



# **Summary Annual Report**

2021/22







# Chairperson's Report



**Carers Week begins on 6th June and runs through to Sunday 12th June. It is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, to highlight the challenges unpaid carers face and to recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK.**

It also helps people who don't think of themselves

as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support. Each year Carers Week has a theme, and this year's theme is **Make caring Visible, Valued and Supported.**

I can personally assure carers reading this that we at North Lanarkshire Carers Together See you, we Value you and we will always Support you.

Our Directors, Staff and Volunteers have seen an unprecedented level of work over the past year.

Last September saw the launch of our Independent Advocacy service for carers aged 18 and over. It has been a much-needed service for so long, not least since the implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act in April 2018 afforded rights in law to carers for the first time, but also as a robust means of giving carers voices when they least have the energy to speak up for themselves. We hope to see this service grow in partnership with Health and Social Care.

Carer Representation has always been in the DNA of North Lanarkshire Carers Together. It is what we do, and do best. To ensure the collective voices of carers are heard, truly listened to and that the policy makers embed those views in the decisions they make.

I am very proud of this work that the charity has undertaken over the last year in particular.

Readers may know that Derek Feeley led on a review of Adult Social Care in Scotland which resulted in recommendations towards a National Care Service and that the Scottish

Government published a nationwide consultation on its development. This is a manifesto promise of the sitting Scottish Government and as such will be rolled out during the term of this parliament.

Our Carer Forum and other carers living in North Lanarkshire contributed towards our submission to the government on this. Also, following planning discussions with our partners in Health & Social Care, we were asked to consult with carers and partners on the need for a different type of short break for carers. We wanted to hear exactly what was needed to enable carers to get a breather in the way that suited their needs. Our staff worked incredibly hard to ensure as many carers were involved in this consultation.

The work resulted in an investment in Carer Breather by Health & Social Care and we were exceptionally proud that 2 carers from our Carer Forum also sat on the panel to consider and approve applications to that fund to provide Carer Breather services.

This is a lovely example of Equal Partners in Care, where carers told services what was needed, services listened, and carers helped make final decisions. This is the way carer services and care provision to those we care for should work. All the time. At the end of September last year, we locked the doors and said our goodbyes to the offices in Hope Street after many happy years there. The decision to move our registered and operating address a little down the road to Forgewood Community Centre was one we didn't take lightly.

However, the benefits this move brings to the charity and importantly to carers will bear fruit for many years to come, I'm sure. Having the facility of a café, many community groups, a wealth of information on community supports as well as our own carer services will mean that carers coming to the centre will enjoy a rich environment entrenched in the local community.

I would like to thank my fellow Directors and all of our staff and volunteers for their continued hard work this past year and finally, a heart-felt thanks to the carers of North Lanarkshire for keeping the entire social care system running as smoothly as it can do.

**Elizabeth R Seaton, BEM**

*Chairperson,  
North Lanarkshire Carers Together*

*For and on behalf of North Lanarkshire Carers Together*



# Organisational Report

## Information for Carers

We have worked to develop a range of ways to communicate the rights afforded to carers by the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 ensuring that we can provide information on the following:

- **Income Maximisation & Benefits**
- **Education & Training Opportunities**
- **Advocacy**
- **Health & Wellbeing**
- **Bereavement Support**
- **Emergency & Future Planning**
- **Carer Supports & Short Breaks**

Over the last 12 months April 2021 – March 2022, we have worked with 1,133 carers, 625 of those were new to the service and hadn't been in contact before, with the remaining 508 coming back to us as trusted providers of Information, Advice and an active referral service. It is pleasing that so many carers trust our staff to ensure they are Visible, Valued and Supported. During these contacts, in excess of 4,500 pieces of information was given out. This included information related to Covid 19 such as PPE, vaccinations, Carer Rights, Emergency Planning and Adult Carer Support Planning which replaced Carers Assessments and Carer Journey's in 2018 when the Carers (Scotland) Act was introduced.

