



Carers' Strategy for Fife

2026 – 2029

Helping carers in Fife to have a life alongside caring, and to protect their health and wellbeing

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Foreword by Roy Lawrence, Head of Culture, Engagement and Communities

Firstly, I want to thank all carers across Fife for the dedication, compassion and support you show every day. From my own experience as a carer, I understand both the challenges—the personal sacrifices and impact on family and relationships—and the real sense of purpose and, at times, joy that caring can bring.

Since taking on the role of senior lead for carers' support within Fife's Health & Social Care Partnership, I have been struck by both the strength of what is already in place and the scale of what still lies ahead. Demand continues to grow and meeting that challenge—together with our partners—remains a clear and shared priority.

This refreshed strategy reflects both progress and realism. Like many partnerships, we have faced significant challenges in recent years, particularly financial pressures that have inevitably affected the pace of our ambitions. Despite this, we have achieved a great deal—providing a solid foundation on which we will now build, improve, and strengthen our support for carers.

The strategic direction remains largely consistent, with one important development. Since our last strategy, the Care Reform (Scotland) Act has been passed. This brings new rights for carers to access breaks from their caring role, alongside a significant new duty for the Partnership to deliver these rights. Preparing for and implementing this will be a central focus of our work over the coming years.

We will also continue to play a strong and active role beyond Fife—both learning from others and shaping the national conversation on carers' support. Fife is recognised for its practical, grounded approach, and we will continue to use our experience to inform and influence national thinking. Through sustained engagement with national carer organisations and networks, we have ensured that Fife's voice is heard and that the lived experience of carers here helps shape wider understanding and future priorities.

We will continue to align our approach with the evolving national policy context. In doing so, we have had regard to the National Carers Organisations' Manifesto and are grateful for the leadership and support of partners including Carers Trust, Shared Care Scotland, Carers Scotland, and the Coalition of Carers in Scotland. This ensures our strategy is both locally grounded and informed by national insight, best practice, and collective ambition.

At the same time, our focus remains firmly local. We know that for carers, what matters most is timely, accessible support close to home. Our Carers Community Chest and our locality-based teams are central to this, and strengthening local delivery will be critical to improving carers' experience.

Most importantly, this strategy is grounded in the voices of carers themselves. Through engagement with 672 people across Fife, there was clear and overwhelming support—over 96% agreement—for continuing with our five existing priorities. This strong endorsement gives us confidence that we are focused on what matters most.

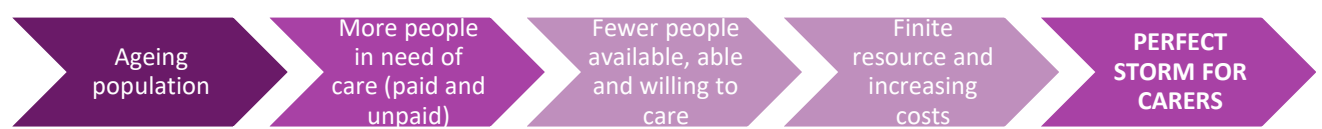
I encourage you to read this strategy and reflect on what it sets out to achieve. Above all, I want to recognise and thank the more than 44,000 carers across Fife for the vital contribution you make to families and communities every day.

I would also like to thank our voluntary sector partners, who deliver so much of this essential support, and the dedicated staff across our HSCP and partner organisations whose professionalism and commitment make a real difference every day.

Executive Summary and Strategy-on-a-Page

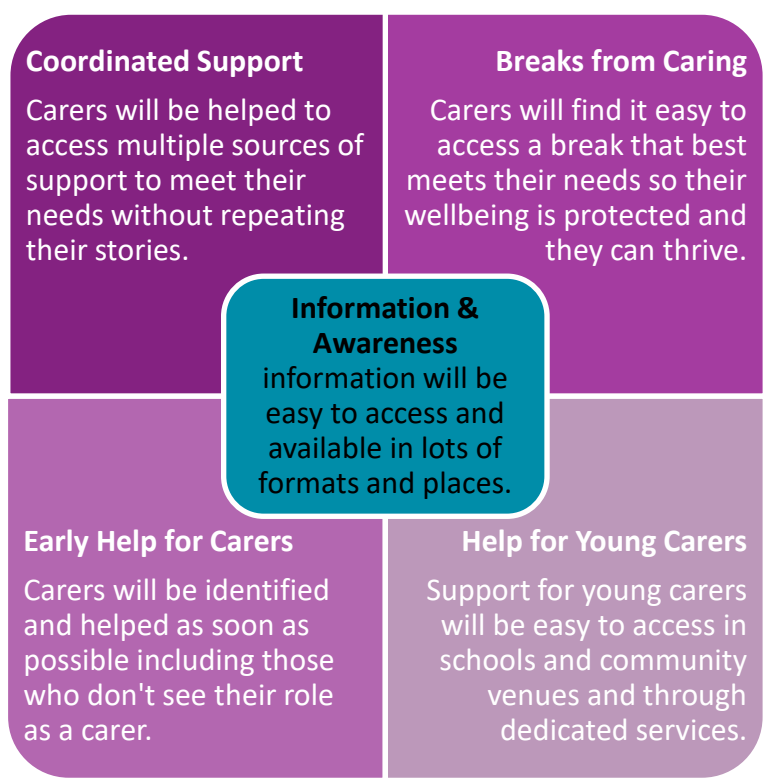
Demand for support for and from carers is increasing; up by 27% to 44,222 in 11 years since the 2011 Census Scotland. The capacity of the commissioned services is not increasing at the same pace due to increasing costs and financial constraints, the finite availability of a skilled workforce, and general awareness among carers and professionals of what is available already. Additional money to support carers has not been made available by Scottish Government since 2023.

Demand for support is increasing; resources are not increasing at the same pace. The problem is best illustrated in this diagram:



The current strategic assessment emphasises the pressures we are facing, which are well known, and the impending challenges from the new duties of the Care Reform Act, the details of which are unclear at the time of writing. However, it is reasonable and prudent to plan for the new rights which, once implemented will have a significant impact; already breaks are widely requested, often costly, and lacking in availability; we anticipate this position will become ever more challenging.

Our consultation with carers and commissioned partners has confirmed, by a significant majority, that the priorities in the 2023 – 2026 strategy remain current. They have agreed our suggestion to retain a priority focus on these areas in the next strategy. Therefore, we will build on the excellent foundations already set down and plan for greater investment where possible to meet the specific needs carers have told us are important to them and which will help them to meet their own needs for support.



