



Carer Strategy

2022-2025

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Introduction

The knowledge and experience of unpaid carers is invaluable and they have a right to play an equal and active role in planning care. We need to work with them, and the person or people they care for, to achieve the best outcomes for both. Unpaid carers fulfil valuable roles that are critical as we face the challenge of providing high quality care with restricted budgets.

Carers need good quality information and advice to lessen the impact of caring, as well as support to enable them to care for as long as they are able and wish to. This support can come from family and friends; staff and volunteers; and local and national government services. It can range from 'universal' services that can be accessed by anyone, to specialist support.

We work with public services, voluntary and third sector partners, and unpaid carers to improve opportunities and experiences of carers and provide young carers with the opportunity to be young people in their communities; to express their views and voices and be supported to achieve their academic potential. All services will work together to support carers as they move from being a young carer to an adult carer.

To explore what support might be helpful carers can have a good conversation and complete an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) or Young Carer Statement (YCS). These focus on what is important to the carer and how they can achieve what they want to do, or where they want to be. These conversations can be helpful in acknowledging what people are doing and how caring is impacting them, and if support is needed.

This strategy sets out how we will support carers of any age and how we will work towards the National Health and Wellbeing Outcome that "People who provide unpaid care are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing, including to reduce any negative impact of their caring role on their own health and well-being".

Find out more at www.midlothian.gov.uk/carers

Policy and Legislation

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 recognises the impact of caring, placed duties and responsibilities on us, and conveyed rights to carers. The Carers Act and Carers Charter set out national standards, which together with this strategy form our statement of how we will improve the lives of carers and support them as equal partners in care.

The Carers (Scotland) Act defines a carer as **“an individual who provides or intends to provide care for another individual”** and a “young carer” as a carer who is under 18 years old, or, has attained the age of 18 years while a pupil at a school, and has since attaining that age remained a pupil at that or another school. An “Adult carer” means a carer who is at least 18 years old but is not a young carer.

The Act requires us to provide for carers who reside in Midlothian and those who provide or intend to provide care to cared-for persons here.

The Act places duties on us to reduce the impact of caring for example:

1. Duty to prepare and review Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements.
2. Establishment of Local Eligibility Criteria for Services for Young and Adult Carers.
3. Duty to Provide Support.
4. Duty to involve carers in carer’s services.
5. Duty to prepare a carers strategy.
6. Each local authority must establish and maintain an information service for carers, and produce a short breaks service statement.

Independent Review of Adult Social Care

This recognises carers as ‘a cornerstone of social care support’. It says the ‘contribution they make is invaluable. ... We need to provide them with a stronger voice and with the networks, support and respite they need to continue in their vital role’. It identified key themes that must change to improve outcomes for people using social care and their carers:

1. Shift the paradigm - Changing the narrative around social care so that it is viewed as an investment, taking into account people’s rights and capabilities
2. Strengthen the foundations – Building on what we have already, including key legislation which must be implemented fully, the strengths of the workforce and carers who are described as ‘the cornerstone of social care support’
3. Redesign the system – Changing structures, including developing a National Care Service

Key recommendations for carers include the need for increased carer support; supporting carers in employment; and ensuring carers are represented as full partners in planning:

- Right to respite with the development of options for respite and breaks from caring
- National Care Service to take a human rights-based approach to support for carers
- Carers more involved in planning their own support
- Carers as full partners on IJBs and the Board of the National Care Service

Developing this strategy

This Strategy was developed in collaboration with adult carers, young carers and staff working in health and social care in the third, private and statutory sectors. It acknowledges the legislative requirements and responds to what carers and staff have identified as priority areas and builds on extensive carer consultation over several years.

Listening to people

You can [read the findings from our consultation on the priorities from the Carers Act](#). We consulted unpaid carers, HSCP and Third Sector staff, people receiving care, and the public on:

1. Carer Identification
2. Access to Support, Information and Advice
3. Health & Wellbeing, including Breaks from Caring
4. Planning Ahead

We also engage carers to take up voluntary roles contributing to the work of the Integration Joint Board and Planning Groups.

