



# Community Planning Aberdeen

<b>Progress Report</b>	Project End Report: 11.6 Increase the number of unpaid carers feeling supported by 10% by 2023
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<b>Date of Report</b>	05/10/2023
<b>Governance Group</b>	CPA Board – 29 November 2023

## Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 11.6 to increase the number of unpaid carers feeling supported by 10% by 2023 and seeks approval to end project.

## Summary of Key Information

### 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Unpaid carers are a critical part of the health and social care system. Collectively, they are the largest provider of care in the UK. It is estimated that the care they provide saves health and social care services in the UK over £10 billion each year. That could potentially equate to £3.5 million in Aberdeen City.
- 1.2 The caring role is not always an easy one and it can take its toll on the Unpaid Carer. This is especially the case if the cared for person's needs are complex and the care provided is intense and/or routine. Unpaid Carers are impacted mentally, physically, and emotionally, especially if the person they care for is loved one who is suffering and/or deteriorating from illnesses or whose behaviour is changing which can affect their normal relationship with the Carer. The role of an unpaid Carer is regularly at risk of breaking down and typically other means of care/respite come as a direct cost.
- 1.3 A conducted survey asked Carers whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I feel supported to manage my caring responsibilities whilst continuing to have a life alongside caring". In 2017, 25.09% of respondents agreed, or strongly agreed with this statement. In 2019, this had reduced to 22.00%. It should be noted that 28.46% in 2017 and 23.00% in 2019 neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The Covid Pandemic also significantly increased the level of disruption to Carers normal routines, especially with the decrease of traditional support services for them and their cared-for.
- 1.4 Based on this information, our aim was to increase the number of Carers who felt supported in their caring role and address the increased level of isolation we observed amongst our Carers post-Covid.

## 2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 In November 2021 the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to increase the number of unpaid carers feeling supported by 10% by 2023, allowing them to enjoy a life alongside caring and to enable the caring role to be sustained.

## 3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE

- 3.1 The multi-agency project team consisting of carers tested the following changes, of which a number came from the North and South Locality Plans as detailed below:

### ***Respitality Bureau***

- 3.2 One notable and novel change made during this project was the introduction of the Respitality bureau. The Respitality bureau started as way to support carers to take short breaks without the added stress of completing lots of paperwork or having to find breaks themselves, as this can be time consuming and can add stress to an already stressful caring role. Our aim was to complete application forms either in person or via telephone calls, to source and book chosen breaks on carers behalf where they feel there is limited availability to do so.

### ***The Doorstep Break Project***

- 3.3 This was a pilot project to test the possible benefits of 3 short, localised day breaks/activities compared to 1 longer hotel break away. Local breaks and activities included spa days, dolphin cruises, bus tours and local cooking classes.

### ***The Time to Live (TTL) Project***

- 3.4 The project reviewed and made changes to this pre-existing funding project, namely (1.) revised the financial award amount from £250 to £300; and (2) allowed Carers to be awarded up to £500 if their desired break/activity included their Cared-for. This project also test-ran the new means of allocating short breaks funding to Carers. Previously Carers applying for the Time to Live fund had to complete an application pack which had a point scoring form that equated points to pounds based on the care role and time spent caring. Many carers backed off from applying for funding because they said the paperwork felt too much for them. This led the service to rethink how to open the funding to make it as accessible to carers as possible while still collecting the data required for funders reports. The revised process was the Respitality Bureau (as mentioned above) and the Time to Live fund was the first to fully utilise the bureau. This now includes 2 members of staff who help Carers complete their application in person or on the phone.

### 3.5 ***Chapelton***

A collaborative effort with local businesses. We tested out a new respite facility at the Chapelton retirement village, along with Aberdeen City Council, to give carers more options for respite in Aberdeen. As part of the respitality bureau, we managed to collaborate with a few local businesses within the village to negotiate deals for carers during their stay there to support local businesses and allows carers to have more options as part of their break. Funding from the Time to Live grant was also available to Carers to use during their stay.

