

MANIFESTO FOR UNPAID CARERS IN SCOTLAND



National Carer Organisations'

MANIFESTO FOR UNPAID CARERS IN SCOTLAND



There are

759,000
adult carers and

29,000
young carers

in Scotland



By 2037, it is
estimated that
there will be

1 million
carers in Scotland

We are calling on all political parties to commit to:

- 1** Adequate resources to implement the Carers Bill **3**
- 2** Increased efforts to improve short break provision **4**
- 3** Better, preventative support for carers **5**
- 4** Improved financial support for carers **6**
- 5** Sufficient, sustainable funding for social care **7**
- 6** Supporting carers in and into employment **8**
- 7** Introducing health checks for all carers **10**

1

Adequate resources to implement the Carers Bill



Why is this important?

The Carers Bill introduces a new framework for recognising and supporting carers. Alongside this it provides carers with new rights and entitlements, such as a universal right to information, advice and a carers support plan and the right to support, based on eligibility criteria. It is essential that the Carers Bill has a strong financial footing and that sufficient resources are available to ensure the Bill can be fully implemented, enabling carers to access their rights.

Local authorities will need to invest both new and existing resources in carer support. However, since there have been significant cuts to carer services over the last few years there is the danger that new resources will only address the rollback of services we have already seen and we will simply return to the position we were in previously.

Estimating the cost of implementing the Bill is extremely challenging, especially in the absence of reliable local information on carer support, a limited understanding of levels of unmet need, and the wide-ranging needs of families.

However, we believe it is vitally important that costs are not underestimated. If sufficient funding is not attached to the Bill, particularly to cover the costs of implementing the duty to support, then local authorities will adjust their eligibility criteria thresholds 'upwards' to reduce the number of carers falling within the scope. This will seriously undermine the preventative aims of the Bill.

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We call on all the political parties to:

- Ensure there are adequate resources to implement the Carers Bill
- Ensure that resources that go to local authorities to implement the Carers Bill are used for that purpose and are in addition to the current local investment in carer support.

2

Increased efforts to improve short breaks provision



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There is growing evidence of significant cuts to existing levels of service provision.

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Why is this important?

Providing short break opportunities for carers and cared-for people is now widely accepted as vital to sustaining the caring relationship, and the health and well-being of carers.

However government data and other research shows the availability and choice of short breaks across Scotland varies considerably, and there is growing evidence of significant cuts to existing levels of service provision.

Given the above, we believe it's time that short breaks lost their Cinderella status and became an essential and valued service. Furthermore, to protect those carers in greatest need in particular, we believe there remains a strong case to establish a minimum entitlement to breaks from caring.

We call on all the political parties to:

- Support the introduction of a short breaks duty to establish short breaks as a vital statutory service. Under the duty local authorities will be expected to take all reasonable and practicable steps to provide a range and level of short breaks which it considers to be sufficient to meet the needs of carers and families in its area
- Ensure local authorities are properly resourced and accountable for delivering their Carers Bill commitments, including breaks from caring and free replacement care to eligible carers
- Monitor the availability, reach and impact of short break services across Scotland to reliably measure changes in provision over time
- Commit to a detailed, independent examination of the potential social, health and economic benefits of introducing a guaranteed minimum entitlement to breaks from caring
- Continue to support the voluntary sector short breaks fund to help expand the provision available through statutory services

3

Better, preventative support for carers

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Early support for carers, including regular breaks from caring, enables people to balance their caring responsibilities with their other commitments and life goals.

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Why is this important?

The Carers Bill will introduce new rights to carers, including new entitlements to support. We welcome this as it brings clarity and extends provision to people whose lives have been significantly impacted by their caring role. However, providing support to carers in a preventative way is both an effective and economic way to sustain people in their caring roles and ensures they do not reach breaking point.

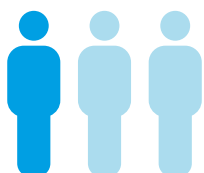
Early support for carers, including regular breaks from caring, enables people to balance their caring responsibilities with their other commitments and life goals.

We call on all the political parties to:

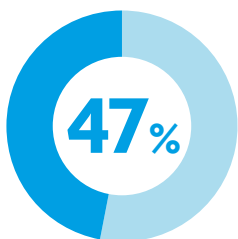
- Adequately fund Scotland's network of local carer support organisations with sufficient resources to cope with increasing demands

4

Improved financial support for carers



A third of carers are struggling to pay utility bills.



47% have been in debt and half are struggling to make ends meet, cutting back on food and heating as a result.



Why is this important?

Caring significantly affects carers' finances. The main carers' benefit is worth just £62.10 for a minimum of 35 hours a week.

A third of carers are struggling to pay utility bills, 47% have been in debt and half are struggling to make ends meet, cutting back on food and heating as a result. This impact on finances can also carry on long after the caring role has ended, as the gap between carers' income and outgoings frequently results in a rapid loss of savings and an inability to contribute to a private pension.

We call on all the political parties to:

- At a minimum, as soon as possible after devolution of powers under the Scotland Bill, raise Carers Allowance to the level of Jobseekers Allowance.
- Commit and legislate to retain a standalone benefit for carers
- Work with carers to develop this new benefit to ensure that it best meets their needs.
- Extend concessionary travel to carers in receipt of (or with an underlying entitlement to) Carers Allowance

5

30%

The number of adults in need of care is expected to increase 30% by 2026 as our population ages.

Sufficient, sustainable funding for social care



Why is this important?