From a total of 623 referrals, our staff team made 220 referrals to the Financial Inclusion Team to help maximise family income and 150 referrals for carer support including a short break.

In May last year, we sent out over 3,900 newsletters providing a range of information on ours and partners services. We have also increased our presence online via our website and social media channels. We use Facebook and Twitter and have seen our Twitter increase by 15% to 1083 followers and Facebook increase by 15.6% to 1015 people liking and following our page. These platforms are a modern, convenient way to take part in snap polls, surveys and to keep up to date with information relevant to carers and the people you care for.



## Carer Engagement & Representation

We have always listened to and valued your views as a carer and represented those views at a range of strategic forums.

Carer engagement and representation is essential to the development of local services and policies and to feed into national and local consultations. This also has to be meaningful, supported, funded and crucially the loop needs to close in that there has to be feedback to carers who give their time to contribute.

This is why our guiding principle 'We Asked, You Said, We Did' is our promise to those carers who form part of our Carer Forum.

This year, our Carer Forum led within North Lanarkshire the consultation with carers on the proposed National Care Service and with the development of Carer Breather. Those in attendance are always provided with a full minute of those meetings and a Flash Report, which is a visual snapshot of the meeting and also information on where their contributions have gone or are going.

Gathering carers views on policy and services which impact carers directly is vital and I would like to take this opportunity to thank every member of the Carer Forum and those who have also contributed to online surveys that we send out.





## Campaigning

A key piece of work we provide is our Carer Aware Programme - where we deliver training sessions to carers and partners, informing them of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, of carer rights, and where and how to access support and services for carers locally.

Over the past year we have delivered 17 sessions to 244 carers and partners, which includes 6 sessions to 65 front-line social work staff.

We are currently promoting one session per month to Health & Social Care as we all recognise the important contribution carers provide to the social care system as Equal Partners.

These sessions have taken place digitally but more recently our staff are delighted to be back delivering them face to face.



# Service Development



## Advocacy

As part of our contract with Health and Social Care, we have now launched our Independent Advocacy Service in September 2021 and it is available to adult carers over 18 years of age living in North Lanarkshire.

This service ensures that carers have full access to their rights as outlined within the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. We know that health and social care systems can often be difficult to

navigate, coupled with the fact that many people struggle to understand their rights as unpaid carers, and our service seeks to address those issues. We have one advocacy worker who is now supporting carers via one-to-one advocacy, empowering them to express their views and concerns to statutory services and ensuring they are fully involved in the decisions that affect them and the person, or people, they care for.

## Family Support Service

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

The service is currently being piloted throughout sites situated within the Airdrie locality with referrals coming from nursery, primary and secondary staff who work in mainstream or Additional Support Needs provision to our team of two staff employed for this new service. Once we receive the referral from education, one of our Family Support Workers will make contact with the parent carers to discuss the main concerns they or their child are currently experiencing.

These concerns can range from awaiting a diagnostic assessment, struggling with emotional or practical issues, being unsure of where to source help and support or even learning some more about the suspected diagnosis of the child.

Staff can provide support which may take the form of psychoeducation, a listening ear, sharing and planning strategies, referral and signposting to wider community supports and informing parents of some of their rights as carers of a young person with additional needs.

It is a niche service with referrals only accepted via the school or nursery, but one we are very proud to have been entrusted with and one we recognise is very much needed.

## Carer Breather

For many years the idea of a short break was either traditional respite or a cash grant which often have restricted eligibility criteria, such as caring for someone over 18 or with a specific disability. We were delighted therefore, to support a consultation entrusted in us as Carer Support Network Leads by Health & Social Care into Carer Breather.

In partnership with 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 think outside the box and address the need for time out that didn't only take the form of an annual short break, but that was easily accessible in the community, available on a regular basis and more flexible in terms of availability throughout the day. From these insights, the Carer Breather funded projects were set up to offer activities such as art therapy, health and wellness activities, holistic support, and groups supporting people

caring for loved ones with learning disabilities or living with long term conditions.

