

Subject: **Unpaid Carers Service Developments in North Ayrshire**

Purpose: To update Integrated Joint Board members on progress to date with developments to expand and improve support for unpaid carers in North Ayrshire.

Recommendation: Integration Joint Board members are asked to:

- Note the advancement and impact for improved carer information and support services.
- Agree to annual progress updates to be brought to the IJB in future

Direction Required to Council, Health Board or Both	Direction to: -	
	1. No Direction Required	X
	2. North Ayrshire Council	
	3. NHS Ayrshire & Arran	
	4. North Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire & Arran	

1.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
1.1	This update brings forth progress to date of the local North Ayrshire Carer Strategy: Building Caring Communities 2023 – 2025 and re-provision of the expanding Carer Gateway North Ayrshire Service, as well as plans for the coming months into 2024/2025.
1.2	<p>The paper highlights the collective priorities and range of activities being taken forward as a strategic partnership with Unity Enterprise and their rebranded Carers Gateway North Ayrshire service, launched in October 2023.</p> <p>The report demonstrates the early effect of improvements and the continued commitment and importance of identifying, informing, involving and supporting carers to sustain caring roles and offer a life alongside caring. It also ensures NAHSCP continues with the implementation of the Carer (Scotland) Act 2016 and the statutory responsibilities therein.</p>
2.	BACKGROUND
2.1	<p>The Carer's (Scotland) Act 2016, which took effect on 1st April 2018, aims to enable unpaid carers to be better supported so they can continue to care, if they wish to do so, while also having a life alongside caring. The Act sets out several responsibilities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the right to an adult carer support plan or young carer statement based on each carers personal outcomes and need for support,

- a duty to provide [support for carers](#) based on [local criteria](#), and consider support in the form of a break from caring,
- the establishment and maintenance of an information and advice service and publishing of a [Short Breaks Service Statement](#),
- a duty for local councils and health boards to involve carers in the planning and evaluation of services that support carers, including the publication of a [local carer strategy](#)
- a duty on health boards to inform the carer and invite their views before the cared-for person is discharged from a hospital stay.

In Summer 2023 NAHSCP launched a revised interim local carer strategy: Building Caring Communities 2023 - 2025, with clear aspirations for supporting carers. This was in conjunction with a threefold investment in the reprovision of the local carer service which has been rebranded and launched as a more visible locality-based Carers Gateway for communities across North Ayrshire. The report details progress on strategic priorities and Carer Gateway service plans.

For context, 1,580 (1,213 adult & 367 young carers) carers were known and registered with the Carers Gateway on 31st March 2024. This shows a reduction in adult carers since last reporting in August 2023 due to data cleansing and archiving of around 200 carer records within the service for all carers aged 18 and over. Most new registrations for adult carers are predominantly coming from self-referral.

Improvements to the young carer data set had already been completed and shows a 28% increase for young carer registrations and reflects good progress based on the work and messaging of the carer services partnership. New registrations predominantly are coming from primary school referrals for young carers.

NAC Education Services lead on young carer identification and support. Across our primary and secondary schools at the last count on 16th April 24, 417 young carers under 18 years were identified on SEEMiS – pupil record management system, an increase of 32% since last reporting in August 2023. There will be expected crossover in the Carer Gateway and Education figures as we offer young people a choice of how they wish to be identified and supported through multiple routes.

3. PROPOSALS

3.1 Priorities remain highlighted within the local carer strategy for growing young and adult carer services. NAHSCP continue to work closely with carers, our commissioned Carer Gateway service and other key partners to improve and implement information and support options with systems that are easier for carers to access to ensure:

- Carers are actively sought and identified.
- Carers are informed, have increased confidence in their caring role and feel supported.
- Carers are offered and supported to prepare an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement.
- Variety in breaks from caring.
- Carers feel involved as equal partners in care design/ delivery.
- Strong partnership working/ engagement is evident.
- Improved identification, information and support for Young Carers with a focus on transition periods through to adulthood.

Primary areas of focus for the Carers Gateway service in the initial months of expansion fell under the following workstreams:

- Continuity and monitoring of current carer service as the service grows.
- Recruitment & HR.
- Partnership mapping to promote the new service.
- Marketing of the rebranded 'Gateway' carer service.
- Digital developments, scoping the right resource and market testing for young and adult carers.
- Property discussions and establishing a new administrative base (no firm date to leave the current facility).
- Financial planning.

