



# Building Caring Communities: North Ayrshire Carer Strategy 2023 – 2025



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## Director's Foreword

Welcome to Building Caring Communities: 2023 – 2025, our new strategy setting out how we will support and nurture unpaid carers in North Ayrshire.

This strategy, and the priorities within, align with the ambitions for the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to deliver improved supports for unpaid carers in line with the [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) (the Act), which extends and enhances the rights of unpaid carers. Our HSCP Strategic Plan sets out our vision that People who live in North Ayrshire are able to have a safe, healthy and active life. This vision applies to everyone in our communities, including unpaid carers. Our carers strategy has been written with and is supported by North Ayrshire carers, our strategic partner – Unity Gateway Carer Service and key stakeholders who want our aims and ambitions for carers to be clear with information and support offered to all carers, which includes those who are adults, parents, working, retired, young and at school or moving into adulthood.

North Ayrshire HSCP acknowledge and give thanks for the substantial contribution that unpaid carers make in caring for loved ones and friends' health and wellbeing and recognise the value carers add throughout our communities. We recognise the huge contribution made by unpaid carers and will continue to work to improve support available to them.

According to Scotland's Census (2011) it was estimated there were around 14,000 people who identified as carers in North Ayrshire, we await information from the most recent census but based on national data we anticipate the number will have grown. Many more people do not identify in their caring role and are not accessing key carer information and support. This strategy is in place to help reach more carers and provide vital information and links to support, which can be accessed at a time that is right for each individual carer and their circumstances.

Our aim is that all North Ayrshire carers are identified, supported and valued and are afforded an opportunity to live, work, thrive and stay connected to their communities enjoying a life alongside caring, where they choose to continue to care.

Our ambition is that all unpaid carers have their voices heard and ideas considered in the design and delivery of information and support services provided across North Ayrshire. We understand that often caring roles are demanding and complex and we hope that this strategy and the supports ensure we can offer support and guidance to carers when they need it most.

We acknowledge the challenges that we currently face across Health and Social Care Services, never have our unpaid carers been more invaluable as part of our whole care and support system. Carers are paramount to the health and sustainability of our communities and the health and social care system. By providing

effective support at the earliest possible stage we hope to maintain people's good physical and mental health and wellbeing for longer and help prevent a crisis response to how we care for and support people. This is why carers needs are a priority across North Ayrshire and our strategy outlines how we intend to raise the profile and accessibility of carers supports in North Ayrshire, through a significant investment in services and collaboration with our caring community.

I look forward with optimism that our refreshed strategy will help us to improve the support and wellbeing of all unpaid carers in North Ayrshire.



*Caroline Cameron*

Director, North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership  
Chief Officer, North Ayrshire Integration Joint Board

## Introduction

Carers help their families and friends across our communities every day to live their lives. Carers and those they care for are at the heart of everything we do and deliver across North Ayrshire health and social care services.

Through understanding and building on the strengths and experiences of carers, North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership will continue to co-produce local information and support services which meet the needs of all carers to help make routes to information and support easier and quicker to achieve a better quality of life whilst caring.

The [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) came into effect on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018. The duties therein extend and enhance the rights of carers to help improve carer wellbeing. It enables carers to continue to provide care to friends or family, if able and willing in good health. The Act works alongside other initiatives to support carers and the people they care for, including transforming primary care, changes under the Scottish social security system, reforming adult social care, and improving choice and control.

In Scotland, there are an [estimated 800,000 carers](#) which includes 30,000 young carers under the age of 18. This accounts for almost 15% of the population. In North Ayrshire, the number of unpaid carers is estimated at 14,000 carers but not everyone recognises themselves in a caring role and are often not seeking the information and help available.

Carers need time and support to look after their own health and wellbeing, achieve their educational, employment and life ambitions and ensure they stay connected to friends and communities alongside caring.

This strategy details the priorities and actions North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership will work towards to help carers realise their ambitions.



## What do we mean by 'carer'



Many people do not relate to the term 'carer'. People often see the help and support they offer as the natural thing to do for family and friends.

What becomes a caring role, they see simply as a natural extension of those close relationships.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 recognises the importance of identifying and supporting caring roles and defines a carer as an individual who:

- provides (or intends to provide) care for another person, and this refers to young and adult carers.
- An adult carer is someone over the age of 18.
- A young carer is someone under the age of 18 or has reached 18 and is still in school.



In North Ayrshire carers are defined as:

**someone who looks after a family member or friend who needs support due to illness, disability, mental health, addiction issues or needs extra help as they grow older.**

It is not a caring role if this is only because of the person's age (where they are under 18). This is parental duties unless the dependent child has additional care and support needs.

It is not a caring role if care is being provided as voluntary work or under a contract of employment. There is also the exclusion of foster care due to the agreement in place and fees paid.

Caring roles can vary, some may be for a short time whilst someone recovers from an illness, operation or injury, or it can be a part of everyday life due to a long-term condition, disability or diagnosis. A carer can provide care for one or more people, and they do not need to live in the same household or town. The help carers provide is also varied, it can be practical such as personal care i.e., washing or dressing, housework, finances, shopping, transport to appointments and picking up and administering medication. It can also be providing company and emotional support. For many carers there are positive and rewarding aspects but there are also lots of reasons why caring leaves carers needing support.

## What are your rights as a carer

Many carers are unaware of their rights and miss out on information, practical, emotional and financial support available to them. The [Carers Charter](#) has been published by the Scottish Government and sets out the rights of adult and young carers. Those rights include:

- Being offered or requesting an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement and receiving support to complete them. The plan or statement should also contain information on any emergency plans if the carer is not able or willing to care and/ or circumstances change.
- Support based on any needs identified in the plan or statement which meet local eligibility criteria for carer support. NAHSCP publish [North Ayrshire Carers Eligibility Criteria](#).
- Support which may be in the form of a break from caring. NAHSCP publish [North Ayrshire's Short Breaks Statement](#) which explains more.
- Access to an [information and advice service](#) for carers. In North Ayrshire the local authority deliver services in partnership with Unity Gateway Carer Service.
- Being involved in the planning of support for the person being cared-for at the point of hospital discharge.
- Being involved in the planning of services for carers more generally, including the preparation of this local North Ayrshire Carers Strategy.



