

Carer Breather Consultation

Improving Carer Breather short breaks for unpaid carers in North Lanarkshire.



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Introduction

Carer Breather: Not just to survive, but to thrive!

“

The service provided by Carer Breather short breaks is a lifeline. I hope it continues as I would be lost without it.

unpaid carer, November 2025

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting individuals with complex needs, often at great personal cost to their own health and wellbeing. In North Lanarkshire, carers have consistently expressed the need for meaningful, accessible breaks that go beyond occasional holidays or short-term respite. These breaks are not a luxury - they are essential for sustaining carers' ability to continue in their role without reaching crisis.

Carer Breather was developed in response to this need, offering community-based activities designed to provide carers with time-out from their responsibilities. Since its launch in 2021, the programme has evolved through multiple phases, each shaped by direct feedback from carers and partner organisations. The current Phase 3 builds on this foundation, aiming to deliver flexible, inclusive opportunities that reflect the diverse circumstances of carers across North Lanarkshire.

This report presents findings from the latest consultation, which sought to evaluate existing provision and identify priorities for future development. It highlights the acute demand for short breaks, the barriers that prevent carers from accessing support, and the practical steps required to ensure Carer Breather continues to deliver on its promise: **not just to help carers survive, but to thrive.**

The consultation took place using an online survey & a hard copy distributed to carers and partners during the period 29th October - 28th November. As part of this consultation we received 329 unpaid carer responses:

250

carers responded to the online survey

78

carers completed a printed copy of the survey

15

All 15 current Carer Breather projects responded to an evaluation

Enormous thanks to every carer who took the time to respond to our Carer Breather survey. Many thanks also to the carers organisations who took part in the consultation. At NLCT, we continue to fulfil our **“We asked, You said, We did”** promise.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Consultation

North Lanarkshire Carers Together (NLCT), on behalf of University Health & Social Care NL (UHSCNL), conducted a consultation with unpaid carers and Carer Breather projects to evaluate current provision and identify priorities for Phase 3 development. The goal: ensure Carer Breather delivers meaningful, accessible short breaks for carers.

Key Findings

Acute Need for Breaks: 70% of carers provide 35+ hours of care weekly, with 54% caring for 50+ hours - double the national rate. This intensity underscores the urgent need for respite opportunities.

Critical Barriers: Lack of replacement care, information challenges, scheduling challenges, transport issues, and accessibility for disabled carers.

Sitter Services Gap: Two-thirds of carers would use or consider using a sitter service, yet only one currently exists in North Lanarkshire. Without replacement care, carers cannot access activities - even when available.

Information Challenges: 55% of carers want clearer information about short breaks. Many report not knowing what's available or where to look. Suggestions: named contacts, regular updates, culturally inclusive communication.

Activity Preferences: Health & wellbeing activities are most valued (64.7%), followed by arts and music. Carers want flexibility and choice, not a one-size-fits-all approach.





Recommendations

- 1** Establish Sitter Services Across All Localities: Develop volunteer-based sitter models with training and safeguarding; replicate the successful, existing Sitter Service at Glenboig.
- 2** Improve Information Provision and Communication: Assign named contacts, create a centralised hub, and deliver inclusive outreach through multiple channels.*
- 3** Expand Flexibility and Choice in Activities: Offer varied times (evenings/weekends), mix of individual and family options, and explore home-based or online alternatives.
- 4** Address Accessibility and Inclusion: Ensure venues are accessible; provide interpreters and targeted outreach for minority communities and carers with complex needs.
- 5** Monitor and Measure Impact: Track uptake of sitter services and information resources; report outcomes against wellbeing indicators.

*We recognise there is work underway to address Information Challenges following a review of the North Lanarkshire Carers Strategy 2024-2027

Conclusion

Carer Breather is a lifeline for those who can access it, but barriers remain. By prioritising sitter services and robust information provision, Phase 3 can transform carers' ability to take meaningful breaks - helping them not just to survive, but to thrive. The further development of Carer Breather ensures North Lanarkshire has a robust infrastructure of short break provision in advance of the Care Reform (Scotland) Bill's full implementation which will afford carers the legal right to a break to support their wellbeing and prevent burnout.

The Reach & Impact of Carer Breather



Carer Breather has become a lifeline for unpaid carers across North Lanarkshire, offering activities that promote wellbeing, reduce isolation, and provide essential time out from caring responsibilities. Since its inception, the programme has demonstrated significant impact, both in scale and outcomes.

What Carer Breather Delivers

Community-based activities such as art therapy, health and wellness sessions, and holistic support.

Specialist groups for carers supporting individuals with sensory loss, learning disabilities, or long-term conditions.

Opportunities for carers to connect, recharge, and access tailored support.

Phase 3 Achievements (April–September 2025)

£300,000

invested in

15

projects delivered by

15

organisations.

(See <https://www.carerstogether.org/support-network/>)

929

unique individuals supported, including

408

carers and

521

cared-for people and family members.

87

activities and

2171

sessions delivered across North Lanarkshire.



Carer Outcomes

332

carers reported being more able to take time out for themselves or with the person they care for.

