# **CARERS**CONNECTION

Autumn/Winter 2024





# Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn 2024 issue of Carers Connection.

This issue, we're looking at ways to support your mental wellbeing, as well as the latest on Carers' rights, including important updates on the Carer Support Payment and the National Care Service Bill.

You'll also find information on our events and activities, plus ways you can support what we do at the Centre including through donating, volunteering or just spreading the word about us.

**Enjoy!** 

# Get more from your mag!

Wherever you see a QR code, scan it to with your smartphone or tablet to find out more\*.

Try scanning this code to visit our website.



\*Scanning ability varies by device. If you would like to use the QR code function but do not know how, please contact us and we'll do our best to help.

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## All The Best, Colleen!

In August, Colleen McGregor, our CEO left us to move to a new role.



Colleen joined the Centre in 2018 and was our CEO for almost four years. She led the organisation in the post-Covid era, helping us to maintain and develop our services through an incredibly tough period, and her dedication to supporting local Carers has been evident throughout.

We were all sad to see Colleen go, but wish her all the best in her new role!

Keri Moore will be our Acting CEO until a new permanent appointment is made.



Thursday 21st November 2024 Carers Rights Day is an annual campaign to raise awareness of unpaid Carers and their rights. Across the UK, Carers Centres and National Carer Organisations are calling for:

- Better support to prevent Carer poverty
- An end to non-residential social care charges
- A legal right to a break from caring
- Increased funding for Carers Centres and Young Carer services
- Greater support for working Carers
- Financial recognition for Carers over state pension age

Many decisions affecting Carers are made without hearing directly from them. Sharing your experiences with your local councillor, MP, or MSP can make a real difference. Help shape the decisions that matter to you by contacting them to let them know the issues you face and what's important to you.

# Taking Care of You Your mental health matters

Did you know that there are over 6.5 million Carers in the UK, with around 627,700 in Scotland alone? That's a lot of wonderful people like you, making a difference in someone else's life every single day.

But here's something we need to talk about: according to Carers UK, an overwhelming 8 out of 10 Carers have reported that caring has had a negative impact on their mental health. In Scotland, the numbers tell a similar story, with 83% of Carers reporting increased stress and anxiety levels since taking on their caring role.

These aren't just numbers – they're real people facing real challenges. Research from the Scottish Government shows that Carers are twice as likely to experience poor mental health compared to non-Carers. That's why taking care of your mental wellbeing isn't just important – it's essential.

#### It's OK to Press Pause

First things first – taking breaks isn't selfish. Think of it like charging your phone; you need to recharge too. Studies show that Carers who take regular breaks are better able to sustain their caring role long-term.

Even small breaks count – whether it's enjoying a cuppa in peace, stepping outside for some fresh air, or having a quick chat with a friend. You shouldn't feel guilty about needing these moments.

### You're Not Alone in This

Sometimes it feels like nobody else understands. But in Scotland alone, one in seven people are Carers – that's a whole community of people who understand what you're going through.

Why not get involved with one of our Carer groups to connect with others in similar situations? It's incredible how sharing a laugh (or sometimes a cry) with someone who 'gets it' can lift your spirits. Plus, they often have great practical tips to share!

### **Small Acts Add Up**

The idea of self-care may be one you can't entertain as it seems unachievable with the pressures of caring. But self-care doesn't have to be something that takes time and effort that you don't have.

It can be as simple as enjoying your morning coffee in your favourite mug, doing a quick stretching session while the kettle boils, or listening to your favourite music or an audiobook while doing daily tasks.

These little moments of joy matter! Look at ways you can build small things into your day.

### **A Helping Hand**

With 71% of Carers in Scotland reporting that they have felt lonely or isolated due to their caring role, it's crucial to remember that reaching out for help is okay. Feeling overwhelmed? That's completely normal, and there's absolutely no shame in asking for help.

Whether it's chatting with a counsellor, joining a support group, or asking family to pitch in – reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness. Many people are happy to help out if given the chance.

