

**A REVIEW OF SUPPORT OF  
CARERS IN NORTH  
LANARKSHIRE**

**October 2017**

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## 1. Introduction

This report outlines the main findings of the review of support of carers in North Lanarkshire. The review's purpose was to consult a variety of stakeholders on the current support<sup>1</sup> provided to carers<sup>2</sup> in North Lanarkshire and to explore how to best meet the needs of carers in the future.

The review was established because there are a number of forthcoming changes that will affect the carers' landscape, both locally and nationally:

- The introduction of the new *Carers Act* in April 2018 which brings in new responsibilities around the planning and provision of support for carers to achieve desired outcomes and allow them to continue in their caring role.
- New national procurement regulations requiring *Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire* to invite organisations to *tender* to provide a variety of services to carers.
- The Carer Information Strategy funding from the Scottish Government will be passed over from the NHS to the local health and social care partnerships. This is a relatively large sum of money and *Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire* were keen to get carers' views on how this could best be used.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Support' for the purpose of this review was agreed to mean any activities involved with: identifying carers, signposting services, helping carers access services, providing information, providing advice, providing one-to-one support, providing group support and training and helping carers to move on if / when appropriate

<sup>2</sup> 'Carer' for this purpose of this review was agreed to mean, 'Any person who provides care to family members, other relatives, partners, friends and neighbours of any age affected by physical or mental illnesses disability, frailty or substance misuse'.



Given these changes, it was seen as a good moment to consult with carers and with those who work to support them. By developing a greater understanding of their experience and knowledge it was hoped that *Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire* would be in a better position to decide how to best structure services and use resources to support carers in North Lanarkshire

This report seeks simply to present a summary of the views of those who were consulted during this process. It is not an exhaustive presentation of all that emerged since there were simply too many themes to be practicably useful. Rather than capture everything and risk overwhelming the reader, we have attempted to present what we perceived as the main themes emerging from all the data.

We hope the findings included in this report will provide a useful resource to those making decisions about how best to support carers in North Lanarkshire in the future.

**Kinharvie Institute**

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## 2. Methodology

A *Kinharvie Institute* consultant, Martin Pearson, met with Eileen McShane, Senior Officer, Planning and Quality Assurance, *Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire*, on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

Eileen explained the context of the work and identified the main outcomes *Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire* were seeking to gain from the consultation process:

- A greater awareness of what kinds of services best support carers in North Lanarkshire
- An increased understanding what structure (centralised or localised) would best support carers in North Lanarkshire.

To ensure a variety of views were included in the consultations, it was agreed the following groups should be invited to participate:

- carers from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, cultural groups, ages
- a wide range of professionals who provide a variety of services and supports to carers in North Lanarkshire.

Eileen McShane coordinated a process to invite carers to attend a consultation on one of the following dates:

- Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2017, 10am to 12:30pm at Coatbridge Community Centre (35 participants and 2 interpreters attended)
- Thursday, 17<sup>th</sup> August, 6pm to 8:30pm at Forgewood Community Centre (30 participants and 2 interpreters attended)

Professionals working to support carers were invited to a consultation event on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> August, 10:00am to 3:30pm. Sixty people attended from a wide cross section of statutory and third sector organisations.



For each of the processes, Kinharvie Institute consultants facilitated a participative process which invited participants to share their experiences with others and to identify:

- what is working well with the current way carers are supported in North Lanarkshire
- what is not working well with the current way carers are supported in North Lanarkshire
- the gaps in support currently provided to carers in North Lanarkshire
- which services required by carers are best met by carer-specific organisations and which needs are best met by other local third sector organisations.

During the consultation process some of those invited to participate were not able to attend either event. To ensure they had an opportunity to share their views Eileen McShane asked Kinharvie Institute to also create and administer an online questionnaire. One response to the online survey was received.

The feedback provided by each of the consultation groups and from the online survey was carefully analysed for key themes and issues and the main findings are presented in the following pages.