Five Priority Outcomes

Information and awareness are an essential priority which will support the other four. This includes specific actions relating to digital awareness and service access; however, many carers tell us they do not access information using online resources therefore our information will also be made available in traditional formats.

This strategy and these outcomes are fully aligned to meet the national carers strategy, the Duties of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and the Fife Health & Social Care Partnership’s Strategic Plan for Fife 2026-29.

Delivering support will be through local partnerships wherever possible. Our locality-based carer support staff play an integral role in this focus which will lead to easy and quick access to support services and a better experience for carers.

Additionally, we will look at what other support we can introduce for carers with specific characteristics. These may include working carers, carers within the Armed Forces and veterans, kindred carers, and carer of under-represented groups. While some support is universal, the nature of these groups may necessitate additional support to help them balance their caring roles with other specific commitments and needs.

Fife Health & Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan

"Support unpaid carers so they can stay healthy and well while balancing and maintaining their caring role"

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

National Carers Strategy

Carers' Strategy Vision

"All carers will have access to high quality information and support at a time and place that best meets their needs, which enables them to make positive choices to thrive and flourish as a carer for as long as they want to, and to help them live a happy and fulfilling life alongside their caring role"

National Carer Organisations Involvement

National Carer Manifesto Priorities

Outcome 1
Information & Awareness

Outcome 2
Coordinated Support

Outcome 3
Breaks from Caring

Outcome 4
Early Help for Carers

Outcome 5
Help for Young Carers

Develop a communication and information sharing plan

Improve how we complete high quality ACSP/YCS

Commission a market gap analysis study of breaks options

Embed a faster timescale to offer and complete ACSP

Develop support tools that help teachers to support carers

Deliver quarterly awareness raising campaign

Invest in workforce skills development

Develop a market options appraisal and stimulation plan

Support GPs and professionals to identify carers routinely

Introduce more support for young carers in transition phases

Create a new carers digital self-service information tool

Complete a full support services recommissioning exercise

Commission and promote new options for breaks for carers

Embed the use of AI in self-service support for carers

Ensure young carers can access support at all times of the year

Introduce tools and learning that supports carers' self-help

Improve value for money from commissioned services

Refresh and publish the Short Breaks Service Statement

Help school staff to identify carers earlier, including pupils' carers.

Develop short breaks options specifically for young carers

Carers' benefits
Carers can easily access high-quality information and support where, when, and how they want it

Carers' benefits
Carers have access to support quickly from partners that deliver excellence and value for money

Carers' benefits
Carers have access to a range of breaks opportunities that support their wellbeing and life balance

Carers' benefits
People who look after others will be identified as soon as possible and given information

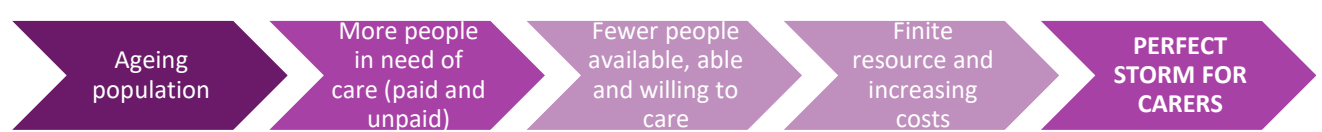
Carers' benefits
Young carers have a clear choice to be a young person first and supported to be a carer as well

Introduction, background, and strategic assessment

Since the publication of our last Carers’ Strategy for Fife, 2023 – 2026, the conditions in which support is provided to carers has changed markedly. This section of the strategy outlines the strategic assessment for the next period, which includes some uncertainties and reasonable assumptions.

Our assessment, based on a range of independent information sources, confirms there is and will be an increase in demand for services and in cash terms, less money available to provide it with greater pressures on how that public money is invested.

This position is true in all parts of Scotland and Fife is no exception. The Scottish Government’s report, Scotland’s Carers, 2026, Main Report, Who Provides Care in Scotland¹, notes that Scotland is entering a period where demand for unpaid care will rise sharply, while political support for carers is intensifying. The next three years will be defined by demographic pressure, continuing post-pandemic recovery, cost-of-living impacts, and a renewed national push for reform. This is summarised in the diagram below:



The number of carers in Fife, as recorded in the Scottish Census 2022 and reported in the KnowFife Briefing², has increased by 27% since the previous census in 2011; formally 44,222 reported they are a carer. However, we know this will significantly underreport the real number of carers; many people with a caring role do not identify or refer to themselves as a carer. This is often particularly true of older people who care for their spouse, and for parent carers.

Carers in Fife in Numbers

44,222 carers in Fife ¹	Number of carers in Fife increased by 27% in 11 years	12% of Fife population are carers ¹	21% of carers are 50 – 64 years old; 11% are 65 or older
In Scotland 73% of carers are female; 58% of young carers are female ³	In Fife 53% of cared-for people are male; only 35% of carers are male – men are more likely to need care but less likely to be a carer ³	1 in 7 young carers live in the most deprived areas in Fife ³	1 in 4 young carers care for someone for 20+ hours per week ³
38% caring for 50 hours per week ³	82% of carers report emotional well-being impact from caring ³	78% of adult carers report life balance impact from caring ³	730 Adult Carers with completed Support Plans; only 29% ³ agreed to have an ACSP

¹ Scotland’s Carers, 2026, Main Report, Who Provides Care in Scotland, (www.scot.gov.uk) 24 March 2026, accessed 6 April 2026.

² KnowFife Briefing (<https://know.fife.scot/>), 7 October 2024, accessed 6 April 2026

³ Carers Census, (www.scot.gov.uk), Fife, 2023-24, data collected and reported as experimental data by Scottish Government, 2025

Further evidence of the need for support and pressure on resources is reported in the National Carer Organisations' Manifesto: supporting unpaid carers and young carers in 2026 and beyond⁴. In summary, it reports:

- **Increased demand for carer support organisations** - As caring roles intensify, local services face rising requests for emotional support, advocacy, income maximisation, and crisis intervention.
- **Growing need for mental health and wellbeing support** - Carers report high levels of stress, burnout, and isolation. It calls for universal access to counselling and flexible healthcare appointments.
- **Short breaks under strain** - Demand for respite far exceeds supply. A national short breaks improvement plan is being proposed to address this gap.
- **Transition points for young carers** - Schools and colleges will face new expectations around identification, support, and awareness training.