Demand for Support

To understand the demand for support both now and in the future we gather information from a variety of sources, including people who do and don't use our services:

- National Census, Health Experience Surveys, Population Surveys, Age Population Studies.
- Local HSCP and Third Sector consultations, surveys and reporting on services offered and delivered, reporting on numbers, or carers, types of support available, types of support accessed, areas of unmet need, or emerging areas of support being required, themes from Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements.

Our Strategic Priorities:

Carer Identification

We recognise carers as equal partners in care and value their role as main providers of care support in our communities.

We want to identify everyone in Midlothian who has a caring role to provide them with information, advice and support to help them in their caring role.

What we know:

- **'It's not always easy to recognise when you become a carer'**
We know there is a high number of carers who don't recognise themselves as carers.
- **'We need to reach out not expect people to reach in'**
We know our staff need to be proactive and reach people where they are.
- **'A central starting point helps'**
We know that a central point of initial information and support is helpful.

What good will look like:

- A focus on caring in all our communities, with services making contact with carers locally and in specific caring situations.
- Services working together to identify carers in community and hospital settings and through local events, making sure carers are recognised, valued and benefit from support.
- Staff are knowledgeable and skilled in working with people who provide care, whether they see themselves as carers or not.
- Simple routes for carers and people in caring situations to self-identify.
- Carers feel more in control and can choose how much care they wish to provide and know their limits of caring. Young Carers will be supported and know who to talk to when their caring role is too much.
- Carers feel informed and equipped about support and feel safe in their caring role.
- Carers are more confident and able to continue in their caring role.
- Young Carers are identified and supported at school, at home, in the wider community, and by their peers

Access to Support, Information & Advice

How Carers Access Support

Adult Carers:

- Request an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) to be completed by Midlothian Adult Community Care Social Work Team or VOCAL Midlothian.
- Speak to a trusted service in the community or friend that can help direct to a source of carer support.
- Speak to a health service practitioner (GP, community nurse, specialist doctor/consultant, pharmacist).
- Get in touch with a service offering carer support, this might be a service that only offers carer support, or might be a service supporting someone with a particular medical condition that also supports carers.

Young Carers:

- Ask for a Young Carer Statement (YCS) to be completed by school or someone from Midlothian Young Carers' Service if already in contact.
- Get more information through the Young Scot card scheme.
- Speak to a trusted service or adult in the community that supports young people.
- Speak to a health service practitioner (GP, community nurse, specialist doctor/consultant, pharmacist.)
- Get in touch with a service offering support to young carers, this might be a service that only offers carer support or might be a service supporting someone with a particular medical condition that also supports carers.

Process for completing Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements

Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSP)

Adult Carer Support Plans are completed by staff from the HSCP or VOCAL Midlothian.

Young Carer Statements (YCS)

Young carer statements are completed by staff from Midlothian Young Carers' Service or Education (Schools) or a professional with good relationship with the Young Carer and family, e.g. Social Worker/practitioner; voluntary sector youth work providers; Communities, Lifelong Learning and Employability staff.

There are statutory regulations and timescales in place for the completion of ACSPs and YCS for carers of terminally ill people.

We recognise carers need the right information and support, at the right time and in the right place to continue in their caring role for as long as they are able and willing to care.

We want to provide support to improve the physical, mental, emotional and economic wellbeing of carers.

What we know:

- **‘Speaking to other carers and hearing how they manage makes you feel less alone and more able to keep going.’**
- **‘Coming to the carers’ coffee morning is like getting therapy.’**
Carers value lived experience and peer support, in addition to the individual support from health and social care staff, and highlighted the significance of ‘word of mouth’, and connecting with trusted sources in the community as ways into accessing support. Midlothian is fortunate to have a well-connected network of community based services working with carers in different capacities.
- **‘I know there is always someone on the end of the phone that I can talk to’.**
- **‘It meant we were talking about me’.**
Carers appreciate being listened to and they value conversations with experienced and knowledgeable carer support workers.

