



Carer Evaluation Report

April 2005 – March 2006

Supported short breaks for people with mental health problems and their carers

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ANALYSIS OF CARERS' EVALUATION FORMS

APRIL 2005 – MARCH 2006

Executive Summary

During the period April 2005 - March 2006, Cairdeas House provided 324 weeks of care to 204 individuals. 114 of these breaks were identified as carer breaks and this report is based on the response to questionnaires completed by those carers.

As with the previous year's evaluation, carers expressed high levels of satisfaction with their own, and the cared for person's experience of using Cairdeas House, and the benefits of their short break. Carers' confidence in the ability of Cairdeas House to meet the mental health support needs of the cared for person is seen to contribute to carers' ability to enjoy their break, and is reflected in the unanimous desire amongst carers for the cared for person to return to Cairdeas House in future.

Overview

- 83% said they really enjoyed the break
- 60% chose to stay at home but do different things while the person they care for was away
- 54% said they felt more able to carry on caring after having a break
- The main benefits of a break were perceived as:
 - a chance to rest / relax / unwind (46%)
 - time for myself (40%)
 - relief from stress / worry (31%)
- 86% said that the break presented no difficulties or disadvantages to them.
- The average time the respondents had spent caring was 12 years
- 100% said they would like the person they care for to stay at Cairdeas House again
- 88% said they had enough information about Cairdeas House prior to the stay
- 51% said the main reason they choose Cairdeas House is because the person they care for enjoys going there

Background

Since 1992, Penumbra Respite Care has been providing short breaks at Cairdeas House for people experiencing or recovering from mental health problems. People may come to stay at Cairdeas House for a variety of reasons, one of which is to provide a break from the pressures of the caring relationship.

Penumbra Respite Care aims to:

- Provide short breaks in a guest house setting that encourage hope and motivation, and promote recovery from mental health problems
- Provide a haven from the social risk factors that can contribute to poor mental health including difficult living routines, social isolation, and stressful life events
- Support Carers by providing planned breaks which are a positive experience for the cared for person and the Carer
- Promote social inclusion by providing short breaks that offer choices and opportunities to broaden experience, and take part in mainstream social and leisure activities
- Provide short breaks that recognise, and are flexible to, the needs of the individual
- Provide breaks that offer people the space and time to reflect, and develop problem solving techniques to encourage personal resourcefulness in living well
- Promote, provide and support the use of volunteers by maintaining a high quality, best practice volunteering experience as an integral part of the service.
- Raise the profile, and promote the value, of short breaks for this client group, as positive experiences for the person with support needs and, where there is one, the Carer

In order to ensure that the service provided at Cairdeas House continues to meet these aims and develop in ways best suited to the users' needs, the views of both guests and carers are gathered at the end of each respite break.

Methodology

Staff at Cairdeas House generally have little or no direct contact with carers, so the best way to obtain their feedback is to send them a short postal questionnaire. Where a carer uses the service more than once a year, a questionnaire is usually only sent once in the period.

During the period April 2005 – March 2006, 114 respite breaks were identified as carer breaks (just over a third of all breaks booked). 59 questionnaires were sent out and 35 returned, a response rate of 59%. These responses form the basis for this report. As the number of questionnaires involved is relatively small, most answers are reported in numbers not percentages unless otherwise indicated. Instances where totals add to more than 35 indicate multiple responses.

Results

1. Source of Bookings

Responses were obtained from the following local authority areas and broadly follow a similar distribution to that of the actual bookings.

<i>Local Authority</i>	No. of responses
Angus	1
Borders	2
Clackmannanshire	1
Dundee	2
Edinburgh	4
Falkirk	2
Fife	6
Glasgow	8
North Lanarkshire	2
Perth & Kinross	1
South Ayrshire	1
South Lanarkshire	2
Stirling	1
West Lothian	2
Total	35

As would be expected, most carers had first heard of Cairdeas House through a social worker, or one of the community mental health team.

<i>How did you first hear about Cairdeas House?</i>	No. of responses
Social Worker	18
CPN	5
Voluntary Organisation / association	4
Friend / relative	3
Community MH Team	2
Day hospital	1
Dr / GP / Psychiatrist	1
Counsellor	1

The majority of respondents (88%) felt they were given enough information about Cairdeas House prior to the break. Of those who did not, their questions centred on the type of care offered (2), what guests needed to bring with them (1) and what the requirements were for Cairdeas House staff to be able to manage medication (1).

