



ANNUAL REVIEW April 2024 - March 2025



Caring for Carers in the Scottish Borders

The Borders Carers Centre is an independent expert charity dedicated to supporting carers over the age of 18 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 this year's Annual Review proves that we 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.

WITH SUPPORT FROM



Chair's Report

Welcome to the 2024/5 Annual Chair's Report. It has been another challenging and successful year for those of us working at the Borders Carers Centre. I have been involved now in the Centre for several years and felt it was worth remembering what it is that we do.

Borders Carers Centre provides a broad range of support to adult and young adult carers, including advice, information and emotional support. We are also commissioned by Scottish Borders Council to work with carers to produce carer Support Plans which give access to support services from SBC. The organisation was originally established in 1995 and following a merger in 2012 became the Borders Carers Centre. We will be celebrating our 30th anniversary later this year.

Thanks to the hard work of the staff, we are in a very good position to deliver on our strategic aims and objectives as set out in our Development Plan. We are in robust financial health thanks to our core funders SBC and NHS and the ability of our CEO Lynn Gallacher to identify and source funding from other organisations and charities. This is not to say that it is easy or that we are complacent, as with many other voluntary organisations we are having to deal with the increasing demand, an increase in National Insurance contributions and continuous improvement demanded by carers and funders alike. As always, we also owe a huge thanks to our external fundraising team

who run the annual Borders Carers Centre charity horse racing event at Kelso every year, as well as other fundraising activities.

Another notable achievement this year has been the development and launch of our new logo and website, and thanks goes to Debbie Rutherford our Information and Training Officer for leading on this. The new site looks professional and is easier to navigate and we hope it will make it easier for carers to find and use.

Kirsty Finlayson and her team of Carers Liaison Workers (Lynn, Joanne, Catriona, Angela, Elizabeth and Laura, plus Hospital liaison worker Heather and Young Adult carer and Parent carer worker Andrea) do an excellent job in seeing and supporting carers and providing them with the advice and information needed when carers come to the Centre for help.

Of course, no organisation can exist without its team of administrators, and we have Sanchia, Jackie, Chloe and Jodie to thank for their hard work and the smooth running of the Centre behind the scenes.

As usual at this time I also want to thank the volunteers on the Board of Trustees, Mairhi, Alan, Ann, Colin, Margaret and Carole and am pleased to say we will soon be welcoming two new Board members onto the committee.

Finally, we are facing a time of change at the Centre and will be welcoming a new CEO and saying goodbye to our current Centre Manager Lynn Gallacher, who is retiring after

26 years firstly as a Carers Liaison Worker, then Depute Manager and finally Chief Executive Officer (Manager). More about this in next year's Annual Report.

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.

A Year of Change...

This year has been an exciting and positive year for the Carers Centre with the launch of our new website and logo. Our fresh new look and easy access website has been very well received, with both carers and professionals giving positive feedback. We would like to thank the carers who were involved in testing our new look and website with the purpose of increasing inclusivity and widening our reach.

We were pleased to welcome Elizabeth Urquhart to our Carers Liaison Worker team in July 2024. Elizabeth comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and expertise, is herself a parent carer and is supporting carers living in the Peebles and surrounding area. At the end of February, we wished a temporary goodbye to Chloe Morrison, our administrative assistant, who is now on maternity leave, following the birth of baby Zachary and welcome Jodie Bennett who is covering her absence in the meantime. Both Elizabeth and Jodie are valued members of the team.

In October 2024, Lynn Gallacher, our current CEO announced her intention to retire in June 2025, so the Centre has been busy succession planning, this included a staff/board development day in November 2024.

We have been working hard on delivering the "Flexible Support Fund" which is a test of change project supported by the Health and Social Care Partnership. Eligible carers can be awarded a budget of up to £500 to support them in their caring role. Carers have received budgets for support with things such as cleaning, dog walking and

gardening. Carers have told us that due to the demands of the caring role, life can become overwhelming. They may be feeling exhausted and stressed and not able to keep on top of things as they once could – this can impact negatively on mental health and well-being. One carer reported that she no longer had time to herself and was unable to cope with household tasks – she was just too exhausted, and this was getting her down as she had always been quite house proud. The carer was eligible for the Flexible Fund and used her £500 budget for a cleaner and within a few weeks started to feel more like herself again. Whilst the cleaner was in the house, her husband felt safe and she was able to meet up with a friend for coffee and coming back to a clean house, was just the icing on the cake. We are confident that the Flexible Fund is making a positive difference to the lives of carers living in the Borders.



