



Making Caring Visible, Valued and Supported - A Carers Week Theme to Guide Our Work

Every June we campaign during Carers Week to raise awareness around the realities of being an unpaid carer. The theme for Carers Week 2022 is 'Make caring visible, valued and supported'. Approaching this annual event provides a time for reflection and a chance to assess the current landscape for carers.

This year there are more considerations than ever before as carers continue to be adversely impacted by factors arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, including ongoing lack of access to social care services and budgets, the very real continued threat to the health of clinically vulnerable loved ones, the resulting social isolation, and the impacts of these factors on physical and mental health. Carers, often on low incomes, are also bearing the brunt of the escalating cost of living crisis with many already reporting having to choose between heating and eating.

The message of 'Make caring visible, valued and supported' is therefore one that, in the current context, we have taken time to reflect upon. For NLCT, this means making caring visible by listening to you and ensuring we represent you and your needs at every level, bringing that visibility around caring roles to our colleagues in North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care, across services in our area and at Scottish Government level.

Our new podcast 'Carers Together' which launched this spring featuring Still Game's Isa, actor Jane McCarry, discussing her caring experience is an initiative that will champion the voices of carers, bringing that increased visibility to audiences far and wide.

We will continue to work to raise the profile of caring as a valued input into the lives of those who are cared for as well as in terms of the huge and undeniable contribution to the social care system made by unpaid

carers. Valuing unpaid carers means truly working with them as equal partners in care and giving the expertise of carers its rightful place in policy, practice, and service design. It also means valuing carers in and of themselves and providing them with opportunities to enjoy a life outside of their caring role.

Ensuring that caring is supported is the outcome we strive towards. Our work to achieve this centres on supporting carers who contact our service to know their rights so they can access Adult Carer Support Plans, SDS carer budgets and other appropriate supports via services. Our new Carer Advocacy Service is already working to access essential supports for carers who have faced difficulties in getting the help they need and are entitled to.

While our reflections on this year's Carers Week theme only galvanise our approach, we felt it important to include the views of an unpaid carer on this topic. Roger, a valued member of the NLCT Carer Forum shared his thoughts, saying that there needs to be fuller recognition of what a caring role involves: *"People need to be made aware that caring is not just a matter of looking after someone. It's different jobs and skills required. In my role I'm a teacher, advocate, healthcare worker, solicitor, cook, DIY handy person, taxi driver and shopper. I don't think people, including health and social care, are aware of the true impacts the caring role has on someone's life."*

Roger's views will resonate with many and provide a principle on which to go forward with our work in supporting unpaid carers at the local and national levels.

Carers Week 2022 runs from 6th - 12th June and NLCT will be hosting a series of events. Visit our website for the latest information at carerstogether.org



A New Advocacy Service Supporting the Rights of Unpaid Carers

As part of our contract with Health and Social Care, we have now launched our new Independent Carer Advocacy Service for adult carers over 18 years of age living in North Lanarkshire. This service ensures carers have full access to their rights as outlined within Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. Health and social care systems can be difficult to navigate, coupled with the fact that many carers do not know their rights. Our new service seeks to address those issues.

Our advocacy worker supports carers one-to-one, empowering them to express their views and concerns to statutory services and ensuring they are fully involved in the decisions that affect them. Some of the reasons carers may require access to our advocacy service include difficulties in accessing SDS budgets,

problems around the hospital discharge of cared for people, and adult protection issues.

We are working in partnership with other local advocacy services where cases require collaborative working as well as providing self-advocacy training in partnership with Carers Scotland. These courses support carers to learn the skills needed to ensure their voices are heard and to build strategies to engage with services to secure positive outcomes.

Our advocacy service is completely independent from the rest of the NLCT team to maintain confidentiality, but carers can request access to the advocacy service via contacting our main office. Queries can be directed to **01698 404055** or enquiries@carerstogogether.org



North Lanarkshire Carers Together Hosts a New Family Support Service

You will note how much NLCT has developed over the last year with the updates in this newsletter. We exist to ensure carers get access to their rights and are suitably supported to continue caring should they be willing and able to do so.

We were therefore delighted to welcome a new Family Support Service funded by North Lanarkshire Council: Education & Families. This service supports parent/carers and their child or young person living at home who has a need for additional support.

The service is being piloted throughout sites within the Airdrie locality with referrals coming in from nursery, primary and secondary staff who work in mainstream or Additional Support Needs provision.

Once we receive the referral, one of our Family Support Workers will make contact to discuss the main concerns. These can include awaiting a diagnostic assessment, struggling with emotional issues, not knowing where to find support or learning

more about the suspected diagnosis of a child.

Support offered by our experienced workers may take the form of psychoeducation, a listening ear, referrals and signposting to wider community supports and informing parent/carers of some of their rights.

One of the Family Support Workers, Karen Cassidy, shared her thoughts on the service: *"Awaiting a diagnosis is a difficult time for families; the uncertainty, the waiting times, the lack of support, the isolation and not knowing where to go for help."*

"The Family Support Service provides that much needed link to services and supports, a 'go to person' that families can turn to for a listening ear, support, guidance and help to find the services in the community that can support their entire family."