The outcomes of the expansion have been positive to date and the report shares some of these below:

Recruitment

A programme of recruitment has seen the Carers Gateway team expand from 4.5 to 15 staff with only two positions remaining vacant.

Adult locality workers are more present in community spaces and at various groups sharing the Carer Gateway aspirations with existing and new networks. The young carers team are also operational across schools with each worker supporting 3 clusters on a rota across their designated areas.

The NAHSCP Carers Team also welcomed Claire Wiseman – Project Delivery Officer for Carers and Self-directed Support developments on 25th March. Claire will continue the work that commenced with our in-house teams and services to improve and increase our messaging for adult and young carers. Areas of focus will be to improve uptake/conversion for Adult Carer Support Plans and to encourage the offer of Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements across Children and Family services.

Digital Support

The Carers Gateway have commissioned [Bridgit Digital Carer Support Services](#), a 24/7 digital resource to reach and identify more carers, provide access to online self-help, access to referral and registration with the Gateway Service, local and national information and support, access to build personal plans, WhatsApp and multi-channel support for regular contact. The resource also has built in analytics and reporting for service tracking and development. The resource went live on 11th March with a full launch proposed in the coming weeks.

The objectives for North Ayrshire carers with the resource are:

1. Improving information; advice and guidance – Bridgit, through AI can access a real time directory of local and national information, events and services for instant support.
2. Identifying carers; the Carers Gateway is exploring joint campaigns with the resource and local Primary Care services, initial conversations in Kilwinning have been positive. The resource is also supported by targeted advertising campaigns through google searches.
3. Staying healthy; self-help plans are available to build and include various topics, health conditions, wellbeing solutions and things important to each individual carer circumstances.
4. A Life outside of Caring; Local events, groups and services are signposted to help identify opportunities away from the caring role.
5. Assessment & Support; carers can access a level of self-assessment with active engagement and support chat along the way.
6. Emergency/ Contingency Planning; carers can create and log 'what to do in an emergency' when they are unable to care. Links to the local Carer Appreciation Card are being explored also to make this a digital offer.
7. Recognition & Value; ensuring that carers have access to a resource and services they have engaged with in the design, operation and content through various focus groups and that it signposts and provides valued support.

The resource is predominantly aimed at adult carers but additionality agreed from the Bridgit Care Service as part of this project is scoping a resource more suitable for young carers. There will also be an area of work to promote local short breaks from caring on the Bridgit platform. Integration work between Bridgit to the Carers Gateway record management system – Charity Log has also taken place to capture online referrals, registrations and plans. On 31st March Carers Gateway reported 6 new registrations and 73 personal carer plans already created by carers self-accessing and exploring Bridgit while seeking information and support.

Engagement work for the resource highlighted the following challenges by carers and it is hopeful Bridgit digital resource will be a starting point to help to guide, support and improve on some of these areas for carers:

- Lack of carer recognition.
- Lack of communication.
- Lack of joined up working across the health and social care system.
- Carers navigating the care system alone and feel unsupported.
- Carers have higher levels of poor mental health than national averages.
- Restricted engagement within the hospital system.

Carers Gateway are also improving their website to correlate with and showcase the changes to the new approach and model, and ensuring more current, correct information is available for local carers [Carers Gateway | Information, support and advice for carers of all ages](#). This went live on 11th March. The service are also making full use of [Carers Gateway North Ayrshire | Irvine | Facebook](#) which is a lively hub for identifying, communicating, engaging and promoting information and support.

A first suite of accompanying printed communication resources (leaflets, banners) has also been developed for staff to connect with other agencies at local events and for carers who are not able or do not wish to access information and support options digitally.

Carers Assessments

Adult Carer Support Plans: In 2023/24, across all Social Work services 1,290 Supported Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SSAQ) have been completed for adults seeking support. In 65% of these assessments there was no offer of an Adult Carer Support Plan, which may be the case for some as no unpaid carer exists or were present at the time of assessment. 35% (452) of these assessments identified a carer and offered the opportunity to complete an Adult Carer Support Plan and 81% (368) of those people declined the opportunity to have a conversation about their caring needs. There is no record of the reason for any of those who declined the offer. 19% (85 carers) accepted the offer to complete an Adult Carer Support Plan. In total over the year 116 Adult Carer Support Plans have been completed. This is an increase of just over 50% from the previous year.

