



Information, advice and support for all unpaid carers & people with disabilities

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Change at the Top



Mary-Denise McKernan, our long serving CEO, has given notice of her planned retirement at the end of January 2019.

It is hard to do justice to her lengthy career with us in a short article, and I cannot expect to reflect the full complexity and sheer determination and commitment it has required to survive the ups and downs

and make it a success. However, some key events are worth noting.

Mary-Denise joined Carers of West Lothian at the Dovehill Office in May 2000 as Centre Coordinator, which doubled the staff complement at that time to a total of two.

A move of the organisation followed, some two years later, to premises within the newly opened Strathbrock Partnership Centre and her promotion to Centre Manager was confirmed in April 2003.

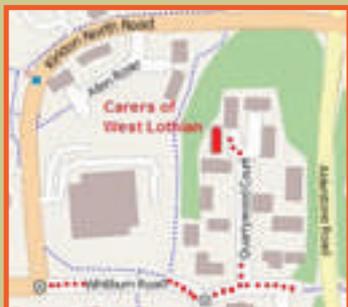
Mary-Denise would be the first to acknowledge the steep learning curve she faced, but at climbing this she proved more than

capable (in contrast to her abseiling technique!) Over time she has been successful in acquiring funding to expand services and grow staffing levels to the current fifteen. Numbers of carers in contact with us have increased from 700 in the year 2000 to over 5,000 today.

She took a lead role in steering CoWL successfully through the Practical Quality Assurance Systems for Small Organisations (PQASSO) levels, resulting, in 2017, in becoming only the third organisation in the UK and the first, and still the only, organisation in Scotland to achieve the top level 3 accreditation. Half way through this process

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How to find us:



LOTTERY FUNDED

Christmas Opening Hours

This year, Carers of West Lothian will be open over the festive period, with the exception of the public holidays. Our festive period opening hours are:



Monday, 24th December, 10.00 am – 3.00 pm

Christmas Day - CLOSED

Boxing Day - CLOSED

Thursday, 27th December, 10.00 am – 3.00 pm

Friday, 28th December, 10.00 am – 3.00 pm

Hogmanay – 10.00 am – 3.00 pm

New Years Day - CLOSED

Wednesday, 2nd January - CLOSED

Back to normal – Thursday, 3rd January 2019

See page 2 for more information

office@carers-westlothian.com

01506 448000

www.carers-westlothian.com

Sycamore House, Quarrywood Court,
Livingston, EH54 6AX

Opening Hours: 9.00 am - 4.00 pm (Monday - Friday)





Tips to cope over the festive period!

Christmas should be a time of joy and celebration, but for many, it can bring added pressures along with the presents. With limited services, tight budgets and family tensions it is no surprise people can feel under stress.



Some tips for dealing with Christmas:

- Try and plan as much as you can in advance, particularly if routine is important.
- Agree a spending limit on presents with family or friends or what about a secret Santa, so everyone just needs to buy one gift?
- Make sure you have all the prescription medication you will need over the festive period as GP surgeries and pharmacists may be closed.
- Talk with your family and friends and agree how you're going to approach Christmas as well as discussing any worries or concerns you have. This can help alleviate stress and reduce conflict.
- If you've got friends and family that could help, even for a couple of hours, don't be afraid to ask them. Many people don't realise the impact caring can have but may be able to offer support.
- Talk to others - if it's not possible for you to get a break, you may get support by talking to other carers in similar situations. **At Sycamore House we are hosting a carers coffee morning on Thursday 27th December between 10.00 am – 12 noon. Please feel free to pop in for a coffee and chat.**

Who to contact over the festive period:

- If you have a critical or life-threatening problem call 999
- NHS 24 for health information and advice call 111
- Out of Hours Social Work 01506 281028 or 01506 281029
- Samaritans 116 123
- Breathing Space 0800 838587

Cont from front page

a move to Sycamore House with all the attendant upheaval was successfully managed, and in 2016 her post was promoted to CEO.

