Falkirk Carers Strategy



2023 - 2026

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# Foreword

We are pleased to present the Falkirk Carers Strategy 2023-26, which has been developed in full recognition of the role and contribution carers make, not only to the person they care for but also to our communities.

We recognise and appreciate carers and young carers in Falkirk and the strategy aims to ensure that those in need of care receive it when required. As part of our joint work to enhance support for carers, this strategy outlines our current range of services, as well as our commitment to improve support to all carers in Falkirk. The strategy has been developed with carers to focus on the priorities that are important to them. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost of living crisis is recognised and has been highlighted in our conversations with carers.

We continue to work with carers to develop support that helps them to continue in their caring role, if that is what they wish to do. We have a wide range of services and support already in place and we are looking to build on this as we implement this strategy. To meet the requirements of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and ensure we meet carers needs, we will continue to work with carers, those they care for and the organisations that support them to enhance the advice, information and support that will make a difference to them.

Patricia Cassidy

Chief Officer

Health and Social Care Partnership

Sara Lacey

Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Children’s Services Social Work

# A multi-colour pie chart and diagram, visualising how national carers policy links to local policy in Falkirk. All sections in the diagram are headings within the strategy document where they are discussed more fully. Plan on a Page

# Introduction

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 became law on 1 April 2018 and places duties on Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership and Falkirk Council to support unpaid carers in their caring role. These duties include preparing a carers strategy with particular focus on the local area. This local strategy supports the delivery of the National Carers Strategy, is reviewed every three years, and is for all Adult Carers and Young Carers in Falkirk.

Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) delivers integrated health and social care services on behalf of Falkirk Integration Joint Board (IJB), and consists of the Local Authority, NHS Forth Valley, and Third and Independent sector organisations, which work together to provide effective and joined up services. This Partnership has worked together to deliver a Carers Strategy for Falkirk. Falkirk Council delivers all local authority services for children including social care and education.

The Falkirk Carer Strategy has been informed by the National Carer Strategy, and forms part of the wider strategy for delivering health and social care in Falkirk, including the HSCP Strategic Plan and Integrated Children’s Plan. It covers the period 2023-2026.

The Falkirk Health and Social Care Strategic Plan outlines six commitments to carers:

1. Identify unpaid carers, including those that are harder to reach
2. Support, inform, and empower unpaid carers as they manage their caring role
3. Enable unpaid carers to have a life outside of caring
4. Fully engage unpaid carers in the planning and shaping of services
5. Raise awareness, including within communities, of unpaid care and the demands and pressures of caring roles, reducing disadvantage and discrimination
6. Recognise and value unpaid carers as individuals with their own unique circumstances, and as equal partners in care.

Consultations with carers and a range of delivery partners have enabled the expansion of these themes within the Falkirk Carers Strategy.

The Falkirk Carers Strategy 2023-2026 follows the Falkirk Carers Strategy 2019-2022. That strategy was published before the Covid-19 pandemic, which has impacted the lives of unpaid carers in many unforeseen ways. The Falkirk Carers Strategy 2023-26 has been informed both by strategy delivery during the pandemic and by ongoing consultation with unpaid carers. Many strategic priorities from 2019 remain relevant in 2023, now partnered with new immediate concerns for carers, both of which will be addressed within this Strategy.

Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership published two consultation surveys for unpaid carers: a general consultation for all carers and a tailored survey for young carers and young adult carers. The strategy has also been informed by anonymised feedback provided to the Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre collected from general enquiries to the Centre and direct feedback from carers given while creating Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) and Young Carer Statements (YCS).

A Carer Strategy Implementation Group comprised of Health, Social Care and Third Sector organisations has been consulted throughout the development of this new strategy to help shape this document and ensure that the strategy represents the needs of carers and can be understood by carers.

# Living with Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to impact on carers, a growing number of whom face additionally complex and intense caring situations. The reduction in, or withdrawal of, many support services during the pandemic left existing carers with more intensive caring responsibilities, while other people acquired a caring role for the first time.As restrictions eased, carers have been left with new challenges to their own physical and mental health and that of those they care for. They also now face new financial pressures which impact on the carers own spending and the availability of support services which may have been reduced.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the HSCP and Falkirk Council responded to community need by managing distribution of Personal Protective Equipment, partnering with food banks and food train to deliver community support, working with PA employers to share guidance on Covid restrictions, Covid testing and access to vaccination, and increasing respitality options.  Flexible Respite options are discussed in more detail within this document. We also supplied IT equipment to carers which provided the opportunity to continue to connect with online carer forums and exert some influence.

# Carers

Falkirk’s vision for carers: Everyone has freedom to live their own lives while they are caring. The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 defines a carer as: *“An individual who provides or intends to provide care for another individual (the 'cared-for person).”*

A carer is “a person of any age who provides unpaid help and support to a relative, friend or neighbour who cannot manage to live independently without the carer’s help due to frailty, illness, disability or addiction.” (Scottish Government, 2016)

Young Adult Carers (YAC) are young people aged 16–25 who care, unpaid, for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction. Young Carers (YC) are under the age of 18, or may be over 18, but still in education. Parent carers provide support to their children, including grown up children who could not manage without their help.

## Carers in Numbers

Scotland’s carers make a huge contribution to the people they care for and our communities. There are more people caring full time for relatives or friends than staff working in either the NHS or in social care. The actual number of carers is not known but it was estimated that there were 700,000 to 800,000 unpaid carers in Scotland before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scotland’s population is ageing, with people living longer and numbers of older people predicted to continue growing alongside a proportionately smaller working age population. This is a success story in terms of improved health and wellbeing and longer life expectancy, but it has significant implications for the future of care and support in Scotland. With demand for health and social care services predicted to grow by 25% by 2031, the role and contribution of carers will be even more critical in the future.