328

carers experienced improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.

306

carers felt more knowledgeable and informed about their caring role.

290

carers reported feeling calmer, more positive, and better supported.

278

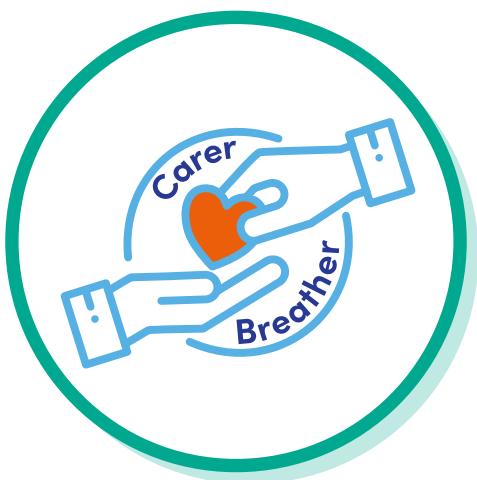
carers are better able to manage day-to-day caring tasks.

277

carers are more able to manage financially and know where to go for help, if needed.

Why This Matters

These outcomes demonstrate that Carer Breather is not just about short breaks - it is about sustaining carers' resilience and preventing crisis. By providing accessible, free, and tailored activities, the programme helps carers thrive in their role while maintaining their own health and wellbeing.



Time for Me

The Time for Me Fund was introduced in 2025 to build on the success of Carer Breather and respond to feedback from the 2024 consultation. Funded by UHSCNL and facilitated by NLCT, this initiative supports small voluntary and community groups in North Lanarkshire to deliver activities that provide carers with meaningful and consistent breaks from their routine and to identify carers unknown to services.

Key Benefits

Give carers dedicated time away from their caring role.

Improve carers' physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Help carers feel informed and supported.

Support carers in managing day-to-day tasks.

Funding and Delivery

£20,000 awarded across seven projects for the period
May 2025 - April 2026.

Seven organisations funded:

Bestway Community Development

Project 42

CABIA Airdrie

Sakoon Mind

Cardowan Community Meadow

Viewpark Conservation Group

Disco Buddies

Two of these organisations specifically support carers from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Impact (May – November 2025)

126

carers were more able to take time out for themselves or with the person they care for.

121

carers experienced improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.

68

carers felt more knowledgeable and informed about their caring role.

84

carers were better able to manage day-to-day caring tasks.

124

carers felt calmer, more positive, and better supported.

75

carers were more able to manage financially and knew where to go for help if needed.

Why It Matters

Time for Me demonstrates the value of small-scale, community-led initiatives in complementing Carer Breather. By funding grassroots projects, the programme ensures carers have access to flexible, local opportunities that meet their unique needs.



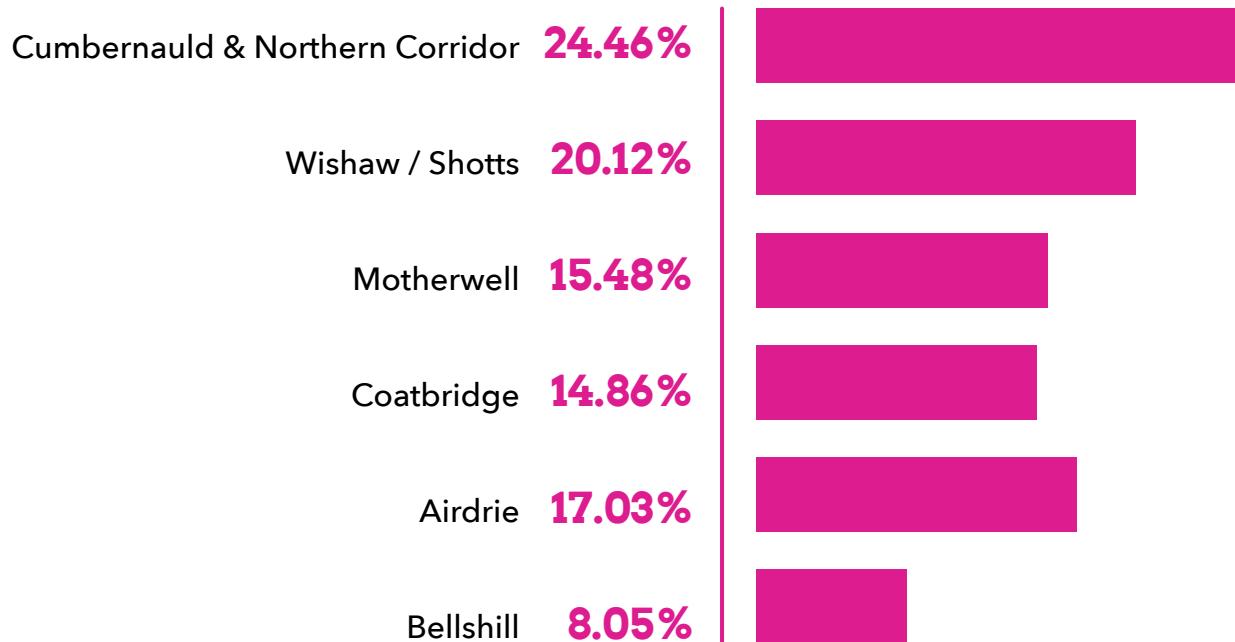
Demographic Findings – Who We Heard From

Understanding who participated in the consultation is essential for shaping services that reflect carers' diverse needs. Our consultation aimed to be as inclusive as possible, reaching unpaid carers across all North Lanarkshire localities.