### Stay Present, Stay Calm

When things get hectic (and we know they often do), try this: take three deep breaths and focus on what you can see, hear, and feel right now. It's like pressing a reset button for your mind. Some people find it helpful to do

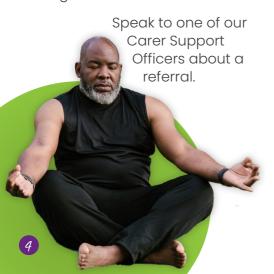


### **Counselling Sessions**

Our team is always here to listen to you, and four of our staff hold COSCA counselling qualifications.

If your mental health has been seriously affected by the demands of your caring role, our Support Officers can refer you to our professional counsellor, Mairi.

These sessions run at the Centre over 6 to 8 weeks and offer a safe and confidential space to discuss your caring situation and your feelings about it. Mairi is an accredited National Counselling & Psychotherapy Society counsellor, holds a BSc in Psychology and is also a registered nurse.



### **Yoga & Relaxation Sessions**

Carers can access a free yoga session every week to help you relax.

### Stirling & Online

The Yoga Tree in Stirling offers yoga and relaxation sessions every Monday afternoon, either in person at The Yoga Tree in King Street, Stirling, or on Zoom.

#### Killearn

Join Endrick Yoga weekly for an hour of yoga and relaxation. Classes run Wednesday and Friday mornings at 9.30am in Killearn Village Hall.

Contact us for details on how to join.

### **Other Support**

The organisations below offer specialist mental health support that is free to access.

# SAMH (Scottish Action for Mental Health)

Scotland's mental health charity offers online resources plus a phone helpline.

**0344 800 0550** (local call rates apply, mobile charges vary) **www.samh.org.uk** 

### Taking Care of You

### **Breathing Space**

A free, confidential phone and web based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety.

0800 83 85 87 www.breathingspace.scot

**Living Life** (NHS service) Living Life offers 4 to 6 talking therapy sessions by phone.

0800 328 9655 www.nhs24.scot/living-life

# Remember the Person Behind the Role

You're not just a Carer – you're you! Whether you're a brilliant baker, a keen musician, a fitness enthusiast or someone who loves a good book, keep nurturing these parts of yourself. Even if it's just 15 minutes a day doing something you love, it helps keep your spark alive and reminds you of who you are beyond your caring role.

Remember, looking after yourself isn't just nice to have – it's essential! By taking care of your own wellbeing, you're making sure you can be there for your loved one in the best way possible.



### **We Need Your Ideas!**

Like many charities, we are facing increasing challenges in securing funding for our work.
To continue providing essential services, we need to explore new ways of raising vital funds. We're looking for volunteers who are interested in helping to generate ideas and to help plan and run fundraisers.

#### Interested?

Contact Beth on 01786 447003 or email beth@ stirlingcarers.co.uk for a chat.

### **Nominate Us!**

If you work for a company with a charity donation scheme that allows staff nominations, please consider nominating Stirling Carers Centre. Even small donations make a big difference. We'd also love to speak directly to any company interested in supporting our work.

## **Carer's Allowance to Carer Support Payment**

In Scotland, Carer Support Payment is replacing Carer's Allowance. This payment offers financial support to unpaid Carers who:

- · Are 16 or older
- · Usually live in Scotland
- Provide at least 35 hours of unpaid care each week
- Earn no more than £151 per week after tax, National Insurance, and work expenses

The person you care for must receive certain disability benefits. Note that claiming Carer Support Payment may affect your other benefits or the benefit of the person you care for.

### New Applications

If you are making a new claim, you will be applying for Carer Support Payment. You can check your eligibility and apply at www.mygov.scot/carer-support-payment



### Existing Carer's Allowance Recipients

If you currently receive Carer's Allowance, you don't need to apply. You'll be automatically transferred to Carer Support Payment by spring 2025. Your first Carer Support Payment will be issued 5 weeks after your final payment from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) due to payment date differences between the DWP and Social Security Scotland. You won't lose out financially and you'll still receive a payment for each week you provide care.

To avoid this initial gap, you can choose to receive weekly payments instead of every 4 weeks. Social Security Scotland will send details on how to request this. However, if you select weekly payments, you cannot switch back to 4-week payments later.