Adding to the existing challenges is the new Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025. Once implemented it will lead to further increases in demand for breaks from caring for a more carers, all of whom will be eligible for support. We have assessed the strategic risks and our mitigating responses for the next three years as:

Strategic assessment & implications	Opportunity & response
Sustained growth in demand for assessment, advocacy, mental health support, and income maximisation.	Build capacity to meet rising complexity Strengthen triage, crisis support, and specialist roles (mental health, dementia, income maximisation).
Need for scalable models of short breaks, including community-based and flexible options.	Lead on breaks innovation and investment Position Fife as a national exemplar for flexible, community-based respite.
Greater emphasis on early identification, especially in primary care, education, and community settings.	Embed carers in prevention and early intervention pathways Especially in primary care, schools, and community mental health.
Stronger partnership working across health, social care, education, and third sector organisations.	Deepen co-production Ensure carers shape strategy, service design commissioning, and performance assessment.
Increased scrutiny of outcomes, with funders expecting evidence of impact on wellbeing, financial security, and reduced inequalities.	Secure sustainable funding Use evidence and outcomes to negotiate multi-year agreements between the HSCP as funders and the commissioned organisations that deliver support directly for carers benefit.

⁴ National Carer Organisations' Manifesto: supporting unpaid carers and young carers in 2026 and beyond (www.carersuk.org), 2026, accessed 6 April 2026.

Our achievements so far

Reflecting on our past achievements is an important part of planning and improvement. In 2025 we published an annual report detailing the progress we've made so far. Since then, we have achieved more.

Within the context of reduced financial capacity, the following high-level improvements in the final year of the 2023/26 strategy were made:

Summary of action	What we achieved
Introduce a refined and integrated approach to adult carer support planning.	Collaboration between social work and Fife Carers Centre led to review of the ACSP based on carers' feedback and resulted in a shorter, more streamlined, and easier to understand ACSP incorporating the new Supporting Carers Eligibility Framework.
Delivered meaningful skills development training and ongoing support for the staff.	Hosted collaboration events to developing the relationships between partners' staff and improve consistency for carers. Developed and delivered additional learning for staff to improve the approach and quality of ACSP. This will be rolled out to other provider partners in 2026/27.
Work with key stakeholders across partner organisations to ensure all relevant training is available to carers.	We supported the delivery of the Dementia Carers Education Programme. We are exploring how we may be able to make this available to a wider group of carers, e.g. carers of people with stroke and neurological conditions.
A settled specialist team within social work who have developed their skills to support carers.	A review of the social work team led to efficiency improvements and a greater dedicated focus on direct support for carers.
Improve awareness through active campaigning to share information about support for carers' eligible unmet needs.	We have developed communication and awareness raising campaign that uses both traditional and modern methods, including digital media, focus groups and workshops, events, and activities with partners.
We will implement a more rigorous and robust approach to monitoring our provider partners' performance and achievements for carers.	We completed a review of all commissioned partners. We identified areas of service that were not working well and delivering value for public money. We will complete a full recommissioning exercise to ensure our investment makes the best benefit for carers and the limited public funds available.

Our Approach to Supporting Carers in Fife

In 2025 the Fife Health & Social Care Partnership reviewed the local eligibility criteria. We established a new framework that is clearer and more transparent.

Our investments prioritise the support that is free and easy to access for any carer; this is called universal support. Most of this is provided through our strong partnership with voluntary and independent organisations. We encourage all carers to request an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carers Statement. These help understand each carer's circumstances and needs for support. These plans focus on the outcomes each individual carer and how we will help them to achieve their goals.

Our approach to supporting carers is by providing early help and focusing their plan to prevent crisis, future planning, and lowering risks. Most carers need a little help which can be accessed from the universal supports we commission.

For the carers in greatest need, where their life, health and safety are at real risk of harm, we are required to provide additional support when necessary to meeting their other needs in their caring role. This is called '*eligible needs*' and is based on a critical level of need in the new supporting carers eligibility framework⁵⁵.



We understand that not all carers are equal and some experience specific challenges in their caring roles due to other circumstances in the lives. This includes working carers, carers who have a more transient life due to the nature of the work within those families, such as carers within His Majesties' armed services, and carers who otherwise would not access support because of their cultural and heritage norms. Our approach will ensure every carer's own circumstances are fully considered and that these circumstances are not a barrier to them accessing support and services.

⁵⁵ [Fife Health & Social Care Partnership Supporting Carers \(Eligibility\) Framework](#)

Our Local Timescale Standard to Access an ACSP or YCS

All carers have the right to request and have an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carers Statement. These are available from Fife Council social work⁶ and a few commissioned partners including the Fife Carers Centre⁷ and Fife Young Carers⁸.

Below are the current timescales we aim to meet to provide carers with access to their right to an ACSP or YCS. In many cases these standards have proven very challenging to meet due to competing demands on services, a high and increasing number of carers seeking support, and pressures on staff and partners to achieve tight deadlines for these and many other support services for carers. Therefore, during the next strategy period we will review each of these to ensure they are achievable and aligned to directions or guidance that results from the Scottish Government's current consultation about these timescales, and importantly, meet the specific needs of the carers themselves.

Carers of a terminally person

5 working days (light touch assessment)

- Light touch focus on urgent outcomes for the carer, and immediate needs for support.
- Full carer conversation follows timeline for substantial need.

Critical/Intensive

Within 10 working days (Young carers - 1 week)

- Caring role is in immediate risk of failing and/or the carers own health is failing.
- Outcomes focus on recovering this situation and reducing the risk.
- Eligible for extra help to address support needs not met through universal support.

Substantial

Within 5 weeks (Young carers - 1 week)

- Direct help will prevent carer role and their caring relationships from breaking down.
- Focus on outcomes to help the carer improve their own situation - supported by professional.
- Assessment and support provided by voluntary sector or social worker or school.

Moderate/Additional

Within 10 weeks (Young carers - 4 weeks)

- Help to maintain caring situation and carer's personal well-being.
- Focus on outcomes to help the carer improve their own situation - self-serve help.
- Assessment and support provided by voluntary sector, social worker or school.

Low/No need/Universal

Within 3 months (Young carers - 8 weeks)

- Support and advice will promote carer's independence and resilience.
- Self directed emergency planning tool-kit.
- Mostly helped through self-service or direct referral to universal support.