Falkirk has an estimated population of 160,560 as of 2020, with 78,645 (49%) males and 81,915 (51%) females. The National Records for Scotland estimate that this will increase to 169.962 by 2042 (a 6% increase based on 2018 mid-year population). Population projections anticipate an 80% increase in the 75+ population between 2018-2043. The large rise in the older population relative to the increase in working age population is likely to increase demand for health and social care services without the required growth in workforce to deliver these services.

Presuming there are 800,000 carers nationally, and the population of Falkirk as 160,560, suggests that there could be as many as 23,551 unpaid carers living in Falkirk.

According to the 2011 Census, the population of Falkirk was 98.1% white, 0.7% Pakistani, 0.3% Indian, 0.2% Chinese, 0.2% other Asian, 0.1% African, 0.1% Caribbean or Black, 0.1% of another ethnic group, and 0.2% mixed race.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) | Young Carers Statements (YCS) |
| 2019 – 2020 | 500 | 66 |
| 2020 – 2021 | 151 | 2 |
| 2021 – 2022 | 474 | 47 |
| 2022 – 2023 (to date) | 397 | 57 |

Table 1: Number of Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) completed by the Carers Centre

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year | Number of new adult carers contacted or referred to the Carers Centre |
| 2019 – 2020 | 586 |
| 2020 – 2021 | 543 |
| 2021 – 2022 | 625 |
| 2022 – 2023 (to date) | 465 |

Table 2: Number of new adult carers contacted or referred to the Carers Centre

# The Carers Act (2016)

The [Carers (Scotland) Act 2016](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/contents/enacted) became law on 1st April 2018. This places a number of duties on local authorities including:

* Offering Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) or Young Carer Statements (YCS) to anyone identified as being a carer (this replaces the previous Carer Assessment)
* Providing a range of information and advice services to carers
* Developing local [Eligibility Criteria](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/social-care/carers/docs/02%20Falkirk%20eligibility%20criteria%20for%20Unpaid%20Carers.pdf?v=201906251052) to determine the levels of support that will be offered to carers
* Publishing a local [Carer’s Strategy](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/social-care/carers/docs/01%20Falkirk%20Carers%20Strategy%20-%20Getting%20it%20Right%20for%20Carers%20in%20Falkirk.pdf?v=201906251052)
* Publishing a local [Short Breaks Services Statement](http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/social-care/carers/docs/03%20Falkirk%20Short%20Breaks%20Services%20Statement.pdf?v=201906251052)

As a result of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, all carers have the right to an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) or Young Carer Statement (YCS). These will be completed at a pace that is suitable for the carer and reviewed in line with statutory guidance or when requested (if sooner).

The Adult Carer Support Plan contains a variety of information about individual carer’s circumstances and their caring role. Young carers have a right to a Young Carer Statement. This will also contain a variety of information about their own circumstances and caring role.

When a young carer reaches 18 years of age, the Young Carer Statement will continue until an Adult Carer Support Plan is provided. If a young carer does not wish to continue providing care, they can choose not to have an Adult Carer Support Plan. They may also decline an ACSP but continue to provide care.

## Delivery of the Act

In Falkirk, the Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre provides Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP) and Young Carer Statements (YCS) for carers.

Carers who are eligible for support funded by the local authority can choose how to access that support using any of the four Self-Directed Support Options. These are:

1. Direct Payment – this is a cash payment to enable the person to purchase the support they need. The person must be willing and able to manage the payment and provide appropriate information relating to expenditure and support.
2. Individual Service Fund – this is where the person directs the use of the available budget by choosing the services to be purchased. Payment is made directly to the provider(s) on behalf of the person.
3. Arranged Services – this is where the person instructs the local authority/HSCP to make arrangements for service provision to meet the agreed outcomes. These services will be purchased using any existing contractual arrangements.
4. Mixed option – this is where the person chooses more that one of the above options for different parts of their support.

On the following page, there is a diagram taken from our local eligibility criteria, which illustrates the different stages of assessment. Stage 1 and 2 (middle and bottom) are designed to support a preventative approach, to ensure carers are supported to maintain a caring role.

Stage 1: Pre-assessment

Universal services and support are those generally provided to the public at large (e.g., leisure and recreation facilities, support groups, neighbourhood networks). Universal services can help carers enjoy the same opportunities as everyone else.

Stage 2: Assessment

Adult Carers Support Plan/Young Carers Statement - Targeted services and support are usually provided in the community where people need additional support to enable them to access a break. They may be specially commissioned and designed to meet local needs.

Stage 3: Post Assessment Support

Specialist services and support would include the range of specialist short break services and support which can cater for cared-for people with more complex care requirements. These people might not be able to access the more universal or inclusive type short breaks

Pyramid diagram in 3 shades of blue, outlining the local eligibility criteria assessment tiers. 
On the base, stage 1 reads, pre-assessment, universal support, local authority power to support carers. In the middle, stage 2, reads, assessment, adult carers support plan and young carers statement, local authority power to support carers. On the top, stage 3, reads, post assessment support. local authority duty to support eligible carers. 

Figure 1: Local Eligibility Criteria Assessment Tiers

## The Carers Strategy Implementation Group

The Carers Strategy Implementation Group oversees the implementation of the 2016 Act in Falkirk. This group has responsibility for commissioning and overseeing activity supported by the Government funding that accompanies the Act.

Four workstreams have been created for focused representation of the Carers Strategy. Each Workstream reports to the Carers Strategy Implementation Group which continues to meet monthly. These workstreams are:

* Finance and Monitoring
* Adult Carer Support Plans/Young Carer Statements
* Commissioning
* Hospital Support and Discharge

The expert Commissioning Workstream has been established to ensure that use of the Carers Fund supports the delivery of the Carers Strategy and addresses carer need.

The work of the Carers Strategy Group is subject to Senior Leadership Team and Integrated Joint Board approval. NHS Forth Valley and Falkirk Council adopted the “body corporate” model of integration. This means we have established the Falkirk Integration Joint Board (IJB). The IJB is a distinct legal and decision-making body. It plans and decides how health and social care services are delivered in line with the broader Falkirk Health and Social Care Strategic Plan and the Integrated Children’s Plan.