In October 2022 capacity was added to NAHSCP carer team with a Carer Support Officer (CSO) to offer an alternative route to early and preventative carer support, for those who are not already known to Social Work teams, where the cared-for does not meet eligibility thresholds for services or for young carers aged 16 - 18 years who are not in school. The introduction of this role has seen the carers team complete 56% (65) of all Adult Carer Support Plans for the year with the remainder being completed by Health & Community Care teams.

Young Carers: Across North Ayrshire primary and secondary schools 376 young carers under 18 years were identified and offered the opportunity to complete a Young Carer Statement. This is a 50% increase from those reported in 2022/ 2023 Scottish Government census return and is representative of the good partnership links with Education Services and strength of messaging and promotion. 30 young carers declined and 346 completed Young Carer Statements have been returned from NAC

Education Services. CareFirst reports that a further 2 have been completed by the CSO role.

Young Carer Statements are beginning to be carried out by Carers Gateway but work is still required to agree appropriate process, access routes to funds for support, recording and reporting and how/when the statement will be reviewed but progress is encouraging with a further route for assessment and good caring conversations for young carers. There will be the same offer for adult carers over the coming months.

Variety in Short Breaks from Caring

A break from caring is any form of support which can be taken in several ways to enable a carer to have time away from their caring routines and responsibilities. The purpose is for carers to have a life outside or alongside the caring role. Short breaks support the carer and often the cared-for, the caring relationship and promote sustained or improved health and wellbeing. It can provide a change of scenery, improve carer confidence, increase ability to cope or succeed, reduce isolation, improve emotional wellbeing, improve general quality of life and increase the ability to sustain the caring role.

The Carers Gateway received £77k for breaks from caring from Shared Care Scotland for 2023/24 which supported 3 phases of carer breaks with around 120 applications per phase supporting a variety of requests at a spend of £69K. The remaining £8K is accounted for in the additional routes for support with breaks and hardship fund at point 3 below where a further 26 carers and families have been supported. £80K has been awarded from Shared Care Scotland for 2024/25.

Carers Gateway also forecast a further £59k spend on carers breaks over the Spring of 2024, as follows:

- £5k (£2.5 each) to the constituted locality carer groups in North Coast and Three Towns to support self-management and growth. It was also used for trips to the Waverly, Healthy Walks and an outing to the Ayr Flower Show.
- £5k for an adult carer trip to bring different carers across the localities together, widening carers opportunity to form peer networks, provide respite and the opportunity to engage in activities which may not always be financially viable.
- £12k (including the £8K mentioned above) for an additional round of short breaks/ hardship funding which will be progressed by the new Short Breaks Officer recently in post.
- £10k for short breaks funding to networks such as NADARS/ Café Solace/ LGBTQIA+/ New Scot – harder to engage carers across these groups (ringfenced).
- £23k for young carers Easter activities including Arty Party, Inverclyde Sports/ Activities in conjunction with Active Schools, Umbrella Holistic Therapies at Fullerton ConneXions, Family Day to the Science Centre, Pony Trek at Kelburn, Watersports at Castle Semple, In Time Escape Room and a weekend sailing trip for 10 young carers with Ocean Youth Trust.

- The remainder was used for staff for organising and processing the above routes to breaks from caring and to issue funds at pace.

Over the festive period Carers Gateway also used £7K to support families who were struggling with food vouchers and presents in addition to the annual festive activities.

For young carers there have been 110 requests for a break from caring this financial year through the HSCP/ Education fund with 74 processed, 10 with no cost due to accessing the KA leisure pass scheme and 26 in final stages with families and supporting services with a total cost of £20,047. Below are some examples of how the fund has contributed to meeting young carer outcomes and looked further to enhance life opportunities.

Young carer applied to complete a Widening Access course to improve their chance to gain entry to Glasgow School of Art. Financial pressures on the family meant the young carer would struggle with weekly travel costs and extra materials to complete the course. £230 was allocated allowing the young carer to have a break from their caring role, pursue their interests and open opportunities after leaving school.

Young carer was the only one in his under 13 ice hockey team to be invited to play competitively for Scotland in Bratislava. This would open further opportunities to represent his country at other games over the coming year, help to find sponsorship and potentially offer pathways beyond school and his caring role for an older relative whilst mum worked. Ice hockey is his break from caring and the family were experiencing financial difficulties, with £1,200 the young carer was accompanied to be part of trial competitions, it relieved him from his caring role and mum did not have to take on extra work and could provide more care to her mother... good news ... the young carer has made it to the final selection for the 2024 Scotland team due to his attendance, ability, commitment and effort.