Survey Reach



There was a healthy spread of respondents across the six North Lanarkshire localities with 1 in 4 carers who replied (24.46%) being from Cumbernauld and the Northern Corridor.



Age Profile

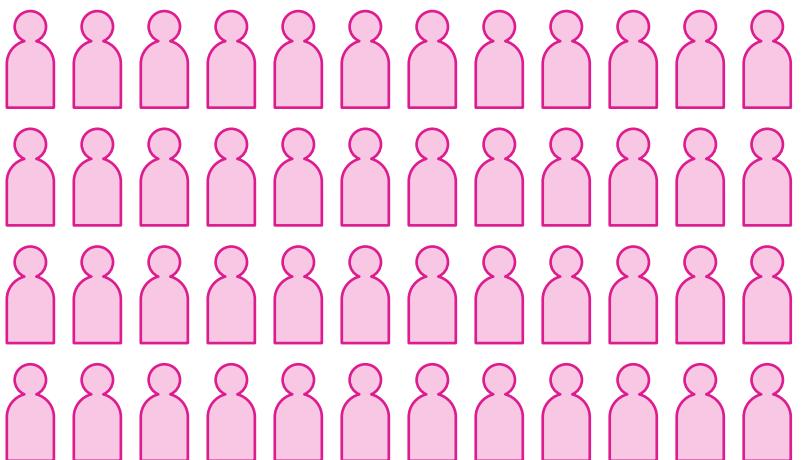
Majority of respondents

(71.5%)

were over

45

years old.



1% 18-24

6% 25-34

22.5% 35-44

33% 45-54

24.5% 55-64

13% 65+

Cared-for Age Groups

Largest group:
under 18

35.6%

Older adults
(65+)

28.9%

Remaining spread across 18-64 years

35.36%

aged under 18

11.25%

aged 18-24

6.69%

aged 25-34

2.74%

aged 35-44

6.69%

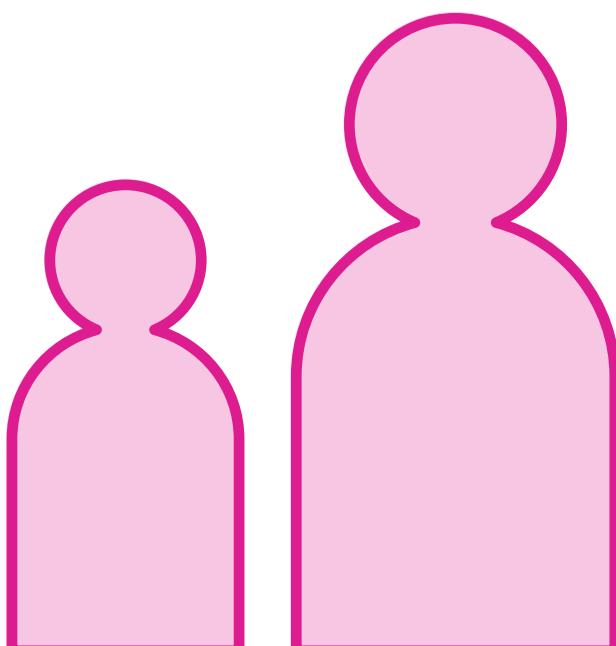
aged 45-54

8.21%

aged 55-64

28.88%

aged 65+



Ethnicity

A massive 89.97% of respondents reported their ethnic group as "White British / Scottish" although we did have representation from all ethnicities.

89.97%

identify as White British / Scottish

0.65%

identify as Mixed Ethnicity / Multiple

4.85%

identify as Asian, Asian Scottish, Asian British

0.32%

identify as African, Caribbean, Black

3.88%

identify as White other European

Caring Intensity

70.3% provide 35+ hours of care weekly and can therefore be classed as caring "full-time"; 54% care for 50+ hours - more than twice the national average.

1.53% cared for up to 4 hours per week



10.74% cared for 5-19 hours per week



17.48% cared for 20-34 hours per week



16.26% cared for 35-49 hours per week



53.99% cared for 50+ hours per week



Primary Conditions Supported

In terms of the primary illness, disability, or condition of the cared for person, responses are as follows with one third of our respondents caring for someone with Autism and Neurodivergence. This correlates exactly with the Scottish Government's Carer Census returns from 2022 that reported 33% of children receiving care from an unpaid carer have Autism.