# Support Currently Available to Carers in Falkirk

Falkirk & Clackmannanshire Carers Centre

The Carers Centre aims to ensure that carers of all ages are recognised, valued, receive the information, and support they need to allow them to care with confidence and in good health, and are empowered to have a life of their own outside caring. Support is provided to carers of all ages throughout the Falkirk area by a team of carer support workers and young carer workers based in the Carers Centre in Falkirk, Forth Valley Royal Hospital, and Falkirk Community Hospital.

The Carers Centre raises awareness about the services they deliver by:

* Delivering talks, participating in events, etc.
* Producing Carers Centre promotional resources, including newsletter and e-bulletins
* Disseminating information via website and social media

The Carers Centre ensures that professionals are aware of their role in identifying carers, providing carers with information, including their right to an Adult Carer Support Plan and Young Carers Statement, involving carers as equal partners, and referring carers to the Carers Centre, by:

* Providing workforce learning opportunities for professionals about carers needs and rights and the services delivered by the Carers Centre
* Working in partnership with other organisations and individuals to facilitate the provision of services that meet the needs of carers

The Carers Centre ensures that carers are identified and provided with information, support, and involvement opportunities by:

* Promoting the early identification of carers and referral to the Carers Centre
* Providing information to individual carers about the services delivered by the Carers Centre and other organisations that support carers
* Developing, promoting, and delivering a programme of Care with Confidence sessions for carers at the Carers Centre and in local communities
* Offering carers an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) or Young Carers Statement (YCS)
* Preparing ACSPs and YCSs
* Providing individual support for carers to help them achieve the outcomes they identify as important to them
* Providing support to young carers in school
* Providing access to short break for all individual carers/families through grants or Respitality or organised outings
* Providing a range of group support activities and events
* Providing a programme of health and wellbeing activities
* Providing carers with access to Welfare Benefit information and support through CAB
* Issuing Forth Valley Carers Cards and Young Carer Authorisation Cards
* Providing and promoting a range of opportunities for carers to have their say in service design and planning (including Carers Centre services)
* Representing carers at local strategic planning groups

An adult carer support plan (ACSP) starts with a conversation around a caring role and what is important to the carer. It helps plan what could help them work towards their goals. The key points of the conversation are written down with agreed actions and this becomes the adult carer support plan. A telephone support service is available for carers to assist with process.

The Carers Centre measures whether carers feel valued, able to look after their own health and wellbeing, and empowered to have a life of their own outside caring by carrying out reviews with individual carers to monitor changes in the impact of their caring role, as identified in their ACSP.

Falkirk District Association for Mental Health (FDAMH)

FDAMH’s Family Support Service is a service for carers and families who are struggling or in crisis because of caring for someone impacted by reduced psychological wellbeing.

Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau

Falkirk Citizens Advice Bureau, in partnership with Falkirk & Clackmannanshire Carers Centre, delivers a holistic, free, confidential advice and information service, including specialist benefits, debt and housing advice, for carers living in the Falkirk Area.

Alzheimer Scotland

Alzheimer Scotland’s Carer Training Programme is a training and information support specifically for family carers of people with dementia. The programme is based on research, which suggests that information and skills training can be as helpful in reducing carer stress as counselling and support groups. The training is designed in consultation with carers, ensuring that the information provided is appropriate to their needs, whilst also acting as a good source of peer support.

Maggie’s Forth Valley

Provides support to carers of people who have been diagnosed with cancer.

SDS Forth Valley

SDS Forth Valley supports individuals in understanding their rights enshrined within the legislation to ensure that they are provided with informed choice regarding their preferred SDS option.

Strathcarron Hospice

Provides support to carers of people diagnosed with a life limiting illness.

## Emergency and Future Planning

The purpose of emergency and future planning is to continue to support carers to plan for the future by considering how they, and the cared-for person, would want to access support in an emergency e.g., the carer becomes unwell is and is unable to provide care for a while. We will support local agencies to provide access and signposting to emergency planning resources.

We can:

* Continue to improve anticipatory care planning and future planning
* Continue to work with a range of providers
* Continue to work with carers to help them build their confidence and manage their anxieties, so that they are better equipped to cope in a crisis situation
* Continue to develop the use of Carer Cards
* Work with schools to ensure young carers know how they will be supported if an emergency situation arises and develop a clear pathway for this

# The Policy Context

## National

National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

The Scottish Government introduced the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill to Parliament on 20 June 2022. The Bill committed Scotland to establishing a functioning National Care Service by the end of 2026. It includes a section on the ‘rights to breaks for carers’, which would amend the Carers Act, and aims to ensure that unpaid carers get the support they need to take 'sufficient' breaks. Being able to take 'sufficient' breaks will also be an identified personal outcome of every unpaid carer.

National Carer Strategy

The National Carer Strategy states that as the National Care Service (NCS) moves forward, we are committed to engaging with people with lived experience of social care to co-design the detail of the new system. Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership and Falkirk Council also commit to including carers in potential service re-design at a local level where possible in line with the new changes brought about by the National Care Service.

National Dementia Strategy

Scotland’s most recent National Dementia Strategy 2017-2023 sets out national action to support better services and supports for people living with dementia and their carers. Key areas included more and earlier diagnosis, increasing access to support after diagnosis, improving integrated home care and taking a national approach to dementia palliative and end of life care.

National Autism Strategy

Scotland’s National Autism Strategy’s outcomes and priorities for 2018-2021 sets out priorities for action to improve outcomes for autistic people and their carers living in Scotland.

Learning Disability Strategy

In 2019, the Scottish government published, with COSLA, a new joint framework to support the delivery of our ‘Keys to Life’ learning disability strategy. The framework emphasises the joint commitment of national and local government to people with a learning disability and their carers.