<i>Did you have enough information about Cairdeas House?</i>	No. of responses
Yes	31
No	4

2. Benefits to Carers

The responses clearly show that carers feel a break, enabled by Cairdeas House, is of positive benefit to themselves and to their ability to care. The most frequently reported combination of benefits is the opportunity to rest, to pursue their own interests and not worrying about the person they care for. Carer confidence in the ability of Cairdeas House staff to meet the mental health support needs of the cared for person contributes significantly to their ability to enjoy their break.

The majority of carers chose to stay at home during their break, with 60% taking advantage of the opportunity to do different things at home than they are able to while caring. The opportunity simply to inhabit the home environment, without reference to the cared for person, is one of the unique advantages of residential respite.

Just under a third of people chose to go away from home during their break. Others indicated that the *feeling* of being able to go away if they wanted to was sufficient benefit without actually acting on it.

<i>What did you do while the person you care for was at Cairdeas House?</i>	No. of responses	%
Continued with usual routine	6	17
Went away	11	31
Stayed at home but did different things	21	60

83% of carers said they really enjoyed the break they had while the person they care for came to Cairdeas House, and 54% said they felt more able to carry on caring.

<i>Which of the following best describes what you got out of having a break?</i>	No. of responses	%
I really enjoyed the break	29	83
It didn't make much difference to me	1	3
I didn't like it	0	0
I felt more able to carry on caring	19	54
I was able to go away	9	26

"I didn't have to worry about the person. Get some of my sanity back intact for the next round."

"A complete break from the responsibilities of caring and a chance to catch up on other things we enjoy doing, and most importantly, a chance to recharge our batteries."

"Rest and relaxation. Recharge my batteries."

"The break from each other helps us to cope better, and the staff are very helpful to my wife who thoroughly enjoys it. It helps relieve the stress between us."

Asked for specific benefits associated with the break, carers were able to write whatever they wanted to. These responses can be categorised as follows, with the chance to rest, relax and unwind (46%), and to have time to themselves (40%) top of the list. An important feature of respite at Cairdeas House was the knowledge that while they were having a break, the person they care for was safe and well looked after (20%), and enjoying themselves (14%). The sample of quotes from carers below illustrates these feelings well (a full set of quotes is in appendix 1).

<i>What have been the benefits for you of the person you care for staying at Cairdeas House?</i>	No. of responses	%
Rest / relax / unwind	16	46
Time for self	14	40
Relief from stress / worry	11	31
Break from each other	11	29
Confidence person cared for was safe and looked after	7	20
Knowledge person cared for was enjoying themselves	5	14
Time with other family / friends	4	11
Felt refreshed / recuperated / recharged	3	9

“I was happy in the knowledge that my son was being well cared for while enjoying a change of scenery with the opportunity to take part in different things.”

“Being able to do things on my own in a relaxed and stress free environment.”

“I was able to go away knowing that my wife was safe, being cared for and able to get support.”

“To take a good rest and being able to go different places without having to worry about her. Just knowing she was in safe hands was a relief.”

3. Disadvantages for carers

Most (86%) carers felt that a short break at Cairdeas House presented no difficulties or disadvantages for them. Of those who experienced difficulties, they centred on specific situations outwith the control of the service, such as illness of the cared for person immediately prior to or during the break (2), getting the break set up in the first place (1) and missing the cared for person (1).

<i>Were there any difficulties or disadvantages for you?</i>	No. of responses
Yes	5
No	30

4. The caring relationship

The average time respondents had spent caring was 12 years, and 20% had never had a break before. Of those who had previously had a break, 53% had taken one in the last year. 78% of those who had previously had a break had used Cairdeas House. This is unsurprising given the scarcity of respite aimed specifically at supporting the needs of people with mental health problems.