⁶ <https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/health-and-social-care2/help-for-adults>

⁷ <https://www.fifecarerscentre.org/>

⁸ <https://fifeyoungcarers.co.uk/>

When considering the context for the next strategy we have also taken the opportunity to reflect on the last strategy, our successes and what has impeded greater success. These influence our decisions in development this new strategy.

We achieved a great deal during the last carers’ strategy period and increased the investments in local support for carers wherever possible. However, we know that we need to do more; we remain committed to a continuing path of improvement to meet carers’ needs more quickly and with even greater success.

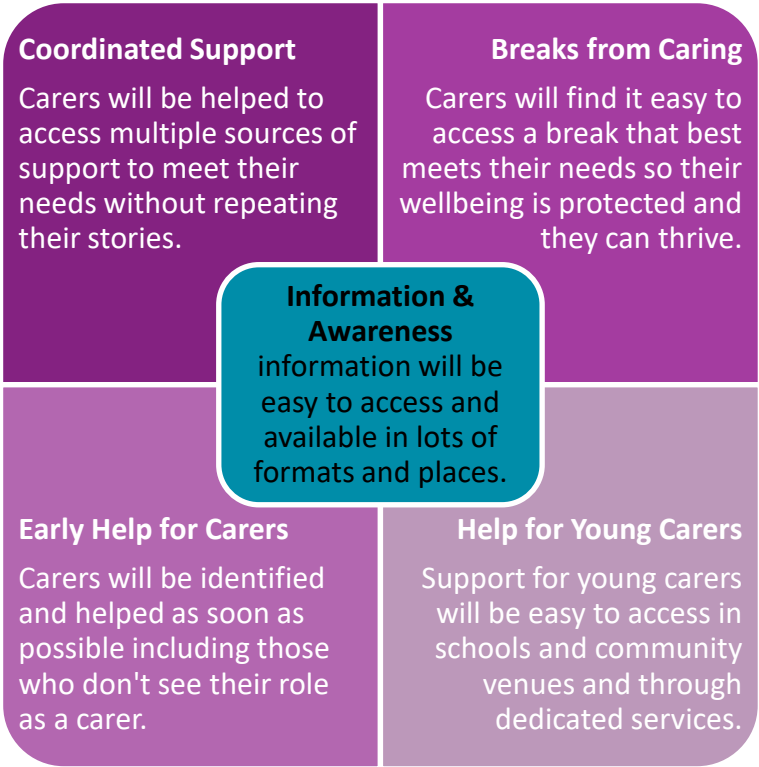
Since the 2025 annual report, we have made further progress including:

- Completed the review of the Adult Carer Support Planning process through collaboration with third sector partners.
- Published a new Supporting Carers Framework as our new eligibility criteria for Fife.
- Completed a full review of all commissioned services leading to some efficiency gains.
- Held the third round of the Carers Community Chest and made further investment in local projects for carers by carers.
- Commenced work on a new communications and awareness raising campaign which will lead us into the next strategy period.

As we close this last chapter of our carer’s strategy for 2023 – 2026, now we turn to building on these successes.

Through consultation and co-production engagement activities, carers have told us the current priorities should remain the same. Partners also advise us we should keep the current focus. Therefore, in the Carers’ Strategy for Fife 2026 – 2029 we will redouble our efforts through these five priority outcomes.

On the following pages we provide some additional information that will help readers to understand our ambitions.



Delivery Plan & Supporting Plans

A detailed operational delivery plan to support the management and control of this strategy is in place. It will be used to report progress towards this strategy.

Below is a single-page delivery plan which highlights the key outcomes over the first year of the strategy. This is directly aligned to the Fife Health & Social Care Partnership's Strategic Plan for 2026 – 2029⁹.

We will develop similar detailed plans for the second and third years of the carer's strategy closer to their implementation period.

What we do...	Who is engaged and will be involved...	How they will feel...	What they will learn and gain...	What we do differently...	What difference does this make...
Provide information to carers on their rights and what supports are available.	Adult carers	Carers feel recognised, valued, listened to, an equal partner in care.	Carers identify themselves as unpaid carers, know it is ok to ask for help, understand their rights and how to access support, information and advice.	Carers access the right supports at the right time, including taking breaks from their caring role and securing welfare rights entitlements.	Carers can sustain their caring role while maintaining their own health, wellbeing and quality of life.
Identify and support carers to develop their own personal support plan, helping carers take an active role in improving their health and wellbeing.	Young carers and young adult carers				
Work collaboratively to design, deliver and commission services to support carers.	Fife HSCP Workforce and leadership	Carers feel they have choice and control over their services and supports.	Carers can access a wide range of support and services including breaks from caring Practitioners, planners and managers know what is working well and what can be improved.	Carers look after their own physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing and cope during times of stress.	
Support carers to access meaningful breaks from their caring role.	Statutory Sector and Independent Partners				
Deliver age-appropriate support that meets the needs of all young carers, promotes their wellbeing, rights, life opportunities and which help them transition into adulthood.	Third Sector & Commissioned Partners	Our workforce feel skilled, confident and supported to provide high quality support to carers.	Our workforce have the skills, knowledge and confidence to identify, support and involve carers in accordance with legislative requirements and best practice.	Services and supports are designed and improved based on what carers have told us is important and their ongoing feedback.	

When developing this strategy and the accompanying delivery plan we have given careful consideration of the need to foster good relations in the civic realm, the requirements to ensure all members of the community are aware of the services which they can access, and the broader considerations of equality, diversity, and inclusion. To support this element of planning we have prepared an Equality Impact Assessment¹⁰.

This strategy also supports a wide range of other strategies across Fife, with an emphasis on local opportunity, local delivery, and local accountability all with carers in mind. We will strive to strengthen easy access to information and support throughout each of our seven localities, build on the local assets to help carers and whenever possible focus local services to meet local needs, aspirations, and diversity. Helping carers in their own communities is key to our success.

⁹ <https://www.fifehealthandsocialcare.org/about-us/publications/>

¹⁰ Equality Impact Assessment is defined in the

Carer quotes about accessing LinkLiving Self-Help service

I came the service at a crisis point and left feeling much more able to cope with my caring role and knowing I have things I can do when life gets tough. Thank you! :-)

"If I fill my cup up first, I will be more able to manage my mind, this will make me a better Mum. And I will also be thinking about myself - which is just as important".