A more recent major achievement was the submission of a successful bid to tender for the services we provide. West Lothian Council put out to contract a new service which included supporting people with disabilities. This new direction for the organisation has been successfully embarked upon by Mary-Denise's leadership of her staff team.

She has also been a well-respected representative of carers' issues and the organisation's reputation to local joint Health and Social service planners and in her links with other voluntary networks.

Her leaving will mean a significant change for not only the other staff members but also for the Board of Directors with whom she has worked closely and successfully through many times of change. We can only hope to be able to recruit someone to carry on her good work as well as she has done.

She may not be the last CEO of Carers of West Lothian, but she will always be the first!

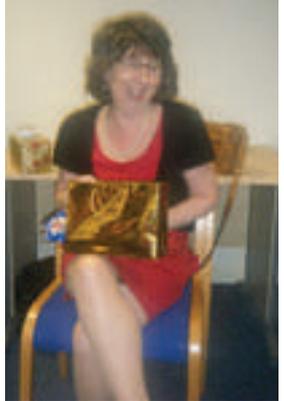
Everyone at Carers of West Lothian hopes that once free of the restraints of work Mary-Denise will be able to enjoy many more city breaks, and no more missed flights!

Barbara McKenzie, Chairperson

Mary-Densie shows us how it's done!



Secret Santa! They don't know I bought this myself!

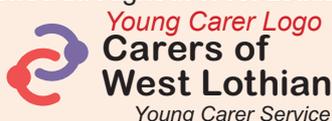


Introducing our new CoWL Logos

Following the award of a new contract in April 2018, which commissioned a new information, advice and support service for unpaid carers and for people with disabilities, we have some new logos. These are to reflect all aspects of our service including carers, young carers and people with a disability that creates a recognisable identity and reflects our full-service approach. While there have been some minor changes to our core logo, it was agreed (after consultations with service users, colleagues and staff) the importance of not changing our name as this is well established throughout West Lothian.



**Carers of
West Lothian**



**Carers of
West Lothian**
Young Carer Service



**Carers of
West Lothian**
Disability Service

Short Breaks

Short breaks fund

We are delighted to announce that we were successful in being awarded a grant from Shared Care Scotland to continue to be able to offer 'Time Out' for carers in 2019.

The grant has been designed with the needs of carers in mind to provide support in creating a break of their choice. Taking a break isn't always about going away on holiday, it can be about taking part in the things you love such as a hobby or exercise, trips to the theatre or having your nails done!

See below for some examples of what the grant can be used for!



Arts and Entertainment

- Annual cinema pass
- Theatre Tickets
- iPad
- National Trust Pass



Learning

- Art Class
- Jewellery Making
- Learning a musical instrument
- Photography classes



Health and Wellbeing

- Annual gym membership
- Course of beauty treatments
- Subscription to mindfulness app
- Yoga Classes



Outdoor Pursuits

- Greenhouse
- Bird Table
- Pet
- Golf Membership

You can apply for up to £250 - please note that while this might not cover the complete cost of the activity you apply for, it can be used as a contribution towards it.

Application packs can be downloaded from our website www.carers-westlothian.com - alternatively, call us on 01506 448000 or email us to request an application pack.

This fund is open to carers caring for someone over the age of 21 or a young carer, however there are other funds that you might be able to apply for - please get in touch with us and speak to a support worker to find out which fund would best suit you.

www.carers-westlothian.com

Conduit Scotland

Conduit Scotland are a not-for-profit, responsible lender, offering fair and affordable personal loans from £100 up to £1,000. Presenting an alternative solution to high cost credit, "pay day loan" providers or doorstep lenders for people in financial shock. We provide a service for people who are not eligible for mainstream credit, including bank loans, credit cards or who may not be able to access credit union loans.

In addition to lending, it is integral to our approach to work closely with our local partners to help improve people's financial and social position and tackle poverty in the communities we serve by signposting and referring them to organisations such as Credit Unions, CAB, West Lothian Council Advice Shop, Scottish Welfare Fund and Money Advice Scotland.