Our team can help you with Carer Support Payment applications, including eligibility checks, and answer any questions about the switch from Carer's Allowance. Contact us at 01786 447003 or email info@stirlingcarers.co.uk.

# **Christmas Celebrations**

### **Parent Carers Group Panto**

Sunday 1st December, 1.30pm Macrobert Arts Centre, Stirling University

We're off to see Snow White at the Macrobert Centre. Open to Parent Carers and their families. Selection boxes provided for children.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Due to a system issue, if you registered for this event before 10th November your booking may have been lost. Please contact us to confirm. Apologies for the inconvenience.

### **Christmas Lunches**

Join us for a festive celebration at our Christmas lunches. You're welcome to bring the person you care for with you. Tickets for our Christmas raffle will be on sale, and donation boxes will be available to support the work of the Centre.

### Balquhidder

Thu 5th December, 1pm Mhor84 Motel

### Stirling

Tue 10th December, 1pm Stirling Golf Club

### **Fintry**

Thu 12th December, 1.30pm Fintry Sports Club

You can also register at www.stirlingcarers.co.uk/ WhatsOn or complete the form inside the back cover.





# The Carers' Garden

Earlier this year, we relocated the Carers' Garden to a new space at Braehead Community Garden. We've settled in well, and the garden is thriving, with several of our groups now making regular use of it.

A huge thank you goes out to Margaret, Jeanette, and Ian for helping with garden maintenance over the past few months.

### **Could You Lend a Hand?**

We're looking for a volunteer who can commit 1-2 hours a week to help with weeding, planting, and general care of the garden. The work could be shared on a rota if multiple people are interested

**Interested?** Contact Beth on **01786 447003** or email **beth@stirlingcarers.co.uk** for a chat.



# **Free Dementia Carer Training**



Age Scotland offers free online and in-person training courses to raise awareness of dementia, promote dementia inclusion, and for Carers to be better informed about their rights. Workshops run regularly throughout the year and there are also self-study options, which allow you to complete courses in your own time.

Find out more on the Age Scotland website: www.agescotland.org.uk/information-advice/information-workshops/dementia-training



# Rise in Scotland's Unpaid Carers Highlights Need for Support

The newly released results of the 2022 Scotland Census reveal that 627,700 people now identify as unpaid Carers - 12% of Scotland's population. Women are more likely than men to take on caring roles, with nearly a quarter of unpaid Carers providing over 50 hours of care each week.

Paul Traynor, Head of External Affairs at Carers Trust Scotland, commented: "Scotland's Census results have shown why much more needs to be done to better support unpaid Carers of all ages. Unfortunately, the vast increase in recorded unpaid Carers is not a shock to us at Carers Trust. More and more people have care needs, and the reduction in available social care is resulting in more people providing unpaid care."

Traynor highlighted the strain on Carers providing 50+ hours of care each week, as the heavy demands can lead to burnout, impacting their health and ability to keep going. He emphasised that local Carer organisations are vital in supporting unpaid Carers and need "adequate and sustainable funding and [to be] recognised as equal partners in the delivery of social care."

The findings show just how important it is to boost support for unpaid Carers. They also underline the crucial role that organisations like Stirling Carers Centre play in supporting Carers and pushing for better social care.

12% of Scotland's population are unpaid Carers

27.5%

increase in people identifying as Carers since 2011

24% provide 50+ hours of care a

women aged 50-64 are providing care

10,723 unpaid Carers in Stirling

Adapted from information from Carers Trust, October 2024.

# YOUNGGARERS

# Celebrating our amazing volunteers!

We're so grateful to all of our Young Carers volunteers for their help and the time that they give up to come along to groups, trips and residentials. We really couldn't run all the activities that we do without them.

This year is Jen's 10th year of volunteering with us, and Charlie has been a volunteer for 20 YEARS! That's longer than any of our Young Carers have been alive!

Charlie also recently became a dad! Huge congratulations from all of us to Charlie and his family on the birth of baby Rosa.







# A Well Deserved Award! Janette, one of our Young

Janette, with her award, and Colleen, one of our YC Officers.