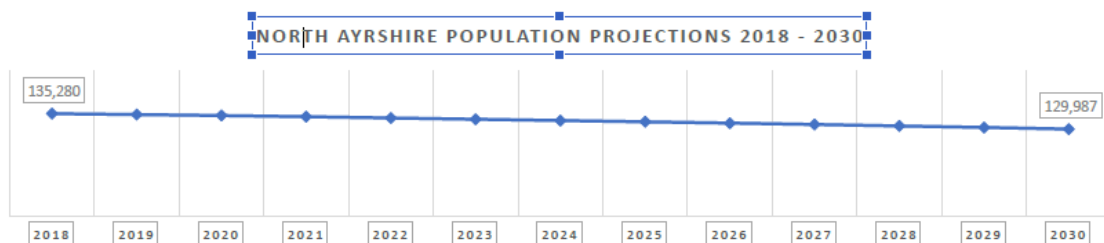
We want as many carers as possible across North Ayrshire to understand and realise their rights. For more information, please contact **Unity Gateway Carer Service** on **01294 311333** or email [northayrshire.carers@unity-enterprise.com](mailto:northayrshire.carers@unity-enterprise.com)

Carers can also visit [Coalition of Carers in Scotland](#), [Carers Trust Scotland](#), [Carers UK](#) or [Care Information Scotland](#).

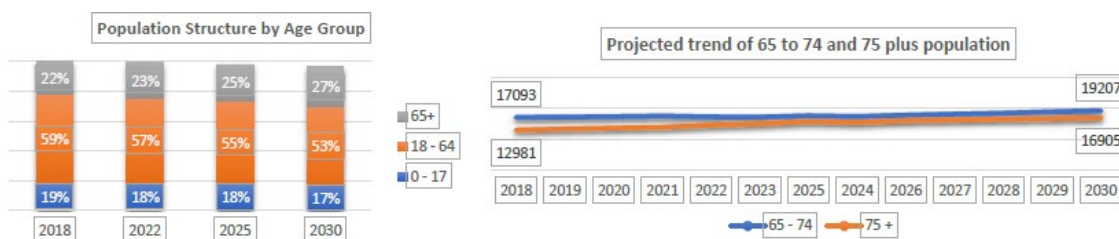
### North Ayrshire caring profile

Around 133,806 people currently live in North Ayrshire across 6 localities with an expectation that the population will fall over the next 8 years. By 2030 we anticipate,

- a) The North Ayrshire population will steadily decrease by 3.9% between 2018 and 2030, falling to 129,987.



- b) Within this falling population, we will continue to see a growing older people population, with those 65 years and over accounting for more than 27%. In addition, it is expected that the number of people over 75 years will grow by 16% from 14,546 in 2022 to approximately 16,905 by 2030, with those 65 to 74 increasing by 11% to 19,207.



Currently, 27% of local people are known to have some form of long-term condition with it being recognised that the prevalence of people with a long-term condition increases by age.

Just over 10% of the North Ayrshire population recognise they are carers according to the Scottish Census. 1,841 (1,585 adults & 256 young carers) carers were known and registered with Unity Gateway Carer Service in September 2023. This is a 16% increase from September 2022 and reflects progress based on the messaging of the carer services partnership. Predominantly referrals for carer registration come from self-referral, Education Services for young carers or acute settings - hospital discharge for adult carers.

North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership has delegated equal responsibility to North Ayrshire Education Services for young carer identification and offers of support. Across our primary and secondary schools 229 young carers under 18 years old were identified in September 2023. Some of those young carers in schools will be known to Unity Gateway Carer Service but not all as it is the young person's choice how they wish to be recognised in their caring role. Similarly, those young carers identified by Unity Gateway Carer Service may not wish to be identified as a carer at school. It is imperative that all carers have multiple routes to identification enabling them to access information and support that is right for them at the right time.

These figures do not account for anyone living out with the local authority area but caring for someone who resides in our North Ayrshire communities.

### North Ayrshire carers independent advice & support service

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership recently retendered for an independent information and support service for carers. Significant resource is invested and we sought a dynamic and creative strategic partner to help build and deliver an expanded outreach service for key advice, information and support for young and adult unpaid carers in all North Ayrshire localities.

Unity Enterprise the incumbent carer service was successful in the award for a term of 3 years which commenced 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023. Unity Gateway Carer Service have plans to expand the carer support team more than threefold with more outreach and specialist roles to reach more carers, in more places, in more ways, and offer alternative support. Alongside this positive growth they will continue to ensure continuity of carer services.

Due thought and diligence went in to considering the options available, risks, and best value implications but it was crucial to achieve the right result for North Ayrshire carers.

Moving forward with Unity Gateway Carer Service the broad requirements for the delivery of the service are as follows:

- Carers are actively sought and identified as we extend the reach of the service through outreach & community-based services.
- Carers are informed, have increased confidence in their caring role and feel supported with carers knowing the rebranded service well and how to access it.
- Carers are offered and supported to prepare an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement through expanding the routes threefold for carer access to assessment and support.
- Promoting variety in breaks from caring with the expansion of wellbeing and short break support in preparation for the National Carer Service 'right to breaks' regulations.
- Carers feel involved as equal partners in care design and service delivery with development of a Carer Collaborative and supporting carers at the point of the

cared-for person being discharged from hospital settings. These priorities will increase carer engagement opportunities and ensure carer voices are heard.