### 3. Introduction to Main Findings

The following chapter presents the main findings from the review and is divided into three sections.

The first section presents aspects of current support identified by participants as working well.

The second section presents the gaps in support and aspects of the support provided to carers in North Lanarkshire that were not working so well.

The third section presents a summary of participants' ideas about which services required by carers are best provided by carer-specific organisations and which services are best provided by other local third sector organisations.

In the first two sections, the themes are presented in order of strength. The first theme presented in each section was the issue most widely and regularly identified by participants. The second theme the next most widely and regularly identified *et cetera*.



## 3.1 Main Findings

### 3.1.1 – What is Working Well?

Participants were asked to identify what is working well to support carers in North Lanarkshire. Participants most regularly identified the following aspects of support:

#### a. The provision of short breaks, pampering and respite care

Carers agreed that the provision of short breaks and respite care is an invaluable support in helping them to care for themselves and to ‘recharge their batteries’ so they are able to continue in their caring role.

#### b. Greater integration and partnership working between different organisations serving carers

Most participants said there is growing collaboration between third sector organisations supporting carers. As a result, those working in these third sector organisations have a much better knowledge of the services available and are better able to signpost carers to a much wider range of services.

#### c. One-to-one support of carers

Where it is available, carers particularly appreciate having one-to-one, ongoing support. A one-to-one support worker gets to understand the unique needs of the carer and those for whom they care. This enables them to help the carer find the tailored support they need (which is particularly important during times of crisis and change).

#### d. The ‘one-stop shops’

Most carers found it useful to have one or two organisations as the first place to go to get information and support. Carers said that having a host of services located in one place saved them time in ‘tracking down services’. This was particularly important for



those carers who provide intensive care and have limited time and those who because of language and cultural barriers find it difficult to search for services.

Participants also identified the ability of the two ‘one stop shops’ currently providing services in North Lanarkshire - *North Lanarkshire Carers Together* and the *Lanarkshire Carers Centre* – to respond quickly to carers’ enquiries. Carers are often working with quickly changing circumstances and so quick responses were important to them.

#### e. Carers’ growing involvement in shaping services at all levels

Carers are becoming more involved in shaping and determining their care at all levels. Most participants agreed the carer’s journey tool is helping to surface the specific needs of the carer and to tailor support accordingly. Carers also recognised that their voice is starting to be heard more at a strategic level as carers are being invited to participate in strategic discussions that affect them.

#### f. Carer representation and training

Where it has been available, carers say representation services and training courses, particularly those focused on legal help and financial support, have been very important in helping them to negotiate the laws, structures, form-filling and meetings necessary to get the best care for the person(s) for whom they care.

#### g. Support groups

The local and condition-specific support groups are a very important source of help for many carers. They provide convenient places to share experiences, make new friends, learn about other sources of support and how to overcome problems. Being able to bring the person(s) they care for to the meeting was particularly important to some carers as they found it difficult to get care cover otherwise.



h. **The growing availability of information**

The growing availability of information about services and online resources make connecting with other carers and accessing support easier.

i. **The Carer's Card**

The *Carer's Card* was a valued support to carers whose budgets are often tight.

j. **Support to linguistic minorities**

Where it is available, translation and bi-lingual support has been a real help to carers whose first language is not English to find and access services.



### 3.1.2 – What Could Be Improved? Where are the Gaps?

Participants were asked to identify what was not working well and what gaps existed in support for in North Lanarkshire. The following were the *main* issues identified:

#### a. A lack of flexibility

The current support available is not always flexible enough to meet the unique needs of the person(s) cared for and their carers. Participants in the review particularly thought more work needed to be done to recognise the diversity of carers needs and target support accordingly. Three areas of diversity were particularly highlighted as needing more work;

- carers in rural areas,
- BME communities who have additional linguistic and cultural differences to the host population
- the different conditions of those being cared for (i.e. the needs of a carer looking after someone with autism are very different to a carer of someone with Parkinson's).