Our progress against our Development Plan

PRIORITY 1 Carers are Supported and Empowered

Borders Carers Centre and unpaid carers, through the Carers Workstream, played a key role in the development of the local Carers Strategy Living Well - A Plan for Adult Unpaid Carers 2024 -2028, launched in December 2024.

We are delighted to report that as an organization, we have been able to deliver on some of the key deliverables of the Living Well Strategy such as improving information, access and support to services for minority ethnic, parent and male carers.

We are hopeful that by working together with carers, statutory and third sector partners, Living Well will have a positive impact on the lives of carers and those that they are caring for.

Our referrals continue to increase, and through the Carers Support Care plan, our data is telling us that carers continue to feel well-supported by our service.

We continue to provide free counselling and deliver well-being and resilience sessions, to all carers.

Our well-being project "Take a Breath" is now coming towards the end of its first year and carers have reported positive outcomes, feeling listened to, valued and with improved mental health and well-being.

PRIORITY 2 Carers are Well-informed and Involved

We are key partners of the Carers Workstream, which is a representative body of unpaid carers, facilitated by the Health and Social Care Partnership Carers Lead, the purpose of which is to feed directly into the Integrated Joint Board to influence the design and delivery of services.

We have continued to facilitate our in-house group "Carers First" with four sessions in total over the year. It provides an opportunity at a more informal level for carers to come together, to have their voices heard and feed into the work of the Carers Workstream.

We have launched our new inclusive and accessible website.

We held an event "Caring – the Way Forward" in August 2024 with speakers from the Coalition of Carers, John Barrow, Carers Lead and Chris Myers Chief Executive Officer of the Integrated Joint Board. Chris was also the key speaker at our Annual General Meeting. Carers who attended both events reported that they felt listened to and heard. A full report of the event is available on our website.

PRIORITY 3 Sustainability

We have continued to maximise our funding streams, with a successful bid to Improving Lives – this will support our counselling service and well-being support project "Take a Breath" for unpaid carers for the next 3 years.

We continue to host some office space for Borders Wheels which has helped both organisations financially with office rental costs.

Our fundraising committee ably led by Andrew Deans continues to work tirelessly on our behalf to raise much needed funds.

We have introduced an active "Donate button" on our new website simplifying the process

for supporters who may wish to donate.

We continue to be proactive in exploring opportunities for income generation.

PRIORITY 4 Centre of Excellence

In February 2025 we were assessed for our Excellence for Carers Award by the Carers Trust and were delighted to have been advised that we have reached all the standards and are now Excellence for Carers Award holders. Excellence for Carers is the Carers Trust organisational standard for best practice in delivering service, information and advice to unpaid carers.

Feedback from the evaluating team was very positive, with reference to our skilled, committed, diligent and warm staff team.

We are committed to continue to develop and value our staff team to ensure our high retention and job satisfaction levels.

All staff across the board are committed to the continued delivery of a quality service, making a positive difference to carers living in the Scottish Borders.



A Day in the Life of a Parent Carers Liaison Worker

Hi, I'm Andrea and I am the Parent Carer Liaison Worker and have been working with BCC for 18 years. I love my role, and I love working with parent carers, hopefully making a positive difference both to them and those that they are caring for.



Every day is different in this role, but I thought I would share with you a "typical" day:

9:00am The computer's switched on and cup of coffee in hand, it's straight into emails, a look at the Client Management System for the work for the day and initial processing of any new referrals. I've got three today but one of them is for Angela who is our Transitions Worker.

10:00am Call from a carer in crisis. It's a long call and on the back of it I make an urgent referral to CHAD (Children Affected by Disabilities Team), make a funding application so that the carer can have a break away, issue a promise of payment Therapy Voucher for a treatment and signpost to DWP for a benefits check.

11:30am Another coffee and its onto calls checking in with carers to see how they are, and to see if further support is required.

12:30pm Stop for lunch at my desk.

12:50pm I'm on the phone to a carer to complete a Carers Support Plan. It's a long call again – it's so important to give carers the time and space they need to make sure that we can support them in the right way. It's a difficult caring situation and the carer is going to need long term support and significant

advocacy support with education and health. I end the call with a follow up call for the next day and list of 'to-dos'.