- Stronger partnership working with carers and key partners to achieve continuous service improvement.
- Improved identification, information and support for young carers with a focus on transition stages in particular into adulthood.

An implementation plan has been agreed and a strategic board established with initial areas of focus noted below whilst ensuring continuity of current carer services.

- Recruitment & HR
- Partnership mapping & establishment of an expanded service
- Consideration of colocation with partners
- Digital developments
- Marketing of the rebranded 'Gateway' carer service
- Financial planning

## What are our carer priorities for development

Priority areas and actions have been identified for growing young and adult carer services. North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership will work closely with North Ayrshire carers, Unity Gateway Carer Service and other key partners to implement and improve information, processes, systems and support.

### **Priority 1: Carers are actively sought and identified.**

It is often asked in relation to carers 'how do you start to look for those that don't know they need to be found?'

Carers are often referred to as 'hidden' and in North Ayrshire this includes carers in employment, parent carers, young adult carers, those caring for loved ones living with addiction or mental health. We would also include our minority communities such as BAME, LGBTQIA+, the travelling community at Redburn and those seeking refuge or asylum.

The move to a community-based outreach service will be central to achieving this priority. An increase to the workforce both in the Health & Social Care Partnership and within Unity Gateway Carer Service means there are now 17.5 staff to develop and embed carer services.

Carer support staff will be more present and visible across all localities to seek out carers who are currently unreached or not engaging with the service. The team will consist of dedicated and knowledgeable specialists within each locality and across all primary and secondary schools. Carer support staff will engage with carers, build networks and use the strengths within our communities to help identify many more carers at the earliest possible opportunity, ensuring information, signposting and support can be offered directly at a time and place that suits each carer.

Innovative marketing, including a service rebrand, and a new digital portal will be established to make identification and registering for support easier. There are plans to include carer identification via GP practices across North Ayrshire. Specific strategies for reaching more young and young adult carers include working with both secondary and their feeder primary schools. This will allow us to support the youngest carers from age 5 years and ensure they are identified earlier. We will also work with local higher and further education establishments across the whole of Ayrshire (and beyond) to identify and support young adult carers living and caring in North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership introduced the [Carers Appreciation Card](#) in 2016 to work towards 'building a caring community' where carers can use the card to be identified and recognised across the community, at hospital, in pharmacies or at school, to name a few. In September 2023, 1,023 carers are recorded as registered for their free card and almost 40 North Ayrshire businesses recognise the value in caring and offer discounts and concessions for carers.

Dedicated work with each Health and Social Care Partnership service has started. North Ayrshire Drugs & Alcohol Recovery Service staff have engaged in a programme of carer awareness. This will increase staff confidence and capacity to improve the level of carer interaction and identification with information and services offered equally to all carers. Success can already be shared through the following personal carer statement:

"I care for my elderly Father, and I am currently supported by the North Ayrshire Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service. My worker identified that I provide a caring role and reached out with the offer of an Adult Carers Support Plan. Through conversations it was identified that I would benefit from more support in the community to talk to other carers.

I began to attend a local Carer Support Group and I have now gained the support I needed. I have been days out and feel I can also manage my caring role much better now. The support group has helped me manage my mental health and get out of the house more and I am thankful that I was able to be connected with them".



## **Priority 2: Carers are informed, have increased confidence in their caring role and feel supported.**

The aim is for North Ayrshire carers, professionals and partner agencies to know and always choose the Unity Gateway Carer Service as the first point of contact for carer information, advice and support when they need it.

The service will:

- Raise awareness of and support carers to understand their rights.
- Develop and publish relevant local and national carer information, news, and updates on carer developments and support using a variety of appropriate digital/ non digital methods and accessible formats.
- Build and maintain effective relationships with other partners to offer and supply co-ordinated carer information and support.
- Signpost and support carers to navigate and access local and national health, social care, housing, benefits and grants, education and employment systems in the best way and at the right time.
- Implement a workforce development programme for awareness and training and improving staff confidence, competence and capacity to improve the quality of information and service offered.
- Implement systems and pathways for effective easy access and delivery of support.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership currently purchase the Carers UK [Digital Resource for Carers](#). This is designed to bring together several digital products and online resources including e-learning, factsheets, guides and tools to help carers manage their caring responsibilities. It covers areas such as health and wellbeing, practical support with caring including short breaks, help with finances, and information on carers' rights including rights at work. Access is also free for the care coordination app, [Jointly](#) to help families organise their loved one's care. This resource helps provide 24/7 support and guidance for carers. Find out more by visiting the [Carers Digital website](#) and creating an account using the following free access code: **DGTL4110**

A dedicated page: [Support for Carers](#) is available on the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership website.

Unity Gateway Carer Service will introduce a new digital portal to replace the current website. The portal will provide local and national information, advice and support with signposting to meet individual carer's needs. The portal will be managed by a Marketing & Engagement Officer in the Gateway carer service, who will also share ongoing communication through e-newsletters and social media updates. The portal will be available 24/7, and the Gateway carer team will be accessible face to face as well as by email, telephone, video call and online chat between 8am and 8pm, Monday to Friday with some weekend support.

The Gateway carer service will develop a triage system operated by Locality Carer Support Officers. It will be more responsive ensuring that carers are quickly directed to the appropriate information and are guided towards the support that is relevant to

them. Carers will also be offered flexibility in accessing the support in a manner and at a time that suits them.

There will also be a focus on providing awareness and training for carers, both to help their caring responsibilities and in other life skills as requested by North Ayrshire carers.

The multitude of ways in which carers can engage with the new partnership carer service will ensure a flexible, responsive and fully accessible service, which will be a key driver in building their confidence in caring roles and ensuring carers feel informed and supported.

### **Priority 3: Carers are offered and supported to prepare an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement**

Until now all Adult Carer Support Plans were offered and prepared by North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Social Work staff.

For the reporting year 2022/ 2023, Social Work staff have offered 449 Adult Carer Support Plans with 94 accepted and 56 of those offered following on to completion and a level of support.

