

Guidance Notes Carer Breather 2026-2028

FUNDING GUIDANCE FOR CARER BREATHER PROGRAMME

Background and Context

Development of Carer Breather:

In 2021, unpaid carers in North Lanarkshire identified the need for accessible, community-based activities that provided meaningful breaks from their caregiving responsibilities without imposing significant financial burdens. This feedback led to the development of the Carer Breather programme, funded by University Health & Social Care North Lanarkshire (UHSCNL).

The programme has been implemented in three phases, beginning with Phase 1 in late 2021-2023, continuing with Phase 2 (2023-2025), and is now in Phase 3. Carer Breather offers early-intervention 'time-out' opportunities beyond annual breaks, featuring activities such as art, health and wellbeing sessions, and carer-focused groups. Designed to be innovative, cost-effective, and scalable, the programme supports carer choice and control, provides a break from caregiving roles, and connects with carers previously unknown to services.

Building on the programme's success, further engagement with carers has assessed its impact, identified barriers, and informed Phase 3, Cohort 1 (2025-2028) & Phase 3, Cohort 2 (2026-2028).

Our Vision:

Our vision is to ensure that carers in North Lanarkshire are identified and connected with community activities that provide meaningful and consistent breaks from caring. Carers can participate individually, with the person they care for, or as part of a family.

We aim to create opportunities where carers feel valued, heard, and free from unnecessary barriers that could hinder their involvement. By offering fulfilling activities, we empower carers to enhance their wellbeing while maintaining their caregiving roles.



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Purpose of Carer Breather Investment

Carer Breather funding aims to empower community and voluntary organisations to deliver consistent and locally focused support for unpaid carers. This includes:

- Reaching carers who are currently unknown to formal services.
- Supporting individuals who may not yet identify with a carer's organisation.

Successful applications should demonstrate how their proposed activities will enable carers in North Lanarkshire to:

- Experience consistent and meaningful breaks that enhance their caring roles.
- Access support without the need to formally align with a carer organisation, if they prefer.

Funded projects must contribute to one or more of the following Carer Outcomes:

	Carer Outcomes
No.	Outcome
1	Carers are more able to have time-out for themselves, or with the person they care for.
2	Carers experience better physical and mental health & wellbeing.
3	Carers feel more knowledgeable and informed about their caring role.
4	Carers are better able to manage day-to-day caring tasks.
5	Carers feel more calm, positive and supported in dealing with the demands of being a carer.
6	Carers are more able to manage financially and know where to go for help, if needed.



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Funding details and criteria

Organisations can apply for funding in the range of £15,000 to £20,000 per year for a two-year project, covering the period from 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2028.

Requirements:

This funding opportunity is shaped by consultation with carers and carer organisations in North Lanarkshire (see [Carer Breather Report 2026](#)) to determine the most impactful services. The focus is on providing dependable 'time-out' opportunities that carers can consistently plan and rely on to enhance their wellbeing and caring capacity.

Key findings & priorities identified include:

- The acute need for breaks, 70% of respondents provide 35+ hours of care weekly, with 54% caring for 50+ hours (double the national rate).
- The ask to address the lack of replacement care, identified as the biggest obstacle.
- Improving information provision and communication is essential.
- The requirement to offer regular, flexible, and ongoing break options.
- The appetite for new initiatives with fresh approaches.
 - Providing evening and weekend activities.
 - Expanding services for individuals with multiple and complex needs.
 - Exploring digital and online activities to enhance accessibility.
 - Ensuring consideration for minority communities and young carers.
 - Expanding flexibility and choice in activities.

Applicants should:

- Demonstrate how they will deliver on the priorities identified through consultation.
- Prioritise overcoming practical barriers to access, including:
 - Lack of replacement care.
 - Information gaps about available services.
 - Activity scheduling and timing.
 - Transport challenges.
 - Accessibility challenges.
 - Awareness of multiple and complex needs.



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- Showcase a diverse range of Carer Breather activities, with a strong emphasis on health and wellbeing, while ensuring flexibility and choice for carers.
- Highlight innovative strategies for engaging carers who are unknown to services, particularly underrepresented groups (e.g., rural, male, LGBTQ+, and ethnic minority communities).
- Align with the current [Carer Strategy](#) and [Engagement & Participation Strategy](#), demonstrating active engagement with carers.
- Address one or more of the six Carer Outcomes listed above.

**** Applications for Sitter Services are particularly welcome.**

Organisational Eligibility

- Registered Charities
- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisations (SCIOs)
- Companies Limited by Guarantee (CLGs) (with an asset lock / not-for-profit purpose)
- Community Interest Companies (CICs)
- Social Enterprises (must demonstrate social purpose)
- Unincorporated Associations (must have a Constitution and bank account with two signatories)
- Trusts (grant-making or community trusts with appropriate governing documents)
- Housing Co-operatives / Housing Associations (must be registered social landlords or community-led)
- Faith-based organisations (Activity must be non-proselytising and open to the wider community)

Not Eligible

- Individuals
- Sole traders
- Private limited companies (without a social purpose)
- Statutory bodies (local authorities, NHS boards)

Preparing and Submitting Your Application

Questions to Consider:

- Have you consulted with carers and stakeholders to inform your proposal?



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- How will you engage carers and stakeholders throughout your project delivery?
- How will you provide useful information to carers on rights and other services?
- How will you facilitate referrals to carer organisations and other support services if needed?

Submission Details:

Please submit your application using the NLCT Carer Breather Application Form. Applicants can also use supporting information as appendices.

Applications, along with any appendices, should be sent to the Carer Support Network Team at North Lanarkshire Carers Together via email at CSN@carerstogogether.org

Deadline:

The closing date for applications is 4:30 PM on Friday, 27th February 2026. Any applications received after this time will not be considered.

For queries, contact:

Sharron Farrell, Carer Support Network Lead
North Lanarkshire Carers Together
Email: sharron@carerstogogether.org
Phone: 01698 404055

Assessment and Decision

An Assessment Panel comprising carers, community and voluntary sector representatives, UHSCNL, and North Lanarkshire Council will review all applications and select projects for funding. Applicants will be informed of the outcome during the week commencing 23rd March 2026.

Carer Support Network (CSN):

Successful applicants will become members of the CSN and be expected to attend these network meetings quarterly. The purpose of the CSN is to embed carer-



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focused initiatives into the local strategic objectives by fostering partnerships across statutory, community and voluntary, and independent sectors.

Its vision is to enhance carers' independence, wellbeing, and inclusion through preventative and anticipatory support measures.

CSN Key Functions:

- Strengthen community capacity to deliver preventative care and reduce loneliness among carers.
- Optimise access to short breaks, enabling carers to better manage their caring roles and maintain their health and wellbeing.
- Ensure co-production and targeted support for short break opportunities through collective decision-making and monitoring processes.
- Align all activities with the North Lanarkshire Strategy for Carers, focusing on measurable outcomes for carers' improved quality of life.

The CSN will also be active celebrants of services available to carers in North Lanarkshire. This will include attending an annual Commitment to Carers event.

Reporting:

Successful applicants will be required to return quarterly monitoring reports using a template which will be shared with award letters. This includes pseudonymised data to inform the national Carers Census. A Data Sharing agreement will be in place between NLCT and successful applicants prior to the beginning of your project.

Seeing the Carer Breather programme in action, meeting carers directly, and capturing impact (even in a very light-touch way) is a requirement of the funding, and it's important for us to be able to evidence this consistently with Case Studies, photos and videos across all partners.



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