Rotary Club of Callander and West Perthshire Award for Endeavour for her resilience and her positive example to other Young Carers, even when facing her own challenges.

Janette is part of the monthly McLaren Young Carers Group, and she also joins trips and residentials with Stirling Young Carers Service.

At the Scottish Young Carers Festival this summer, Janette helped younger Carers settle in and enjoy the activities. She also led site tours for

local decision-makers, including MSP Gillian Mackay.

Janette has been open about her own caring role, sharing how she balances it with school and personal well-being. Her example has inspired other Young Carers, and she hopes to one day work in a field that supports Young Carers. It was an honour to present Janette with this award at her school's Senior Awards Ceremony.

# A Lot of Fun at the Allotment

We've been getting our hands dirty (literally) at the Carers' Garden learning how to look after a garden, planting and harvesting crops and meeting the resident chickens. It's been a great space for us to hang out in and we've really been enjoying it.









# Summer 2024!

We had such a busy summer with loads of activities happening. Here are a few of the highlights.



Learning lawn bowls at Stirling Bowling Club



Making a beautiful mess at the craft day



Film project with Artlink at Stirling Castle



Paddleboarding with Roll Outdoors, Callander



Learning how to fight fires with the experts



Conquering Dumyat!



Hanging out at King's Park



Stirling Council Champs Fun Day



Sailing with Loch Venachar Sailing Club

### Thank You!

Our summer programme was full of trips and activities which provided a break for Young Carers. This would not have been possible without the support of our community. A big thank you to:

- Stirling Fire Station
- Roll Outdoors
- Benview Garden Centre
- Braehead & Broomridge CDT Community Garden
- · Vue Cinema Stirling
- · Stirling Bowling Club
- Loch Venachar Sailing
   Club
- Igloo Ice Cream Parlour Stirling
- McDonald's Drip Road, Murray Place & Springkerse
- Stirling Champions Board
- Artlink Central
- Historic Environment Scotland
- · Carers Trust Scotland
- Roundabout Executive Travel
- Parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, older siblings and everyone who helps our Young Carers get to and from activities

# Creepy Carving!

We had a brilliant time at the Carers' Garden in October finding hidden pumpkins and creating some fantastic designs on them!



Congratulations to **Dunblane High School**who have achieved their

We Care 'We Recognise'

Award for their support

for Young Carers.

Play in a Week

During the summer, one of our former Young Carers, Erica, came back to visit us. She's now a drama student, and she came along to help us write and perform a play in a week!

We all worked really hard to come up with the plot, remember the lines, and eventually perform it to our families.





Grab your chance to win big and directly support Stirling Young Carers!

£25,000 Jackpot Draw every Monday and Thursday
Daily Draws' of up to £1,000 • £1000 Super Friday Raffle
Monthly draw for £25,000 • Grand annual draw of up to £100,000

All this for under a tenner a month AND you'll be directly supporting Stirling Young Carers!

Players must be 18+. Gambleaware.org

\*See Full Terms and conditions at www.scottishchildrenslottery.com/terms-conditions

Register to play at: bit.ly/sycscl





# **MONTHLY CARER LUNCHES**

Open to all Carers and those you care for (16+)

Balfron · Cowie · Dunblane · Kippen · Killearn · St. Ninians · Riverside

See www.stirlingcarers.co.uk/whats-on for details

## Carers' Right To A Break At Risk

The National Care Service (NCS) Bill is a proposal to improve health and social care services in Scotland. It would create a national body to make sure these services work well across the country.

### Why is it important?

Apart from proposed improvements to health and care services, a key part of the Bill is focused on unpaid Carers. It aims to give Carers the legal right to take breaks from their caring responsibilities. It also means government ministers could hold local authorities responsible if these breaks aren't provided.

### Why is it at risk?

The Scottish Green Party recently voted not to support the Bill. Although they agree with the idea of better services, they have said they cannot support the Bill until compromises are made that bring it more in line with the party's values. Because of this, the Bill is not likely to pass when it goes to a vote in spring 2025.

