

Toolkit

Carers Rights Day – 21st November 2024



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1. Organising Your Event

Carers Rights Day is about raising awareness of unpaid carers and their rights. This year we are asking local carers centres to invite their local MSPs and MPs to meet with unpaid carers to hear about their lives and learn from them about how carers can be better supported.

This campaign has been developed by the Joint Campaigning Group whose membership includes Centre Managers, local young carer organisations, National Carer Organisations, carers and young adult carers.

These meetings should be planned in advance of Carers Rights Day. However, the plan is for **all press and social media content to be embargoed until Carers Rights Day itself on Thursday 21st November.**

In this toolkit we will provide you with resources to plan your event, including:

- A template invitation
- Briefing papers on key policy areas which you can use to raise issues with your invited guests
- Infographics and posters to enable elected representatives to sign up to pledge their support
- Communication assets to be used on Carers Rights Day itself.

Invite your local MSPs and MPs

We suggest that you aim to invite your elected representatives to visit in the 3 or 4 weeks leading up to Carers Rights Day. Below is a template email you can use to invite them. It can be helpful to phone their office in the first instance to check their availability, before sending the invitation.

Dear <MP / MSP Name>

This year for Carers Rights Day we are recognising the significant contribution carers make to our communities and focusing on the rights and supports needed to ensure their health and wellbeing are protected and their human rights are upheld.

We would like to invite you to meet with unpaid carers from <name of organisation> in advance of Carers Rights Day on the 21st of November, to hear their experience of caring and the challenges they face in navigating the complex landscape of care giving.

We will also be asking local representatives to commit to actions to support unpaid carers, including supporting the right to breaks from caring and increased financial support.

<add details of the event you are inviting them to, or an offer to set a date with them>

We look forward to welcoming you to <name of organisation> on <date>

Yours Sincerely

Meeting carers

It may be easier to invite your elected representatives along to an existing carers group, rather than arranging a specific event. We would suggest that an optimum number of people to attend would be between 8 and 12, to allow everyone the chance to participate. If possible, it would help to meet with the carers in advance of the meeting to brief them about what the Key Asks of the campaign are.

In terms of the format, we would suggest that you introduce each of the Key asks using information from the briefing papers, then open the discussion for carers to share their experiences on the topic. You can then invite the elected representative to respond.

Elected representative can support the campaign by committing to the key asks and having their photo taken holding up the posters. They can also support the campaign on Carers Rights Day itself by sharing photos and Infographics on their social media platforms.

When people with lived experience of trauma share their experiences it's important to create a safe and meaningful space that considers the impact on the individual and others:

Trauma Informed Support

The wellbeing of unpaid carers with lived experience taking part in co-production and engagement events is of the highest importance. Below are some points you might want to consider:

- Think about how sharing will affect the person and others. Sharing can be empowering, but it can also bring up emotions or leave people feeling vulnerable.
- Ensure people are aware that they do not have to share their life story
- If possible, a staff member should be assigned to support/mentor throughout the engagement activity
- Recognise trauma and its impact
- Discuss whether people would prefer to remain anonymous.
- Ask people what support they need to prepare and how they will feel afterwards.

Key Asks

We have produced a briefing paper for each of the Key Asks

Carers and Finances

- I support an end to Care Charging
- I pledge that no carer should be in poverty
- I pledge that no carer should have to give up work to care
- I support a specific recognition payment for older adult unpaid carers with underlying entitlement to Carer Support Payment

Breaks from Caring

- I support a right to breaks from caring

Local Support

- support secure and improved funding for local carers centres and young carer services

Local Asks

As well as the key policy asks set out in the briefing papers included in this toolkit, you may also want to include a local ask which is specific to your local area. This may relate to supporting your organisation, such as raising awareness of your work with local councillors, or it may relate to other areas of carer support, such as protecting local short break services from cuts.

Communications on Carers Rights Day

In advance of Carers Rights Day the Joint Campaigning Group will be sending out a communications plan which you can use for raising awareness on the day. This will include Infographics, tweets and posts for you to share on your social media platforms. On Carers Rights Day itself, we would also like you to share these assets, along with the photos you took at your event.

2. Briefing Paper on Ending Care Charges

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Background and Evidence

When we talk about improving financial support for carers and ending care charges it is important to put this in the context that **the value of unpaid care in Scotland is estimated to be £13.1 Billion per year**. No carer should find themselves in poverty as a result of their caring role, yet recent research by Carers Scotland found that the poverty rate for carers is 56% higher than for those without caring responsibilities¹

People with support needs in Scotland pay over £40 million every year as charges towards the cost of social care support. These charges are continuing to rise in many areas with thousands of disabled people on Universal Credit having to pay up to £100 a week from their social security benefits.

COSLA and the Scottish Government published a Joint Statement of Intent in 2022, which included a commitment to have plans in place by May 2023 to deliver an ‘end to charging for non-residential services as soon as possible’

However no date to end care charges has been put forward yet. The Scottish Government has said they will end all charges within the term of the Scottish Parliament, meaning that it could be as late as April 2026.

Key Asks

We are asking MSPs and MPs to **Support an end to care charging**

What impact this would have for unpaid carers

The impact of care charges is felt by both supported people and their unpaid carers.

- They are often in the same household and care charges reduces their household income.
- In some circumstances the unpaid carers income or assets may be taken into account, where they are the partner of the supported person and finances are shared.
- Supported people sometimes refuse social care support as they feel they cannot afford the care charge. This leaves unpaid carers having to provide more care.