10.67%

Dementia

5.18%

Mental Health

9.15%

Learning Disability

33.84%

Autism and Neurodivergence

11.89%

Physical Disability

9.76%

Neurological Condition

1.83%

Addiction

0.61%

Palliative Care

2.44%

Cancer

5.49%

Frail /
Elderly

0.61%

Sensory Loss

7%

Other Illness/
Disability

Key Insight

Carers provide intensive, complex care, often for children and older adults. In addition, carers advise that if the carer is also disabled, there can be a lack of support in accessing short breaks. This diversity underscores the need for flexible, tailored support options.

Findings on types of Carer Breather activities and Carers' Preferences

What type of Carer Breather activity would suit carers best?

There were four options given regarding the type of Carer Breather activity that would suit carers best - these scored, in order of preference.

38.6%	An activity on my own
34.04%	An activity we could do together as a couple or as a whole family
13.98%	Separate activities, but at the same time
13.37%	An activity for the person I care for

It is clear that one size does not fit all and throughout the consultation, as identified above, there is an appetite for more flexibility and choice around the type of Carer Breather activity offered.

An activity we could do together as a couple or as a whole family, a break from the routine, was the most popular response in the 2024 Carer Breather Consultation, and such activities were strongly encouraged in the first round of applications for Phase 3, based on carer feedback.

More on the sort of Carer Breather activities carers would prefer to access

We asked carers to tell us what kind of activities they would value the most, allowing them to choose more than one. This gave individuals an opportunity to share exactly what they would like to be able to access that would keep them well in their caring role. Health and Wellbeing activities scored highly here.

64.74%	Health & Wellbeing
39.2%	Arts
33.13%	Music
19.54%	Sport / Recreation
13.37%	Other (please specify)

Responses to Key Questions

Sitter Service

Our 2024 Carer Breather Consultation highlighted that the lack of access to replacement care for the cared-for is a substantial barrier to carers taking part in activities. Furthermore, a significant percentage of carers showed an appetite for a Sitter Service where the replacement care could be provided by a Volunteer for up to two hours per week in their own home.

Carers were now asked - would you use a Sitter Service if there was one in your locality?

Two thirds of respondents advised that they would use (37.08%) or would consider using (29.18%) a Sitter Service.

Carers' feelings around a Sitter Service & why Sitter Services are needed

“ Accessing respite or sitter services to allow the carer to take break without worrying about leaving the cared for person alone.

“ It's not the accessing of activities or support that's the barrier; it's who looks after the person I am caring for when I am engaging in these activities/supports.

“ I feel that sitter services in all areas of North Lanarkshire are needed.

“ My wife and I have twins with complex needs. We might be interested in sitter service but the children's support needs are complex.

“ A sitter service would be great if the person was trained in dealing with anything that could go wrong and had previously met the person I care for.

Understanding carers' feelings can point us to further context around why one third of carers (33.74%) may be reticent to even consider Sitter Services, or why they do not or cannot access them.

“ I'm not sure if I'd use sitter service as I'd find it stressful having a stranger in my house etc although sure it would work for some people.

“ I would love a sitter but nobody that I care for would accept it!

“ I don't really know of any activities my daughter would go to; she is with me all of the time, she won't stay with anyone else.

“ For me personally, the primary person I care for would never want/allow anyone else to provide care for them given the personal, intimate and complex range of care and support needs they have. They do however genuinely want me to have a break but that would mean they had no alternative carer and would be on their own, knowing this, and the knock-on consequences, would create such guilt and worry for me and that is my greatest barrier to accessing respite. Sometimes, even if limited respite is available, a carer still has to forgo that help.

Short Break Support

We asked carers to tell us what kind of support would make it easier for them to find and take a suitable Short Break, allowing them to choose more than one answer. This gave individuals an opportunity to share exactly what assistance they would like provided to meet these needs.

Clearer information about what short breaks are available scored highly here.

55.32%

Clearer information about what short breaks are available

38.91%

More flexible options (e.g. evenings, weekends, shorter breaks)

38.60%

Information about funding or costs

37.99%

Regular updates about new short break opportunities

33.13%

Help to find a break that fits my caring responsibilities

29.48%

A named contact who understands my situation

26.14%

Help with forms or applications for short breaks

24.92%

Someone to talk to about what kind of break would benefit me most

21.88%

Support to plan or arrange the break itself

21.28%

Hearing from other carers about what's worked for them

7.26%

Something else

Carers' thoughts around Short Break Support

“ For new carers, it would help to have a nominated contact who can give appropriate advice or guidance. For existing carers, a nominated contact would help identifying or arranging group sessions i.e. wellbeing or specific information nights or group discussions.

“ Knowing what's on, I found Disco buddies from seeing it on STV news.

“ I think communication of support and activities available could be better. Perhaps an info leaflet given out to each child in ASN schools.

“ I'd just really like to find out more information about short breaks. I finally realise taking a break is important.

“ We really have lack of help & information for unpaid carers. We should have something set up for the ethnic minority as well. There are few places I know that are out there but for some carers especially from ethnic backgrounds, language, culture become barriers.

“ Information on Short Breaks needs to be more widespread. Put information into newspapers and GP practices.

Gaps and Barriers

Carers were asked (as in 2024) - Are there obvious gaps or barriers to accessing activities in your community?