"I feel I am getting out of the "slump" I had found myself in and am feeling more positive about things, I also feel I have the tools to help me continue."

With thanks to LinkLiving

Carer quotes about accessing Sense Scotland's sensory sessions and Carers Café

"A chance to relax and the girls to be safe."

"I massively benefit. I have learned what he likes and it takes the pressure of me."

"I meet other families and can share experiences. I benefit from contact with other parents/carers and knowing that my child has had a fun and stimulating session."

"I enjoy the time to chat to other parents and carers."

"It is useful to get advice and exchange experiences with other parents/carers."

With thanks to Sense Scotland

Carer quotes about accessing Change Mental Health's support in Fife

"Knowing someone is there to support me through the tough days has kept me going".

"Coming to the group makes me feel good... being with like-minded people helps so much."

"The guidance I received helped me understand my rights and what support was available."

"For the first time in a long time, I don't feel alone in this."

"The carers group is my emotional life jacket."

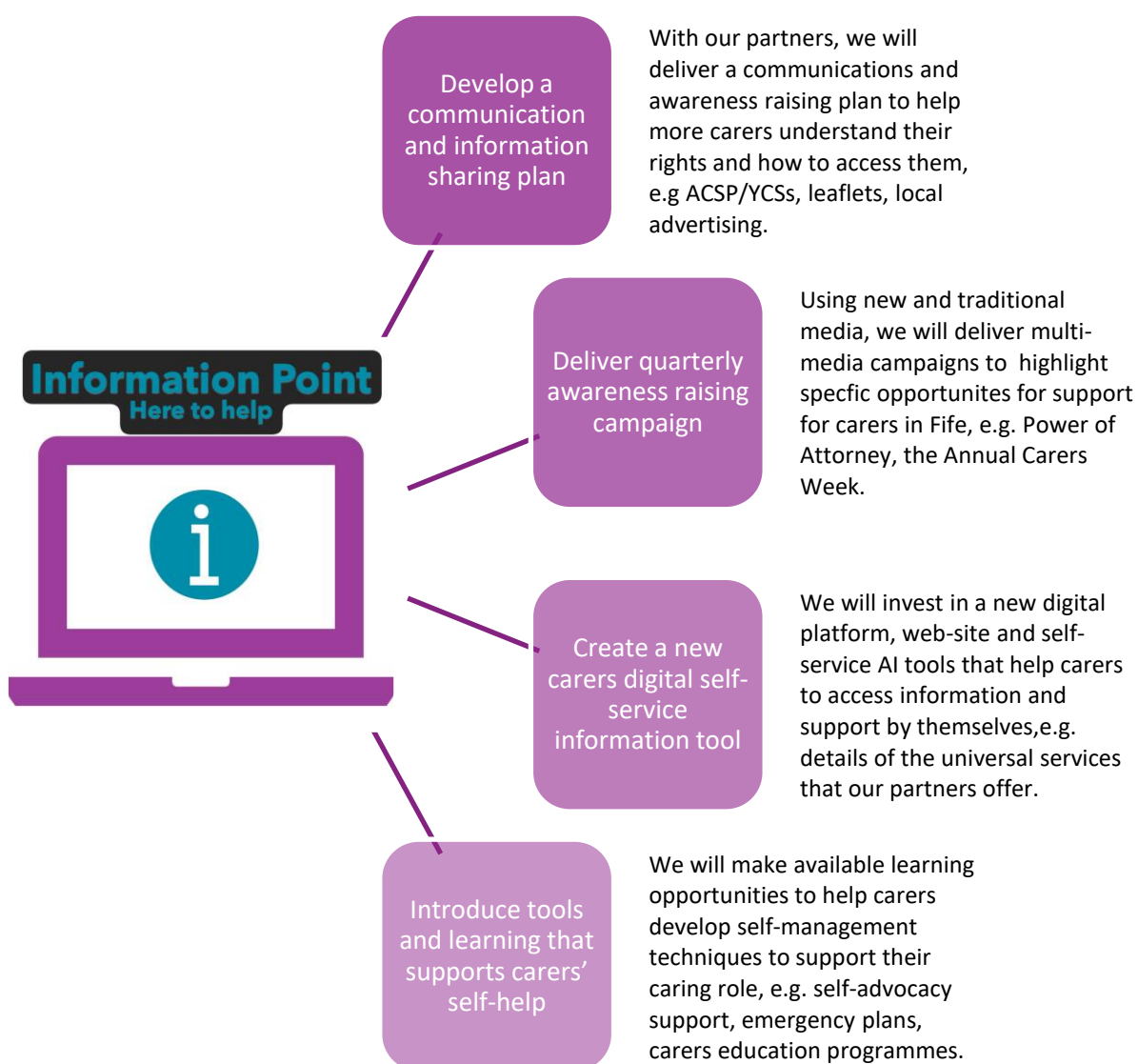
With thanks to Change Mental Health

Our ambitions for 2026 - 2029

The five priority outcomes in this strategy have been developed with the involvement of carers, staff, and partners. Each group has confirmed that these outcomes are important to them and will support carers on their own individual journeys to live a balanced and positive life alongside their caring roles.

Outcome 1 – Information & awareness

Carers tell us they don't always know what information is available, where to access it or who to ask despite this being key to supporting carers and helping them to help themselves. For this reason, information will remain our central priority and one which links directly to the other four outcomes in this strategy. And whenever possible our approach will be through local activities and partners.