2:30pm I've got to get to Earlston for a Meeting Around the Child with a carer. These meetings can be difficult and daunting for carers and they really appreciate the additional support from us and being able to debrief afterwards. It's not always easy for carers to take in all the information so I make sure that I take notes.

4:15pm Back at my desk for the rest of the day. I make a funding application to the Carers Trust for a carer whose washing machine has broken down and then get back to my calls list for the day.

4:45pm I managed one call and then took a call from a carer, who is struggling financially and emotionally. Discussed counselling and agreed a referral to our counselling service along with a Hardship Application. The payment will be in her bank tomorrow. I put her on my list to call again tomorrow.

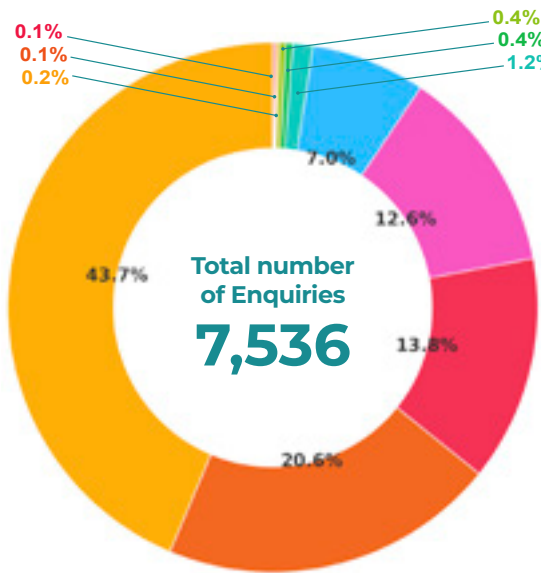
5:30pm Phew! The end of another busy day and time to refuel, just hope that the support I've given has made a difference. Back tomorrow!

Our Year The facts and figures



Financial awards

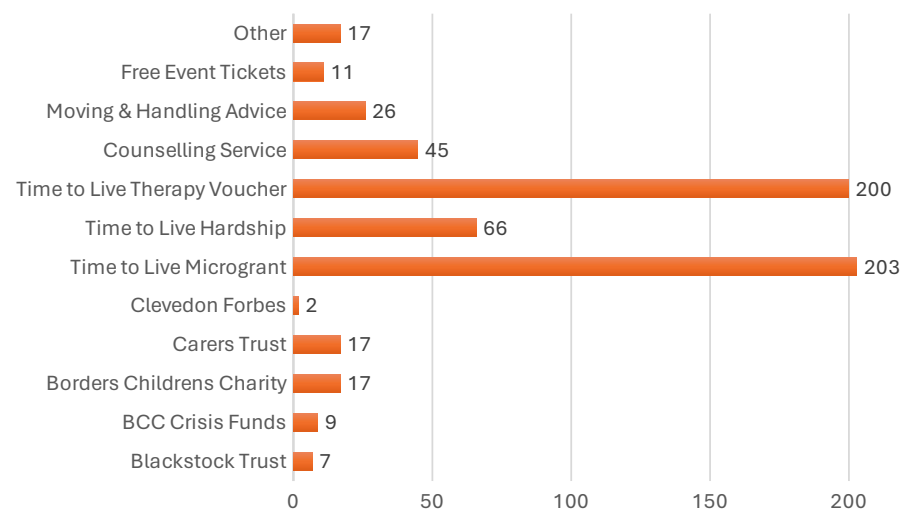
- Blackstock Trust
- BCC Crisis Funds
- Borders Childrens Charity
- Carers Trust
- Clevedon Forbes
- Time to Live Microgrant
- Time to Live Hardship
- Time to Live Therapy Voucher
- Others