To enhance and advance the effectiveness of Carer Breather for unpaid carers in North Lanarkshire, it is essential to understand the practical obstacles that stop carers from engaging in Carer Breather activities.

The majority of the carer responses fell into five distinct categories:

Lack of Information regarding what's available & Information Complexity

“ I'm often not aware of specific activities available for my cared for persons to attend, either with or without me as their carer. In my experience over the last 5 years, it felt like at times no one could point me in the direction of the right people/organisations for relevant help or info, but when I did the info was so vast it was overwhelming to take in.

Lack & Limitations of Replacement Care

“ The care that carers get is getting progressively better, but I am aware the main issue in carers accessing supports, is who looks after the person they are caring for when the carer is on a supported break/accessing a carer support activity. This seems to be one of the biggest and recurring problems with carers when accessing supports that are available.

Scheduling Challenges

“ Many support groups run during typical working hours which leaves working carers feeling isolated.

“ There are no evening groups with help to look after the person I care for.

Transport Barriers



Sometimes groups are held in community centres that aren't easy to get to without a car. Holding them on main bus or train routes would help.



The Northern Corridor is forgotten. We need local support groups and groups that we can get to without having to travel outwith the area.

Accessibility for Disabled Carers



Because I am in a wheelchair it is hard to access all activities as I need one to one support to and from groups.



If the carer is also disabled there can be a lack of support in helping the carer access breaks

Other less common themes reflected in the responses included:

Service Availability and Responsiveness

Financial Barriers to Support

Lack of Community Support

Multiple Caring Roles

Locality-specific Service Coverage & Age-specific Support Limitations

More Carers' Feedback

Carers were invited to share feedback or comments regarding the topic of Carer Breather. Listening to the insights and feelings of carers will undoubtedly lead to enhanced services and demonstrates a dedication to Engagement and Participation throughout North Lanarkshire.

“ I would love Breaks where I am still involved in the care but have extra support and can relax a bit more.

“ Many support groups run during typical working hours which leaves working carers feeling isolated.

“ Transport in the evenings. Company at night.

“ More support for the carer. Help with benefits. Information. Lots to take in, very overwhelming.

“ I was referred by my GP to one of the carers services but I feel they are too busy to deal with myself and offer support.

“ Carers for those with terminal end stage care really require support, don't get a minute and really need not to have to be chasing grants or long questions.

“ There are a lack of activities for younger Carers and Cared-for, who do not want to attend older peoples groups.

“ A lot seem to be outwith my area making it difficult to attend.

“ There doesn't seem to be a lot out there for multi complex children, my child struggled with loud and overcrowded groups.

“ I registered with carers support. I had a couple of contacts then nothing. I know they are there and I can contact, but I got so busy caring for mum. I forgot to look after myself, it would be good for impromptu check in calls. It could really help someone becoming unwell.

“ Financial insecurity is another major issue for unpaid carers accessing a lot of things that are taken for granted by others.

“ I think carers or those cared for should be made more aware of their rights in terms of vouchers for energy or anything else relating to the person they care for as much as possible. I understand every individual has different needs and it's difficult at times but by having more workshops that helps.



Carer Breather Projects' Consultation

All 15 Carer Breather projects were asked to complete an evaluation form with 2 key carer questions - their answers offer tremendous insight into how Phase 3 of Carer Breather could potentially be developed and ensure that this is based on what carers say they want and need.

How would carers like to see your project develop?