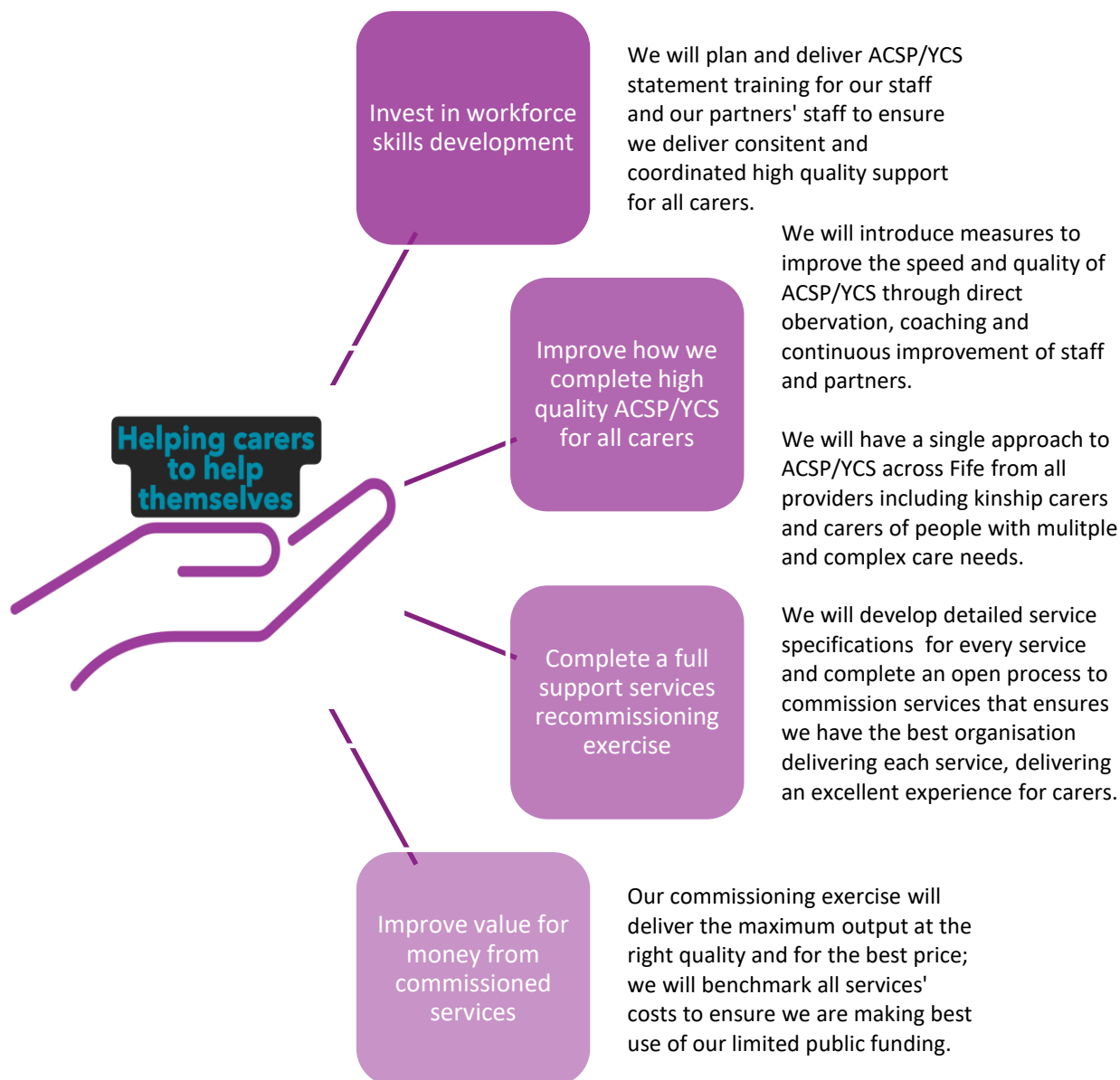


By the end of this strategy:

- Carers will tell us their access to information has improved.
- More people will access information on our website.
- Carers will actively use the self-service tools without support.

Outcome 2 – Coordinated support for carers

Carers tell often don't have easy or quick access to high quality support that meets their needs for support. They feel that they find having to repeat their stories can be distressing and frustrating. They want professionals to talk to each other and help smooth their access to the support they need to live well and balance their own health and wellbeing with their caring responsibilities.



The Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 also introduces a new timescale standard for completing ACPS and YCS. Our improvement actions will lead to delivery of these new standards from day one.

As we look to commission new services, we will place a high value on supporting organisations whose role includes supporting carers in their own workforce such as through Carer Positive awards. Working is a right and caring should not be barrier to work. Our strategy will specifically support initiatives and organisations who support carers to remain in their workforce where and when those carers want to work.

By the end of this strategy:

- Carers will tell us they feel that they have a positively meaningful ACSP/YCS.
- Staff and partners tell us that they feel more confident in supporting carers.
- We will be delivering newly commissioned services that deliver better value for money.

Outcome 3 – Breaks from Caring

Many carers tell us they need a break from their caring roles to be able to recharge their batteries and enjoy time for the other things that are important to them. We know that many carers do not get the breaks they need.

In preparation for the carers' Right to a Break, included in the Care Reform (Act 2025, we will significantly increase our work to secure more opportunity for carers to take time away from caring.



By the end of this strategy:

- We will be in a better position to meet the new Duty and support carers to access their Rights by increasing the number and type of breaks available to meet carers' eligible needs.
- Carers will tell us they have easy access to breaks from caring that meet their personal outcome goals.
- Carers tell us their personal health and well-being has improved because of their break.

Carer quotes about the benefit of breaks from caring with Crossroads Fife

"If we had to match, we couldn't have done a better job ourselves. It's lovely to hear the laughter, and it's such a relief having the service, as I was worried my son was becoming isolated. Andrew just gets my son, whether it's watching horror/anime or even sitting in comfortable silence, they just enjoy each other's company. I know I don't have to worry."

"Kian & Madge get along brilliantly. I can relax for a few hours knowing Kian is safe and happy."

"The service is brilliant, they have built a really positive relationship. We didn't expect Lisa to be so accepting. Madge took things at Lisa's pace. If I could make copies of Madge and share her with others I would."

With thanks to Crossroads Fife

Young Carer quotes about accessing Fife Sports & Leisure passes

"I feel going to the Gym gets me out of the house and I enjoy it."

"For me it has been really helpful. It's been best way to give me an escape from what's been happening at home."

"Have really enjoyed the Fife Leisure Pass, I am also now able to use the Sauna which is even better."