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 support carers by providing a volunteer in the home who can support the cared for person for a period of up to two hours a week. This frees up carers to use their time out as flexibly as they would like, to do what matters to them.

Carers can now access new services across North Lanarkshire that provide breaks from their caring roles and allow them to take some quality time out for themselves. The Carer Breather projects and pilot Sitter Services launched this spring, and were developed directly through listening to the views of carers.





## Carer Podcast

We were delighted to launch our new Carer Podcast early in the new year. Actor Jane McCarry agreed to discuss her previous caring roles and the impact the pandemic has had on mental health and wellbeing of carers and the people they care for in our inaugural recording. We have lots of exciting plans for this new medium of ensuring caring is visible and you can find it where ever you listen to your podcasts and searching for North Lanarkshire Carers Together.

Information on any of these services can be found on our website or by calling the office on 01698 404055  
**Colin Smith**, *Development Manager*







# Working for you.....

## Information, Signposting and Referral Service

We will provide information that is of value to carers:

To do this, we will work in partnership with carers, health & social care and the voluntary and community sector to gather and share information relevant to the carer agenda. We will provide up to date information for carers that will include:

- Carers Rights
- Income Maximisation & Benefits
- Education & Training Opportunities
- Advocacy
- Health & Wellbeing
- Bereavement Support
- Emergency & Future Planning
- Carer Support & Short Breaks

Carers should be able to obtain information from a range of sources relevant to them and the person they care for to help support them in their caring role. We will:

- **Develop information** that is accessible, proportionate and relevant to individual carers' needs
- **Offer an active signposting and referral service** for carers to link carers into statutory services and local supports including groups, activities and short break opportunities.
- **Develop a range of promotional information** to help identify hidden and hard to reach carers
- **Work in partnership** to ensure that carer information is distributed and displayed within health & social care settings, including social work localities, GP practices, community health centres and other locations
- **Deliver Carer Aware sessions** to professional colleagues to raise the profile of carers' issues, carers' rights and the support available to carers in North Lanarkshire
- **Provide our members** with an Annual Newsletter and invitation to attend our Conference in June which will include our AGM



During office hours, carers can access information by speaking to, or meeting with, one of our Carer Information & Engagement Workers. Outside office hours carers can access information and contact our team via our information website [www.carerstogther.org](http://www.carerstogther.org) like us on Facebook @NLcarerstogther and follow us on Twitter @nlct\_carers





## Carer Engagement and Representation

We will form active links between carers and professionals to influence policy development and support carers to have their voice heard in the development of local service provision.

To do this, we will work in partnership with carers to develop and support a Carer Forum to:

- **Provide a networking opportunity** to share issues, experiences and information, including developing communication and engagement mechanisms via social media platforms
- **Actively link carers and professionals together** to discuss and consult on issues that impact on carers and the people they care for
- **Develop a collective response** to key issues

The Carer Forum will help identify carers who may wish to consider becoming involved in representing carers' views at a strategic level. To support this we will:

- **Offer informal support and mentoring** via the Carer Forum, NLCT Board and staff
- **Support the implementation** of the 3 best practice standards for carer engagement including reimbursement of normal expenses and the costs of replacement care that needs to be put in place to fulfil their roles

## Campaigning for Carers

We will represent you with integrity and be a potent force for change:

It is vitally important to raise the profile of carers' issues at a local level and to gather support from local MPs, MSPs and councillors. NLCT Board and staff will work alongside carers to develop a clear vision in relation to campaigning for better recognition and rights for carers. We will:

- **Bring carers together** at our Forum meetings to ensure carers have a collective voice and their concerns are brought to the attention of local and national government and other key decision makers
- **Support the work** of the Coalition of Carers in Scotland and adopt the 10 Guiding Principles to strengthen future campaigning activity
- **Ensure carers and member organisations** are kept up to date with local and national policy and opportunities to influence the political process
- **Work with key partners** to develop local campaigns linked to key themes

*For and on behalf of North Lanarkshire Carers Together*











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