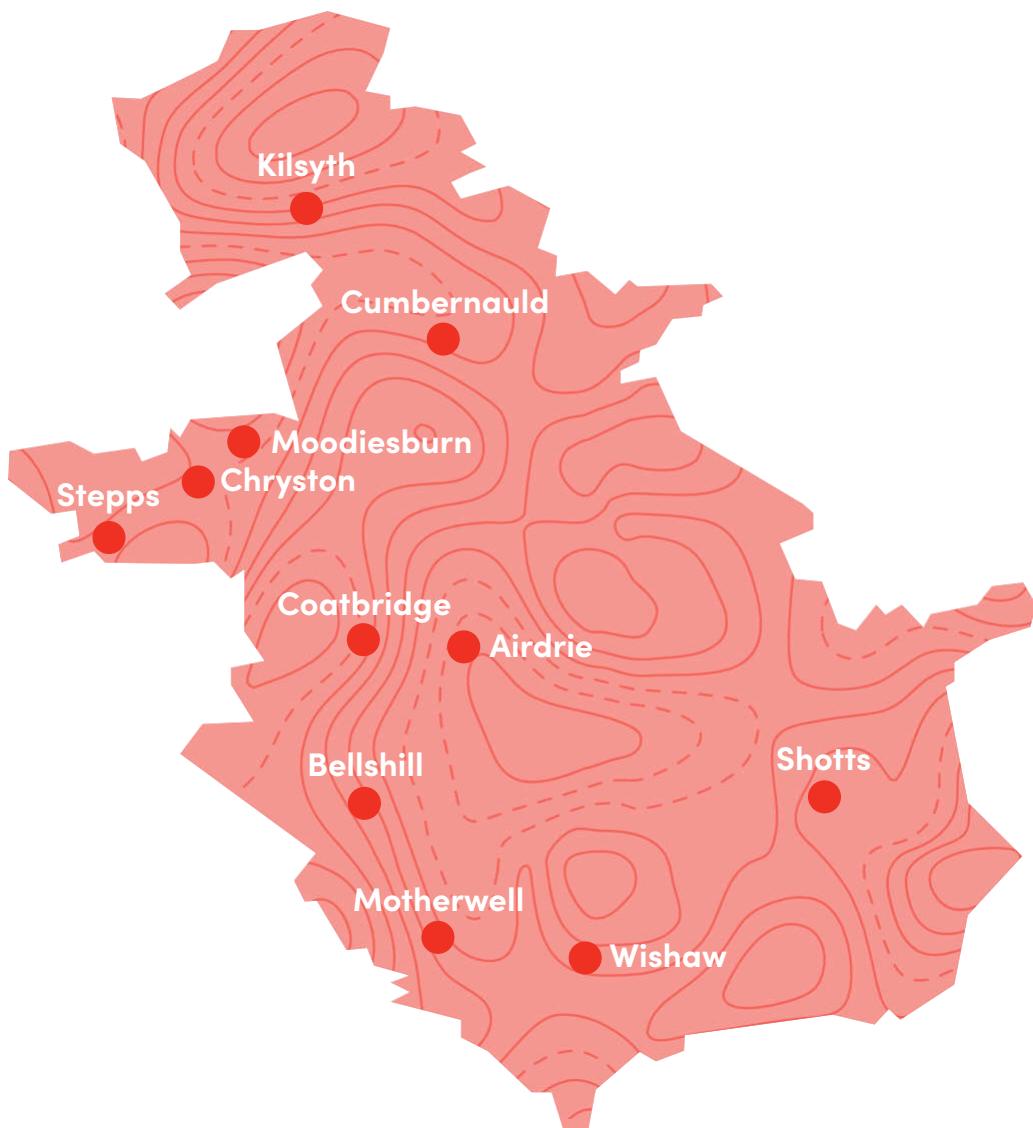
	Establish Sitter Services Across All Localities: Develop volunteer-based sitter models with training and safeguarding; replicate the successful, existing Sitter Service at Glenboig.
	As a result of our annual survey in September, there has been an increase in demand for a physical activity, i.e. Zumba, Yoga, Pilates. We are looking into making more use of the local Community Hubs to cater to the whole of North Lanarkshire instead of limiting it to the Wishaw area where our office is. The next thing most requested has been more information days, in particular self-advocacy.
	Carers would like to see more carer/cared for sessions in North Lanarkshire alongside more carer-focused funded sessions.
	Many carers are working and expressed the need for after work and weekend services. Most recent feedback stated they just wanted to come and have peace and quiet - 'I just want to read my book and not talk'.
	The carers who attend are enjoying the programme but have said there is quite a lot of things on in the mornings so would like to see an afternoon or early evening group. We will look at this for after the holiday and we may restructure the programme to suit.
	Our carers who have spent the season with us have expressed an interest in attending residential outdoor wellbeing retreats. We have conducted a pilot and this was a life changing experience for 2 carers and the disabled wife/mother. We would expand on the pilot and include some holistic wellbeing offerings such as sauna, cold water therapy and massage.

	Many carers have mentioned they would like to see the return of the wellness sessions.
	Carers have said they would like more activity nights or maybe some trips away.
	Many parents have limited time and appreciate the idea of having dedicated "parent time" while their children attend the youth group. This would give them a chance to rest, connect, or take part in supportive activities without having to travel home and back again, which can be tiring and impractical.

Have carers spoken to you about any other services/projects that they would like to see developed in North Lanarkshire, aside from your own project?

	There has been conversation around lack of public transport which is impacting access to several groups carers would like to attend.
	Carers speak about their wishes for befriending services.
	I think all carers are so grateful for any support that can be offered to them. I have spoken with some families regarding the sitter service and this is something that would be very beneficial not so much directly impacting the young carers this project supports but the wider family at home.
	Our carers enjoy activities such as Heart for Art, Dementia Choir in South and would like to see/access similar in North Lanarkshire.
	If we could identify a reliable, qualified sitter service within North Lanarkshire, similar to what Glenboig offers for the elderly, that would be the dream.
	Formal certified learning opportunities with flexible access i.e. learning from home. Support with small business start-up & understanding what can be developed without losing benefits.
	Our families would like to see better inclusive facilities that they can use with their loved ones, this includes access to more leisure facilities, buildings with changing places facilities.

	<p>Often carers are surprised that they can bring the person they care for with them to group - which is invaluable to them in terms of being able to attend something for themselves. A sitter service might be even more beneficial.</p>
	<p>Carers have asked for us to develop other projects for them, including groups with activities where they can chat to their peers in a safe space. We have looked into holistic therapies and are piloting a group but costing for this will be a barrier for carers.</p>
	<p>Carers have expressed interest in respite opportunities specifically tailored for deaf children, to ensure both the child and their family can benefit from appropriate support and rest.</p>



Key Insights

High Demand for Short Breaks but Significant Barriers

70% of carers provide 35+ hours of care weekly, with 54% caring for 50+ hours - double the national rate. This creates an acute need for meaningful breaks.