The number of adults in need of care is expected to increase 30% by 2026 as our population ages. The strain this will place on carers could force many of them to give up their caring role, putting the health and wellbeing of the people they care for at risk and undermining the stability of the health and social care system. With social care already struggling to cope with £1.1bn in cuts between 2010-2015, local authorities will find it increasingly difficult to find adequate resources to support carers and their families.

Funding for social care is in crisis and this will not be resolved through policy without significant investment. Long term solutions need to be sought, such as universal social care insurance.

Investing in support for carers now will mean they can continue in their caring role, protecting the health of the people they care for and securing the longevity of our social care system.

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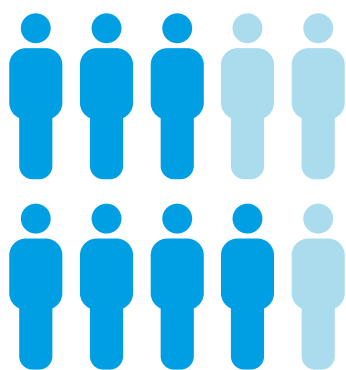
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We call on all the political parties to:

- Commit to investigating alternative solutions to funding social care to ensure local authorities have the resources they need to provide adequate levels of support for disabled people and carers.
- Consider how Scotland could learn from other countries and how they resource social care, such as Long Term Care Insurance schemes.

6

A commitment to support carers in and into employment



70%
of carers were
over £10,000 a
year worse off as a
result of reduced
earnings.



Why is this important?

More than half of carers of working age combine paid employment with caring, but it can often be difficult to juggle these responsibilities. Many carers find that their career and promotion opportunities are affected, that they have to reduce hours or give up work all together.

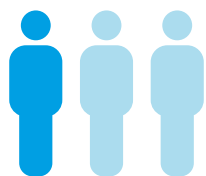
There is a significant financial cost in both reducing hours and giving up work to care. 70% of carers were over £10,000 a year worse off as a result of reduced earnings. 1 in 3 put this figure at £20,000 per year. This loss of earnings, savings and pension contributions also means that carers face long term financial hardship into retirement. Female carers are particularly affected, with 1 in 10 reducing hours or giving up promotion opportunities, with women aged 45 to 54 twice as likely as other carers to have reduced their working hours.

In addition to the personal and financial costs to carers, the cost to the economy of carers giving up work to care is an estimated £400M each year and Scottish businesses lose a further £280M.

Caring also affects the type of employment carers are likely to take on. Many find local, flexible, low skilled and low paid work simply because it can fit around caring. This is particularly true for female carers but affects carers of both genders.

An ageing population living longer alongside a rising retirement age, with people expected to work longer, means that more people will find themselves caring for longer whilst trying to hold onto employment.

Unless action is taken to help support carers in workplaces and to provide flexible, responsive care services, the number of carers leaving



Almost a third of carers surveyed had been out of the workplace for 10 years or more.



Carers who are out of the labour market for some time may have significant barriers to re-entering employment.



employment or reducing hours will rise – affecting carers, business and the economy.

Carers who have given up work to care also find it difficult to return to the workplace, often after many years away. For example, almost a third of carers in Carers Scotland's State of Caring survey had been out of the workplace for 10 years or more. A quarter of carers not currently in work say they would like to return to work and almost two thirds would like to when their caring role has ended.

Carers who are out of the labour market for some time may have significant barriers to re-entering employment. In some cases the skills of the sector they worked in have become outdated or they may have faced increased social isolation and lack confidence. However, there is a lack of cohesive support to enable carers to retrain and return to employment.

We call on all the political parties to:

- Develop a "Carers Leave Employer" accreditation for employers offering paid carers leave, for example, as part of the current Carer Positive award. This could include committing to the Scottish Government taking a lead as a Carers Leave employer. We recommend a minimum level of 5-10 days a year taken as needed to provide care.
- Incorporate specific and measurable actions for families with a disabled child into the Childcare Strategy to ensure that specialised childcare (including that which also involves nursing care) is available to all families who require it. This should include ensuring that summer play-schemes are available and accessible for disabled children.
- Develop a dedicated employability programme for carers. This should offer tailored support to carers, including replacement care to attend training and education alongside extending access for carers to existing schemes such as paid internship schemes, community jobs and modern apprenticeships.

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Introduce health checks for all carers

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It is known that preventative support for carers is vital in preventing the caring situation from deteriorating and ensuring that the carer can cope with their caring role.

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Why is this important?

The early identification of carers remains a challenge despite a wide range of initiatives designed to improve this. Experience tells us that GPs and allied health professionals are best placed to identify carers at any stage in the caring journey, as they could identify carers who may be attending the practice to support the person they look after as well as attending for their own health needs. GP practices currently apply a code to an individual's medical record within the practice if they are identified as a carer; collectively this information can be used as the basis of a carers' register.

We believe the carers' register should trigger an offer of a health check appointment for the individual carer every six months to determine if the caring situation has changed and whether additional support is required to protect the carer's own health and wellbeing. It is known that preventative support for carers is vital in preventing the caring situation from deteriorating and ensuring that the carer can cope with their caring role.

We call on all the political parties to:

- Commit to supporting regular health checks for carers.

Contacts

For further information or to discuss the Manifesto for Unpaid Carers in Scotland, please contact:

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**This manifesto was produced by
the national carer organisations.**

The national carer organisations are brought together by a shared vision that all Scotland's unpaid carers will be valued, included and supported as equal partners in the provision of care and will be able to enjoy a life outside of caring.

They are Carers Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People Project (MECOPP), Carers Trust Scotland, the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance, Crossroads Caring Scotland and Shared Care Scotland.