

ECAS adapting their services for online delivery

Physically disabled adults in Edinburgh and Lothian can once again access the Grants Fund, activities, befriending, and young people's services run by charity, Ecas.

With the recent decision to re-open the Grants Fund, Ecas is now offering our full range of activities and services for physically disabled people in Edinburgh and Lothian. The Grants Fund will help meet the costs of items or services that can't be purchased through welfare benefits and other sources – for example, grants have helped people buy furniture, white goods and electronic goods, pay for a holiday and meet student fees.

In March, Ecas had made the difficult decision to suspend most of their activities and services.

Ally Irvine, Chief Executive of Ecas said: "Many of the people we work with were shielding, which made in-person contact unsafe. And the financial impact of Covid-19 meant we were no longer able to offer our Grants Fund."

Despite those challenges, most existing befriending matches were able to continue through phone or video calls. Realising there was an even greater need for befriending during this isolating time, Ecas also recruited volunteers for a Distance Befriending Service which is now accepting referrals.

Through the Ecas Distance Befriending Service, Joan was introduced to John. They talk about anything and everything, from a shared love of crime novels to family to football to politics. "He matches up with me brilliantly," Joan says. "We're always talking and laughing. I can talk to him about what's going on with me, and he tells me what he's up to. I look forward to our calls."

Our arts, crafts, music, reading and creative writing, yoga, computing, and seated tai chi, meditation and relaxation groups are now online and open to applications from new members. "I can still enjoy my art class whilst staying safe and not having to travel outdoors," says Joanne.

Ecas supports member with training, computer equipment and software, and supplies to attend sessions online. "I was apprehensive about using Zoom, but I now find it quite easy and straightforward," says Reading and Creative Writing group member Angela.

The Young People's Service is a partnership service where we work with physically disabled people aged 18 to 30 to identify goals and plans based on their unique circumstances.

Ally Irvine explained: "This isn't the first time Ecas has operated through a pandemic. In our 100-year history, we've managed to adapt through several significant global events, including the Great Depression, World Wars I and II, and the Spanish Flu. We're committed to supporting disabled people in Edinburgh through this time too."

For more information or to apply for any of their services, visit www.ecas.scot email hello@ecas.scot or call 07500 221618.

When it's safe to do so, Ecas activities and services will resume in person.

Ecas is a registered charity offering friendly and practical

help for people with a physical disability in Edinburgh and Lothian. We've done so for over 100 years: promoting equality, choice and participation through our activities, befriending service, grants fund and youth services.