### Why is this an issue?

Carers' organisations have strongly supported the Bill's promise of guaranteed breaks from caring. If the Bill doesn't pass, Carers could lose this important right, and there would be no legal enforcement to make sure these breaks are given.

### What can you do?

Carers across Scotland are being encouraged to reach out to their local MP's, MSP's and councillors to ask what will be done to protect Carers' rights if the NCS Bill fails and to ensure that Carers' right to a break will still be upheld.

We have prepared a template letter/email that can be sent to elected members to ask how they intend to protect the rights of Carers.

Download the template: www.stirlingcarers.co.uk/2024/11/NCS



Find your local elected members:

- www.stirling.gov.uk/ postcode-finder
- www.parliament.scot/msps

# **Got a Minor Injury?**

### Call first before you attend



Right Care Right Place

If you or a member of your family has an injury that needs urgent or immediate attention, you should **call NHS 24 first on 111**, day or night for:

- Healthcare advice without having to leave home
- An appointment at a local centre for further assessment or treatment – so you don't need to wait when you attend

The Minor Injuries team can help adults and children over 12 months who have a recent minor injury, including:

- Sprains and strains
- Suspected broken bones
- Minor head injuries
- Minor burns and scalds
- Minor ear injuries
- Minor eye injuries
- Infected wounds
- Insect bites and stings

If you attend the Minor Injuries Unit without arranging an appointment via NHS 24 may have to wait longer be seen or could be asked to come back later.

You can also call NHS 24 on 111 any time, day or night if you:

- Think you need to attend A&E but it's not life threatening
- Are too ill to wait for your GP Practice, pharmacist or dentist to open
- Need urgent mental health advice and guidance

Remember If your condition is serious or life-threatening you should dial 999 or go to straight A&E.

www.nhsforthvalley.com/rightcare









### **Let's Make Some Noise!**

For the past three years, we've been proud to receive support from Global's Make Some Noise. Global is the media powerhouse behind popular radio stations like Heart, Capital, LBC, and Classic FM. Every year, they organise 'Make Some Noise Day' to raise funds for local charities.

Recently, some of our team joined
Des & Jennifer on the Heart Scotland
Breakfast Show to discuss the vital role
of unpaid Carers and how support
can transform lives. We also had the
privilege of joining Des on part of his
'Great Walk to Glasgow', where he
walked from Inverkeithing to Glasgow
in just 24 hours, raising over £20,000!

We are immensely grateful for Global's commitment to supporting local charities like ours.

# **COULD YOU USE A BREAK?**

Apply for a grant of **UP TO £300** to help you take a break from your caring role.

Speak to our team or visit

www.stirlingcarers.co.uk/TimeToLive







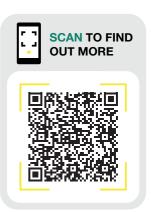


# Are you over State Pension age, or know someone who is?

Pension Credit tops up pension income and can help with day-to-day living costs.

If you are over State Pension age, you may be eligible to claim **Pension Credit**, even if you own your home or have savings. People who claim **Pension Credit** may also be able to get:

- The Winter Fuel Payment\* and other help with heating costs
- Help with rent and Council Tax
- A free TV Licence for those aged 75 or over
- Help with the cost of NHS services, such as NHS dental treatment, glasses and transport costs for hospital appointments



You could be eligible for **Pension Credit** if your weekly income is below £218.15 or, if you have a partner who lives with you, £332.95. Qualifying income level may be higher in some circumstances.

Don't miss out.

Check your eligibility at **gov.uk/pension-credit** or by calling **0800 99 1234** 

### **Winter Vaccines Update**

Unpaid Carers are eligible for a free flu vaccine this winter, though they are not currently eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine unless they belong to another qualifying group.

These qualifying groups include:

- · Living or working in a care home for older adults
- · Aged 65 years and over
- Aged 6 months and over with an eligible health condition
- Pregnant
- · A frontline health or social care worker

The Coalition of Carers in Scotland (COCIS) and VOCAL (Voices of Carers Across Lothian) have sent an open letter to the First Minister, urging a reconsideration of the decision to exclude unpaid Carers from COVID-19 vaccine eligibility. They argue that, like frontline health and social care workers, many unpaid Carers carry out essential care tasks and should be protected to avoid disruptions in care. We will monitor the progress of this campaign and share updates as they come in.