In October 2022 capacity was added to the Health & Social Care Partnership carer team with a Carer Support Officer to offer an alternative route to early and preventative carer support, more so for carers who were not already known to Social Work services or were aged 16 - 18 years and not in school. The introduction of this new role has seen the carer team offer retrospective support and funds to the 72 carers who completed an Adult Carer Support Plan in 2021/ 2022.

There have been 61 referrals and 25 assessments completed through this new route from February – September 2023 for light touch support. This was improved by a Self-referral form launched in carers week (5<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023) to all social work services, in particular Service Access our front door teams and commissioned carer services with release on social media platforms. These routes allow carers the opportunity to be involved in good and equal conversations to identify their personal goals and need for support, which if achieved, will enable the carer to provide or continue to provide care for someone.

The route for young carers to be offered or request and prepare a Young Carer Statement is through both our Social Work teams and North Ayrshire Council Education.

North Ayrshire Council Education staff report 183 Young Carer Statements offered with 167 accepted and completed in the year 2022/ 2023. Over three times more than in 2021/ 2022.

From the Young Carer Statements, it is noted 40% of young people required a break away from their caring role, 34% needed emotional support meaning school staff being aware of caring roles and the impact on the young person's life, their anxieties and having someone to talk to. 23% requested practical support with homework, schoolwork, or a place to study. And 24% of young carers expressed they did not



need additional support through their carer conversation. Also 40% identified as having 2 or more (multiple) needs.

57 young carers and families who completed a Young Carer Statement in 2021/2022 have been offered retrospective support. 46 of those young carers accepted the offer of support and the remainder have left school or moved out of the area.

During preparation of a plan or statement, there is an opportunity to discuss the caring role and consider the impact caring has on several areas in a carer's life, identifying any risk that may impact on the carer's own health and wellbeing or ability to have a quality of life.

To determine the level of support carers receive fairly and consistently North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership are required to publish a framework for eligibility for [adult carers](#) based on national health and wellbeing outcomes and [young carers](#) based on GIRFEC indicators to access services.

Every carer is entitled to information, advice and universal support. Our Integrated Joint Board agreed in June 2022 to extend the eligibility threshold to include those individuals with low and moderate need as per the Strategic Commissioning Plan – Caring Together 2022 – 2030 ambitions meaning lower levels of support will be provided for carers with a view to supporting carers at an earlier stage in the caring journey.

Unity Gateway Carer Service will offer a third route for young and adult carers to flexibly be offered or request a carer conversation and access to support. It will be the responsibility of the Locality Carer Support Officers and Young Carer Support Officers to increase both the total volume of Plans/ Statements offered and completed, and the proportion of carers registering with the new service to access continued information and support when required. The benefits of completing Plans/ Statements will be promoted by the Marketing & Engagement Officer and embedded as a key feature of the new digital portal for carers to access.

There are no set timescales for the offer or preparation of Adult Carer Support Plans or Young Carer Statements from identification of a carer. It is expected that all carers who want one should be able to benefit in an efficient and timely manner and ought to be offered and prepared within reasonable timescales taking into account the urgency of need for support and any fluctuation in those needs.

Due to the urgency of supporting carers looking after someone who is terminally ill, the Act sets out time limits for preparing plans of support for these carers. Diagnosis of a terminal illness affects the person and their family or friends who support or intend to support them in very different ways. Carers in this situation often do not have time to think about and discuss their own needs or are ready to recognise their role of becoming a carer.

Many carers are already known to North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership services and can approach the team already involved with the person they care for. Alternatively, carers can contact their local area office Service Access Team as the route to all formal assessment and support. Carers may also ask for a

referral from Hospital, GP, District Nurse, hospice care or other sources through to the local office Service Access Team.

All carers of people who are terminally ill will be offered an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement within **2 days of them being identified as a carer**, if this is not possible, as soon as is practical thereafter, and as soon as the local authority becomes aware the person is caring for someone with a terminal illness.

An initial carer conversation should then cover immediate or urgent outcomes and need for support and should be had **within 5 working days of the carer accepting the offer** to complete a Plan/ Statement. Based on this conversation a light touch Plan/ Statement is completed.

If the conversation takes place within 5 working days, then the **Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement must be completed within 10 working days of the date when the carer originally requested or accepted the offer** of the plan/ statement.

If the conversation takes place later, as requested by the carer, the Plan/ Statement must be prepared within 10 qualifying working days from the original request or acceptance. The timeframe is paused so that any working days between the delayed date and the conversation taking place are not counted as qualifying days and still allows for 10 working days.

The light touch Plan/ Statement addresses immediate and urgent carer need and support but may not cover all information required. The carer and service supporting the carer will agree when the Plan/ Statement should be reviewed to include full carer information and direction on when all identified carer needs will be met. It is expected that the review would be proportionate to the carer's circumstances. Where there is a terminal illness diagnosis it may require more regular contact, communication and review of support provision.

#### **Priority 4: Promoting variety in breaks from caring.**

There are many terms used to describe breaks from caring, including respite, short breaks, relief or replacement care.

Respite often refers to more traditional forms of building based or residential services which can be beneficial for many carers and families. North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership offers day care, residential and nursing care home services.

The idea of a short break, taken often, as a means of supporting carers helps sustain caring relationships, and for some is more acceptable and manageable to the carer and the people they care for. Short breaks focus on improving the quality of life for both the carer and the person they help, potentially including a break taken together. Short breaks align with the development of personalised approaches, choice and control and options under the [Social Care \(Self-directed Support\) \(Scotland\) Act 2013](#).

A short break can mean different things to different people.