You can apply for a Conduit Scotland loan online at www.conduitscotland.com, by telephone 01506 353824 or by visiting our Bathgate branch which is located at 79 South Bridge, Bathgate EH48 1TJ. Our branch is open 10.00 am – 4.00 pm Monday to Friday.



Photo: Ruth Hutchison

Say Hello to Ruth!

I'm delighted to be working for Carers of West Lothian. I've lived in Livingston for 28 years and with my husband brought up our two daughters. Livingston has served us well as a family and over the years it's been a great place to get involved in a variety of activities in our community.

I've come from a background of supporting individuals and families who were either homeless or at risk of homelessness. As a sociable person I enjoy "meeting people where they're at" and as a support worker value gaining an understanding of individuals' different situations and difficulties. In my first week with Carers of West Lothian, I met with the walking group and chatted to some carers at our coffee morning. I also attended the Stress Management Group for Carers and this gave me an insight into some of the stressful situations and crises carers can find themselves having to cope with.

Overall, my first few weeks have been inspiring and I'm looking forward to being more involved with the wonderful work of Carers of West Lothian and getting to know more of you in the process!

Courses, Workshops & Drop-ins

Getting it Right for your Child

Are you a parent or carer of a disabled child or young person, or a child with additional support needs?

Do you want to:

- Meet other parents and carers?
- Explore opportunities around support?
- Improve your knowledge of your rights?
- Increase your confidence to ask for the support you need?
- Find out about practical information, resources and who to ask for more help?

In a relaxed and friendly atmosphere ...
... then come along to our workshop!



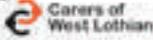
Where and When
10.30 am – 2.15 pm, Thursday, 31st January 2019
Carers of West Lothian, Sycamore House, Quarrywood Court, Livingston, EH54 6AX

This workshop will explore topics such as:

- your rights and the rights of your child
- where to go for information, support or advocacy
- support you need for your child and how to prepare for an assessment or important meeting

 The workshop is **free** and lunch and refreshments are provided.

To find out more and register interest, contact:
Carers of West Lothian 01506 448 000 or email office@carers-westlothian.com



Home Energy Advice Clinic



Now that winter has well and truly arrived, do you have any energy worries or issues? Andy, an Affordable Warmth Advisor for Changeworks, will be with us again on the last Wednesday of every month between 10.00 am - 12.00 noon with useful energy and money saving tips for the home and to offer advice and support.

He can advise on how to:

- Find the cheapest energy tariff
- Choose the best payment options
- Resolve billing problems with your supplier
- Understand your heating and hot water systems
- Combat condensation and dampness
- Apply for grants

To book an appointment call 01506 448000 or email office@carers-westlothian.com



Bereaved Carer Support Group

Has the person you cared for passed away? Carers of West Lothian offers a Bereavement Support Group which is open to all bereaved carers in West Lothian.

The group meets monthly and is an opportunity to come along and have a cup of tea and a chat to other bereaved carers in a relaxed and friendly setting with a member of staff facilitating. The dates and times of the group can be found on the back page however if you would like more information or would like to attend the group, please get in touch on 01506 448000 or email office@carers-westlothian.com

Introduction to Gentle Massage Course

In partnership with Wee Sally's Therapeutic Massage we are offering a course covering Hand, Face & Neck Massage. Sally is a fully qualified advanced therapist with many years experience.

Gentle massage therapy has many benefits such as aiding relaxation, reducing tension and improving relationships for both the person receiving and giving the massage.

The course will take place at Sycamore House over 3 weeks – 14th, 21st and 28th March 2019 from 10.00 am - 12.00 noon.



To register your interest please email office@carers-westlothian.com or call 01506 448000.



Carers of West Lothian
Disability Service

For free advice

office@carers-westlothian.com

01506 448000

 Carers of West Lothian

Weekly Disability information drop-in

Every Wednesday 11.30 am - 1.30 pm

Carers of West Lothian are here to offer:

- INFORMATION
- ADVICE
- SUPPORT

Staff from Carers of West Lothian will be at:

The Ability Centre Carmondean Livingston EH54 8PT

West Lothian Health & Social Care Partnership





Workshops

We are delighted to be working in partnership with Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL) to offer the following workshops. These workshops are open to anyone with a disability or long-term condition living in the Lothians or Edinburgh.

