



HELPING HAND: Caring Soles offers treatments like nail clipping to elderly people

# Footcare charity launches appeal for donations

## Vital service for city pensioners facing bleak future

■ HENRY GOODWIN

AN Edinburgh charity providing foot care and social support to elderly people has launched an urgent appeal for donations after the city council slashed its funding.

The Eric Liddell Centre (ELC) has started a JustGiving appeal to pay for its Caring Soles Footcare Service, after a funding application was rejected by the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board, which oversees health and social care spending in the Capital.

Caring Soles offers physical treatments like nail clipping and exercise classes to improve mobility, as well as "befriending networks", which are aimed at bringing older people together and fighting loneliness.

The service is delivered by NHS-trained volunteers, and has been running since January 2017.

Now, however, the ELC is asking the public to help plug a "significant funding gap", and plans to expand Caring Soles into Craigmillar and other areas have had to be shelved.

The service treats around 70

people per week, and for many it is their only source of foot treatment.

Les, 88, has used Caring Soles since May 2017, and says it "has made a great difference" to his life.

"I don't know what I would do without it," he said. "It's not just getting my nails cut - if there's anything wrong, they'll tell me. It's really been a benefit."

Stan, 92, who first visited

**"It's not just getting my nails cut - if there's anything wrong, they'll tell me. It's really been a benefit" LES, 88**

Caring Soles in July 2017, said: "You feel really good after the service. For £10, it's nothing. There must be a lot of older people, especially in housing estates, who don't get their feet done at all and don't know what to do about it because they can't afford it."

Mary Brennan, a University of Edinburgh professor who volunteers with Caring Soles, believes the programme is hugely beneficial to local people.

"It has given me a chance to give back to my own local

community and to meet and support some interesting people," she said. "It really helps people in their day-to-day lives."

Caring Soles is the latest in a string of social care services to be hit by funding fears.

Serenity, a community cafe for recovering addicts, was forced to close in November after running out of cash and, in December 2017, a lifeline charity offering vital support to disabled children and their families faced closure after the council changed its funding policy.

John MacMillan, Chief Executive of the ELC, said: "It's highly unfortunate that the Caring Soles service is in this position. While it is understandable that public bodies can't fund all requests for financial support, we're nevertheless disappointed that this well-regarded service, with ambitions to grow and expand throughout Edinburgh, now finds itself struggling."

Kezia Dugdale, Labour MSP for Edinburgh and the Lothians, said last month that the Capital was "in the grips of a social care crisis".

She said: "It's a truly distressing and worrying situation for many elderly vulnerable residents, and the only thing that could make a significant and immediate difference would be an injection of additional cash."