By ending care charges supported people and their unpaid carers will have one less demand on their household income at a time when many are struggling to make ends meet. This will help to support the estimated 100,000 unpaid carers living in poverty in Scotland²

¹ [Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in Scotland’ A WPI Economics Report for Carers Scotland, 2024](#)

² [‘Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in Scotland’ A WPI Economics Report for Carers Scotland, 2024](#)

3. Briefing Paper on financial support for older unpaid carers

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Background and Evidence

Research by Carers Trust Scotland into the Experiences of Older Adult Carers³ found that 82% of unpaid carers over 65 felt that their caring role had financially impacted them.

Many were significantly impacted by the overlapping benefit rule between State Pension and Carer's Allowance (Carer Support Payment).

The overlapping benefit rule prevents people receiving more than one earnings-replacement benefit at the same time. State Pension and Carer's Allowance are both categorised as earnings-replacement benefits. This means that despite older unpaid carers meeting all other aspects of the eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance, most do not receive financial payments as they are in receipt of State Pension (this is known as underlying entitlement).

According to a Scottish Commission on Social Security report published in 2023, around one third of people who claim Carer's Allowance are affected by this rule⁴.

Older unpaid carers reported that as well as being financially penalised and having to use their State Pension to help fund a caring role, many felt as though they are no longer recognised as an unpaid carer and feel unsupported and undervalued.

Carers Trust are currently running a campaign - [*"Benefitting Older Carers"*](#) - to improve social security financial support for older unpaid carers. The goal is to ensure that older adult unpaid carers are financially recognised for the contribution they make to society.

Key Asks

We are asking MSPs and MPs to **Introduce a specific recognition payment for older adult unpaid carers with underlying entitlement to Carer Support Payment**

What impact this would have for older unpaid carers

This would

- Provide financial support in recognition of their caring roles.
- Help to alleviate the hidden costs of caring.
- Contribute to older unpaid carers feeling more valued and recognised by society
- Raise wider awareness of additional social security support, such as Pension Credit, to increase uptake.

³ Carers Trust Scotland, [Experiences of Older Adult Carers in Scotland](#), 2023

⁴ [Carer-Support-Payment-scrutiny-report.pdf \(socialsecuritycommission.scot\)](#)

4. Briefing Paper on Breaks from Caring

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Background and Evidence

Scottish Government figures indicate that only a small proportion of carers are able to access a break from caring

- Approximately 3% of carers currently access short breaks through an assessed route.
- The latest figures from the Scottish Health and Care Experience survey reveal that 2% of unpaid carers receive personal support to enable them to have breaks from caring
- Only 31% of carers reported that they felt supported to continue caring.

We are increasingly worried about the reports of respite care and day services facing closure or cutting services due to financial insecurity and unsustainability and carers facing reductions in their personal budgets for breaks.

Closures and cuts significantly impact carers' access to essential breaks from their caring responsibilities. The precarity of the short breaks and respite sector is such that carers cannot wait for a legal right to a break to deliver change.

Key Asks

We are asking MSPs and MPs to **Support the right to breaks from caring**

The ability of the new right to fulfil its potential hinges not only on the right itself but also on the necessary investment, resourcing, commitment and leadership to develop a sustainable short break sector that can meet the diverse needs and circumstances of all carers.

We are therefore also asking MSPs and MPs to

- Consider what can be done locally to support and sustain the short breaks and respite services that provide vital support to unpaid carers.

What impact this would have for carers

Short breaks services are lifeline services to carers

“I feel my world has been opened again”: Myra, who cares for her adult daughter with learning disability

“I couldn’t have got through this period without knowing that the Carers Hub had my back and stepped up when I needed it most.” Murdo, who cares for his wife who has multiple physical health issues and dementia.

5. Briefing Paper on Funding for local carers centres and young carer services

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Background and Evidence

Local Carers Centres provide a broad range of vital services for unpaid carers. This includes delivering legal duties within the Carers Act, providing practical, emotional and financial support to unpaid carers and delivering the 'Time to Live' short breaks grant scheme at a local level.

Yet funding for carers centres across Scotland is inconsistent, often insecure and generally inadequate to deal with the increasing demands on their services.

- 42% of carers centres report that their funding from local authorities has remained the same or decreased in the last 2 years.⁵
- Less than half of carers centres were able to match the cost of living increase for staff provided by local authorities. Of those that did provide staff with a cost of living increase, 77% had to use reserves to pay for this.
- 83% of carers centres report an increase in referrals, with the average being 41%
- 42% of carers centres are on a one year funding cycle.

Key Asks

We are asking MSPs and MPs to **support secure and improved funding for local carers centres and young carer services**

What impact this would have for unpaid carers

This is an opportunity for you to let your elected representatives know about the services and support provided by your organisation and what difference this makes for carers. You might want to include examples from carers of their lived experience and how the carers centre has supported them.

By providing secure and improved funding for carers centres, carers would be better supported by:

- Knowing their local service is not under threat of cuts.
- Ensuring carers centres are able to respond to any increase in demand, without having to implement waiting lists.
- Allowing carers centres to plan their services more effectively and reduce the time spent on having to fundraise for vital service

⁵ Carers Centre Funding Survey, Coalition of Carers in Scotland, August 2023,