Significant barriers include lack of replacement care, information challenges, scheduling challenges, transport issues, and accessibility for disabled carers.

Sitter Services Are a Critical Gap

Two-thirds of respondents would use or consider using a sitter service, yet many cannot access activities because no one can look after the cared-for person.

Carers repeatedly expressed that sitter services are essential for enabling participation.

Information Provision Is A Challenge

Over half of carers (55%) want clearer information about short breaks; many report not knowing what's available or where to look.

Suggestions include regular updates, named contacts, and culturally inclusive communication.

Preference for Health & Wellbeing Activities

Health and wellbeing activities scored highest (64.7%), followed by arts and music. Carers want flexibility and choice, not a one-size-fits-all approach.

Ethnic and Age Diversity Requires Tailored Solutions

90% of respondents are White British/Scottish, but minority carers face language and cultural barriers. Most carers are over 45, and many care for children under 18 or older adults, requiring varied support models.

Conclusion

Our 2024 Carer Breather Consultation highlighted that the lack of access to replacement care for the cared-for is a substantial barrier to carers taking part in activities. Furthermore, a significant percentage of carers showed an appetite for a Sitter Service where the replacement care could be provided by a Volunteer for up to two hours per week in their own home.

Sitter Services – A Fundamental Enabler

Two-thirds of carers surveyed indicated they would use or consider a sitter service if available. Carers repeatedly expressed that the absence of replacement care is the single biggest obstacle preventing them from participating in activities. Without someone to look after the cared-for person, even the most accessible and well-designed Carer Breather activities remain out of reach. Introducing sitter services across North Lanarkshire would directly address this gap, enabling carers to take meaningful breaks without guilt or logistical stress.

Information Provision – Closing the Awareness Gap

Over half of respondents (55%) reported that clearer information about short breaks would make it easier for them to access support. Many carers stated they simply do not know what is available or where to look. Suggestions included named contacts who understand carers' circumstances, regular updates, and culturally inclusive communication strategies. Improving information provision is not just about visibility - it is about creating confidence and reducing the complexity that carers currently face when seeking support.

Why These Changes Matter

Carers in North Lanarkshire are providing care at levels far above the national average, with 54% caring for 50+ hours per week. This intensity underscores the urgency of removing barriers to respite. By prioritising sitter services and robust, accessible information channels, Phase 3 of Carer Breather can deliver on its promise: not just to help carers survive, but to thrive.

Survey Context

1,781 unpaid carers completed the State of Caring 2025 survey in Scotland. Scotland's Census 2022 found that there are 627,700 unpaid carers in Scotland. This represents a 0.28% response rate at a national level. The State of Caring survey is the UK's most comprehensive regular research into the lives and experiences of unpaid carers.

In comparison, 329 unpaid carers completed NLCT's Carer Breather survey (online and hard copy). Scotland's Census 2022 advises there are 45,300 carers living in North Lanarkshire. This represents a **0.73%** response rate, more than **2.6 times** the national return.

1,781

unpaid carers completed the State of Caring 2025 survey in Scotland.

627,700

unpaid carers in Scotland.

0.28%

response rate nationally.

329

unpaid carers completed NLCT's Carer Breather survey.

45,300

carers living in North Lanarkshire.

0.73%

response rate locally (2.6 times national return).

Key Need

The findings reported here come against the backdrop of the 54% of North Lanarkshire carers who responded to our survey advising they are caring for 50+ hours per week. It is worth noting that this is more than twice the National Rate of 24.3% (Scotland's Census 2022). The acute need for meaningful Carer Breather activities that provide a real rest for carers and a break from both their caring role and their routine is clear.

Co-Design Imperative

It is key that co-design with carers should be embedded in every part of development of Carer Breather, moving forward.

Legislative Context

The Care Reform Bill passed in the Scottish Parliament in June 2025. It marked a pivotal moment for Scotland's unpaid carers as it passed into law the legal Right to A Break from Caring.

“ *This new right has the potential to be transformative for carers. The legislation makes changes to the existing Carers Act and means that access to sufficient breaks from caring will be an identified personal outcome for every carer. Where a carer is unable to take sufficient breaks, the support required to meet that need is recorded within a support plan, and the local authority has a legal duty to provide the support necessary to meet this need. No eligibility criteria applies, and no charge will be made to the carer.*

Kate Hogarth, Chief Executive at Shared Care Scotland

Opportunities for UHSCNL

“ *University Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire should be congratulated for Carer Breather and Time for Me services. Additionally, they now have an opportunity to develop and improve how Carer Breather activities are provided and create a blueprint for other local authority areas to adopt, whilst getting ahead of the curve in relation to a Right to a Break. This consultation provides a body of evidence direct from carers, upon which to consider next steps.*