See below for details and get in touch for more information or to register your interest.

Assertive communication workshops

Are you a disabled person, or someone with a long-term condition?
Do you live in Edinburgh or the Lothians?
Do you want to learn how to:

- be more assertive?
- give yourself the best chance of getting what you need by preparing well for meetings or assessments?
- challenge decisions?

... and would you like to:

- meet new people?
- increase your confidence?

In a relaxed and friendly atmosphere ...
... then come along to our workshops!
There will be two sessions:

Assertiveness 1
10.30 am – 2.30 pm, Thursday, 28th February 2019
In West Lothian – Location to be confirmed

At this workshop we'll cover different ways of communicating and their effects, and you'll have a chance to think about and plan how to make a case for something you need.

Assertiveness 2
10.30 am – 2.30 pm, Thursday, 14th March 2019
In West Lothian – Location to be confirmed

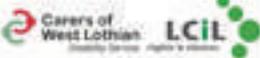
This workshop will give you the chance to discuss how you used what you learned in Assertiveness 1 and to take your skills further.

Please note: you must do Assertiveness 1 before you do this workshop.

It's great if you can come to both, but you're welcome just to do Assertiveness 1 on its own.

 Lunch and refreshments will be provided, and if needed we can organise and pay for transport if you live in Edinburgh or the Lothians. 

To find out more or register interest, contact:
Carers of West Lothian on 01506 448 000
or email office@carers-westlothian.com




Know your rights workshop

Are you a disabled person, or someone with a long-term condition?
Do you live in West Lothian?

Do you want to:

- Improve your knowledge of your rights
- Increase your ability to self-advocate?
- Learn how to make a complaint if your rights aren't met?

... and would you like to:

- meet new people?
- increase your confidence?

In a relaxed and friendly atmosphere ...
... then come along to our workshop!

Where and When?
10.30 am – 2.00 pm, Thursday, 31st January 2019
In West Lothian – Location to be confirmed

At this workshop we'll cover:

- the social model of disability
- where, when and how to get support
- where to go for support/advocacy with accessing benefits and services

 Lunch and refreshments will be provided, and if needed we can organise and pay for transport if you live in Edinburgh or the Lothians. 

To find out more or register interest, contact:
Carers of West Lothian on 01506 448000
or email office@carers-westlothian.com




Basic Footcare Session

Following the success of our first session in October 2018, we are running another basic footcare session on Tuesday, 26th February 2019, 13.00 - 15.00 hrs.

These sessions are run in partnership with an NHS Podiatrist and take place at Sycamore House, Quarrywood Court, Livingston, EH54 6AX.

The session will cover common foot problems, footwear, feet, nail and skin care with an aim of supporting individuals to become more confident managing their own or someone else's footcare.

This course is open to all CoWL service users. To register your interest, please call 01506 448000 or email office@carers-westlothian.com



Carers Pamper Day



January is just around the corner and what better way to beat those January blues than to spend some time getting pampered? We are hosting a Pamper Day for carers on Monday, 21st January 2019 here at Sycamore House. We will be holding 2 sessions, the first from 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm and the second from 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm. There will be various therapies available such as massage, manicures and hair styling and we will also serve up some tasty treats to complete your experience.

Please contact us to register your interest in either the afternoon or evening session on 01506 448000 or email office@carers-westlothian.com

Relaxation Workshops



Spring 2019 New Evening Workshops

In response to demand we will be running our wellbeing workshops over Spring evenings in 2019.

Our popular wellbeing workshops will be run over March, April and May 2019 and will include Understanding Stress (formerly Stress management), Emotional Resilience & Mindfulness. Please call 01506 448000 or email office@carers-westlothian.com to register your interest.



Understanding Stress

In understanding stress, we will explore 'what is stress?' How do the ways we react and respond to stress impact on us? What sort of experiences and events create that stressful response within us. Together we will look at ways we can understand and acknowledge the stress in our lives which can lead us to find ways to manage it more effectively.

