

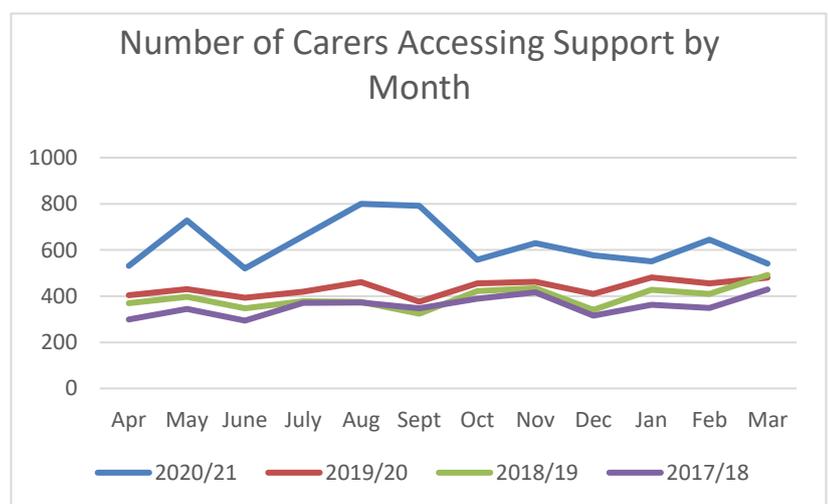
# Carers of East Lothian (CoEL) Annual Summary 2020/21



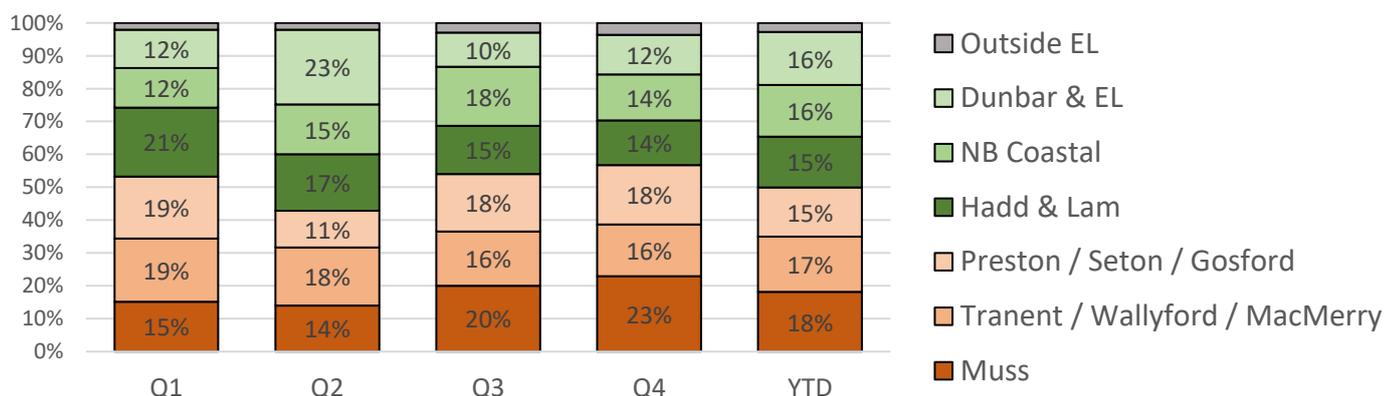
***“Being able to talk to someone who understands what my husband and I are going through. Everyone is so kind and understanding and I feel they have helped us since being in contact with yourselves. Nothing has been too much trouble to CoEL.” (Mrs F from Musselburgh)***

## Our busiest year ever

- We directly supported **2,454** individual carers over the year including **656** carers who were referred to us for the first time during the year.
- The average number of carers supported per month was up **37%** compared to last year
- At the end of the year we were in contact with **4,896** carers in total.
- We supported carers from across the whole of East Lothian for a wide range of reasons, with the most common being carer wellbeing, finance / benefits and social care.