Types of enquiries

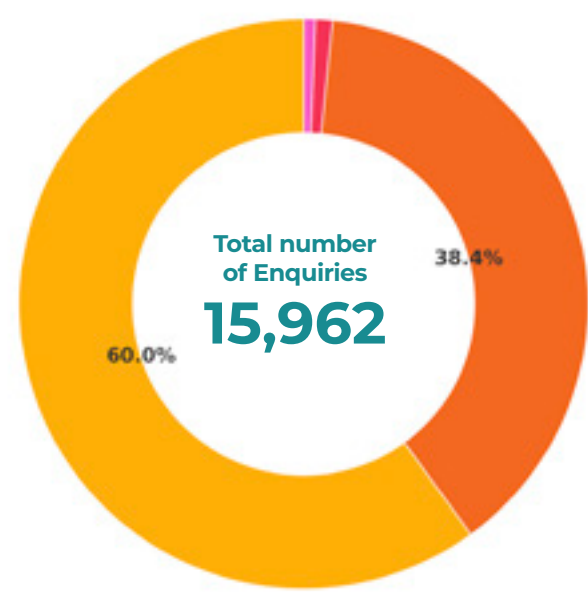
- Future Planning
- Finance & Funding
- Home Environment
- Signposts
- Getting Out
- Information - Carers Rights
- Illness specific
- Legal Actions
- Referral to Housing
- Referral to Childrens Services
- Referral to Health Services

Number of carers & families that benefit from awards



Number of carers and Families that Benefit from Awards and Additional support

620



Total number of Enquiries
15,962

- Community Council Review
- New Direct Payment
- Direct Payment Top Up
- Social Work Managed

Short break SDS option, hours secured

Identified classifications that the awards were used for:

Short Breaks	Classes Training	Entertainment	Equipment Household	Leisure Fitness	Hobbies Interests	Therapy Relaxation
Caravan	Cookery course	Dining Out	Washing machine	Gym membership	Garden furniture	Reiki
Camping fees	Driving lessons	Take away meal	Tumble Dryer	Golf membership	Garden plants	Massage
Coach trip	Open University	Show tickets	Bed & mattress	Horse Riding	Camping Equipment	Hair cut
Hotel	Piano lessons	Laptop or Tablet	Soft furnishings	Exercise accessories	Lego	Manicure
Spa Break	Guitar Tuition	Subscription to Netflix	Sofa Bed	Walking clothes	Craft materials	Yoga

Number of referrals: 679

Number of active cases: 1,328

Number of contacts with carers: 16,970

900 carers attended support groups throughout the year

48 carers received 385 counselling sessions



Maureen's Story

My Aunt, Kathleen Isaac, has been as close to me throughout my life as my mother and always there for me. As she aged, we spent many years trying to persuade her to move to be closer to family. Following a significant cardiac event we finally moved with Kathy to the Scottish Borders in 2019 when she was still physically and mentally doing well.

To begin with, she was still her fun, charming and independent self, however, it soon became clear, that all was not well mentally - she became difficult, sometimes spiteful and cantankerous. It was my daughter who advised me to seek help and get in touch with the Borders Carers Centre. I clearly remember my first call to Debbie - I had taken our dogs for a walk, and I sat on a bench and called her, in tears from frustration, not knowing what to do and she talked me through where to start. I was quickly registered with the Centre and put in touch with Laura, who became our regular point of contact to discuss anything my aunt was going through and the impact it was having on us and how to cope. What I didn't know at the time was the complexity of the social services and the changes my aunt would go through with dementia. Laura and Debbie have been there every step of the way.

During COVID, Kathy recovered remarkably well from a hip replacement following a fall and was soon back to her old self but by 2022, it was clear that dementia had begun to take hold, as did incontinence and Kathy was eventually diagnosed with Vascular Dementia and Alzheimer's. Following a Social Work Assessment a much-needed care package was put in place, and we were lucky to find three very good carers who

stayed with us until 2024. As Kathy deteriorated and her needs escalated, the hours of care required increased, and I found this particularly challenging - it was Heather who came to our rescue. As Kathy's mobility became an issue, coupled with the worsening incontinence, she was unable to go to the day centres, which made life even more difficult.

In 2024, we celebrated Kathy's 98th birthday and that same evening, she had a very bad fall. 999 was called and the ambulance arrived 15 minutes later. The paramedics were amazing and so calm. We didn't know until after the scan that she had broken her neck and an arm. The impact of this fall began a downward spiral, with the dementia becoming significantly worse. Kathy spent nearly five months in a very busy orthopaedic ward, and I worked with her consultant, occupational therapist and physiotherapist to see if there was any possibility for her to come home. Accepting that it was not made me feel I had failed, as I remembered the conversation we had shared, that I would do all that I could to keep her out of a nursing home.

Throughout this time, the Carers Centre were there for me, Debbie offered me a workshop to attend, or something fun, always with a listening ear, which has been a lifeline to staying sane. Heather

helped us with the hospital pitfalls, and Laura guided me through the nursing home process with the provided pages of Nursing/Care Homes. I felt I was in no position to make this decision alone and was at a complete loss for how to choose the ones we wanted to visit. Laura talked me through every single one until I had a shortlist.