Understanding Stress will run over three Wednesday evenings in March 2019 at Sycamore House. See back page for dates and times.

Emotional resilience

Emotional resilience refers to our ability to adapt to stressful situations or crises. More resilient people are able to "roll with the punches" and adapt to adversity without lasting difficulties; less resilient people have a harder time with stress and life changes, both major and minor. Resilience can be developed with a little effort. Join us to explore what emotional resilience means for you and how we can learn from each other in developing our own resilience.

These workshops will be delivered over three Wednesday evenings 3, 10 and 17 April 2019 from 6.00 - 8.00 pm at Sycamore House.

Mindfulness for relaxation



Mindfulness is increasingly being recognised as an effective way to reduce stress. Studies have shown that practised regularly Mindfulness can be an effective method of reducing stress and anxiety and can often lead to improvements in overall health and wellbeing. **We will be offering an Introduction to Mindfulness for relaxation over three Wednesday evenings 1, 8 and 15 May 2019 from 6.00 -**

8.00 pm at Sycamore House.

Opinion Survey Update

We want to say thank you to all **269** people who took the time to complete our Opinion Survey over the last few months. Your feedback, suggestions and comments will be used to make sure Carers of West Lothian continue to provide the high-quality services you need.

A taste of the information gathered so far:

- **73%** of those that received information and advice over the past year found it to be helpful.
- **75%** were very happy with the overall service and support they have received.

Some of your comments:

"I value the Newsletter as it keeps me informed of services available to my family."

"It is good to know that if you need help you can phone. Thank you for your help in the past."

"Fantastic support system. Couldn't do enough to help and if they didn't have the answers they provided me with the organisation who could help. Well done to everyone."

"When the Newsletter comes through the door it is reassuring that there is support and back-up there if I need it. It's reliable and it contains lots of information."

"As a long-time carer my social time is extremely restrictive and sadly the times your groups are available are not suitable for me."

"I find the Newsletter very informative and look forward to having a wee look at it."

Fork & Field

We are beyond delighted that the Fork & Field and Heineken have invited Carers of West Lothian to join them again for Christmas Lunch. You may remember we joined them last December and what a delicious treat it was! This year the Christmas Lunch will be held Monday, 10th December at 1.00 pm and is open to all carers who are registered with us.

Over the past year the Fork & Field have very generously hosted many Meet & Eat events for carers who are newly registered with us or who haven't had the opportunity to access our services. The feedback from these events has been fantastic – so much so that Carers of West Lothian have decided to host a special dinner of our own! Again, this is open to all carers registered with us and will take place Thursday, 7th February 2019 at 6.00 pm.

Places for both meals will be limited. If you would like to register your interest please call to speak with a member of staff on 01506 448000 or email office@carers-westlothian.com

Young Carer Service



Xanthe & Wilma



As summer draws to a close and the nights get darker, we see the groups' sessions coming to an end for this year. We've had some fabulous and fun filled sessions and our evening groups have had some super activities to get involved with.

Some young carers enjoyed a fantastic night at Almondell Country Park with Kirsty the Ranger. The young carers went pond dipping, checking out all the small creatures living in the pond. Although it was a damp cold night the group loved it!

We also visited our good friends at Urban Nature Retreat at their new premises. This was fabulous but a little yucky as everyone got to taste live meal worms. We built some shelters and Sean finished the evening introducing us to some of his lovely animals.

Meanwhile back at the carers centre we all had an amazing time getting to know each other, playing games, making pumpkins and decorating cakes.

We are now looking forward to our end of group trips. Our juniors decided

to go to a Halloween Party in Blackburn Partnership Centre. Thank you to Blackburn Gala Committee for allowing us to join them. The tweenies and seniors have decided to battle it out at laser quest – Megazone . . . but who will win and be the highest scoring team??? Keep an eye out on our Facebook page to see what happened and which group won!