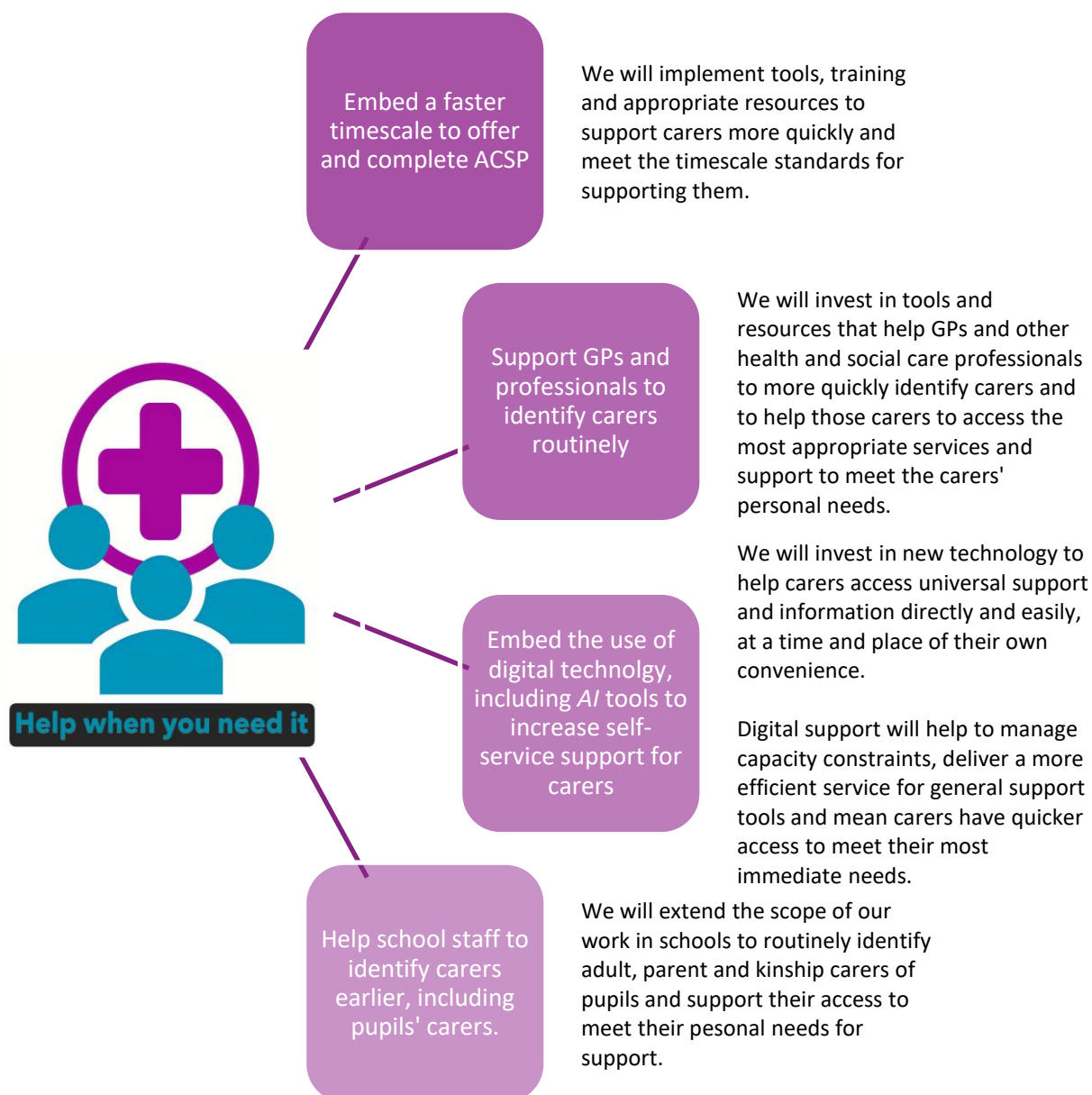
"I access the gym regularly and this has helped my mental health."

"I enjoy having my Fife Leisure pass, it gives me time out of my caring role but also allows me and my mum to spend time together."

With thanks to Fife Young Carers and Fife Sports & Leisure Trust

Outcome 4 – Early Help for Carers

Carers tell us they don't always feel recognised in their caring roles by professionals, and they find it is distressing and frustrating having to repeat their stories. They want professionals to talk to each other, share information, and help smooth their access to information and support, to help them live well and balance their own health and wellbeing with their caring responsibilities.



By the end of this strategy:

- Carers will tell us they feel recognised as a carer by professionals.
- All carers will be able to access an ACSP/YCS within agreed timescales.
- Carers who wish to access digital support will tell us this meets their urgent needs.

Outcome 5 - Help for Young Carers

Young Carers tell us they need support to balance caring roles with their education and social lives as a young person. They often need different emotional and practical support, and breaks from caring, from adult carers. We recognise this different need and therefore we have included again a separate outcome specifically to meet their needs as young people first, and as carers second.



By the end of this strategy:

- Young Carers will tell us they feel informed and supported in their caring role.
- Young Carers will tell us they feel able to access appropriate support in schools to help them in their school career, which also balances their caring responsibilities.
- Teachers, school staff, and carers' champions are better able to identify and meet young carers' needs quickly, with a range of information and support to address their most urgent needs.

Critical Success Factors and Improvement Planning

To help us to monitor and report on progress toward this strategy we will adopt a limited series of critical success factors. Central to this will be the experience of carers. Underpinning carers experiences will be operational measures of economy, efficiency, efficacy, and equity.

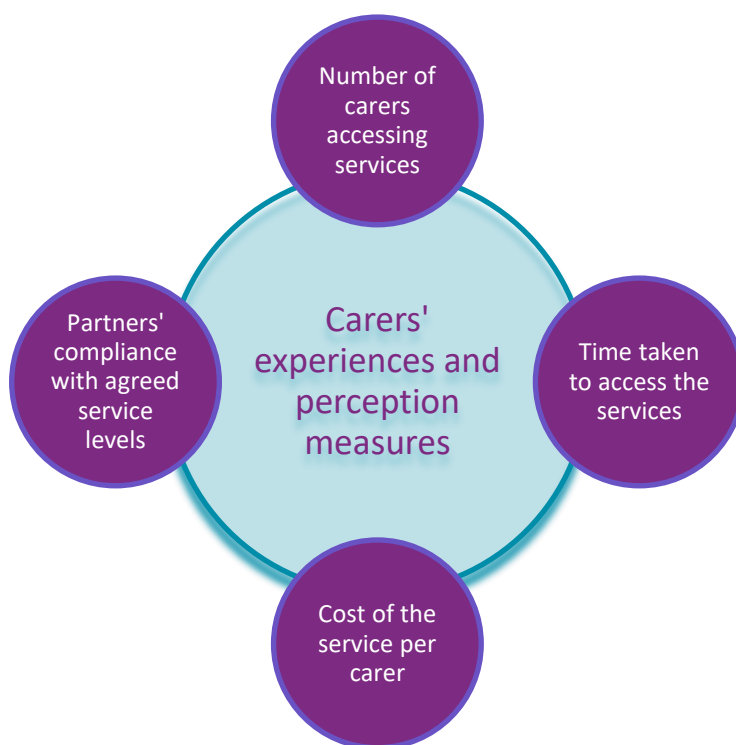
Funding for carers support is limited. And demand for support from carers is increasing. Therefore, we must ensure our money is spent well on services that carers want, need, and feel a positive benefit from.