Neurological Care and Support: Framework for Action 2020-2025

This Framework for 2020-2025 sets out a vision for driving improvement in the care, treatment and support available to people living with neurological conditions – and their carers - in Scotland. Its aim is to ensure people with neurological conditions and their carers are partners in their care and support.

Getting it Right for Every Child

A commitment to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time.

## Local

Strategic Plan 2023-26

The Strategic Plan sets out how services will be delivered across Falkirk.

Integration Scheme

The Integration Scheme is a legally binding agreement between Falkirk Council and NHS Forth Valley, known as ‘parties’ in the scheme. The scheme describes what the parties will do to enable the Partnership’s Integration Joint Board to meet its responsibilities, known as ‘delegated functions’.

Participation and Engagement Strategy 2021-24

The renewed Participation and Engagement Strategy, first published in 2016, ensures as many people as possible can be involved and actively engaged in the design and development of health and social care services in the Falkirk area.

Communications Strategy 2021-24

The new Communications Strategy outlines how effective communication can help the Partnership achieve its strategic vision. Its principles apply to all Partnership staff and their communication activity.

Falkirk Integrated Children’s Services Plan 2021-23

Plan to help make best use of collective resources to meet the needs identified by young people and based on Community Planning Partnership Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and ongoing engagement with Falkirk young people through the Children's Rights & Engagement Group.

# Feedback from Carers

## CONSULTATION ON EXISTING PRIORITIES

The 2019-2022 strategy set eleven priority areas for carers, one of these priorities – Transport – relies on The HSCP Transport policy.

Each of the remaining ten priorities remain relevant, each was named by carers as important, and each is contained within the six priorities presented within this 2023-26 Falkirk Carer Strategy:

1. Reduce impact of caring on health and wellbeing
2. Breaks from caring
3. Transition pathways
4. Developing community support
5. Preventative support
6. Market shaping
7. Identifying hidden carers
8. Emergency planning
9. Carers employability (Carer Positive)
10. Carer involvement in hospital discharge

Falkirk HSCP conducted two formal consultations to directly inform the 2023-26 strategy, one general consultation and another which focused on young carers and young adult carers. 52 carers completed the general consultation which asked which of those 2019 -22 priorities were important to them. 30 Young Carers and 9 Young Adult Carers completed our second consultation which will be discussed within the Young Carers section of this strategy.

## New priorities from consultation

Feedback from unpaid carers to the Carers Centre highlighted two new areas of concern for carers: financial pressures, including financial impact of caring and the developing or changing relationship between an unpaid carer and the cared for person.

Financial pressures, including financial impact of caring:

* Worries about financial support available
* Concerns around unexpected bills and debt
* Managing finances, including for two homes for some carers
* Cared for person turns 18 and there is a drop in income
* Increase of costs in caring role, e.g., incontinence issues
* Worries about financial impact of cared for person going into long-term care
* Financial support and advice, e.g., funding, grants, will planning, power of attorney etc.
* Benefits, including restrictions around work and claiming Carers Allowance

CAB has reported that the demand for Citizen’s Advice Bureau Help for Carers service has increased by 35% between 2020 and 2021, and then increased a further 28% in 2022. The demand for this service is likely to increase over the next financial year.

Supporting relationships between an unpaid carer and the cared for person:

* Struggles with cared for person’s behavioural changes due to diagnosis
* Worries about judgement from others
* Family support sometimes not available to enable a break because of the behaviour issues.
* Carer doesn't have enough support (respite, social work) to manage cared for person’s behaviour, and can lack breaks
* Constant demands on the carers time to provide reassurance and support
* Cared for person refuses access to respite to give carer a break
* Cared for person struggles to settle in day care or accept paid carer

A later section on family wellbeing connects isolating carer roles with a need for peer support, and specific training tailored to caring for persons with particular conditions associated with more challenging behaviour. It is also important that carers can be made aware of adult support and protection processes. [Protecting people from harm - Adult support & protection](https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/social-care/protecting-from-harm/adult-protection.aspx)

The strategy recognises that each caring relationship can present its own unique challenges and it is important that we understand particular challenges experienced by mutual and co-dependant carers as we deliver this strategy.

Carers were asked what must be considered when addressing the identified priorities:

* Involving those with lived experience and professionals, including paid carers
* Developing good relationships
* Regular contact and timely response
* Joined up delivery and effective tracking/review of individual needs
* Recognising that carers are a diverse group with diverse needs
* Neurodiversity informed approaches
* Recognising the continuing impact of Covid-19 on carers
* Improving awareness, knowledge and understanding of local communities
* Information and support at the right time and place – signposting to appropriate support
* Preventative support rather than response to crisis

# Six Priority Areas

## Identify unpaid carers, including those that are harder to reach

We will continue to explore ways of raising awareness of the 2016 Act and remain committed to identifying and supporting carers from all groups to ensure we meet our statutory responsibilities. We will explore and develop how we reach hidden or hard to reach carers by engaging with travelling communities, Black and Ethnic Minority communities, LGBTQIA+ communities and the organisations these communities engage with and are supported by.

We are actively partnering with third sector organisations to commission services to identify carers and help them to access their support and entitlement. We have also commissioned additional Adult Carer Support Plan staff within the Carers Centre in response to increased demand, as more carers were identified and sought support owing to circumstances imposed by the Covid pandemic.

We will work closely with the Falkirk Council Sensory Services Team to ensure that our approaches to reach hidden carers, include communication methods which are accessible to all.