#### b. A lack of continuity

Many of the carers said that in terms of support, one of the most important things to them was *continuity* of support. The cuts and changes to services in recent years has meant carers had had to invest energy and time in finding new sources of support and building relationships with new people and support providers. This detracts from the amount of time and energy they have to give to their caring role.

#### c. Cuts in funding

Carers said that cuts in funding have lead to services they relied on being cut and had lead to a greater sense of isolation.



#### d. Public services working in silos

There was widespread consensus that the public services which regularly come into contact with carers are working too much in isolation of each other and the third sector organisations that support carers in North Lanarkshire. They identified this having the following impact:

- There are many opportunities to identify carers and signpost them to sources of support (GP surgeries, accident and emergency departments, wards in hospitals, schools and contact with social workers were particularly identified). However, these opportunities are often missed because staff in these organisations either do not have the information and/or the time to signpost carers to sources of support.
- Carers spend a lot of time sharing the same information ‘again and again and again’ to organisations because there is no system which helps services to share information.

#### e. The availability of support outside office hours

Some participants said the services currently provided are not flexible enough to accommodate the needs of carers, particularly full-time workers and carers dealing with emergencies who need to access support outside of office hours.

#### f. The role of carers is not widely understood

Many staff working with carers, particularly in the public services, do not understand the role of a carer. This was particularly the case in hospitals and GPs where carers are often excluded from important decisions about the care and discharge of those for whom they care.



#### g. The availability and administration of respite care

While participants agreed the respite care available to carers in North Lanarkshire was of a good standard, its availability was limited and it is not always offered with enough notice to enable carers to make the most of the service.

#### h. The influence of carers on shaping services

Participants' valued the efforts made to include carers in decisions made about support services in North Lanarkshire. However, they thought more could be done to invite and encourage a more diverse range of carers to input and to support carers to participate more meaningfully in the processes.

#### i. Management and presentation of information

Some carers said sometimes there is so much information available to them it can be overwhelming. Participants thought more could be done to 'streamline information and make it more accessible'.

Participants also identified two areas: information about employment and the blue badge as areas where more information needs to be made available to help carers understand their rights.



### 3.1.3 By which type of organisation are services best provided?

Participants in the consultation were asked to identify which services provided to carers would be best provided by carer-specific organisations and which services would be best provided by local third sector organisations.

The table below presents the services on which there was broad consensus about which type of organisations are best placed to provide these services to carers.

<b>Best provided by carer-specific organisations</b>	<b>Best provided by other local third sector organisations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First port of call for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Information</li> <li>○ Emergencies &amp; out of hours support</li> <li>○ General enquiries &amp; advice</li> <li>○ Signposting to other services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Carer identification and registration</li> <li>• Providing training courses for carers on core skills needed to be a carer</li> <li>• Developing the general public's awareness and understanding of the role of carers</li> <li>• Training those whose work brings them into contact with carers</li> <li>• Representing carers in strategic fora</li> <li>• Administering short breaks, respite and pampering services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running local support groups, social activities, drop-in meetings and befriending services</li> <li>• Providing condition-specific information</li> <li>• Running condition-specific support groups</li> <li>• Providing 1:1 condition-specific support and advice</li> <li>• Carer identification &amp; signposting to other services</li> <li>• Providing training about caring for people with specific conditions or disabilities</li> <li>• Providing locality-specific information</li> </ul>



There were also services identified where there was little consensus as to whether these services were best provided by carer-specific organisations or by other local third sector organisations. These are listed below:

- Advocacy & support with forms, legal issues, funding
- Support with income / benefit maximization
- 1:1 conversations working on the Carer's Journey
- Raising the awareness of local GPs about the particular needs of carers
- Providing specialised counseling
- Providing extra support for BME and protected groups
- General 1:1 support
- General support groups