What good will look like:

- Carer’s strengths are valued and support is guided by what matters to them.
- Support is tailored to their caring situation and their personal outcomes.
- Information is easy to access and their ACSP/YCS is shared with other services to avoid duplication.
- Carers feel financially more secure, and families have been supported to maximise their income.
- Carers better manage and maintain their relationships.
- Carers are in more control of their choices in caring, including the limits of caring.
- Carers feel better informed and safer in their caring role.
- Carers are more confident and able to continue in their caring role.

Health and Wellbeing (including breaks from caring)

We recognise carers must be supported to look after their own physical and mental health and wellbeing. Carers need to maintain good social connections and have regular breaks from caring.

We want to provide support to maintain the physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing of carers, and facilitate more breaks from caring to help carers cope and have a life alongside their caring role.

What we know:

- **‘It’s important to spend time with other people in your life and to do things you enjoy’.**
- **‘If the person I care for is looked after and well, then my health will be better.’**
Carers described the importance of ways of coping, connecting and having time out.
- **‘Being able to take a break from caring is essential’ ‘being able to be out socialising with others and being ‘me’ not just a carer’.**
- **‘I don’t want [the person I care for] to go into a home for a week, I just want a day to myself once in a while.’**
Carers need more care support in the home and overnight.

What good will look like:

- Carers receive support from services that recognise and understand the impact of health inequalities in our communities, and deliver support to reduce and remove the things we know result in unfair and avoidable differences in carers’ health and wellbeing.
- Support is connected to the impact of caring and carers feel supported to balance and prioritise their own health needs.
- Carers are supported to draw on abilities or develop new skills and connections.
- Carers are better able to manage and maintain their health and wellbeing.
- Carers have more opportunity for a life of their own.
- Carers are better able to manage and maintain their relationships.
- Carers are more confident and able to continue in their caring role.
- Carers have been offered access to respite opportunities, individual to their caring role and respite needs.

Planning Ahead

We recognise we need to support carers to feel confident and able to take control of making plans for now, the future and for emergencies.

It is important for carers to get help to work out what plans they might like put in place in an emergency (and they could not provide the care they usually do), and what plans they might need to start making about their life and what their caring situation may look like in the future.

What we know:

- **‘A plan and access to resource should be offered from day one’.**
A significant theme was the belief that there is a lack of support/information and signposting at the beginning of the caring journey.
- There was mixed feedback about Adult Carer Support Plans. A significant number of people consulted had one. One of the worries raised was that this was not reviewed and did not necessarily lead to any action or change.
- **‘I would love a plan in place that I could calmly look at and action with confidence’.**
‘Planning for emergencies terrified me, keeps me up at night time [...] but it’s important’
Carers and staff who had completed an emergency plan viewed them as positive and that it’s an important thing to get help with. It was said to give peace of mind and has helped some people have conversations they may not have otherwise had with their family.

What good looks like:

- Future and emergency plans are based on good conversations with others, e.g. Professionals, family, the cared for person, people who may be able to offer help/support.
- Future planning is personal to the carer and the person they care for.
- Plans are up to date.
- Plans are commonplace – it is normal to plan ahead.
- Emergency and future planning is easy to access, and plans are joined up with other planning tools, e.g. Power of Attorney, Anticipatory Care Planning.
- Carers are in control of their choices in caring, including the limits of caring.
- Carers are involved in shaping support. Carers are better involved in shaping the quality of life and plans for the future of the person they care for.
- Carers are involved in Emergency and Future Planning.
- Young carers have been supported to plan for key life transition moments, such as primary to secondary school, and secondary school onwards.