Social prescribing services provided by Falkirk District Association for Mental Health (FDAMH), Strathcarron Hospice, and Cyrenians can also help to identify carers and signpost to appropriate information and community support. These are themes which appear within our next priority.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Raise awareness of unpaid caring | More people identify as carers | Number of new adult carers contacted or referred to the Carers Centre. Number of ACSP/YCS completed |
| Explore and develop strategy for identifying hard to reach carers | Increase the number of carers from hard-to-reach groups, accessing ACSP/YCS and associated support  Opportunities are developed for partnership working with organisations supporting hard to reach carers. | Number of new adult carers from hard-to-reach groups contacted or referred to the Carers Centre  Number of ACSP/YCS completed from members of hard-to-reach groups |
| Commission services to identify and support hard to reach carers | Increase the number of carers from hard-to-reach groups, accessing ACSP/YCS and associated support | Number of new adult carers from hard-to-reach groups contacted or referred to the Carers Centre  Number of ACSP/YCS completed from members of hard-to-reach groups |
| Engage with Primary Care and social prescribing teams to publicise pathways to carer identification | More people identify as carers | Number of new adult carers contacted or referred to the Carers Centre  Number of ACSP/YCS completed |
| Work with hospital teams to find ways of ensuring caring roles are recognised when patients are admitted to hospital | More people identify as carers  Unpaid carers are identified /included within the Integrated Discharge Project at Forth Valley Hospital. | Number of new adult carers contacted or referred to the Carers Support Workers at the hospital  Number of carers identified within admission paperwork completed upon arrival at hospital  Percentage of carers who feel involved/included in hospital discharge |

## Support, inform, and empower unpaid carers as they manage their caring role

We commit to recognising the different stages and transitions for carers, to improve our understanding of these and to work with carers to develop the right support, at the right time, to enable carers to continue to confidently provide care that is manageable. The Falkirk Carer Strategy will be delivered as consistent conversation with carers to inform what support and how support should be available to carers.

The Carers Centre has delivered Care with Confidence training to help support, inform, and empower carers.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Year | Care with Confidence Training attendance (average per quarter) |
| 2019 - 2020 | 97 |
| 2020 - 2021 | 73 |
| 2021 – 2022 | 203 |
| 2022 – 2023 (to date) | 155 |

Table 3: Care with Confidence Training Attendance

Through our strategy consultation and feedback to Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre, carers have expressed a need for more accessible general carer information and access to a directory of resources and local support. A caring role may change over time, and it is vital that carers can identify and access information and support as that role develops. As part of this strategy, we will improve the range of resources available to carers locally. We will ensure that carer information on HSCP websites is informative and accurate and improve circulation of printed guidance on a range of themes which impact upon caring roles.

The Carers Centre can provide information at an early intervention stage, to those who are assessed as low/moderate on the unpaid carers eligibility criteria and signpost to additional third sector organisations who provide services for carers. Self-Directed Support Forth Valley signposts carers to local groups and community organisations while they await social work assessment.

SDS options will be offered to carers, and we will be aligning local SDS developments with the updated Statutory Guidance and the Implementation Plan. We will also be using the SDS Framework of Standards to support local implementation/developments. SDS Forth Valley can provide advice, guidance and support to carers when accessing SDS options for themselves and/or cared for person.

FDAMH provides services focused on helping carers understand and manage their mental wellbeing. It provides a Family and Carer Support Service. Both mental health support and supporting the wellbeing of families were topics which carers gave importance to during consultation and this strategy will return to both these themes.

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| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Improve availability and visibility of information resources for carers  including the range of methods by which carers can access information | Carers report feeling more informed about the range of support they can access | Percentage of  carers who feel  supported  in their caring role |
| Compile, and connect carers with, a directory of local support services | Carers report feeling more informed about the range of support they can access | Percentage of  carers who feel  supported  in their caring role |
| Ensure capacity to deliver support and training continues to increase to meet demand | Carers report feeling more informed about the range of support they can access | Percentage of  carers who feel  supported  in their caring role |
| Ensure carers know how to access income maximisation, financial and debt advice | Carers are aware of what benefits and financial support/grants they can apply | Number of carers who accessed specialist advice, number of carers with recorded financial gains |

## Enable unpaid carers to have a life outside of caring

Availability of short breaks/respite was severely impacted by the pandemic. Figures are expected to return to pre-pandemic levels as services resume and carers become more confident about accessing short breaks. In 2019/20, the Short Breaks Bureau arranged 802 weeks of respite for 302 people. In 2020/21, during the pandemic, this fell to 236 weeks for 89 people and in 2021/22, it increased again to 417 weeks and 142 people. *Please note there will be additional emergency respite not included within these figures.*

The Falkirk Health and Social Care Short Breaks Bureau consulted with carers in 2022 and identified emerging carer priorities within short break provision. As a result of this, the HSCP have created an action plan to improve short breaks provision and the availability of complete and accurate information on short breaks. We will explore options to increase respite options, informed by our engagement with Shared Care Scotland’s Promoting Variety programme; and working alongside respite providers to improve activities and outings during respite stays.

Overnight respite budgets were used flexibly during the Covid-19 pandemic which prohibited access to regular short breaks. This Flexible Respite initiative has continued as an option for carers and allows carers to receive funds for services and support that can provide them a break from their caring role and help meet their outcomes.

Carers can have up to £1,000 of their overnight respite budget to spend on something that can provide them with a break from their caring role. This budget can be spent on a single item, on several things or put towards a more expensive item, whatever best meets the needs of the carer. The £1,000 is deducted from the overnight budget and equates to four overnights.

Flexible Respite requests can be technology, online classes/subscriptions, buying items (such as garden furniture, exercise bikes, fitness equipment) or even getting assistance to create a space to relax in the garden. Any creative or innovative ideas are welcomed as long as they meet the carers’ needs.

Pie chart illustrating types of flexible respite requests. the categories are 
1. home (3)
2. technology (19)
3. sports equipment (8)
4. caravan site fees/ leisure (1)
5. extra care (3)
6. garden (21)
7. online training (2)
8. cleaning (1)
9. pamper (1)



Figure 2: Types of Flexible Respite Requests (2020-21)

Young Carers have access to Creatives Breaks through the Young Carers Project at the Carers Centre. Creative Breaks provide time away from home for a few hours a week, and can take the form of cinema passes, gym memberships or organised activities. Short breaks provide opportunities to do fun activities, make new friends and learn new skills. Family breaks are also important to many young carers. This is often something they have missed out on.