Young carer with their own health issues engaged in a conversation though school, they lacked confidence, were unhealthy and quite unhappy. School applied for a KA Leisure Membership to help support the young carer's own health and wellbeing through the current programme. Other routes were sought for the young carer through the ILF Transition Fund to support driving lessons due to a transport element to the caring role for appointments and family shopping and to promote independence and reduce feelings of anxiety. A final request for £300 from the HSCP/ Education fund was submitted towards the cost for the young person to attend end of year prom to ensure the young carer had the best experience leaving school as they had undergone an extremely difficult time throughout school, this supported a positive end.

There have been many other young carers supported with small, meaningful purchases such as football boots to play in the school tournament which was turned around in one day with help from HSCP business support and from the Resettlement Team to fully understand the young person's support needs, ice skates to join friends at the local skating rink, vouchers for sports clothing to go to the gym to improve wellbeing.

Carers Act funding secured 240 KA Leisure memberships for young carers across North Ayrshire as a route to improved wellbeing and social opportunities with peers. 236 have been allocated to date with final requests being processed. 25 young carers through a survey issued have told us that this has been good for their physical and mental health. For some it helped with feelings of anger, for some they could go swimming with mum as it was the least painful activity for her, it was about family time, for some it was about body positivity and for many it reduced the financial barriers of being able to join in and be with friends whilst taking a break from caring.

For adult carers in 2023/ 24 there have been 127 referrals to the Carers Team – CSO. Not all requests required access to funding but through these conversations we have supported carers with a variety of requests at a cost of £9,722 and can share the impact on support for the following carers:

Gentleman cares for his wife who receives palliative care and have no wider network or family support. Allocated Social Worker contacted the CSO for help to identify a break from caring. The carer had a caravan in the back garden where he liked to spend time which felt close enough to be able to get time alone but care for his wife, but it required work to repair the electrics. £300 was awarded and this encouraged further conversations to assist the carer to access No One Dies Alone and the Men’s Shed.

Service Access referred to the CSO for a gentleman (carer) and his wife waiting for a package of support. The gentleman was finding the caring role increasingly difficult. They have family close by, use the services of a cleaner, handyman and Wiltshire Farm Foods for meals. The CSO placed a referral initially to the Sensory Impairment Team, North Ayrshire bin pull out service, Community Alarm and advised how to install a key safe. It was suggested to use the cleaner more than once per week and purchase a slow cooker as the gentleman enjoyed making home cooked meals at the weekend. The wife’s health improved slightly over a number of weeks and the gentleman felt more able to cope and no longer felt the need for formal support. They have been in touch again for support to access a podiatry service. This was all at no cost other than time to listen, understand and advise.

CSO supported a family with multiple caring roles. Father was allocated £200 to purchase a gym membership to support his mental wellbeing and was signposted to the Wellbeing Recovery College for confidence building after a previous diagnosis of cancer. Other opportunities for computer courses and the Men’s Shed were offered when ready to engage. Mum was offered £200 to continue to attend exercise classes for physical and mental wellbeing and with a referral to CLASP and Money Matters for income maximisation and benefit advice. The Son has autism and formal support had been removed. He was advised of a local film club and attends independently twice per week. He has been signposted to Equal Futures and has since returned to university to finish a master’s degree in Broadcast Production.

NAHS CP’s longstanding Carers Appreciation Card has 1,107 young and adult carers benefitting from the cards ability to identify them in their caring role across their

community and provide carers with discounts and concessions from 40 local businesses often supporting a break from caring.

Carer Involvement & Engagement

NAHSCP is committed to the principle of carer involvement with our longstanding Carers Advisory Group, our Carer Champion and nominated Carer Representative on the IJB all of which widen the pool of views being represented locally for carers.

Carer involvement continued with the Carers Gateway and the launch of their service in October 23 in West Kilbride. This was the first in a suite of roadshows forecast to meet and engage with more carers and showcase the renewed service – future dates include June in Irvine, August in Arran, September in Kilwinning and November in either Garnock Valley or North Coast (TBC).

The final Carers Advisory Group was held 27th November 2023 which included discussions to move away from the corporate approach of engagement with limited access for all carers to an open network or collaborative. The Carers Gateway Marketing and Engagement Officer is moving forward with the Carers Participation and Engagement strand of work adopting the underlying principles of a Champions Board approach (Equality, Empowerment, Collaboration and Action) as the foundation of a new model for carers voices.