### ***Wee Blether***

- 3.6 The Wee Blether is a test for change pilot scheme aimed to reduce social isolation observed amongst our Carers post-Covid, by bringing Carers together for company and a chat, and to build better links to the local community by working in partnership with local authorities. The Wee Blether groups were targeted at our unpaid Carers aged 55+

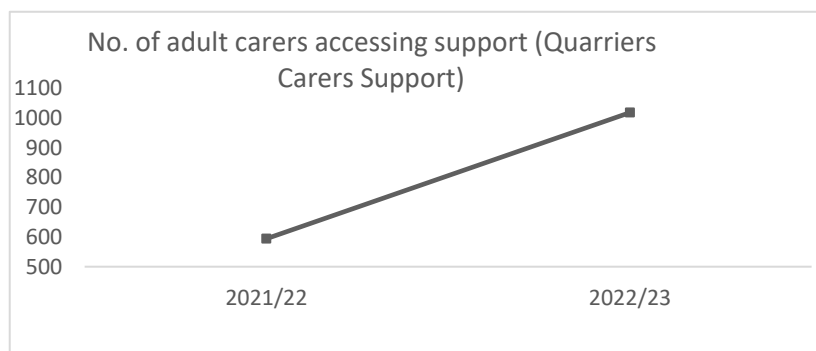
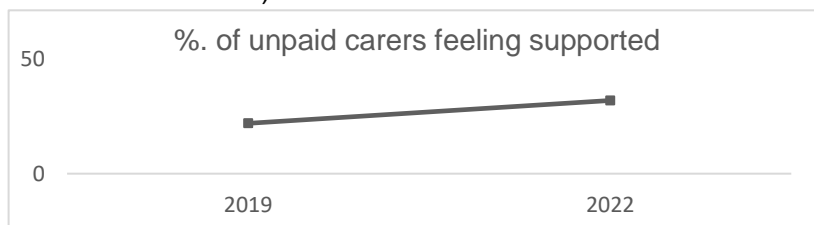
and they were welcomed to bring their Cared-for along. Provided for our Carers are free soup and hot drinks, games and activities. Part of our support was to also signpost our Carers to ongoing activities and groups within the local community providing additional support via local businesses and organisations. Our aim was to set up 5 Wee Blethers within the locality.

**The Scot Spirit Voucher Scheme**

3.7 This was a government funded initiative which provided one million pounds between each carers centre in Scotland. Carers could take breaks at any location, but the hotels/ accommodation used must be signed up to the initiative. The financial award was £300 - £500 per family to take a break. All Carers’ breaks were booked, paid and processed by the Respality staff, allowing Carers the freedom and hassle-free approach to their Scot Spirit Break. It was found throughout this project that hotels were raising the price from that which was agreed, this shortened the days carers could take a break. It was also discovered that there were very few hotels in each location that had signed up for the scheme, which in turn, limited the choices for Carers. The financial award didn’t cover travel and food expenses, so Carers were able to use additional time to live funding to cover this. The initial funding had been completed but extra funding was awarded due to other carers centres being unable to use all funding provided to them.

**4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?**

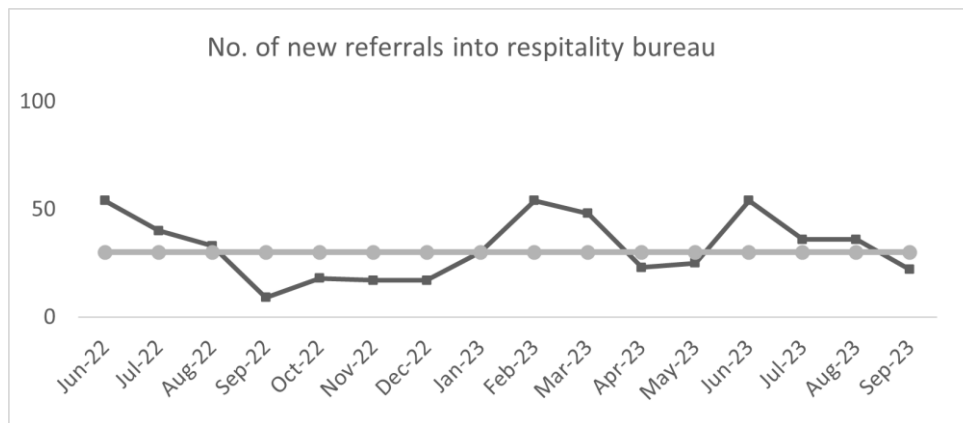
4.1 Yes, the aim has been achieved with a 10% increase in the % of unpaid carers feeling supported between 2019 and 2022 as recorded by the Health and Care experience survey (HACE) which looked at positive, neutral and negative responses. 32% responded positively, a 10% increase compared to 2019. Similarly, there has been a 71.3% increase in the number of adult carers accessing support (594 in 2021/22 compared to 1018 in 2022/23).