<i>How many years have you been a carer for the person you care for?</i>	No. of responses
>1 year	0
1-5 years	3
6-10 years	14
10-15 years	4
16 – 20 years	9
> 20 years	4
No answer	1

<i>Have you ever had a break from caring before?</i>	No. of responses
Yes	28
No	7

<i>If yes, how long has it been since your last break?</i>	No. of responses
0-3 months	4
4-6 months	5
7-12 months	6
1-2 years	9
2-4 years	2
>4 years	0
no answer	2

<i>Where did the person you care for go when you last had a break?</i>	No. of responses
Cairdeas House	22
Stayed with relatives	3
Stayed at home with other help	0
Hospital	3

5. Future Respite Needs

100% of carers who responded to the questionnaire said they would like the person they care for to stay at Cairdeas House again in future, with a preference for breaks every 3-6 months.

<i>Would you like the person you care for to stay at Cairdeas House again?</i>	No. of responses
Yes	35
No	0

<i>If yes, how often would you like them to visit?</i>	No. of responses
Once every 3 months	12
Once every 6 months	7
Once a year	7
Less than once a year	0
No strong view / up to the person cared for	9

Given the choice of more local respite, home based respite, and continuing to use Cairdeas House, most carers chose Cairdeas House as their preferred type of respite. The primary reason given is that the person they care for enjoys it, highlighting how important it is that the break is a positive experience for both people in the caring relationship.

<i>If you had the choice, would you prefer the person you care for to be able to...</i>	Yes	No	No answer
Go somewhere more local	3	26	6
Stay at home and someone come in to help	2	25	8
Keep going to Cairdeas House	34	0	1

<i>Please explain answers given above</i>	
Person cared for enjoys it	18
They are well looked after	8
Friendly staff	8
Did cared for person good	8
Opportunity for different experiences /change of scene	7
Familiar setting causes less anxiety	5
Distance from home creates more of a proper holiday feel	3
Opportunities to meet other people	2

At the end of the questionnaire, carers are given the opportunity to add anything else they would like to say about their contact with Cairdeas House or the visit of the person they care for. These comments are a personal reflection of the value of Cairdeas House to the carers involved and are recorded verbatim in appendix 1.

Conclusions

Carers who have used the short breaks service provided by Cairdeas House, have a very high opinion of the experience of respite care and the service provided there.

Respite is perceived as of positive benefit to the carer, the person cared for and other family members. Spending time pursuing their own choice of activity, free from the responsibility of caring, provides the opportunity to recharge batteries and return to the caring relationship with a fresh outlook. Cairdeas House adds particular value to the short break through the staff's specialised experience of working with people with mental health problems, giving carers confidence that the support needs of the cared for person will be met appropriately.

The carers who responded would like regular breaks with a preference for every 3-6 months, and the majority would choose to continue to use Cairdeas House. One of the key factors in this choice is that the cared for person enjoys their time at Cairdeas House, and this is independently confirmed by feedback from guests in the Guest Evaluation report. Confidence in the staff and organisation of Cairdeas House is evident through the high level of demand for return visits.

"I am very grateful for the chance she gets to visit Cairdeas House as she benefits so much from it. Being away also gives her time to think and boosts her confidence no end mixing with other people and staff."

"I get great enjoyment from seeing the person I care for coming home feeling really happy and excited about her stay. It gives myself and her a good lift and a lot to talk about."

"Having a break is good for the two of us... It is a great confidence boost for the person I care for and also a holiday, which she really enjoys. It also gives me a chance to recharge my batteries."

"I appreciate very much that Cairdeas House is available when most needed."

"It gives him far more opportunities – mixing socially with a range of people, going out...which he tends to avoid at home."

Verbatim Comments from Carer Evaluation Forms

What are the benefits for you of the person you care for staying at Cairdeas House?