## **A break from caring is ...**

any form of support which can be taken in several ways to enable a carer to have time away from their caring routines and responsibilities. The purpose is for carers to have a life outside or alongside the caring role. The short break will support the carer and often the cared-for, the caring relationship and promote sustained or improved health & wellbeing. It can provide a change of scenery, improve carer confidence, increase ability to cope or succeed, reduce isolation, improve emotional wellbeing, improve general quality of life and increase the ability to sustain the caring role.

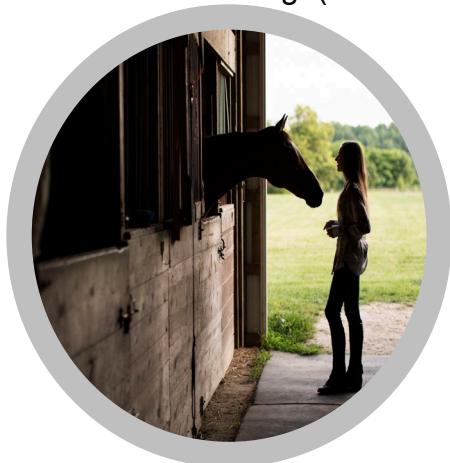
North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership have prepared and published a [Short Breaks Services Statement](#) along with local carers and the people they care for, the longstanding Carers Advisory Group, Unity Gateway Carer Service, as well as staff and other third sector partners.

The Short Break Statement is to inform and advise young and adult carers, staff and the wider community of planned, short break (often referred to as respite) opportunities for carers who care for someone living in North Ayrshire. The Statement provides useful links and ideas, what is available regardless of level of support needed, and how to access a break from caring.

Collaboratively the Gateway Carer Service and Health & Social Care Partnership will develop, resource and deliver a Short Breaks Bureau. This will include statutory and alternative offers and will increase the choice and variety of carer breaks. The Bureau will offer advice and practical support to carers seeking and planning a short break from caring along with accessing funding for the cost of carer breaks. A Wellbeing and Breaks Officer specialist role will strengthen the promotion and arranging of breaks from caring.

'I provide care for elderly grandparents who have a number of medical conditions. I help with shopping, preparing meals, and doing housework. I recently applied for the 'Time to Live Fund' via the local Carers Centre.

I volunteer at local stables and use this time as a break from my caring role. The fund allowed me to purchase the proper equipment for horse riding and I have now increased the number of days I volunteer which has had a positive impact on my health and wellbeing. (Adult Carer)



A Short Breaks Bureau is defined by [Shared Care Scotland](#) as;

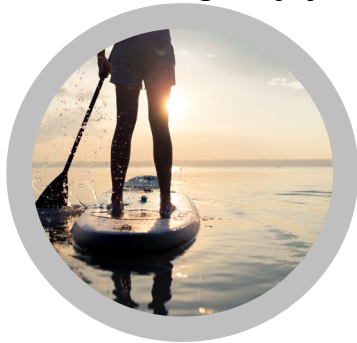
a single point of contact through which carers, and those requiring care, can be supported to access personalised, overnight, short breaks. The bureau helps to connect people with services that best meet their particular needs and situation. The bureau gives people the support they need to plan what they want and to organise it through the bureau or, if they prefer, through family and friends or advocate.

Unity Gateway Carer Services receive funding from the Scottish Government through Shared Care Scotland to distribute across North Ayrshire communities. Carers can access Better Breaks, Creative Breaks and Time to Live funding programmes. For the year 2023/ 24 Unity have been awarded £70k with the proposal to target certain carer groups and locality areas which do not normally access breaks.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership have implemented several routes to breaks recently to support young carers wellbeing and offer short breaks from caring.

Young carers identified have been supported through the Young Carers Education Fund. The fund has been used to deliver a variety of creative breaks for young carers to enable them to take time out from their caring responsibilities. This has included overnight stays, family activities, days out, clothing for the gym and personal pieces of equipment such as goal posts, footballs and football boots, ice skates and paddle boards.

**‘I bought a paddleboard which I love. I am now able to go out with friends and do something I enjoy and not have to think about caring.’ (Young carer, age 15)**



Carer partners along with KA Leisure have offered all registered young carers a one-year subscription to help support positive and active lives. This opportunity offers young carers the ability to access swimming, ice-skating, the gym and activities across all KA Leisure facilities for all ages.

**‘I love being able to go ice-skating on a Friday night with my friends, it’s expensive but I don’t need to worry about missing out anymore as I have my KA Card.’ (Young carer, age 14)**



Carer partners along with Active Schools helped 19 young carers enjoy a free two-day residential trip where young carers enjoyed a variety of activities and the opportunity to make friends. Active Schools will continue to work with young carers to ensure their identified needs to remain active and healthy are met.

**'This was my first residential and I met new friends and had a great time'.  
(Young carer, age 10)**



**'It was good to get a break away from caring and spend time with my friends doing new activities. I did find it hard being away from home overnight, but I am proud of myself for doing it.'** (Young carer, age 11)

For young carers aged 16, 17 and 18 years who are eligible and meet the criteria the [Young Carers Grant](#) offers a one off annual payment of £359.

Young Scot offers a special bundle of treats available to all young carers who are aged 11 - 18 years old (inclusive) in Scotland - [Young Carers Package](#).

The Scottish [Young Carers Festival](#) takes place every year and provides a chance for young carers to have a break from their caring role, meet other young carers, take part in consultation and most importantly, have fun.

#### **Priority 5: Carers feel involved as equal partners in care design/ delivery.**

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership believe carers should be included and involved as much as possible in key decisions about their support and the support of their loved ones.

We recognise carers feel heard, seen and empowered by having their views and feelings considered by others in relation to support planning and care decisions.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership use the [Equal Partners in Care](#) principles which set out the right for carers to play an equal and active role and are intended to ensure that workers in different settings have a shared understanding of how to work in partnership with all carers including young carers.