## Carers Accessing all forms of Support by Home Area



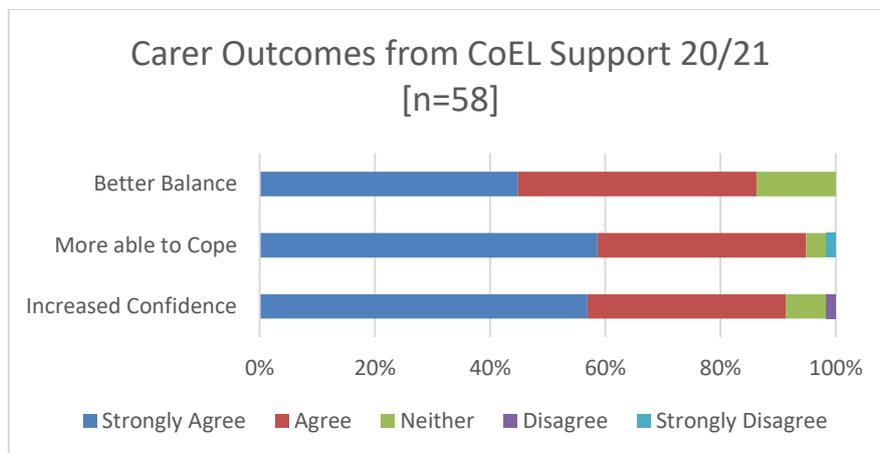
The COVID-19 crisis continued to influence our work during the period, as we initially moved our workforce to home working, carrying out ongoing risk assessments and planning to ensure our approach fitted carers’ needs and our requirements as an employer throughout the pandemic. Additional support to carers in this time included one-off ‘COVID check’ calls, reaching out to carers to offer support for new issues arising due to the pandemic, offering a range of additional grants to support carer wellbeing, address financial insecurity, and help parent carers cope better during the early stages of the crisis, and supporting carers to access up to date vaccine information.

## The Support we provide for carers:

- One to one information, advice and emotional support – for example linking an isolated parent carer with other parents or supporting a carer to know how to respond when someone has suicidal thoughts.
  - Specialist support and small grants to help carers get a break – we focus on helping carers take breaks and, as part of this, last year we provided grants of over **£40,000** towards such breaks.
  - Run workshops, events and monthly support groups for Carers attended by **145** carers overall.
  - Run Power of Attorney, Dementia and Financial Planning surgeries.
  - Welfare Rights Service - In 2020/21 CoEL supported carers, and the people they care for, to claim over **£1,150,000** in annualised welfare benefits. We worked with a total of 440 carers on benefits issues along with over 300 Carers accessing our specialist benefits helpline.
  - Counselling Service - Our specialist counselling service offers carers the chance to explore and express the thoughts and feeling they have around their caring role, to support them to feel better able to cope.
  - Carer Panel and Strengthening Carers' Collective Voice - We work closely with East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership (ELHSCP) and others to ensure that carers' needs and concerns influence policy development and lead to improved local services and structures. As part of this approach, we support a group of carers and former carers to come together on a monthly basis to discuss relevant issues and solutions.
- Carers are overwhelmingly positive about our support and we maintained our **99% approval rating**.

## The outcomes from our support for Carers

- Carers continue to tell us our support makes a real, positive difference for them:



## New projects and services

- We set up a new project, Connections for Life, with short term funding from the People's Postcode Trust, to support carers whose loved ones are at risk of suicide. We are delighted to have retained the skills within the organisation to continue to deliver these sessions beyond the initial project funding.
- We trained a number of staff as Companions to deliver Seasons for Growth sessions for local carers, bringing hope and confidence to carers who have experienced significant change or loss.
- We also focused on improving quality assurance, gaining a number of key accreditations to demonstrate our commitment to high standards, becoming Disability Confident (Committed), Carer Positive (Engaged) and an accredited Living Wage employer.

## **Our financial resources**

- Carers of East Lothian's overall financial position improved in 2020/21. Our net income significantly increased due to additional funding, particularly due to additional grants secured and awarded throughout the COVID crisis. We are grateful to all our funders, without whom we would not be able to continue to support carers across the region.
- In addition, we were successful in securing the contract to provide adult carer services across East Lothian to June 2023, with the option of an additional two years' extension. The tender process provided the opportunity to reflect on the organisation's existing structure and priorities, which led us to submit a bid including greater emphasis on counselling, volunteering and peer support.
- You can see our full Accounts on our website here: <https://coel.org.uk/about-coel/governance-and-accounts/> or just ask us for a copy.

***“An invaluable service provided by a member of staff with a wealth of knowledge”  
(Mr S from Haddington)***

***“I just want to say a very big thanks to my CoEL worker”  
(Mrs T from Musselburgh)***

***“Having reassurance and someone to listen to you made me feel more comfortable in my role as a carer” (Mrs D from Cockenzie)***