

Still Game's Isa urges carers to seek emotional and practical support

A new national campaign is urging carers across the capital to seek emotional and practical support through a new national campaign.

Still Game's Jane McCarry marked the launch of the campaign by addressing carers from across Scotland at this year's virtual Carers Parliament event.



Jane, who plays Isa Drennan in the BBC Scotland sitcom, is a 'sandwich' carer – that means she cares for her mother while juggling childcare and work responsibilities

With more caution about going out, as well as services being under pressure because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, even more people have taken on a caring role.

Before the pandemic, there were an estimated 690,000 carers in Scotland, however recent polling by YouGov suggests this figure could have increased by an additional 390,000[1] during COVID-19 and lockdown, taking the potential total number of carers in Scotland to around 1.1 million.

The campaign aims to make sure that all who are new to caring, as well as those who were before, are aware there is support out there for them and can come forward to access it.

Although most support is being provided remotely, services are still open and ready to welcome carers. There's a range of

support measures available nationally and locally to help improve carers' quality of life, with local carer centres across Scotland offering sessions such as virtual support groups, information, advice and online relaxation sessions.

Local carer centres in Edinburgh can help all carers prepare their own personalised support plans.

Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing Joe FitzPatrick attended the virtual Carers Parliament event. He said: "Carers are juggling a lot between work, family, friends and their caring duties – it's crucial for their own wellbeing that they get the support they deserve.

"They may not be aware of what's available to them, or they may not even recognise themselves as carers, but there is support available nationally and locally to help improve their quality of life.

"Crucially, we want carers to recognise that they're not alone. There is a community of carers on every doorstep and every street. Together, it's important to connect them with emotional and practical support that works for them."

Jane said: "I know first-hand how challenging it is to be a carer for a close friend, neighbour or family member. The working day doesn't end yet you never view your responsibility as a burden because you're 'just' looking after someone you love.

"The reality, however, is hard – both mentally and physically – and sometimes we all need some support, be it counselling, peer support sessions or even just sitting down for a virtual cuppa with someone who knows what you're going through.

"I'd encourage anyone in a caring role to seek out the support that's on offer to them."

Jill Franklin, 51, from Edinburgh, is a carer for her two

autistic sons and has experienced the benefits of taking advantage of the support on offer.

She said: "It's crucial that carers take advantage of the support available to them and take some time back for themselves. In my own personal situation, I was referred to the carers' allowance which helped me financially.

"I've also received help from VOCAL, an organisation supporting unpaid carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian. Their support helped me to pay a childminder which allowed me to take some time to study for a masters in playwriting. It's so important to take time too for yourself which helps ensure you can continue to provide care to your loved ones when they need it most."

The annual Carers Parliament is organised by Carers Scotland, on behalf of the Scottish Government and in partnership with national carer organisations, with this year's virtual event including seminars, workshops, and networking opportunities for those in a caring role.

For more information on the support available to carers, [please visit](#) or call <0800 011 3200>.