4.2 The project has also seen a positive impact from the changes tested which focused on different ways for carers to access support as detailed below:

## **Respite Bureau**

- 4.3 Between June 2022 and Sep 2023, 516 new referrals were received to the respite bureau, of which 100% were supported and received a short break. Any carers not awarded due to e.g. funding depletion, are automatically carried over and prioritised in the next funding cycle, thus ensuring every carer was supported. As shown below, since Dec 2022 we saw an increase in the number of referrals to Respite from 30 people referred in Jan 2023 to a peak of 54 in Feb 2023 to 48 in March 2023. April (23) and May (25) saw a decrease in referrals due to the cycle of short breaks funding such as Time to Live and ScotSpirit ending for the year 2022/23. June 2023 saw another peak in referrals (54) with the remaining months maintaining referral rates around the median (30).



## **The Doorstep Break Project**

- 4.4 58 carers were supported. A simple end of activity survey asked Carers if they felt that the 3 short breaks was easier to achieve and if it gave them the same, more or less benefit than 1 longer break. From running this project, the service learned that carers preferred more frequent, shorter breaks, rather than one big break a year. This funding is now complete with really positive feedback from carers. The service will be looking at more funding opportunities like this going forward as per the feedback from carers and what has been learned from this.

## **The Time to Live (TTL) Project**

- 4.5 In 2021/22, 96 Carers were supported, in 2022/23 we saw a 136% increase with 227 carers supported and data for 2023/24 to date is showing this is on track to sustained/exceeded with over 160 carers supported so far. Time to Live was the first funding project to fully adopt our revised Respite process in 2022/23, which included 2 members of staff who help Carers complete their application in person or on the phone. As a result of this, we have seen a tremendous increase to the number of Carers accessing the service and the funding which can be seen when comparing the number of Carers accessing the Time to Live funding over the years. Additionally, carers have directly reported to us in 1-on-1 conversation on the benefit and ease of accessing their funding through the new application process.

## **Chapelton**

- 4.6 2 local businesses have provided deals for carers during their stay there, which supports the local businesses whilst allowing carers to have more options as part of their break. Feedback from carers was overall very positive.

### **Wee Blether**

- 4.7 The Wee Blether initiative has also progressed very well with the first Wee Blether group starting in Jan 2023. The third Wee Blether group is expected to start shortly. They hold weekly and to date, we have had on average 8 regular attendees at our Middlefield group and 4 at our Bon Accord centre group.
- 4.8 Feedback from carers attending the Wee Blether has been tremendously positive and it was greatly encouraging to have regular and returning attendees.

### **The Scot Spirit Voucher Scheme**

- 4.9 73 carers were supported. The initial funding had been completed but extra funding was allocated to our service due to other carers centres being unable to use all funding provided to them. This project provided many carers with a much-needed break, and they were thoroughly supported throughout the whole process. (Scot Spirit was the most support-intensive project as the carer was support at every stage of the break-booking process and carers brought to our attention the tremendous help this provided them). From the feedback received there were a few barriers in place regarding locations, but carers thoroughly enjoyed their time away, often sharing photos of their time away.
- 4.10 Below is direct feedback from our Carers on the Scot Spirit Scheme;