An inaugural North Ayrshire Carers Conference will take place on 12th June at the Riverside Hotel, Irvine in line with celebrations for Carers Week – June 2024. This will invite 100 carers from across North Ayrshire localities to express our gratitude for the care they provide for their loved ones, to showcase the value and regard we have for carers and to share information, ideas and routes for improvement for carer services, as well as to celebrate the first year of the remodelled Carers Gateway service.

NAHSCP Carer Development Officer has been working with the HSCP Transformation Team, Arran CVS, Arran schools, Brodick Patient Participation Group and the Carers Gateway Arran family worker following a period of initial engagement on the Island which highlighted the need to increase carer awareness, information, advice and support on the Island. A phased plan of activity is underway (March to October 2024) to explore understanding and use of adult carer support plans, young carers statements and Carers Gateway service. The work will investigate young people's understanding of caring and explore the impact caring has on future life options and choices, along with the general populations understanding of the caring role, carer rights, and use of the Carers Gateway service. The final phase will identify specific carer needs, gaps in information and carer support. The work will generally raise awareness with a view to increasing reach and referrals for the Carers Gateway service. Green shoots are already evident with 12 new carer registrations due to this activity (6 adult and 6 young carers).

3.2	<u>Anticipated Outcomes</u>
	<p>The report demonstrates the early effect of improvements and the continued commitment and importance of identifying, informing, involving and supporting carers to sustain caring roles and offer a life alongside caring. Ensuring the IJB continues with the implementation of the Carer (Scotland) Act 2016 and the statutory responsibilities therein.</p>
3.3	<u>Measuring Impact</u>
	<p>We will demonstrate improvements and what good carer support looks like through governance and performance monitoring of the local strategy and Carer Gateway Service Development Plan 2024 – 2025. The carer services and its associated developments remain accountable to the IJB and North Ayrshire Council. Scheduled updates will be tabled through appropriate governance routes for continued oversight and direction with escalation where required. It is proposed the formal reporting to the IJB moves to an annual reporting cycle.</p> <p>Bi-annual contract monitoring also measures quality and impact through agreed KPI's linked to outcomes in the local strategy.</p> <p>Carers Gateway have worked to improve their data collection system – Charity Log with a cleansing exercise and staff training for all delivered in February 24. NAHSCP have highlighted the importance of accurate recording and reporting through our governance system and the need for timely information, as well as statutory reporting of the annual Scottish Government Carer Census. Carer identification, increased reach and access to support will be tracked through referrals, registrations or short break applications as well as completed ACSP and YCS.</p> <p>Improvements to the carer engagement model will also provide a measure of impact/success as we move to a more inclusive and collaborative model. Developments will be monitored through the voices, wisdom and experiences of our carers.</p> <p>Carers Gateway also began work with Evaluation Support Scotland but did not feel they were the right fit and have now accessed support from Matter of Focus who support organisations to measure, monitor and report on their impact for improvement.</p>
4.	IMPLICATIONS
4.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>North Ayrshire have been awarded Carer's Act Implementation funds from the Scottish Government since 2018. The use of this funding is not ringfenced or stipulated but should enable and support the implementation of carer duties under the Act. The revised annual budget for 2023/24 was £1,188,716. The following shows annual spend for carer support services in 2023/24:</p>

Actual Annual Spend 23/ 24		£
Carer Service Contract		566,066
Staffing Carer Support Team (<i>2 team posts-SDS/ mainstream</i>)		57,727
Light touch breaks for adult carers		9,722
Young Carers Wellbeing through Education		20,047
Digital Resource (Carers UK)		2,500
NAHSCP SDS Learning Review		8,250
TOTAL SPEND		666,312
TOTAL BUDGET		1,188,722

NB: Carer funds were also realigned to the provision of in-house respite services

4.2 **Human Resources**
There has been positive progress with filling all positions, with updates contained in the report for both Unity - Carers Gateway NA and NAHSCP Carers Team.

4.3 **Legal**
North Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire and Arran must meet their duties under the Carers (Waiving of Charges for Support) 2014 Regulations, Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, Terminal Illness Regulations (July 2021), in relation to carers 'Rights to Breaks from Caring'. Unpaid carer legislation should be held in the same regard as any other directive pertaining to professional assessment of need and provision of support.

4.4 **Equality/Socio-Economic**
Under the Fairer Scotland agenda, it is commonly noted that unpaid care places added strain on multiple areas of a person's life including personal health, relationships and social opportunities, finances, appropriate housing, ability to retain education or employment. It is also known that carers predominantly are female and in the mid – older stages of life.