Carers recognise the value of peer support groups and having a network of family and friends for support, both to facilitate breaks from their caring role and as a source of comfort allowing them more life balance. For some, family support to look after the cared for person can be the only break the carer has. However, not all carers can rely on family support and parent carers may have to consider the impact that their caring has on their other children.

Caring can be isolating and put a strain on other relationships, and there is value to commissioning peer support initiatives that carers can share experience and empathy. FDAMH have been commissioned to deliver a Family and Care Support Service and will now also deliver training and peer support groups for families who care for a person with autism.

The value of the FDAMH Carer Support Service is highlighted by the volume of carers engaged: in 2020/21 the service worked with an average of 32 carers per quarter, in 2021/22 that number was 47; and so far in 2022/23 the service has worked with an average of 55 carers per quarter.

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| Year | Carers Engaged by FDAMH Carer Support Service |
| 2020 - 2021 | 128 |
| 2021 – 2022 | 188 |
| 2022 – 2023 (to date) | 165 |

Table 4: Carers Engaged by FDAMH Carer Support Service

Carer mental health has been impacted by all aspects of delivering care during a pandemic and the lasting legacy of delivering that care. The Commissioning Group has now also commissioned FDAMH to deliver a counselling service for carers.

Whilst carers feel the impact of their caring role on their own health, they don't find it easy to focus on themselves and practice self-care and we will also look to commission services which grant carers that opportunity, and those which allow carers to improve their physical wellbeing.

We will continue to develop bereavement support to carers. Organisations such as Strathcarron Hospice and the Maggies Centre can also be an important source of support to bereaved carers.

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| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Commission new support options aligned with identified carer need | Carers report feeling recognised and supported  Carers report having information about respite provision and understanding the respite options and support available to them | Percentage of carers who feel supported in their caring role |
| Provide tailored training for carers | Carers report feeling recognised and supported  Carers report having information about respite provision and understanding the respite options and support available to them | Percentage of carers who feel supported in their caring role |
| Support unpaid carers to access a break from caring | Carers report feeling recognised and supported  Carers report having information about respite provision and understanding the respite options and support available to them | Number of short breaks provided  Percentage of carers reporting positive outcomes from their short break |
| Help unpaid carers understand what short breaks are available, how they can be accessed and any eligibility criteria that apply | Carers report feeling recognised and supported  Carers report having information about respite provision and understanding the respite options and support available to them | Number of short breaks provided  Percentage of carers reporting positive outcomes from their short break |

## Fully engage unpaid carers in the planning and shaping of services

Involving carers at national level

Since the publication of the previous Falkirk Carers Strategy, local carer reps have been supported to attend meetings of the Carers Coalition and the Carers Parliament to ensure that the voices of carers are taken forward on behalf of Falkirk carers and that information from these are relayed back to carers in local Carers Voice Meetings.

While the age and number of young carers participating in the Scottish Young Carers Festival may vary from year to year, the Carers Centre is committed to taking a group of young carers from Falkirk and Clackmannanshire to the Festival every year. This group is supported by staff members from the Young Carers Project. Young carers and young adult carers from this project also have opportunities to take part in national consultations and opportunities. This includes two young carers who were involved in the Media Ambassador project where they interviewed, filmed, and edited a short film which was shown nationally as part of Young Carers Action Day.

Involving carers in local strategic planning

The Carers Centre facilitates three Carer Voice groups: forums for all carers, parent carers, and young/young adult carers to express concerns about developing challenges to their caring role which are shared with the Falkirk Health and Social Care Carers Team.

The Young Carers' Voice group is a group of young carers, aged 12-18, living in Falkirk and Clackmannanshire who come together every three months to have their say and take action on what matters to them. The speaker programme is co-designed with our Voice members – professionals in health, social care, education, social security and the third sector are invited to attend. Members of the Voice group are encouraged to express their views and experiences of caring, as well as learn about their rights as young carers.

A carer representative attends the Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board and reports back to the broad Carers Voice Group and there is also a carer representative at the Carer Strategy Group which oversees delivery of this Carers Strategy. Here, the representative is given a platform to feed back or raise concerns and the group notes and responds to these.

The Falkirk Carer Strategy will be delivered as consistent conversation with carers to inform what support and how support should be available to carers. The Carers Strategy Implementation Group is informed by engagement with carer representatives, Carer Centre staff and engagement with Carers Voice groups and commissions services to achieve carer priorities.

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| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Ensure Carer Representatives are fully supported to attend strategic groups and other relevant groups | Carers report feeling informed, listened to, and recognised  Carers issues/ concerns raised through local groups are recorded and updates provided | Percentage of carers reporting that they feel informed about and involved progress in relation to strategy implementation  Increase in the number carer reps on involved in local and national carer groups |
| Ensure carers are informed and given access to progress updates within strategy implementation | Carers report feeling informed, listened to, and recognised  Carers issues/ concerns raised through local groups are recorded and updates provided | Percentage of carers reporting that they feel informed about and involved progress in relation to strategy implementation  Increase in the number carer reps on involved in local and national carer groups |
| Ensure questions from carers are addressed appropriately and a response provided | Carers report feeling informed, listened to, and recognised  Carers issues/ concerns raised through local groups are recorded and updates provided | Percentage of carers reporting that they feel informed about and involved progress in relation to strategy implementation  Increase in the number carer reps on involved in local and national carer groups |

## Raise awareness, including within communities, of unpaid care and the demands and pressures of caring roles, reducing disadvantage and discrimination

On an ongoing basis, we will explore other opportunities for community support options and build relationships across the Falkirk area to access these. Carers may be supported in various ways, many of which won’t involve replacement care or formal services, but instead can be different types of community support. For example, accessing leisure facilities, local gardening groups, libraries, clubs, or anything that provides a break from the caring role while meeting personal outcomes.