The excellent service provided to unpaid carers by BCC is evident throughout - new members to groups are made to feel welcome and the team walk alongside you. Carers groups are a lifeline, offering support and guidance; they are so much more than a chatting group. A combination of Debbie and Laura's 'time to listen and advise' led me through the often 'maze-like system' of social workers and their constant change of personnel to working with my aunt's Doctor and medical team.

During these past five years, the workshops for coping with stress, guilt, and staying afloat, amongst others, have helped me to understand the stages of the illness my aunt was going through and improve my life as an unpaid carer. I had to learn how to approach her differently and adopt endless patience and kindness - not always easy when the person I had known and loved all my life had changed before my very eyes. She became increasingly difficult, argumentative and very cantankerous, but the Centre gave me strategies to help.

Throughout this journey, I have been involved in the 'Carers 1st meetings', to understand carers' rights and entitlements, sharing with Social Workers and local Councillors, what works and what needs to change. It's not always about more money, but ensuring things are planned for at

the right time and by the right people, avoiding inequality. The breadth and depth of care are evident, with a little icing on the cake sprinkled throughout the year with fun events. For example, making Christmas Crafts and Earrings with time to talk to each other while making crackers or learning about chocolate and a lovely Christmas lunch to share with those that we have come to know well. The positive impact of the service on me has been life-changing, making a significant difference in what would have been a very isolated and lonely journey, with nowhere to turn to for knowledge. I have felt like an equal partner and have been given a voice many times to share my journey with decision-makers. This has given me the strength to carry on in the face of such sorrow as my aunt continues to deteriorate.

Increasingly, it becomes harder to visit my aunt each week as she continues to get worse, but we go, with our batteries fully charged, knowing that when we leave after an hour, she will have had enough, and we will be exhausted. It's like going through the grieving process every time. We always try to keep her upbeat by taking her a newspaper, family photos and flowers, knowing that she will not know which year she is in, where she is living or who in her family is still alive. The Nursing Home Manager has indicated that if they can keep her limbs together, we will hopefully celebrate her 100th birthday on 22/1/26. My sister said a while ago, after Kathy had been particularly difficult, 'God is not ready for her yet,' and the reply from another said, 'Is she ready for God?'

Maureen Franks



Highlights of the Year

Events, Activities, Days Out and Training

BUCCLEUCH ARMS

We held a large event at the Buccleuch Arms in August this year entitled 'Caring – The Way Forward'. Forty people were in attendance, and we looked at what was working well, and not so well in the Borders for unpaid carers. We had speakers from the Health and Social Care Partnership as well as the Coalition of Carers who gave a full Scottish overview. A report of the day, and 'postcards from carers' is available on our website and has been shared with partners to effect change.



KELSO RACES

We were also honoured by our fantastic Fundraising Committee by the annual Borders Carers Trust Handicap Race at Kelso Races with all funds going directly to supporting local carers. The event is a very special day and a local carer, Alan Bone attended and delivered an emotive talk, which really resonated with our supporters. The Chair, CEO and our Information and Training Officer also attended, and we were warmly welcomed and taken care of.

CARERS WEEK

We celebrated Carers Week and embraced the theme for the year 'Putting carers on the map', raising awareness and holding a Treasure Hunt at Kingsknowes Hotel in Galashiels where we also enjoyed games, chat and a delicious lunch.



PROFESSIONALS TRAINING

We are delighted to be working with NHS Borders at the BGH again following an extended break due to COVID restrictions. The Borders Carers Centre offer training every six weeks as part of the Corporate Induction programme in the Education Suite at BGH and trained one hundred and ninety new recruits over the twelve-month period.

Sixty-six other professionals underwent carer awareness training in a variety of organisations including Social Work, CHAD, SW Mental Health

Team and Housing. The Carers Centre were also involved in two Living and Caring for Dementia events in Hawick and Peebles in partnership with the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Several talks were given over the year to groups, including the Probus Club, to whom we are very grateful for the donation to our Carers Crisis fund. We also had an evening meeting with many parent carers and Meeting of Minds to allow us the opportunity to meet with carers who work during the day.