The strategy and plans for continued carer service growth contained in the report bring together a range of priorities, new approaches and better routes for information and support to ensure carers are equally recognised, informed and supported whilst trying to reduce any negative impacts caring may have.

4.5 **Risk**
The work outlined goes some way to mitigate the risks which are well understood in relation to not getting the right supports in place for unpaid carers, including:

- Carers not being be aware of their rights or how to access information and support at the right time on their caring journey impacting on multiple factors of their life.
- Carers are not be identified, informed and supported resulting in carer roles/ relationship breakdown and carers experiencing further impact on their own physical and emotional wellbeing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers may not be included, listened to or involved in carer services design to support them or care planning for their loved ones. • The impact on wider HSCP services if Carers are not supported, further overwhelming and increasing demands on statutory care services and increased costs for health and social care services.
4.6	<p><u>Community Wealth Building</u> Community benefits are a contractual requirement within the re-provision of the carer service. The NAC Community Benefit wish list has also been considered. Quarterly reporting of community benefits will be adhered to with a final report within 2 weeks of contract end date – 2nd July 2026. Below are the agreed benefits from Unity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend 5 employers fairs. • Employ 1 x FTE who has been unemployed for more than a year. • Employ 1 x 0.5 FTE who has been unemployed for more than six months. • Four student work placements lasting at least two weeks. • One instance of support via the NA Community Benefit wish list (two opportunities currently being explored in a local care home and on Arran).
4.7	<p><u>Key Priorities</u> NAHSCP priorities remain linked to those highlighted in our local carer strategy - Building Caring Communities 2023 – 2025. The Carers Gateway Service Development plan 'Visibility, Value and Voice 2024 – 2025' is being finalised and works in conjunction with local strategy aims. Plans are to help carers reduce isolation, develop skills, improve wellbeing and feel more empowered and valued.</p> <p>As a partnership we will focus on the following in the coming year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Ayrshire Short Breaks Statement will be reviewed and published with development in variety of breaks following the recent appointment of a Short Break Officer and Wellbeing & Activities Officer. • Communication and marketing materials to encourage carer identification and carer conversations, promote carers rights and inform how to access carer services. • Wider carer engagement will continue from the work in Arran across to our mainland communities to begin to develop a medium – long term strategy commencing 2026. • Information, awareness and support to improve our offer for carers across all HSCP teams enhancing staffs understanding of their duties, carers rights, ACSP/ YCS and the support available. • Creation of a communication and activities plan for the coming year, making the most of the national calendar events, local roadshows and annual carer celebration. • Continued networking, mapping and partnership building with local organisations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with carers through development of the Carer Champions Board, building on established and constituted peer groups and involvement in locality planning groups. • Continuing to develop Bridgit and the opportunities the digital resource offers. • Improved social media presence and sharing positive carer stories empowering carers voices. • Identifying and supporting carers who experience financial pressures. • Improved strategies to identify and support minority carers. • Localised work within North Coast, Garnock Valley and Arran where there are low registrations and less carers seeking support. • Improved process and pathways for all carers with identification, registration, ACSP and YCS options. • Development of Section 28 – Involving Carers in Hospital Discharge, learning from the pan Ayrshire work and identifying a model and approach for North Ayrshire community hospitals. <p>Specifically for young carers we will continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forge partnerships with education, health, social care teams and third sector staff to identify potential young carers. • Develop better systems and safe spaces for self-identification and sharing experiences for students. • Support schools to establish peer groups and buddy supports as young carers transfer from primary to secondary. This also ensures the transfer of information meaning schools are prepared to support the young carer on arrival. • Host awareness campaigns, sessions, events to encourage disclosure and minimise stigma for professionals and carers. • Encourage YCS completion and access to support. • Develop activities and short breaks opportunities with young carers. • Engage with parents to understand what information and support is required and when for families. <p>Focusing on these areas and fostering collaborative partnerships ensures that all young carers in North Ayrshire, including those from underrepresented communities, receive the support, recognition, and resources they need to thrive.</p>
5.	CONSULTATION
5.1	<p>Carer involvement and collaborative working is a key principle and duty under the Act and in all our ambitions for carers, we recognise carers are equal, expert and valued partners in caring decisions, care delivery and reforming carer services. Fuller consultation and engagement plans are through the body of the report.</p>

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