Financial Support

We recognise the financial cost of caring. Carers must be able to access support to manage and plan their finances and future financial support for the person they care for. They must be able to access welfare rights and benefits support; support to combine paid employment with caring; and debt management support.

What we know:

- **Help to get money you are entitled to is crucial**

The impact of financial stress on a carer's health and wellbeing was mentioned multiple times by carers and staff. Financial hardship was also cited as a barrier to being able to plan ahead.

A need for more support with finances was highlighted, including help to apply for benefits and maximise income, annual or biannual finance 'checks' and support for in-work carers. Others also suggested discounts e.g. gym membership or incentive schemes to provide indirect financial help to unpaid carers.

- **'Carers save the economy a fortune but financially are often left with very little.'**

Decisions about balancing a caring role with staying in or leaving work, or reducing hours impacts on the economic wellbeing of carers. This is compounded by additional costs associated with caring and carers supplementing support needs, equipment etc. from their financial resources.

- **'I didn't know about Attendance Allowance or how to apply'**

Claiming appropriate welfare benefits and pensions and other sources of support is vital in maximising income for the carer and person they care-for.

What good will look like:

- Carers can access advice for maximising their income from trained and qualified staff.
- Carers are supported to appeal and challenge decisions and applications related to Welfare Benefits.
- Carers are more financially secure and confident in managing their financial situation.
- Carers are able to balance employment and care – maybe through accessing education. Young Carers are supported to develop their financial education and awareness.

Carer Involvement

We recognise unpaid carers as a thread that runs through all our work, serving as a valuable resource that is drawn on in our services and communities. Carers must be involved in the support they receive for their own needs and involved in decisions about the care and support of the person(s) they provide care to. Carers must also be involved in the development and review of services and policies that have an impact on carers.

What we know:

- **'...It is crucial that we help people get the basics right at home.'**
- **'If the person I care for is looked after and well then my health will be better.'**
Carers often take on more responsibility if support for the person they care for isn't available or doesn't meet their needs. Carers need to be involved in planning and decision making.
- **'Hardest thing is starting a new relationship with a professional, it initiates all the emotion again'**
- **'Unpaid carers are made to repeat their story multiple times.'**
Carer involvement needs to be helpful to the carer and their caring situation, and be built on a partnership based relationship.

What good will look like:

- Carers feel workers have listened and responded to their views and support planning is personal to the carer and the person they care for.
- Carers are considered within new plans, policies or procedures developed by the HSCP.
- Young Carers are consulted in the development of Midlothian Young Carers service.

Future funding of carer support

Spend on carer services and supports is from the Scottish Government Carers Act funding, but also from the HSCP Social Care budget. We combine these budgets and use them to:

- Commission services from voluntary and third sector organisations,
- Provide Self Directed Support budgets for carers to directly purchase care and support services,
- Provide services directly by the Partnership which are non-chargeable for carers, for example, residential respite for cared-for person within HSCP residential care homes.

The Carer Support and Service Review and re-commissioning of carer support services (2020/21) was based on indications of available budgets at that time. In early 2021 the Scottish Government announced a significantly increased budget for carers; after we had awarded contracts carer support service. We have worked with local stakeholders to discuss how to investment these additional funds.

The Young Carers Service will utilise other young work specific funding streams, such as Creative Scotland Youth Arts Fund, Duke of Edinburgh Diamond Fund, and Carers Trust Grants, to further enhance and develop the youth work offer available to Midlothian's Young Carers.

Monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this strategy

Whilst this Carers' Strategy incorporates Adult Carers and Young Carers together, there will be separate Action Plans and oversight. The HSCP will monitor progress and feed this into the Midlothian Health & Social Care Partnership Strategic Commissioning Plan. For Young Carers, oversight will be by subgroups of the GIRFEMC board, and monitoring will inform the Single Midlothian Plan and the Partnership Community Learning and Development Plan. This Strategy and Action Plans will be working documents, developed and updated accordingly.