Colin Smith, Manager at North Lanarkshire Carers Together

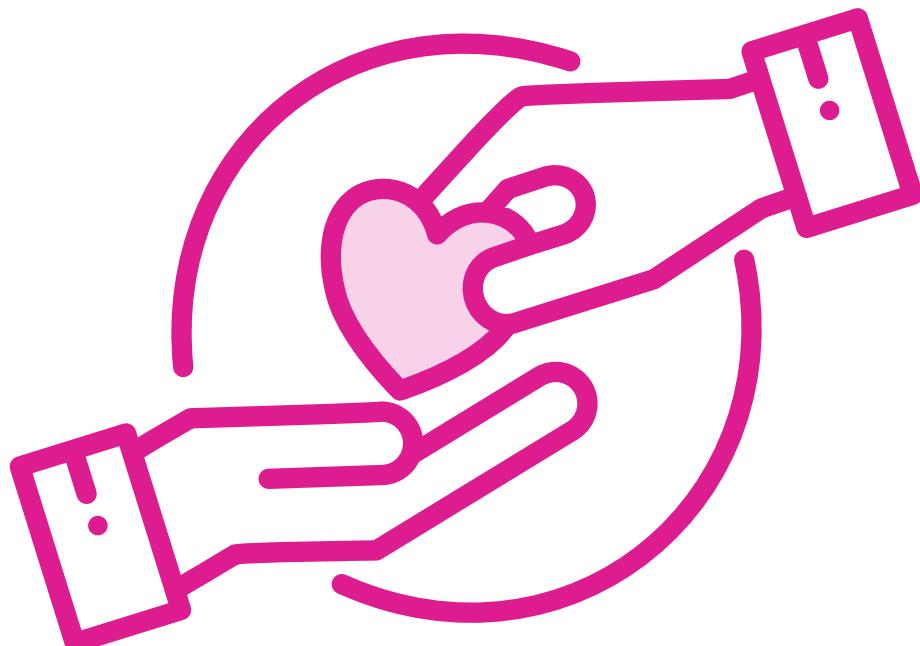
Considerations

How will Phase 3 address the two biggest barriers - lack of sitter services and information challenges - given their strong impact on access?

Are current Carer Breather activities sufficiently flexible to meet diverse needs (age, cultural background, complex care situations)?

What measurable outcomes will demonstrate that new investments (e.g., sitter services, improved communication) reduce barriers and increase participation?

How will current and any new Carer Breather activity or projects ensure carer engagement and co-design is integral?



Recommendations for Phase 3 Development

To ensure Carer Breather continues to deliver meaningful, accessible breaks for unpaid carers in North Lanarkshire, the following recommendations are proposed.

1 Establish Sitter Services Across All Localities

Why:

Two-thirds of carers would use or consider using a sitter service yet lack of replacement care remains the most significant barrier to participation.

Action steps:

- Develop a volunteer-based sitter service model with appropriate training and safeguarding measures (replicating the existing service at Glenboig).
- Prioritise the creation of Sitter Services across all localities.
- Ensure sitter services are flexible and culturally sensitive, accommodating complex care needs and diverse family situations with robust supervision, training and safeguarding embedded.

2 Improve Information Provision and Communication

Why:

55% of carers want clearer information about short breaks; many report not knowing what's available or where to look

Action steps:

- Assign named contacts within Carer Breather projects to provide personalised guidance and support.
- Create a centralised, easy-to-navigate information hub (online and offline) listing all Carer Breather activities and eligibility details.
- Distribute regular updates via multiple channels: social media, GP practices, schools, community hubs, and local newspapers.
- Develop inclusive communication strategies for ethnic minority carers, including translated materials and culturally tailored outreach.

3 Expand Flexibility and Choice in Activities

Why:

Carers expressed a strong preference for health and wellbeing activities (64.7%) and want options that fit their schedules and family needs.

Action steps:

- Offer activities at varied times (evenings, weekends) to accommodate working carers.
- Provide a mix of individual, family, and joint activities, ensuring carers can choose what suits their circumstances.
- Explore home-based or online options for carers with mobility or transport challenges.

4 Address Accessibility and Inclusion

Why:

Carers with disabilities and those from minority backgrounds face additional barriers.

Action steps:

- Ensure venues are fully accessible and provide support such as BSL interpreters or assistive technology.
- Develop targeted outreach for minority communities and carers of children with complex needs.

5 Monitor and Measure Impact

Why:

To demonstrate effectiveness and inform future investment.

Action steps:

- Track uptake of sitter services and effectiveness of information resources.
- Collect feedback on whether these interventions reduce barriers and increase participation.
- Report outcomes against key wellbeing indicators (e.g., reduced stress, improved health).



Thank you

North Lanarkshire Carers Together would like to extend our sincere thanks to every unpaid carer who took the time to share their experiences, views, and ideas through this consultation. Your honesty, insight, and willingness to engage, often alongside demanding caring responsibilities, have been invaluable. We are also grateful to the Carer Breather and Time for Me projects, and to partner organisations across North Lanarkshire, for their thoughtful contributions and ongoing commitment to supporting carers. This report is rooted in what carers have told us, and it will directly inform the future development of Carer Breather as we work together to ensure carers are supported not just to survive, but to thrive.



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