We understand carers have a unique role in the life of the person they care for. Each carer and their own circumstances mean not all caring roles are the same, but all carers have valuable skills and knowledge to contribute to decisions for support. More often the carer is the expert in their loved one's life. Encouraging this input from carers on key decisions at transition stages in life, on discharge from hospital, at the beginning of the support journey or when there are changes to care needs is key to true partnership working.

Involvement of carers in the design and development of local services at strategic level through policy and practice developments, and with Unity Gateway Carer Service is equally important to ensure carer services in North Ayrshire are developed with carers for carers.

The North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Integrated Joint Board (IJB) is the main decision-making body. A nominated Carer Representative has been part of the group membership for around 8 years along with the Carer Champion for over 10 years to help widen the pool of views being represented locally for carers.

The longstanding Carers Advisory Group has been active for 11 years and carers represent all localities, care groups and conditions. Moving forward this group will expand to form a Carers Collaborative or network for carers, professionals, organisations or volunteers who have a shared aim of improving carer services. This will be established and led by the Carers Champion, Carer IJB Representative and Unity Gateway Carer Service. This approach gives carers a stronger voice in future service design and planning and encourages the principles of community engagement to be embedded more widely. To support this aspiration further Unity Gateway Carer Service will introduce an annual North Ayrshire Carers Conference.

There are also carer involvement duties for NHS Ayrshire & Arran Health Board under Section 28 of the Act and the Discharge without Delay agenda to improve pathways through hospital settings and reduce inpatient stay.

Working with carers from admission to hospital ensures people and their families can make informed decisions and are as prepared as possible for loved ones to return home or to a homely setting.

A Pan Ayrshire team, led by East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership and supported by Health Improvement Scotland have made good progress over the past year as part of the intensive support to acute hospitals. East Ayrshire Carer Service have recruited 2.5 FTE Carer Support Staff to work across Crosshouse and Ayr



acute sites, as well as other community sites, to work with staff to identify carers, and support in delivering the right information and support at the right time for carers. A referral process is also implemented for workers to signpost into Unity Gateway Carer Service in the North. North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership will bring forward the learning from this approach for North Ayrshire Community Hospital settings.

**Priority 6: Strong partnership working/ engagement.**

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership along with the Gateway Carer Service seek and encourage effective relationships with carers, professional staff and partner agencies to achieve better outcomes and opportunities for carers as set out in this strategy. Together services will actively engage to support earlier carer identification through delivering core information about the role of carers and support available to them.

The Gateway Carer Service will reach out to local community groups both in person and through digital, social media and virtual engagement to achieve greater presence, raise awareness, provide important opportunities to network and enhance the ability to signpost carers to appropriate current and new services.

The Gateway Carer Service has a solid foundation and reputation and will be responsible for growing partnerships at a strategic level, establishing a North Ayrshire-wide framework that will then be activated by the Carer Support Officers and Young Carer Support Officers in each locality. Carer Support staff will have autonomy to implement and expand these relationships locally to best meet the needs of carers in their area.

As previously detailed a Carers Collaborative or network for carers, professionals, organisations or volunteers who have a shared aim of improving carer services will be developed to share information, ideas, and to find opportunities to work jointly for carers in North Ayrshire.

**Priority 7: Improved identification, information and support for Young Carers with a focus on transition periods through to adulthood.**

Carer rights, opportunities and the developments laid out in the preceding sections of the strategy also apply to young carers.

The experience of each young person is different, and the impact of caring and how they will cope differ too. Some young carers have little relief from the pressures of caring and many experience life changes or must grow up earlier than most children due to seeing the effects of an illness or condition on the person they care for.

Young carers often become more stressed, isolated and can struggle with school attendance, academic progress and miss out on social opportunities with friends all of which can harm their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership adopt a whole family approach to supporting young carers considering the impact of caring responsibilities on the wider family, as well as the young person's individual life, educational and social

needs. Young carers should be recognised and supported as early as possible and enabled to be children and young people first and foremost. This includes relieving them of any inappropriate caring roles to allow them to have a quality for life and a childhood like their peers.

A [Jargon Buster for Young Carers](#) was developed to help young people understand some of the key points that matter to them within the Carer (Scotland) Act 2016.

In North Ayrshire the Gateway Carer Service currently supports 256 young carers. As the service expands it will have a four-fold increase in young carer staff to identify and support young carers, such is the importance being placed on helping young people with caring responsibilities. Young Carer Support Officers will be split across North Ayrshire school clusters, with each worker being aligned to 3 secondary schools and those feeder primary schools.

Young Carer Support Officers will deliver their programme of information, advice, one to one and group support to fit around the needs of young carers, and their families, from the age of 5 to 18 years with support available in school and the local community.

The Young Carer Support Officers will work in line with the Team Around the Child (TAC) model to ensure a joined-up approach with education, social care, health and other agencies with regards to the welfare and wellbeing of each young carer identified.

North Ayrshire Council Education have identified Young Carer Champions who are part of the education staff in every school across North Ayrshire to offer support to all young carers who are identified. Between October 2022 and March 2023 young carers recorded as identified on Seemis education system increased by 50% and the number of Young Carers Statements offered to young people more than trebled in the reporting period 2022/ 2023 compared to the previous year. All information, resources, toolkits and support are available on the GLOW resource for all Education staff to access to support young carers.

Young Carer Statement workshops were delivered to all schools with the aim of raising awareness of young carers, promoting good conversations, how to offer and complete Young Carers Statements and recording of identified support needs. This workshop was also delivered to School Inclusion Workers.

A Young Carers Statement begins with a conversation that helps young carers to think about their caring role and what is important to them in their life. This gives young carers the opportunity to think about their own health and wellbeing, what goals or aims they want to achieve, and it helps to find out what help young carers might need to do the things they enjoy when they are not caring (going to after school clubs, enjoying sports or hobbies or hanging out with friends). It helps professionals such as teachers, school nurses, social care services and the Gateway Carer Service to establish if young carers are carrying out caring tasks, they feel

comfortable with and not helping with those that are inappropriate. The key points of the conversation along with identified needs and support are written down and this becomes the child/ young person's Young Carer Statement.