- I didn't have to worry about the person. Get some of my sanity back intact for the next round.
- Having a break, due to the fact I am taking pills.
- To have a break and do something.
- Relief from support needs. Time for myself. Able to go away. Knowing she was not just safe but in a really positive environment.
- I was happy in the knowledge that my son was being well cared for while enjoying a change of scenery with the opportunity to take part in different things.
- Managed to rest and relax.
- To take a good rest and being able to go to different places without having to worry about my wife. Just knowing she was in safe hands was a relief.
- Pressure off us because he's not there. He lives next door to us and comes in here a lot. We can do different things without him because he comes out with us all the time. Gets to be too much when he's in here all the time.
- Time for myself and able to catch up with jobs around the house.
- More time and energy to spend on my own pursuits. Relaxing, not worrying about my relation being lonely / bored / depressed. Inviting friends to visit without considering my relation.
- Being able to do my own things in a relaxed and stress free environment. Able to meet with friends and have no worry in the knowledge that she was happy and well cared for.
- The main benefit was having my own space, being able to unwind and do my own things.
- Do what we wanted to do when we wanted to. Good night's sleep, privacy.
- I had time to have time with my family and do as I pleased when I wanted.
- Rest and relaxation. Recharge batteries.
- I was ill myself so the week he spent with you gave me time to rest and get better.
- I was able to relax and unwind and get myself rested.
- Time to myself, no cooking or dispensing medication.
- Change of domestic pattern. Obviously only myself to care for. Very relaxing given she was in good care and enjoying it.
- Just having a break from the usual routine. Being able to do things I haven't done for a while.
- Chance to take a holiday. Break from the caring routine. Partner more alert on return due to company.
- An opportunity for resting and taking care of myself as my health isn't very good.
- It gives me a break from the constant emotional reassurance I have to give.
- I was able to go away knowing that my wife was safe being cared for and able to get support.
- Being able to relax to watch TV or read without constant interruptions.
- Peace of mind. A complete break.
- Good break for caring, less work, time for myself.
- I feel relaxed that I know my son is in a safe place.
- Spend more time with my children and have a wee break.
- I was more relaxed, not stressed, able to do many things – little things – without being held back looking after my son.
- A complete break from the responsibilities of caring and a chance to catch up on other things we enjoy doing, and most importantly, a chance to recharge our batteries.

- Spent some quality time with my kids. A rest from the routine.
- Less stress.
- Less worries. More relaxation. Less stress. More rest.

Reasons for choosing for the cared for person to continue coming to Cairdeas House

- People's needs are properly cared for. I found that the person who visited came back more relaxed.
- He seems satisfied going there. Actually I have him through in Edinburgh regularly which he enjoys.
- I felt my wife was well looked after and benefited from her stay.
- It gives us a proper break and is better as a "holiday" if not local.
- My son has fond memories of Edinburgh and it reminds him of when life was "normal" (prior to his illness). He feels at home in the city and there is always plenty to see and do (theatre etc).
- Has been before and enjoyed his time spent at Cairdeas and Edinburgh sightseeing.
- For care and support given to my wife and the staff's kindness. My wife was able to go out and about with support from the staff.
- He likes staying at Cairdeas House. He's very relaxed staying there. He gets a break away from us and we get a break away from him.
- She felt safe and secure and enjoyed her time spent at Cairdeas. I was happy that if she needed me I could get there quickly.
- It gives him far more opportunities – mixing socially with a range of people, going out to cafes, shops, maybe the cinema, which he tends to avoid at home. Having new experiences of city life. Eating regular meals in company. Having people to talk to.
- She found it beneficial.
- I feel she is in a safe environment. Very helpful and caring staff. I feel she benefits greatly when there, her confidence improves and the break does both of us good.
- Having a break is good for the two of us as it has good benefits for the two of us. It is a great confidence boost for the person I care for and also a holiday which she really enjoys. It also gives me a chance to recharge my batteries.
- He enjoys Cairdeas House so he is happy to go. If we know he is happy we are happy.
- He enjoys Cairdeas and looks forward to going. I know he is well cared for. The staff are wonderful.
- Alex loves his visits to Cairdeas House. He is very much at ease there, he gets to know the staff and guests.
- He is used to Cairdeas House so he knows what to expect. Going to strange places sometimes upsets him.
- Cairdeas is a very nice house and he was very well cared for.
- Because the person I care for likes it there.
- She thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed her visit to Cairdeas House. Liked the staff. No problems reported either way.
- He enjoyed Cairdeas House. He really enjoyed his break. He thought highly of the staff and was able to go out with the rest of the guests or stay in if he so wished.
- It's now familiar to him who doesn't like change and panics.
- He enjoys his time at Cairdeas House and always looks forward to his visits. As long as he is happy – I am happy.
- Because it is familiar the anxiety is less for them to go and stay on their own.
- She is happy and settled and gets a lot out of going to Cairdeas. Travel is not really a problem and she needs a break away.