Further information on the service and how it develops will be available later in the year.

Building on our Work to Support More Carers in the Future

Having celebrated our 20th anniversary in 2021 we continue to shape our plans for the future. Two developing areas of work include ensuring we can engage with diverse groups of carers and growing our volunteer programme.

We recognise the importance of making sure our services are accessible to all including minority ethnic carers, LGBTQIA+ carers, carers with sensory loss and rural carers who all face barriers to accessing support.

We have introduced Language Line, an interpretation service that allows us to communicate with carers in over 200 languages including BSL. We are also working with local partners to build relationships with community groups supporting diverse groups of people so that we can improve access to our services.

Members of our team and Board have been trained in Equalities and Human Rights and Cultural Competency as well as in how to better support carers from the LGBTQIA+ community. We now have a strong level of understanding, awareness, and skills to take forward our commitment to equalities and diversity.

On the volunteering front, we have assigned a team member to work on our volunteer programme. This offers people a meaningful opportunity to support us in our work. Volunteers can support with engaging with GP practices, information events, and office-based support.

If you would like to find out more, email: enquiries@carerstogogether.org



"I value Carers Together as much as they value me!"

Sandra - NLCT Volunteer



Putting Unpaid Carers at the Heart of New Services in North Lanarkshire

Carers can now access new Carer Breather and Sitter Services that provide meaningful breaks from their caring roles. The services launched this spring and were developed through listening to the views of carers.

In partnership with North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care, we supported the consultation of carers, putting them at the heart of service design. Carers told us that service providers needed to address the need for time out that didn't only take the form of an annual short break, but that was accessible in the community, available regularly and flexible in terms of availability throughout the day.

From these insights, the new projects were set up and offer activities including art therapy, health and wellness inputs, holistic support, and support to people caring for loved ones with learning disabilities or living with long term conditions.

The organisations providing the services are Bazooka Arts, Health and Wellness Hub, GBT Shotts, Glenboig Development Trust, Watch Us Grow, Parkinson's Self-Help Group Airdrie, Parkinson's Self-Help Group Motherwell and The Haven.

The pilot 'Sitter Service' was also developed following the consultation, during which carers shared strong views on the need for a person-centred approach to getting a regular 'breather' from caring. These services provide a volunteer to support the cared for person for a period of up to two hours a week in the home, freeing up carers to use that time out to do what matters to them. GBT Shotts, Glenboig Development Trust and The Haven provide the Sitter Services.

The development of the services was based on the 'we asked, you said, we did' ethos whereby carers' views directly led to them being developed. To find out more about the services on offer contact: enquiries@carerstogogether.org



Representing Your Views at a National Level

In 2021 we were engaged in the Scottish Government's National Care Service consultation, putting your voices at the heart of our own local gathering of views, hosting a feedback session via our Carer Forum and submitting our response to ensure carers' concerns were represented.

We are now amid the Scottish Government consultation on Scottish Carer's Assistance, the payment that will replace Carer's Allowance in Scotland. As such we gave you the opportunity to feedback on issues including on eligibility criteria and on payments for caring for more than one person. We, again, hosted a feedback session through the Carer Forum and ran short surveys online. We will soon submit and publish our response and a flash report on this on our website.

In addition, we are currently leading, in partnership with Lanarkshire Carers and North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care, on a Care Inspectorate Inquiry into carer experiences of social work and social care.

Interest was invited from local council areas to participate in a 'deep dive' into experiences of carers, and North Lanarkshire was selected. We are supporting with the inclusion of carers in feedback sessions with the Care Inspectorate team. The Care Inspectorate aims to publish its findings on this in August 2022 which we will feature on our website.

Thank you to all carers who generously give their time to input into our national level consultation activity.

To sign up to our mailing list email:
enquiries@carerstogogether.org



Our Rights-Based Approach to Supporting Unpaid Carers

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 came into effect on the 1st April 2018, enshrining the legal rights of unpaid carers to support, information and advice. One of the priorities within the Act is to raise awareness of unpaid carers and support them to know their rights. There is also the need to ensure professionals like social workers, for example, are aware of everything carers are entitled to.

As such, our Carer Information and Engagement team have been delivering Carer Aware sessions to our partners in North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care and to carers themselves over the past 18 months.

Over 60 professionals have attended, saying they now feel more confident identifying and supporting carers. The course provides information on the definition of a carer, the caring role, the challenges and barriers faced by carers and the rights and duties set out in the Act.

Participants come away with an understanding of who is an unpaid carer, an awareness of how carers contribute to the social care system, and the importance of treating carers as equal partners in care.

We are running our workshops throughout 2022. Sessions are delivered via Microsoft Teams or face to face. If you would like to book or find out more, contact us at bookings@carerstogogether.org or call Carolanne Christie, Carer Information and Engagement Lead, on 01698 404055

"Really enjoyable session. Relaxed and easy to follow. Information provided was just perfect. Thanks again to the fab NLCT team!"

YOUR
OPINION
MATTERS

North Lanarkshire Carers Together is a campaigning organisation that gives carers a voice and promotes carers' rights