The choice of routes to access a Young Carer Statement will improve over the term of this strategy. The Gateway Carer Service will begin to support Education Services in the offer and completion of Young Carer Statements. And for those young carers aged 16 – 18 years who are not in school, North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership Carer Team have a dedicated Carer Support officer who can also support young carers not already known to social care services. This can be accessed through our Service Access Teams at each local social care office.

Young carers should have a smooth [transition pathway](#) to support them entering different ages and stages of life more so from the age of 16 years to manage and prepare for changes to the caring role when they reach the age of 18 years and become adult carers. Changes in life/ education/ home/ work/ caring circumstances trigger specific advice and support.

Additional focus will be on higher education facilities with young adult carers being particularly difficult to engage. Gateway Carer Service staff will build stronger partnerships with West College Scotland, the University of the West of Scotland and other establishments Scotland wide, all of whom receive young adult and adult carers from North Ayrshire. There will also be improved links and opportunities with North Ayrshire Council Employability Hubs and Skills Development Scotland.

Some young carers also have their own health difficulties, disabilities or impairments. The [ILF Transition Fund](#) can help young disabled people, between the ages of 16 and 25, with transition after leaving school or children's services to be more independent, more active and engage in their community and to build and maintain relationships with other people.

## What will good support look like for carers

North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership will promote and provide consistency of information and support and create a culture of mutual respect and partnership with carers, cared-for persons, Unity Gateway Carer Service and partner services altogether.

North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership have adopted and expanded the [Equal Partners in Care Principles](#) which align with our responsibilities under the Act ensuring:

- Carers are identified as early as possible across all communities.
- Carers are supported and empowered to manage their caring role.
- Carers are enabled to live fulfilled lives and have a quality of life alongside caring.
- Carers have equal and easy access to good information, good conversations and support to enable them to maintain their own wellbeing.
- Carers are free from disadvantage or discrimination related to their caring role.
- Carers are fully engaged in the planning and shaping of services.
- Carers are recognised and valued as equal expert partners in care.

North Ayrshire Health and Social care Partnership will move forward with the content of this strategy and associated action plan at page 23 to ensure all carers in North Ayrshire can experience a good quality of life, sustain or improve their wellbeing and realise their goals by accessing information and support closer to home that enables them to continue caring where they wish to do so.

We will demonstrate what good carer support looks like through self-governance and performance monitoring of the action plan. Carer Services and the developments remain accountable to the Integrated Joint Board (IJB) and North Ayrshire Council. The Carer Team will provide scheduled updates to the Health & Social Care Partnership Senior Management Team for continued oversight and direction with support from Social Work Governance Board where required.

Developments will be further monitored through the voices, wisdom and experiences of local carers. The Carer Collaborative will be more inclusive with the shared aim of real change for carers. Members will share information, insight, knowledge, ideas and routes for improvement as well as identify information, awareness and service gaps. The Gateway Carer Service will also engage more fully with Carers Champions in schools and create a programme of wider engagement with carers across local groups who are able to represent the interests of all local carers within their networks. These opportunities will form the key building blocks of our caring communities.

The Gateway Carer Service also work with Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) who help organisations to measure, monitor and report on their impact and success. They have a proven track record of supporting third sector organisations with improvement.

## Action Plan

### **Priority 1: Carers are actively sought and identified**

What we will see and achieve:

- An increase in the number of carers identified, registered and supported, year on year.
- A proportion of the carers identified will be new young and adult carers who are not known to services or in receipt of carer support.
- A proportion of new carers should be from diverse groups.
- Good recording and reliable reporting of carer referrals and registrations.

### **Priority 2: Carers are informed, have increased confidence in their caring role and feel supported**

What we will see and achieve

- Carers and partner agencies will know where to go to access good quality carer information and support with options closer to carers homes/ in their community.
- A range of digital and analogue resources will be developed for carers.
- Outreach services are developed in all localities.
- Improved response times from the first point of contact to information and support received by the carer.
- More carers understanding, using and acting upon the information, advice and guidance to support their caring role.
- Professional staff have an increased awareness/ knowledge of caring roles, the impact of caring, and where to signpost for support.

### **Priority 3: Carers are offered and supported to prepare an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement**

What we will see and achieve:

- All carers identified through the Gateway Carer Service, Health & Social Care Partnership Services and Education Services have been offered the opportunity to prepare an ACSP or YCS.
- Improved recording and reporting to confirm those ACSP and YCS that have been accepted and declined with the reasons for decline as well as signposting to universal or alternative support.
- Improved recording and reporting of information and support received by the carer and the personal carer outcomes met.
- Improved recording and reporting of reviews of each ACSP and YCS completed, at least, within 12 months of the original being completed.

**Please note: Reporting of ACSP & YCS inform the statutory annual Scottish Government Carer Census return required to be submitted by Local Authorities and Carer Support Services.**

#### **Priority 4: Prompting variety in breaks from caring**

What we will see and achieve:

- All carers requiring or receiving a short break, no matter the route will have been offered an ACSP or YCS.
- Short breaks criteria and protocol will be established, clear and where possible published allowing reasonable timeframes for relevant carers to be aware of all opportunities.
- Examples of carer short breaks for young and adult carers will be shared and published, with permission of the carer/ recipient(s).
- Carers express they have time for themselves and enjoy a life outside caring.
- Carers express an improved ability to manage and enjoy a changing relationship with the person they care for.
- Carers express improved emotional, physical and/ or mental wellbeing.

#### **Priority 5: Carers feel involved as equal partners in care design/ delivery.**

What we will see and achieve:

- Carers Collaborative established.
- Carers express they feel involved, listened to and their opinions valued - treated as equal and expert partners in care.
- Carers express having an equal and/ or greater say over the support and services they receive as well as those provided to their loved ones.
- Carers express improved confidence in their caring role and in their wider life.