- He has got to know clients and helpers and feels more comfortable with what he knows.
- Edinburgh has a lot to offer for days out etc.
- It feels more of a break for both of us if she is further away from home.
- My son likes going to Cairdeas House. He likes the people and it has a good atmosphere for him.
- He enjoys the different things available to do in Edinburgh and treats it like a holiday.
- Change of area, likes the quiet. He needs to be with other people. He loves his own room and space and the staff are very helpful
- The relaxed friendly atmosphere of the place, the staff's attitude towards the clients who visit Cairdeas. They have a real interest in them, even remembering them by name. The place is very welcoming.
- She really likes it and is comfortable staying there and it's close to home in case of emergencies.
- He would feel more secure staying at home with someone coming in to help.
- My husband finds Cairdeas House very beneficial and receives first class support and care.

Other comments

- I am very grateful for the help received and for the warm welcome.
- They are always helpful with difficult diets. Staff always friendly – excellent ethos. She enjoys the outing element. Still got a great appearance equal to the top hotels. This gives self-worth and is invaluable.
- My son came back with great praise for staff members who made his stay very interesting and happy. His mood was upbeat as he talked about people he met and the places he had visited. I have not seen him so animated for some time. Thank you for looking after him so well and for all your hard work.
- This was a much needed break for myself with the pressure taken away for 7 days. This would not have been possible without the good help and support of Cairdeas House. My wife loved the break and help received from the staff. Food was very good and she felt safe and contented.
- We would like you to phone us about how he is when he is there.
- We had a friendly welcome and felt confident that any problems could be dealt with in a positive way.
- It was good in all departments.
- I am very grateful for the chance she gets to visit Cairdeas House as she benefits so much from it. Being away also gives her time to think and boosts her confidence no end mixing with other people and staff. Caring for a person 24/7 is a great strain, so it helps me also to relax and value time-out for me. My stress and BP levels also reduce. I sleep well too which proves how relaxed I am.
- I get great enjoyment from seeing the person I care for coming home feeling really happy and excited about her stay. It gives myself and her a good lift and a lot to talk about.
- I have never seen Cairdeas House, but he likes the staff, the building and the area and also the good food. He is not into modern things. He has his own personality and Cairdeas House seems to suit his personality.
- Cairdeas itself is a lovely place. It is spotless and the carers look after the visitors with great care and attention. He loves his stay there. It is the only place I would let him be without me with him.
- They have been very professional in all our dealings with them. We can go away and know he is getting well cared for.
- He likes his visits, likes the staff and knows there'll be back up if he becomes ill. He also enjoys the outings to theatres and shows and runs in the minibus. He always

comes back full of news about what he did so thank you all very much for your time and care.

- He was well cared for and got on with all the residents and staff who made him feel extra welcome.
- I can only express gratitude for the work you do. Not everyone appreciates the pressure you lift from a carer and the pleasure you give your guests.
- The people at Cairdeas House were very helpful and caring.
- I think they do a great job and really meet the needs of the individuals in their care. I am very grateful for their help and understanding.
- Always a friendly atmosphere. She enjoys her visit but then gets very anxious about coming home. If more support could be given to that aspect it would be useful. Also, if more flexible packages booked long in advance could be offered.
- I have no complaints about any of his stays, he always enjoys stays and is well looked after. The only problem I have is that he is on such a lot of medication and I would prefer it if the hospital pharmacy could make up 7 or 14 day dispensers that you can just give him.
- The break from each other helps us to cope better, and the staff are very helpful to my wife who thoroughly enjoys it. It helps relieve the stress between us.
- He enjoys his stay and we would like more funding if available from the government to finance this type of project.
- All the staff have been very helpful to me.
- I was expecting Cairdeas House to be more like a hospital/clinic but was pleasantly surprised to find it was more like a friendly holiday hotel. I think this is very important for the type of clients who visit. All of the members of staff we came into contact with were extremely helpful and friendly, therefore I felt confident to leave my brother in your care.
- My wife really enjoys going to Cairdeas House. It gives her something to look forward to. She gets on really well with the staff and is always eager to go.
- I appreciate very much that Cairdeas House is available when most needed. I also would like to thank the staff and volunteers.