

National Carer Organisations response to: National Outcomes Review 2023, Call for evidence

Introduction

Scotland's National Carer Organisations are [Carers Scotland](#), [Carers Trust Scotland](#), [the Coalition of Carers in Scotland](#), [MECOPP](#), [Shared Care Scotland](#), and the [Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance](#).

Together we have a shared vision that all Scotland's unpaid carers will feel valued, included and supported as equal partners in the provision of care. We aim to achieve this through the representation of unpaid carers and giving them a voice at a national level. We believe we can deliver more for unpaid carers by working together to share our knowledge and experience, and by focusing our collective efforts on achieving improvements in areas of policy and practice that are of greatest concern to unpaid carers.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence in the National Outcomes Review of 2023. We have structured our response in two parts: comments on the National Outcomes and Performance Framework as a whole; and more detail in relation to 'Scotland that cares'¹ a coalition campaign calling for a new dedicated National Outcome focused on care and carers. Specifically we will focus on how this relates to unpaid carers.

Overview

This National Outcomes Review is set against a backdrop of a global pandemic, and a cost-of-living crisis, both of which have disproportionately impacted on Scotland's unpaid carers and those they care for². It has therefore never been more important that a revised National Performance Framework focuses clearly on 'measuring what matters', and ensuring that it can be done in a way which is meaningful, transparent, and timebound.

It is also important to note that the period since the last review has seen the implementation of significant legislative changes in relation to unpaid carers in Scotland in the form of the Carers Act 2016³. This is set to continue, with the potential development of a National Care Service⁴ and a right to a break from caring⁵, significant changes to social security⁶, and the implementation of the recently published Carers Strategy⁷. The National Performance Framework provides a vital mechanism for measuring whether the policy intention of these changes has been met, and their

¹ [A Scotland That Cares](#)

² [State of Caring survey | Carers UK](#)

³ [Carers' charter - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁴ [National Care Service Bill response | Shared Care Scotland](#)

⁵ [National Care Service | Shared Care Scotland](#)

⁶ [Carers Assistance consultation | Shared Care Scotland](#)

⁷ [National carers strategy - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

impact has resulted in an improvement in the lives of all unpaid carers in Scotland. It has yet to meet its full potential as a means of holding ourselves and others accountable.

We therefore support the view of Oxfam Scotland that more must be done to position the NPF front and centre at all stages of the policy process, in developing and articulating the annual programme for government and associated spending and in evaluating its success, through a series of robust and transparent metrics.

Consultation and participation on outcomes

We recognise that the consultation on the review of the National Outcomes is in line with the duty to review every five years, however we do not think that the opportunities to participate in this exercise have been extensive enough.

The consultation broadly sought to validate existing outcomes and indicators and the lack of specificity in the consultation made deeper and detailed engagement more challenging. This is particularly difficult for those – such as unpaid carers – who are time-poor.

More effort needs to be made on delivering meaningful consultation to ensure that we are still measuring what matters to people, and this includes further effort to include those with lived experience, and a particular focus on groups under-served and under-represented. We discuss the lack of visibility of carers in the National Outcomes in more detail below.

Current framework

As a National Performance Framework it is disappointing that a **number of indicators have not been developed** and that the reporting against progress is inconsistent. More must be done to ensure that reporting is consistently high-quality, in recognition of the importance of the framework and the focus it warrants.

This is coupled with an **online reporting platform** that is inaccessible and difficult to interpret. Improving user experience of the web platform would serve to make clearer lines of sight between the data and the indicators and outcomes, allow for greater scrutiny, and likely also increase interest and awareness in the Framework as a national measure.

We recognise that there was a conscious decision to move towards continuous improvement rather than **timebound outcomes** however as a driver for policy and spending decisions, closer alignment between activity – for example period covered by the Carers Strategy – and the timescales for improvement would create greater transparency and add accountability.

We would also like to see consideration given to a **greater range of data** including qualitative data rather than focusing entirely on quantitative measures. There is much more nuance to progress than can be captured in quantitative data alone, and the diverse experiences of Scotland's unpaid carers would be better understood through a balance of lived experience and statistical data.

It is also important to recognise that the diverse nature of caring in Scotland means greater attention needs to be paid to **cross-cutting themes**, or an intersectional approach, to data gathering. We

believe this would be better served by a specific National Outcome on Care, but improvement on intersectionality is required throughout.

'A Scotland that cares'

The National Carer Organisations in Scotland individually and collectively support the coalition campaign for 'A Scotland that cares'⁸ backing the development of a new, dedicated National Outcome focused on care and carers in Scotland. The campaign focuses on a broad definition of care, including paid care, however our response is provided in relation to unpaid carers.