We have also previously approached businesses to contribute to respitality based on identified carer need, with businesses then being able to share a respitality certificate in displays and marketing material. Respitality provides a unique way for Carers Centres and the Scottish Hospitality sector to work together to provide short breaks for carers. The hospitality sector gifts short breaks to carers through the Carers Centre. Gifts may include overnight stays, days out, dinner reservations, spa days, beauty treatments – whatever gift the business chooses to donate.

Carers have fed back that they find full-time work stressful and are struggling to manage work and caring responsibilities. Supporting carers to enter or stay in work brings vital benefits to carers, employers, and the economy. Many of the challenges faced by carers are due to financial hardship and tackling the systemic issues that force many to reduce their working hours is a fundamental aim of the Carers Strategy. We are committed to exploring how support can assist carers to maintain and attain employment.

Between 31 March 2019 and 2020, the Carers Centre engaged 119 people in work force learning events, three people in 2020/21 (owing to the pandemic), 101 in 21/22, and 106 in the first three quarters of 2022/23.

The Workplace Equality Fund supports employers to deliver innovative solutions to overcome workforce inequalities faced by groups such as carers, and to encourage employers to embed Fair Work practices within their workplaces. We will continue to promote and support this fund. We will continue to promote Carer Positive Workplaces, including renewing dialogue with Falkirk Council to support progress to the next tier within Carer Positive.

Specific awareness training and sharing information with wider organisations helps to raise knowledge of caring and recognise the pressures of delivering unpaid care.

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| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Increase the profile of unpaid caring at information events | Raise awareness of unpaid caring | Number of new unpaid carers supported  Number of new organisations engaging with carer recognition and support (increasing respitality, applications to Carers Fund) |
| Seek ways to work with local businesses to raise awareness of carers and promote a Carer Positive ethos | Raise awareness of unpaid care within employment | Number of local employers seeking Carer Positive certification |
| Identify sources of support to help carers attain and maintain employment | Carers are better positioned to find and remain in employment if that is their wish | Number of unpaid carers who feel supported in their caring role |
| Explore other opportunities for community support options, and build relationships across the Partnership area to access these | Carers better able to engage in local community activities | Number of unpaid carers who feel supported in their caring role |

## Recognise and value unpaid carers as individuals with their own unique circumstances, and as equal partners in care

Caring responsibilities are increasing in number and complexity and carer experience is becoming both more relevant and more specialized. It is therefore more important than ever to both recognize and utilize this experience within care partnerships. It is equally important that we appreciate a carer’s individual circumstances when offering support.

Carers who are eligible for support funded by the local authority can choose how to access that support using any of the four Self-Directed Support Options. Carers who contact the Health and Social Care Short Breaks Bureau should also be identified with their own record and outcomes separate from the cared for person. Carers’ ACSP and YCS should recognize carer specific outcomes which they are supported towards.

Section 28 of the 2016 Carers Act states that each health board must ensure that, before a cared-for person is discharged from hospital, it involves the carer of that person in the discharge. In line with Section 28 of the Carers Act, the Hospital Support and Discharge Workstream will channel work begun by the Carers Strategy Group, to find ways of ensuring carers who support patients are provided with information and support pathways.

The Hospital Support and Discharge Workstream became a priority for the Carers Strategy Group as pandemic restrictions and growing demands on NHS staff reduced access to Carer Support Workers within the acute and community hospitals, which they rely on to identify and support carers. One of the hospital-based Carers Support Workers will now work alongside the Home First Team, stationed within Forth Valley Hospital.

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| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Work with HSCP staff to ensure unpaid carers are recognised and identified and referral is offered for ACSP/YCS | Carers are recognised, including in their unique individual circumstances | Percentage of carers within HSCP surveys who feel support recognises their individual circumstances |
| Work with NHS staff to improve admission sheets to appropriately identify unpaid carers | Improve identification of carers when cared for person is in hospital | Percentage of carers who feel involved/included in hospital discharge  Increase in number of carers involved in activities in community groups, activities, and outings |
| Work with NHS staff to identify unpaid carers through a good conversation model  and recognise behaviour which would indicate someone is fulfilling an unpaid caring role | Increase the percentage of carers who feel involved/included in Hospital Discharge | Percentage of carers who feel involved/included in hospital discharge  Increase in number of carers involved in activities in community groups, activities, and outings |

# Young Carers/Young Adult Carers

The Strategy Consultation asked young carers what was important to them. Within the consultation, Young Carers and Young Adult Carers were asked multiple choice questions on a range of themes. These themes were then explored during an interactive meeting of the Young Carers Voice Group, facilitated by the Carers Centre. This strategy presents their feedback within the headings which appear in the Young Carers section of the National Carers Strategy.

Involving young carers in improving mental health support

While a lot of secondary schools now provide school counsellors, young carers told us that this is not always the most suitable context/person to talk to. There are long waiting lists and appointments are often during break and lunchtimes – time that should be spent with friends.

They told us it can be emotional talking about feelings and worries so there needs to be a private, welcoming space to meet. It was agreed that in-person discussions work better than online or over the phone discussions.

Some young carers feel comfortable talking to their parents about their feelings/emotions but for many young carers this is not possible. They don’t want to add to their worries or stress. Some young carers report not having another adult in their life they can talk to.

The Time for Me Mentor scheme at Forth Valley College, that young adult carers/care experienced young people can access, is a successful scheme because students have someone consistent, they can talk to.

Young carers can have their own need for support (e.g., mental ill health, learning disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder) which may require intervention from specialised services out with the Carers Centre. Young carers told us that there needs to be more support to cope with stress and anxiety and help with family problems.

Support in schools

Young carers would benefit from having a named person in school who knows about their caring role. While there is a Young Carer Champion in each of the secondary schools in Falkirk (a member of staff who is responsible for identifying and supporting young carers in their school), young carers have told us they don’t always know who this is, or they don’t meet with them regularly. Young carers would prefer that the staff member approached them, rather than them seeking them out. Some schools are very good at making this connection but there needs to be consistency across all schools; primary and secondary. The Carers Centre is linking in with Young Carer Champions to improve this.