*"To have the opportunity to relax and not have to be cooking and cleaning and just enjoy family time was amazing. My boys and myself loved the swimming pool at hotel as swimming is now a stress with limited opportunities at home. I really did relax and enjoy being away from my house for a few days. This trip would not have been possible without this funding. Thanks again for helping me find the energy again to continue caring role!"*

*"It made us take the time away together that we wouldn't have had otherwise. We treated ourselves which was lovely."*

*"ScotSpirit gave us very good memories and very positive experiences, it really promoted family bonding and it expanded my child's understanding of the world because that stepped him outside. The scheme of the ScotSpirit is an excellent one, it helped me and my family to take some time off my caring role and it did provide us with a life long experience. This scheme is a brilliant idea for the carers & the cared-for. I hope you will be able to give us another opportunity to repeat the same experience."*

- 4.11 As shown above, a number of different funding/ break schemes and changes were tested in relation to supporting unpaid carers with short breaks. Although most funding schemes have ended, our main intention going forward is that all funding that becomes available is accessed through the Respitality bureau.

## **5 HOW HAVE OUR COMMUNITIES/PROTECTED GROUPS PARTICIPATED IN THE PROJECT AND THE IMPACT OF THIS**

- 5.1 The Respitality bureau was a vital part of fulfilling our project aim and the idea for the bureau was created as Carers notified us of barriers and challenges experienced when completing application forms to access funding. The Respitality bureau project was therefore co-produced with our Carers to address this issue. We have seen tremendous progress as a result of this. Carers no longer have issues with applying for the funding

as they are assisted throughout, and this has increased the number of Carers accessing funding and the speed at which Carers are awarded their funding. This makes planning and getting a break much easier for our Carers. We continue to value the ideas and feedback from our Carers, so we regularly send out feedback forms to give our Carers the opportunity to express their experience of their break as well as the process of applying for the funding.

5.2 Previously, paperwork and posting out forms delayed the process of being awarded funding. But when engaging with our carers, many are notably more confident and comfortable in accessing breaks as they are able to go on last minute breaks and have spontaneous time off due to the faster turnover which is a great relief to them, as their schedules can sometimes be unpredictable.

5.3 The following change ideas from the South and North Locality Plans were progressed by the project as detailed above:

#### North

- Increase the number of informal opportunities for unpaid carers across the locality.
- Co-design local unpaid carers resources and support.
- Explore opportunities to support unpaid carers with their wellbeing post lockdown.
- Increase support for dementia sufferers and their carers.

#### South

- Identify early intervention and prevention support for unpaid carers in the community with a view to addressing gaps and support.

## **6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR AND SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?**

6.1 We will monitor and sustain these improvements by continuing to co-produce our ideas with our Carers through regular meetings, one-on-one conversation and feedback questionnaires to ensure they are always heard and that the service meets their needs in the best way possible. We monitor our data through internal reports shared on a monthly basis. We will be continuing our existing work with the Respite bureau and implementing new ideas as new funding becomes available.

## **7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD**

7.1 There are opportunities to scale up the changes above, however as referenced above all are depending on available funding streams. The project is scaling up the Wee Blether initiative with 3 now in place and will work with Aberdeen Responsible Business to explore ways businesses can support current and future improvements.

### **Recommendations for Action**

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that testing is concluded and that this Improvement Project is brought to an end on the basis that project aim has been achieved and changes embedded as business as usual where funding available; and
- ii) Note the opportunities for scale and spread and that the Resilient Included and Supported Group were considering further improvement activity in relation to carers as part of the refresh of the LOIP

## Opportunities and Risks

- Increase the number of Carers supported to access breaks
- Reducing barriers Carers face when applying for breaks
- Reducing isolation
- Funding for specific projects
- Carers still not accessing or knowing about the service and what we provide despite our best efforts

## Consultation

RIS (Resilience, Included, Support) Outcome Improvement Group.  
Project Team – Andrew Falconer, Anna Schmitt (Quarriers)  
CPA Management Group

## Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Project Charter

<https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/11.6-Carers.pdf>

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