#### **Priority 6: Stronger partnership working/engagement**

What we will see and achieve

- Carer services are present and visible at local and national groups, events and sessions to promote the new look service.
- A programme of carer engagement/ consultation activities are reported regularly by the Gateway Carer Service.
- Carers and professionals' knowledge and skills are improved due to working in partnership with the Gateway Carer service.
- An increase in carer referrals from all pathways including Social Care, Health and Education, third sector and independent providers.
- A range of digital and analogue resources will be developed for professionals to improve the early identification, recognition of caring and delivery of communication and support available for carers.



**Priority 7: Improved identification, information and support for Young Carers with a focus on transition periods through to adulthood**

- What we will see and achieve:
- All family members or family circumstances are considered in each young carers needs.
- Young Carer Statements will identify strengths, aspirations and support to overcome the impact created by caring.
- Young carers know the Gateway Carer Service and what information and support is available in their school and wider community.
- Local strategic partners are aware of the specific needs of young carers.
- Information and support will be available/ accessible in appropriate formats.
- A programme of young carer engagement activities will be planned to ensure young people's involvement and inclusion in developing services.

## Appendices

### North Ayrshire National & Local Policy Context for Carers

It is the intention of the [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) to ensure all carers are better supported on a more consistent basis so that they can continue to care, where willing, able and if they so wish, in good health and wellbeing, allowing them to have a life alongside caring.

The overriding intention for young carers is that they should have a childhood like their non-carer peers by ensuring young carers are enabled to be children and young people first and foremost and relieved of any inappropriate caring roles to allow them to have a quality of life.

The Act makes real this ambition by furthering the rights of both adult and young carers instructing North Ayrshire Council/ Health & Social Care Partnership to:

- Actively identify unpaid carers.
- Provide information and advice services to carers, which must be accessible and proportionate to the needs of carers who use these services.
- Offer and complete Adult Carer Support Plans or Young Carer Statements to identify personal outcomes and need for support. As well as the provision of that support, which may include access to breaks from caring.
- Set local eligibility criteria frameworks for all carers. In North Ayrshire it was agreed at IJB dated 16<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to amend the eligibility thresholds to include those individuals with low and moderate need for carer support. This extended the parameters of support to include early and effective support as per the Strategic Commissioning Plan (Caring Together 2022 – 2030) ambitions meaning lower levels of support are provided for carers with a view to supporting carers at an earlier stage and preventing the breakdown of carer relationship and support.
- Involve and engage effectively with carers about their own potential support needs, that of the person(s) they care for, in general around service design and delivery as well as relating to hospital discharge processes.
- Develop, implement and publish a Carer Strategy to detail plans for how carers are identified and how they receive information about local support in their area.

A separate [Carers' Charter](#) was also published by Scottish Government setting out the rights of carers as provided for under the Act.

The [National Carer Strategy in Scotland](#) aims to support unpaid carers whilst recognising and valuing their contributions. It sets out a range of priorities and actions to ensure carers are supported fully in a joined up and cohesive way.

The Act and National Strategy are a few of the directives that sit within the broader context of local and national policies and plans that guide carer developments and support in North Ayrshire. Others are:

Caring Together 2022 – 2030, North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership's Strategic Plan and vision for ***People who live in North Ayrshire are able to have a***

**safe, healthy and active life.** To help realise this NAHSCP have five strategic priority areas for action:

- Engaging Communities
- Prevention & Early Intervention
- Improve Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Tackling Inequalities, and
- Bringing Services Together

[North Ayrshire Council Plan 2023 - 2028](#) is a contract with the communities and contains priorities for its residents. The vision of the plan is 'A North Ayrshire that is fair for all'.

The strategic aims of the plan focus on four areas which aspire to:

- Transition to a wellbeing economy, delivering prosperity, wellbeing and resilience for local people.
- Have active inclusive and resilient communities.
- Achieve net-zero by 2030.
- Be a community wealth building Council that is efficient and accessible, maximising investment and focusing resources on our priorities.

[Independent Review of Adult Social Care](#) is a request to recommend improvements to adult social care support in Scotland. It proposes to:

1. Shift the paradigm or thinking.
2. Strengthen the foundations.
3. Redesign the system.

For carers there are four specific recommendations (11 – 14) to improve involvement in planning and support and increase the recognition of carers and caring roles:

11. Carers need better, more consistent support to carry out their caring role well and to take a break from caring with regular access to quality respite provision.

Carers should be given a right to respite with an amendment to the Carers Act as required, and a range of options for respite and short breaks should be developed.

12. A new National Care Service should prioritise improved information and advice for carers, and an improved complaints process. It should take a human rights based approach to the support of carers.

13. Local assessment of carers' needs must, in common with assessment of the needs of people using social care support services and supports, better involve the person themselves in planning support.

14. Carers must be represented as full partners on the Integration Joint Boards and on the Board of the National Care Service.

[Getting it Right for Every Child](#) (GIRFEC) is a strengths-based approach and puts the interests and rights of the child at the heart of decision making for their wellbeing, attainments and development.

The young carer eligibility criteria for North Ayrshire is based on GIRFEC's wellbeing indicators – Safe, Health, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible, and Included. This promotes the preventative work and early intervention to support young carers to enable them to be children and young people first and foremost.

[The Promise Scotland](#) aims to ensure that care experienced children and young people will grow up loved, safe and respected.

North Ayrshire Council achieved [Carer Positive](#) Exemplary accreditation in March 2023. North Ayrshire Council aspires to be an employer of choice and are committed to valuing, supporting and retaining employees in the workplace who have caring responsibilities.

### **Associated Legislation**

- Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968
- NHS Community Care Act 1990
- Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2017
- Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- The Social Care (Self Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2012
- Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014
- Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2022
- Equality Act 2010