Thanks to the following:

Tesco #Bagsofhelp – Thanks to everyone who voted for us in the local Tesco stores. We won 1st prize and received £2,100 to pay for young carers activities over the next 12 months.

W H Smith – thank you for the £100 to help pay for some of our group activities.

Forth One Cash for Kids - for paying for our annual Pantomime trip in December. We are looking forward to seeing Beauty and the Beast at the Kings Theatre.

Merry Christmas to you all and we would like to wish you all the very best for the New Year . . . here's to an awesome 2019!!

Happy New Year!

Thanks from Wilma, Xanthe & Marion

www.carers-westlothian.com



Courses Jan - Mar19

(For more information on any of the courses below please see in inside and if you are interested in attending please call to register your interest).

January

Carers Pamper Day (2 Sessions available)	Monday 21	2 - 4 pm & 6 - 8 pm	Sycamore House
Knowing your rights workshop (CoWL & LCiL)	Thursday 31	11.00 am - 2.00 pm	The Ability Centre
Getting it right for your child (CoWL & LCiL)	Thursdays 31	10.30 am - 2.15 pm	Sycamore House

February

Basic Footcare for Carers and People with Disabilities	Tuesday 26	1.00 pm - 3.00 pm	Sycamore House
Assertive Communication (Over 2 Sessions see March) Assertiveness 1 (CoWL & LCiL)	Thursday 28	10.30 am - 2.30 pm	The Ability Centre

March

Understanding Stress	Wednesday 6, 13 & 20	6.00 pm - 8.00 pm	Sycamore House
Assertive Communication Assertiveness 2 (CoWL & LCiL)	Thursdays 14	10.30 am - 2.30 pm	The Ability Centre
Gentle Massage	Thursday 14, 21 & 28	10.00 am - 12.00 noon	Sycamore House

Events Dec18 - Mar19

(Please call to confirm if you are interested in attending any of our groups as last minute changes can sometimes occur).

Weekly Events

Carers Coffee Morning	Wednesday	10.00 am - 12 noon	Sycamore House	A drop in coffee morning for carers.
Carers Walking Group	Wednesday	10.00 am	Sycamore House	A walking group for carers leaving from Sycamore House, walking around Livingston Village, suitable for all abilities.
Disability Information Drop-in	Wednesday	11.30 am - 1.30 pm	The Ability Centre	Drop-in for information, advice and support.

Monthly Events

Mental Health Support Group	Monday 3/12, 7/1, 4/2, 4/3	6.00 - 8.00 pm	Sycamore House	A support group for carers of individuals with a mental health condition.
Legal Clinic	Tuesday 4/12, 8/1, 5/2, 5/3	1.00 - 4.30 pm	Sycamore House	For carers and people with a disability - contact CoWL for an appointment.
Power of Attorney Clinic	Tuesday 18/12, 22/1, 19/2, 19/3	9.30 am - 4.30 pm	Sycamore House	For carers and people with a disability - contact CoWL for an appointment.
Carer Massage Drop-in	Wednesday 12/12, 13/2 (none Jan19)	10.00 am - 12 noon	Sycamore House	Twenty minute carer massage. Call to make an appointment.
Evening Support Group	Wednesday 30/1, 27/2, 27/3	6.30 - 8.30 pm	Sycamore House	Meet other carers in a social atmosphere, share experiences and meet new friends.
Home Energy Advice Clinic	Wednesday 19/12, 30/1, 27/2, 27/3	10.00 am - 12 noon	Sycamore House	Useful energy and money saving tips for the home, for carers and people with a disability.
Dementia Drop in Support Group	Friday 7/12, 4/1, 1/2, 1/3	10.00 am - 12 noon	St John's Hospital OT Department	A support group for carers looking after someone with dementia at home.
Bereavement Support Group	Friday 14/12, 18/1, 15/2, 22/3	10.30 am - 12 noon	Sycamore House	Support Group for bereaved carers in West Lothian.

Please note that views expressed throughout this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Carers of West Lothian. We cannot endorse/recommend any service advertised within this publication. If you have a compliment or complaint to make please see above for contact information.