To check eligibility for vaccination or book an appointment, visit www.nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines or call 0800 030 8013.



## Going The Extra 22km!

A big thank you to Fiona Kerr, one of our Carers, who ran the Aberdour 12K on 28th July and the Stirling 10K on 8th September for charity.

She raised a fantastic £1,104 which was split between Stirling Carers Centre and Alzheimer Scotland.

We're very grateful to Fiona for choosing to support us and to everyone who donated.



# Short Breaks Groups

Our free groups and activities are a chance to take some time for yourself and meet other Carers. Unless otherwise stated, activities are open to all Carers aged 16+.

**Book Group** • 5th December, 10.30am, Stirling Carers Centre
A chat about the book of the month over a cuppa.

**Carer Lunches** • 12.30pm, days & venues vary

Monthly lunches with an activity in venues across the area.

Connecting with Dementia Carers • Fri 29th November, 1.30pm, Riverside Bowling Club

Monthly group for Carers of people with dementia.

Next Event: NHS Occupational Therapy Dementia Care

**Cuppa Chat** • 17th January, 10.30am, Stirling Carers Centre
Our monthly drop-in coffee morning. You're welcome to bring
along the person you care for.

Male Carers Group • Day & venue varies

Monthly group especially for male Carers. New events to be announced early 2025

My Time • Thu 28th November, TBC, Vue Cinema Monthly evening group. Next event: 'Wicked' cinema trip

Parent Carers Group • 19th December, 1.30pm
For parent Carers of children aged 16 and under.

Next event: Macrobert pantomime

Walking Group • 25th November & 9th December, 10.30am
Gentle fortnightly group walks around the Stirling area.

Working Age Carers Group • Fri 29th November, 6pm

Bi-monthly evening group for Carers Aged 18-65.

Next event: Cocktail Masterclass at Stirling Gin Distillery.

## Interested?

Use this page to let us know you're interested in any of our events. Post it to the address on the back cover, or take a photo and either email it to info@ stirlingcarers.co.uk or WhatsApp it to 07570 270 141.



I am interested in: REGULAR GROUPS	<b>Your Details</b> Name:	
Book Group Carer Lunches Connecting with Dementia Carers Cuppa Chat Male Carers Group My Time Parent Carers Group Walking Group	Best contact number:  Email address:  I would like to receive the monthly bulletin by email	
<ul> <li>Working Age Carers Group</li> <li>CHRISTMAS EVENTS</li> <li>☐ Parent Carers Group Panto</li> <li>Christmas Lunches</li> <li>Please note that priority for each event will be given to</li> <li>Carers living in the local area.</li> <li>☐ Balquhidder</li> <li>☐ Fintry</li> <li>☐ Stirling</li> <li>OTHER</li> <li>☐ Yoga Sessions</li> <li>☐ Complementary Therapies</li> <li>☐ Forth Valley Carers Card</li> <li>☐ Other:</li> </ul>	The information you provide will be used for events management and mailing purposes. Your information is kept in accordance with data protection legislation, stored securely, and never shared with a third party without your consent or unless we are required by law to do so.	
	Please note that registering for an event does not guarantee a place will be available. Where places are limited, our team may allocate them on a needs basis.  One of our team will be in contact to confirm with you.	



# Have you got your Forth Valley Carers Card?

The Forth Valley Carers Card is designed to help you identify yourself as a Carer to Health and Social Care Professionals and be more involved in care planning.



Apply for a free card on our website by visiting www.stirlingcarers.co.uk/FVCC or contact the Centre.

If you have received this magazine by post it means that you are subscribed to Stirling Carers Centre's mailing list. You can unsubscribe at any time by calling or emailing the Centre on the details below.

Monday-Friday | 9am-4pm

Kintail House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ 01786 447003 | info@stirlingcarers.co.uk

Also available in accessible formats, including large print. Call 01786 447003 or email media@stirlingcarers.co.uk to request a copy.

# www.stirlingcarers.co.uk