We will introduce a more assertive and robust approach to performance management across all services for carers, thereby ensuring carers' experiences are improved.

If our partners are not achieving the outcome we have agreed with them, we will introduce a requirement to produce short term improvement plans to achieve their targets within six months. We will also introduce a three-yearly strategic commissioning approach to secure best value.

We will hold ourselves to the same standard for performance and deliver of high-quality services that support carers. If performance is below expectations, we will resolve this quickly.

Alongside this, we will develop a plan to improve the support incrementally and continuously for carers, specifically how quickly support is made directly available to meet their personal needs for support and outcomes.



Monitoring and Review

This strategy was developed and with the support and direct involvement of the Joint Carers Strategy Group. This is a group of experts who have a direct involvement and experience in support for carers, either as a delivery partner or as a carer with personal experience.

This group meets on a quarterly basis and receives progress reports towards the plan. This also provides the group with opportunities to inform the plans with improvements and innovation to meet carers' current needs and emerging future duties.

Additionally, the strategy will be monitored through the internal assurance and governance processes of the Fife Health & Social Care Partnership including the Integration Joint Board.

For public oversight and transparency, we will prepare an annual progress report which will be published on the partnership's website, made available in hard copy on request, and shared with carers through the Carers Forum.

Glossary of Terms

“The Act” or “Carers Act”	The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and any regulation passed after this which relate to the Act. This is the Act of the Scottish Parliament that specifies the Duties on local authorities to support carers, and the Rights of Carers to access support to meet their needs.
Carers or unpaid carers	Section 1 of the Act defines a carer as any individual, save for certain exceptions, who provides or intends to provide unpaid care for another individual. This does not include paid caring work.
Young Carers	Section 2 of the Act defines a “ young carer ” as under 18 years old or has attained the age of 18 years and remains a pupil at school.
Adult Carers	Section 3 of the Act defines an “ adult carer ” as a carer who is at least 18 years old but is not a young carer.
“ACSP”	Adult Carer’s Support Plan is a personalised plan offered to adult carers in Scotland to help them identify their needs, set goals, and access support to maintain their wellbeing while caring. The duty and specific requirements are outlined in sections 6 to 11 of The Act.
“YCS”	Young Carer’s Statement is a personalised plan offered to young carers in Scotland to help them identify their needs, set goals, and access support to maintain their wellbeing while caring. The duty and specific requirements are outlined in sections 12 to 20 of The Act.
“FHSCP” or “the Partnership”	Fife Health and Social Care Partnership. This is an integrated care system combining NHS Fife and Fife Council to deliver adult social work, community health, and social care services. It manages services like district nursing, mental health, and care for older people, focusing on enabling residents to live healthy, independent lives in their communities.
“IJB”	Integration Joint Board. This is the governing body responsible for leading the FHSCP, planning, resourcing, and overseeing the delivery of adult health and social care services in Fife, merging functions from NHS Fife and Fife Council.
Supporting Carers Framework	This is the name of the eligibility criteria for Carers in Fife. It enables the partnership to provide support to carers in different caring situations across a whole range of life circumstances. Local eligibility criteria assist us to prioritise support and to target resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. It recognises that demand for support is increasing due to demographic changes, more complex needs, and a greater intensity of caring. The duty and specific requirements are outlined in sections 21, 22 and 23 of The Act.
“The Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025”	The Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 is the Act of the Scottish Parliament that outlines the new Right to a Break for Carers (section 8). While this Act has received Royal Assent, it has not yet been implemented.
“Equality Impact Assessment” or “EqIA”	The purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment is to evidence that we are meeting the legal duties by assessing the potential impact of this strategy on different groups of people and the environment. This includes the impact on all protected characteristics, and Children’s Rights and Wellbeing.

Summary of Engagement with Carers

The 2026–2029 refreshed Carers’ Strategy engagement gathered the views of 672 unpaid carers across Fife, including Young Carers, adult carers, and working carers.

The consultation was delivered through a blend of online surveys, in person sessions, targeted young carer engagement, and a “Question a Day” campaign designed to broaden reach and maximise accessibility. The high level of participation provides a strong and credible evidence base for shaping the next strategy.

Feedback was supportive of all five existing outcomes Information, Coordinated Support, Breaks from Caring, Early/Upstream Identification and Young Carers, confirming they remain relevant and essential. Across all themes, carers shared consistent messages about what is working, what is missing, and where system improvements are most needed.

Carers repeatedly highlighted challenges in accessing clear, timely and coordinated information. They emphasised that although information exists, it is difficult to navigate, scattered across multiple sources, and often not available in accessible formats. Clearer public messaging is also needed to help people recognise themselves as unpaid carers earlier.

Support pathways were described as fragmented and inconsistent, with many carers reporting long waits, limited communication, and a need to repeatedly share their story. Carers requested better cross agency communication, access to named contacts, and support that is flexible enough to accommodate employment, caring responsibilities, and changing needs over time.

Breaks from caring remain one of the most significant pressures. Carers called for more regular, meaningful, and reliable respite options, not only crisis-triggered support. Young Carers emphasised the importance of time away from responsibility, opportunities to socialise, and activities that build confidence and enjoyment.

Early identification was seen as critical to preventing crisis. Many carers do not recognise their role, and professionals do not always identify caring responsibilities during routine interactions. Carers want clearer pathways, improved professional awareness and practical guidance early in their caring journey.

Young Carers expressed a need for school-embedded support, reduced stigma, flexible education arrangements and sustained access to breaks, training, and mental health support. Many reported that identification came late and was dependent on individual staff noticing their circumstances.

The overall findings show that the 2026–2029 Carers’ Strategy must focus on strengthening information pathways, improving coordination across services, expanding access to meaningful respite, ensuring early and proactive identification, and embedding stronger support for Young Carers in education settings. These priorities directly reflect the lived experiences and voices of unpaid carers and provide a foundation for the next stage of strategy development.

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