CARER WORKSHOPS

Our carer workshops this year covered a session on Stress Management, which helped carers identify their personal triggers and helped them discover some helpful ways to alleviate those as well as a new session called 'Making Friends with your Emotions'. This workshop was run by our own in-house cognitive behaviour therapist and was an interactive session looking at emotions in more detail. This year also saw the return of our popular Staying Afloat workshops as part of our Take a Breath project. In addition, we offered monthly Yin Yoga sessions in 2 locations (Galashiels and Lauder) The teacher, Laura's intention is to empower individuals to learn new regulation tools to manage their emotional and physical wellbeing. We ended 2024 with a lovely Christmas crafts session where we made gold, silver and copper embossed gift tags and cards.

We also worked in partnership with NHS Borders Mental Health service and Dr Eimear

O'Kane (Speciality Doctor Medical Lead for Personality Disorder) to offer support to carers who are supporting someone with a diagnosed personality disorder offering Time to Recharge DBT (Dialectical Behaviour Therapy).

We also held four Carers First meetings with a variety of guest speakers and topics including the carer Lead John Barrow, Chris Myers, Chief Officer IJB (Integrated Joint Board)/Director of the HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnership), Irene Thomson the Operational Manager for the LAC (Local Area Co-ordinator Team), Gary Ward, the Operational Manager for the MHOAS team and Tess Campbell the Advanced Nurse Practitioner for the older adult's service.



DAYS OUT AND ACTIVITIES

We enjoyed a fantastic crafting day in Edinburgh, where we made earrings and keyrings. "It was brilliant to have a real 'day away', and I really relaxed. I was also pretty pleased with the results!" said one of the carers. Another mentioned how great it was to have the chance to chat with other carers in such a calm and creative environment, and how it made her feel really refreshed.



CHRISTMAS

At Christmas, the Borders Carers Centre were also really pleased to be able to take twenty five carers out to Christmas lunch in three of the Borders most beautiful venues. When asked what it meant to be able to enjoy a Christmas lunch, some of the comments were:

- Only Christmas lunch I will have.
- Only lunch out this year.
- Only meal with people this year.
- Being with people who understand is invaluable.
- An opportunity to breathe and be surrounded by people who understand the additional and hidden struggles and challenges that the festive period brings.
- It is the only time I get to share a meal and happy time with other carers as we often spend time together sharing problems and discussing possible options.
- Christmas at home can be hard when you are caring for someone in your own home.
- Having someone else provide a meal is a gift.

We were also delighted to be able to offer family Christmas outings at the festive Abbotsford House.



Carer's Support Groups

This year, we added an extra venue to our very popular support groups for carers in Jedburgh. We also changed our Hawick venue following the closure of the First Light Café. We are very grateful to the wonderful venues, who make us all feel so welcomed and cared for. Over the year, we welcomed over 900 carers to the following venues:

Galashiels – The Coffee Tree

Berwickshire – Heathers Restaurant

Kelso – Floors Castle

Hawick – Mansfield House Hotel

Peebles – Tontine Hotel

Jedburgh – Border Meringues

We are also delighted to be working in partnership with Dementia Friendly Tweeddale offering Friends and Family carer Support Groups every six weeks at Firholm. This has allowed carers to be supported separately whilst the cared for enjoys activities in another room close by relieving stress for all parties.

We also offered a similar group at Coldstream Dementia Café in partnership with Alzheimer Scotland.



The Final Say...

What difference have we made?

"Your efforts are tireless"

*"You were there at the beginning of my carer journey
and the end – thank you"*

*"I commend you for your fantastic work and the
positive impact it has on local individuals and
families"*

"I felt I could speak honestly and not be judged"

*"Thank you for all the support you gave me when I
was struggling"*

"Thank you for this lifeline from the bottom of my heart"

*"At the workshops you meet other carers, and you
realise that you are not alone"*

*"I'm so grateful for the therapy vouchers and the
massage path its sent me on - it's made such a
difference physically and mentally"*

*"It is the first port in a storm when you feel like you are
drowning in care and lose sight of your own health
and wellbeing"*

*"What three words describe BCC? Empathy,
compassion and connectivity"*

"It's a place where firm friendships are made"

*"You receive far more than you could ever pay back,
from the dedicated staff team"*



Brewerybrig
Low Buckholmside
Galashiels TD1 1RT

2024 - 2025

t 01896 752 431

e admin@borderscarers.co.uk

w www.borderscarerscentre.co.uk

Scottish Charity No. SC028087