

Wednesday 8th October 2024

Dear Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport,

Recognising the demands on local carer organisations and the need for more support.

Carers Trust Scotland are writing to you on behalf of our network of local carer organisations, following a recent meeting that was specifically called because of the concerns many organisations expressed about organisational and individual staff workloads and expectations of local carer organisations.

Across Scotland, a majority of local carer organisations receive a significant level of statutory funding to deliver key services to unpaid carers, including young carers. Within our network of local carer organisations in Scotland, statutory funding last year totalled £9.5 million, of a total £15.5 million income for our members.¹

As you will know, there are approximately 800,000 unpaid carers of all ages in Scotland, with this number set to increase with our aging population and increasingly strained health and social care systems. Recent research undertaken by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation anticipates that if the number of unpaid carers rise only in line with population growth, by 2035, there will be an extra 400,000 people in the UK caring for more than 10 or more hours per week. An 11.3% increase compared to now. Of these new unpaid carers, 130,000 will be of working age. If including those caring for fewer than 10 hours per week, the figure rises to 990,000 additional unpaid carers - a 10.6% increase compared to now. **In total the projected number of high-intensity unpaid carers needed by 2035 is 4 million and for all unpaid carers is 10.3 million.**²

The challenges and barriers unpaid carers - including young carers - face are often complex and varied, impacting on all parts of their lives. Despite this being well evidenced, most of the funding for these vital services and interventions are often only committed to on short term bases.

Carers Trust Scotland's network of local carer organisations are asking Scottish Government and you as the Minister with the portfolio for social care support and unpaid carers to:

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Data from Carers Trust Network Data Exchange 2024

² [The future of care needs: a whole systems approach | Joseph Rowntree Foundation \(jrf.org.uk\)](#)

President: Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal www.carers.org

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1. Meet with our network of local carer organisations to hear directly about the excellent innovative work happening across Scotland to support unpaid carers of all ages, discuss the issues raised in this letter and potential solutions.
2. Monitor and report on how Carers (Scotland) Act implementation funding has been spent and the outcomes for unpaid carers and carer support that are being achieved in each local authority area through this investment.
3. Provide protected budgets for local carer services, and mandate for locally awarded contracts to be increased annually in line with inflation, ensuring contracts are sustainable and in line with the cost of delivery.
4. Advocate for longer term funding agreements to be granted for local carer organisations to support longer term planning and ensure a more sustainable third sector, which is essential to keep our health and social care systems in Scotland operating.
5. Provide national funding – as has been previously available – to support capacity building and support the ongoing sustainability of local carer organisations.
6. Take action to ensure local carer organisations are valued expert partners in local health and social care eco-systems.

Below is a summary of the key points raised at our meeting with local carer organisations.

Local carer organisations (including young carer services) raised a number of issues, including the significant increased level of need being experienced by unpaid carers that they are supporting. This is resulting in staff spending significant amounts of more time supporting individual unpaid carers than they have previously needed to. Local carer organisations expressed that due to a reduction in wider support available, increased needs of unpaid carers in their localities - including cost of living pressures - they have become a safety net for unpaid carers and as one local carer organisation stated, a “*de facto social work replacement service*”. Some local carer organisations have needed to have direct conversations with statutory services on the expectations being placed on them and the complexity and seriousness of unpaid carer cases that are being referred to them.

“There has been no recognition to back the work up, you are dealing with much more complex cases, much further down the line, and much more crisis related work.” (Local carer organisation manager)

Some local carer organisations discussed having to manage the demand through introducing new systems and screening processes – such as categorising unpaid carers in Red, Amber and Green based on their level of need and the provision of support that they are able to provide. It was also flagged about some challenges when assigning cases to support staff, as factors such as rural localities need to be considered when allocating case load.

Some local carer organisations noted that they have introduced volunteer led services to continue to provide a service for unpaid carers assessed as having lower support needs, as staff capacity is so stretched and they need to prioritise this to unpaid carers with the greatest support needs.

“We have a small team of volunteers, although this is not in itself free or easy by any means, but we now have regular volunteers and they do wellbeing calls to carers with lower support needs identified and maybe haven’t been in touch for a while.” (Local carer organisation manager)

A number of local carer organisations have required to change their support models of delivery to meet the increasing needs of unpaid carers accessing their services. Some have needed to cease running group sessions to ensure their staffing resources can be concentrated in supporting unpaid carers in significant need or at crisis. To combat this gap in support, several local carer organisations also reported supporting unpaid carers to set up their own peer support groups, and noted they recognise the value of providing opportunities for peer support, but they do not have the staff capacity to continue to facilitate these.

“We have adopted a new approach to group work. There was a small number of carers benefiting from the previous support group model with more carers needed individual support. Carers are helped to make their own peer support, social and friendship connections and we have had to work hard to build the community links for that.” (Local carer organisation manager)

Many reported changing their service offer from exclusively face-to-face to a blended model incorporating digital support as a way to help address demand. Others reported reducing the number of house calls that they are able to offer to support unpaid carers in need.

“We don’t do home visits. Unless there’s a need being put forward for that, the only time we would usually do that would be if it was a joint visit with a social worker and the carers had asked us to be there, but they would need to be a case put forward for that.” (Local carer organisation manager)

The levels of complexity of need that staff are supporting unpaid carers with is having a detrimental health and wellbeing impact on local carer organisation workforce, making it very difficult to recruit and retain staff in these roles. Local carer organisations are often receiving just small uplifts and short term funding, while experiencing significant cost of living increases, resulting in challenges for them to be an attractive and competitive employer. Some local carer organisations have struggled to provide salary increases to staff in recognition of the increased cost of living, due to financial pressures and budget constraints. Those that have provided salary increases have been unable to provide these in line with cost of living inflation or similar uplifts being seen across society, such as those to private and public sector staff – resulting in salaries offered being less competitive than other employers.

“The bottom line is, if you can’t support your staff in the same way that they are supported in the wider Health and Social Care Partnership around uplifts to salaries etc they are not going to stay.” (Local carer organisation manager)

“Longer term funding would enable clearer long-term planning, enable direction to planning that can be seen by those we support, show commitment to unpaid carers, increase

confidence in recruiting, longer term funding leads to confidence in the sector leading to candidates looking to third sector jobs as viable, improved standard - quality of committed staff.” (Local carer organisation manager)

Due to a reduction in wider support services being available across Scotland at local levels, local carer organisations reflected that they predict that demand is only going to continue or increase, a cause of great concern for them. However, some local carer organisations stated that additional funding alone will not solve these challenges. There needs to be clarity across Scotland about the role of local carer organisations as valued partners in supporting unpaid carers, but not a replacement to statutory support or wider support services needed for individuals and families.

“There was an extra 100 carers on top of the ones from the previous year, where we've seen a massive increase, so it's just not bottoming out for us and I don't see any way around it other than keep nagging that we need extra staff. They could give me £100,000, but I can't keep managing more and more staff, you know you've only got a management team round about you that can support so much.” (Local carer organisation manager)

Difficulties were also expressed about exiting unpaid carers from their services onto wider support when a caring role ends, as many other provisions of support available are extremely limited or not available.

With an inevitable growth in the number and need of unpaid carers in Scotland, we need to take action now to ensure a sustainable and sufficiently resourced local carer services sector.

We look forward to hearing back from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky Duff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Becky Duff, Director for Scotland, on behalf of Carers Trust Scotland's network of local carer organisations.