

Respitality for Edinburgh carers

Edinburgh tourism supports *Respitality* initiative

Voice of Carers Across Lothian's' – VOCAL offers support to the 750,000 unpaid carers living in Scotland.

As part of their commitment to improve carers physical and mental health VOCAL work in partnership with Shared Cared Scotland (SCS) leading on the implementation of *Respitality* in Edinburgh and the Lothian's through the creation and development of a *Wee Breaks Hub*. *Respitality* combines traditional respite with hospitality, working together with local tourism and leisure providers to gift in kind breaks and experiences to unpaid carers.

Tourism is one of Edinburgh's key success stories, and a fundamental part of our city's identity. The impact of the visitor economy is typically demonstrated through statistics such as the growth in annual visitor numbers, Festival ticket sales, jobs created and provision of services. While these are all important to the wellbeing of the city and city region, we should also recognise the often hidden role the sector can play and does play in supporting our communities.

There are many ways that tourism supports *Respitality*, and not only the 40,000 recognised carers in Edinburgh and the Lothians, but also those hidden carers in our work places, families and friendship circles. Tourism is key to the future of *Respitality* and *Wee Breaks*, with several businesses in Edinburgh working with VOCAL to offer carers in the local

community the opportunity to enjoy a day out at their attraction, to relax and have fun.

Rabbie's Tour's find that providing their support to *Respitality* and *Wee Breaks* lets them help those who help others – especially those carers who rarely ask for help. Being a provider and assisting in Wee Breaks allows them give back to their local community, contributing to those around them in need and supporting their mission statement to 'make the world a better place through travel'.



Historic Environment Scotland work with VOCAL to

offer *Respitality* day's out through to those carers who might otherwise not be able to visit their properties – supporting inclusive access to their sites and delivering programmes which work with carers in creative ways to assist in learning and improve wellbeing.

A carer who enjoyed a *Respitality* visit to Edinburgh Castle felt that “Life is sometimes a monotonous routine where we do the same things over and over again- [it was] great to have something totally different and stimulating! The trip to Edinburgh Castle was great for my social well-being and getting out; I really enjoyed the outing and having time to socialize and found the guided tour very informative.”

Many carers find spending time with others in a similar situation to be beneficial – meeting up with those who share the same lifestyle and experiencing something new together. A day out at a visitor attraction can have a positive impact on a carer's social wellbeing, giving them a chance to relax and enjoy some quality time, hopefully leaving them feeling somewhat rejuvenated.

Dynamic Earth collaborates with VOCAL to increase participation in earth and environmental science, their Community Learning Programme recognises that without representative organisations communities are further away and the challenge is greater. Together providing relevant, inspirational and fun learning opportunities to carers through workshops and other activities.

Tourism businesses help VOCAL to give back, to show their appreciation and support for those that give every day, by doing what they do best – providing fantastic Scottish Hospitality. Ensuring opportunities like *Respitality* are supported and extended across Edinburgh is of key importance for the tourist industry in the development of the new 2030 strategy.

2019 is a very special year for VOCAL, as they mark their 25th anniversary with celebrations throughout and many events taking place during National Carers Week in June 2019. To find out more about opportunities to get involved with local carers and VOCAL visit www.vocal.org.uk.