The Young Carer Champions can also act as a valuable link between the Young Carers Project and young carers by sharing information and co-ordinating 1:1 meetings with Young Carer workers.

Young carers told us that more awareness raising is needed in schools. These kinds of awareness raising sessions stopped during the pandemic, but Carers Centre staff are getting invited back now.

For young carers in college or further education, it is felt that their lecturers and tutors often look too busy to talk to. It would be helpful if education staff could allocate dedicated time to speak with young carers.

Transitions from secondary education to higher and further education

Young carers raised that the impact of their caring can change between primary and secondary school, so it is important that there is regular communication with school staff.

For many young carers, they do not meet the criteria for an enhanced transition to high school, especially if they are seen to be coping well in school. When completing Young Carer Statements with P7s many report having worries about moving to secondary school and request more support with the transition.

Being a young carer is classed as an additional support need, but young carers feel this is sometimes not recognised in schools.

Young adult carers are disengaging with education because they are not able to leave their cared for person.

Social and financial inclusion

The Young Carers Grant through Social Security Scotland is available for young carers aged 16-18, but those outside that age bracket still need financial support. For those over 18, they can apply for Carers Allowance but if the young carer is in full time education, they are not eligible for the benefit. Removing this restriction has been raised as a key proposal with the new Scottish Carers Assistance benefit.

Young carers are very worried about the cost of living rising. They need help with general bills like gas and electricity. One young carer shared their personal experience of their cared for person needing the heating on a lot because of their condition. This is having huge financial implications on their family. Another young carer spoke about their cared for person needing life supporting equipment which requires a lot of electricity.

We also heard from one young carer who explained that their cared for person is autistic and tends to break things when they get angry or upset. This can be expensive when they need to replace things. It was raised that often parents are unable to work because of their needs and/or caring role, and the waiting time for benefits can be a very difficult time for families.

Someyoung carers also support their family with translation. One young carer shared their experience of translating for their mum, they support their mum to translate bills, MOTs, etc., and attends doctors' appointments with her.

Young adult carers voiced a need for education on personal finances as money worries are an extra pressure on top of their caring responsibilities.

Young adult carers and transition to employment

Fair Start Scotland offers pre-work support for up to 18 months and in work support for up to 12 months’, and so there may be value to strengthening links between organisations such as Fair Start and Young Adult Carers.

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| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Identify mental health support which is cognisant of the pressures of unpaid care | Young carers have someone to talk to | Percentage of young carers and young adult carers who feel supported to attain educational, personal, and social goals  Increase in the number of YCS and YC referred to the Carers Centre  Increase in the number of YC/ YAC in the Young Carers Voice Group |
| Strengthen links between schools and the Carers Centre | Schools are more aware of the challenges faced by young carers  Young carers are more closely supported in schools | Percentage of young carers and young adult carers who feel supported to attain educational, personal, and social goals  Increase in the number of YCS and YC referred to the Carers Centre  Increase in the number of YC/ YAC in the Young Carers Voice Group |
| More awareness sessions in schools | The pressures of caring roles are recognised, and young carers can connect to sources of support | Percentage of young carers and young adult carers who feel supported to attain educational, personal, and social goals  Increase in the number of YCS and YC referred to the Carers Centre  Increase in the number of YC/ YAC in the Young Carers Voice Group |
| Provide training to young adult carers on managing finances, including how to access income maximisation and debt advice | Young adult carers feel more confident in managing their finances | Percentage of young carers and young adult carers who feel supported to attain educational, personal, and social goals  Increase in the number of YCS and YC referred to the Carers Centre  Increase in the number of YC/ YAC in the Young Carers Voice Group |
| Connect young carers with employment support and support into further education | Young carers and young adult carers are more closely supported between educational and employment transitions | Percentage of young carers and young adult carers who feel supported to attain educational, personal, and social goals  Increase in the number of YCS and YC referred to the Carers Centre  Increase in the number of YC/ YAC in the Young Carers Voice Group |

# Parent Carers

While parent carers share many of the same caring experiences and concerns as other carers, they also highlighted specific concerns both within the strategy consultation and in Carers Centre Voice groups. Parent Carers wish to be recognised as a group of carers with their own particular needs.

Parent Carers had particular concerns around children/young people being able to access activities in the community.

Additional priorities identified by parent carers included

* Raising awareness and understanding  of ASD in schools so they can better support the individual needs of the children.
* Support for families with a child receiving palliative care or living with a life limiting condition
* Support for siblings

Family wellbeing is a theme highlighted within the National Carers Strategy which will be given equal attention by the Falkirk Carers Strategy.

Many further Parent Carer concerns related to the support and opportunities provided to their children. Though these concerns must be informed by a wider policy context, we will welcome funding proposals to the Carers Fund which target specific parent carer outcomes.

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| Action | Outcomes | Measures |
| Ensure all carer training recognises particular needs of parent carers | Raised profile of parent carers | Percentage of parent carers who feel informed and supported in their caring role  Increase in parent carers accessing support and services |
| Design and deliver specific training for parent carers | Parent carers report feeling recognised and supported | Percentage of parent carers who feel informed and supported in their caring role  Increase in parent carers accessing support and services |
| Design and deliver training on specific conditions | Parent carers report feeling informed, recognised and supported | Percentage of parent carers who feel informed and supported in their caring role  Increase in parent carers accessing support and services |
| Commission new support options aligned with identified carer need | Parent carers have access to a range of support including peer support | Percentage of parent carers who feel informed and supported in their caring role  Increase in parent carers accessing support and services |

# Carers Act Implementation Funds

Funding for the Implementation of the Carers Act is included within Falkirk IJB Carers Strategy with a total recurring budget of £2.1m. In addition, Falkirk’s Integration Joint Board provides training for carers and staff, short breaks, respite and Respitality, and one-to-one support and help for carers to engage in policy and service design.