolates and teacups filled with fresh flower displays made and donated by a carer as well as a pamper hamper for self-care.



“Thanks for caring and for listening”

“Great day out and great to meet other carers – could not have been better”

“Just great not to feel alone”

Days Out & Activities

Parent Carer Retreat Peebles Hydro

we took a group of parent carers to Peebles Hydro in April for a retreat with therapies, crafts, chat, afternoon tea, rifle shooting, axe throwing and lots of eating and drinking. Solid friendships were made, and a reunion was organised for later in the year.



“It can be really difficult to find time for me – this ticked all the boxes”

“This was a perfect day – thank you – please do it again!”



Coronation Hampers

when King Charles’

Coronation took place in May, we wanted to mark the occasion. Although we had clearly not planned for this, we were able to purchase 5 beautiful Fortnum & Mason hampers and run a Royal Quiz to win a hamper.



Summer Lunches at Buccleuch and Collingwood Arms

16 of us met in July 23 to catch up, chat and enjoy some lovely local food.

“It was great as usual to share the laughter and tears with the other carers who are like another family”

“No cooking, no washing up, good food, and good company – thank you”

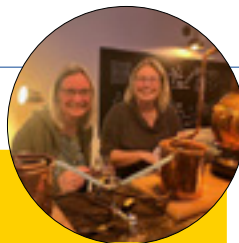
“It was a wonderful treat – it means a lot and makes me feel valued”

(Days Out continued)

Gin Tasting and Distillery Tour

In September we took a group of carers to a Gin tasting and distillery tour at Peebles Hydro. This was a welcome day for carers to try new tastes and experience something new.

“Thank you Borders Carers – I’ve really enjoyed my day out and you have taken away all the stress and worry even just for a little while – don’t think it was just the gin!”



Chocolatarium

In October we took a group of carers by train to the Chocolatarium in Edinburgh for a great session making chocolates and truffles.

“I had a thoroughly wonderful, memorable day”
“I just wanted to write and say thank you for a lovely day out. It could not have been better”



Christmas Crafts

In November, carers got together to make Christmas Crackers, snow globes and gift tags to get them in the mood for the festive period, which for many carers can be a very challenging and stressful time.

Peebles Hydro Retreat and Gin School

We arranged a Gin School and overnight residential for 8 carers in November. This gave the carers the opportunity to learn about, distill and make their own gin, which they named, bottled and took home. We enjoyed dinner together, as well as use of the spa. Everyone had their own double room to relax and spend a comfortable evening before all meeting for breakfast in the morning.

“We’ve been so well taken care of – nothing was too much trouble”
“What a lovely break away and so lovely to meet other carers”



Abbotsford Christmas Family Event

We provided vouchers for carers to enjoy Abbotsford House Christmas Extravaganza

“Thanks again for helping to make our festive season extra magical”
“Thanks so much for voucher for Abbotsford, we had a fantastic time”
“Thank you for a lovely morning out at Abbotsford, it was truly magical”

Christmas Lunches

We held two large Lunches across the district for carers just before Christmas which was a boost, particularly for those carers who are unable to celebrate on the day.

Our Training Workshops

Managing Guilt

In November we held a Guilt Workshop to work through feelings of not being good enough, getting things wrong, struggling to ask for help and self-doubt – emotions which can be difficult for many carers to manage when they find themselves in a demanding and challenging caring situation.

“I thought Ada (Trainer) was brilliant and the workshop was so helpful. I’m so glad I attended even though I was feeling horribly anxious”.

“It has certainly helped me to start reframing my guilt”.

Coping with Dementia

In April in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland, we ran a training course for carers caring for someone living with dementia, with the aim to develop coping strategies and to find ways of managing difficult challenges along the way. Feedback was positive and this is something that we will plan to run on a more regular basis going forward.

“It’s so good to not feel so alone and I do feel more able to cope. It’s never going to be easy but I feel stronger”

Carers Support Groups

Throughout the year 500 carers attended groups throughout the 5 localities – all of our groups are now held in relaxing, accessible and comfortable venues with coffee/tea and fresh baked goods on offer – please see below:

Galashiels – The Coffee Tree

Berwickshire – Heather’s Restaurant, Eyemouth Golf Club

Kelso – Queen’s House, Floors Castle

Peebles – The Buchan Room, The Tontine

Hawick – First Light Trust

“I really look forward to the group – it’s time out for me. We laugh, cry and grumble at times but

it always feels like a treat. Where we meet is special and we are always well taken care of”

“It’s lovely to see everyone and to spend time with my carer buddies!”

“Getting together with others in the same situation means a lot”

All groups are open to all carers, no matter where you live or your caring situation. If you would like more information on joining a group, please contact 01896 752431 for more information. Everyone is welcome.

Thank you for your feedback...

“ Thank you very much for your continued dedicated support to carers and to my family”

“ Thank you for always going above and beyond”

“ Thank you for your unlimited kindness and support”

“ I am incredibly grateful for all of the wonderful care and support I received from Borders Carers Centre”

“ The Borders Carers Centre, it's a lifeline that is very much appreciated and much needed”

“ Borders Carers Centre really does care for the carer ”

“ Thank you for all of your help through a very difficult and emotional time”

“ Without the support and care I had from the carers centre, I really don't think I'd have come back from all that had happened to me. They gave me the confidence to get back out into the world and live. I have a part-time job now, and I also attend the support groups and events whenever I can, as these are always really enjoyable and informative”

“ The support of the Borders Carers Centre has helped me enormously in so many different ways”



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