There are over 800,000 unpaid adult carers in Scotland and an estimated 30,000 young carers⁹, yet they are entirely invisible within the National Performance Framework.

Being an unpaid carer can be rewarding, but it can also have well-evidenced impacts on the quality of life and wellbeing of an unpaid carer¹⁰. Evidence would also suggest that there is a negative trend in this area¹¹. Impacts are felt widely across education¹², health, social capital and participation in communities¹³, working life, and financial wellbeing^{14, 15}.

Research also tells us that unpaid carers in Scotland are providing an estimated £10.9 billion worth of care, and continue to do so at a time when health and social care services are facing unprecedented workforce and financial crisis. With every adult expected to provide care at some point in their life, it is essential that a national outcomes framework is reflective of this.

To include a dedicated outcome on care would also send an important message on the type of society we want to create in Scotland, the value that we place on carers, and go some way to changing the conversation on carers and caring.

Recent policy developments and legislative changes for unpaid carers such as the Carers Act have been very welcome and represent progress towards the intention of the Scottish Government that Scotland's unpaid carers should be better supported on a more consistent basis so that they can continue to care if they so wish, in good health and to have a life alongside caring. This is likely to continue with the development of the right to a break from caring, and the potential for a National Care Service. However, as unpaid carers have told us, there is often a gap between policy and implementation making the lived experience of carers very different from the rights set out on legislation.

The dedicated outcome on focused on care and caring, would go some way to recognising this gap, gathering evidence of progress from across a wider range of indicators, and therefore guiding future policy direction and investment.

⁸ [A Scotland That Cares](#)

⁹ [Scotland's carers: update release - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹⁰ [Health and Care Experience Survey 2021/22: National Results - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹¹ [Older Adult Unpaid Carers in Scotland - Carers Trust](#)

¹² [Being a young carer is not a choice - Carers Trust](#)

¹³ [scs_hap_report_executive_summary_web.pdf \(sharedcarescotland.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁴ [Unpaid Carers and the Cost of Living | Carers UK](#)

¹⁵ [The cost of caring - Family Fund](#)

We support the extensive work of Oxfam and the University of the West of Scotland¹⁶ in developing a blueprint for the outcome and beacon indicators and sub-indicators in relation to an outcome on care and caring.

The **quality of life indicator** has particular relevance to the aspiration for carers to have a life alongside caring, and also recognises the importance of short breaks and respite, with specific reference to social connections and life-care balance. This is important as the current framework indicates that perceptions of local area and places to interact are less favourable for disabled people, however there is no data in relation to unpaid carers who are likely to have similar experiences.

The availability of respite is also noted as a sub-indicator and this links closely too to the Beacon Indicator on **adequacy of funding for care**. This is of particular importance regarding the proposed right to a break from caring as in order to meet a right, there has to be sufficient variety and capacity available within short breaks services. This has recently been evidenced as a critical concern¹⁷. The need to invest properly in unpaid carers, and particularly in the provision of preventative support, is also regularly raised by carers¹⁸.

Carers also consistently highlight the need for them to be equal partners in care and this was identified by the Independent Review of Adult Social Care¹⁹. Including carers representatives on care boards and ensuring that they have a central role, would link strongly to the indicator on **Voice and influence of carers**, and the sub-indicator on them having **influence over care policy and spending**.

The recent Scottish Parliament [inquiry on health inequalities](#), the [wider evidence](#) of caring as a social determinant of health, built upon decades of research evidencing that caring has a significant impact on carers physical and mental health, with carers having poorer health than non-carers²⁰. Thus we also recommend an indicator be developed that captures the health impact of caring and measures policy intentions of reduce this inequality.

We would also raise the importance of indicators and sub-indicators on access to **education and training** which is of relevance to particular groups of carers including young carers and young adult carers. The current performance framework shows no indicators in relation to education that capture the experience of young carers and this is a significant gap. Addressing this through a specific care and caring outcome recognises that the life chances of young carers can be significantly different from their non-caring peers.

Finally, we would also like to note the **financial wellbeing of carers** indicator that is proposed as part of the blueprint as an essential. The impact of caring is felt across employment, and also has a large impact on household costs and experiences of poverty. There is also a gendered impact of caring which is inadequately captured in the existing performance framework.

¹⁶ [NPF-Report.pdf \(uws.ac.uk\)](#)

¹⁷ [Give Carers a Break: The vital need and urgent challenges in Scotland | Shared Care Scotland](#)

¹⁸ [National-Care-Service-Response.pdf \(carersnet.org\)](#)

¹⁹ [Adult social care: independent review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

²⁰ For example, [Scotland's Carers, Scottish Government](#)

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