

# Orkney Unpaid Carers Strategy 2024-2026



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# Background

## Some Figures

Scottish Governments tell us there are around 800,000 unpaid carers in Scotland, representing nearly 15% of the total population of the country. This includes an estimated 30,000 young carers who are still in full-time education.

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There are an estimated 800,000 unpaid carers in Scotland.

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Estimates vary substantially around the value of unpaid care. Scottish Government suggest £12.8 billion, whilst Oxfam Scotland analysis, in 2020, estimated this figure to be nearer £36 billion. Whichever is more accurate, these are staggering figures, especially if we consider that the Institute for Fiscal Studies calculated Scotland's social care budget, in 2022 / 23, at £4.3 billion. This means, of course, that unpaid carers account for between three and eight times the total

national spend on social care.

So, what does all this mean for Orkney? Well, with a population of just over 22,000, this means there are around 3,500 unpaid carers in Orkney, which will include more than 100 young carers. Even if we assume the lower estimate for the value of unpaid care in Scotland, this means unpaid care in Orkney is worth around £56 million.

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Unpaid care is worth between 3 and 8 times the total spending on social care in Scotland!

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It is difficult to comprehend these enormous sums of money. Perhaps it is easier just to say that, without the care delivered every hour of every day, up-and-down the land, social care services would collapse.

## The Carers Act (Scotland) 2016

The Carers (Scotland) Act was introduced by Scottish Government to give adult and young carers new rights, whilst bringing together the rights carers had previously, under one piece of legislation. (You can read the full Act [here](#).) For example, under previous legislation, carers could only ask for support if they provided "regular and substantial" care for a person. The new legislation means anyone who provides care for another person is now considered to be an unpaid carer.

Carers also now have the right to a formal support plan, if they would like one, as well as a say in the hospital discharge process of their cared-for person, alongside a say in how services are delivered for their cared-for person.

There are also proposals to extend these rights, giving carers the right to a break from caring.

# Why an Unpaid Carers Strategy?

There are two reasons for publishing a dedicated Unpaid Carers Strategy.

Firstly, the Carers Act requires local authorities and health boards to jointly prepare and publish a local Unpaid Carers Strategy. This must show how they will support people in their caring role, as well as what they will do to identify carers who are not currently receiving support services.

The second and, perhaps, most important reason is that supporting our unpaid carers is one of the Strategic Priorities of Orkney's Integration Joint Board (IJB), the local organisation with responsibility for planning, resourcing, and overseeing integrated health and social care services.

Last year, the IJB published their new Strategic Plan. The plan specifically acknowledged the vital role of unpaid carers, saying "Unpaid Carers are at the heart of everything we do. The fact is, without Unpaid Carers, the social care system in Scotland would fall apart." (You can read the full Strategic Plan [here](#).)

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Unpaid Carers are at the heart of everything we do.

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This Unpaid Carers Strategy will lay out how we will deliver the support our carers need, as well as how we will know we are making a difference to unpaid carers.

## Who are Carers?

As we have seen, anyone who provides care for another person is an unpaid carer. This could be a family member, a friend, or a neighbour. They might have an illness, a disability, a physical or mental health problem, or an addiction.

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Anyone who provides care for another person is an unpaid carer.

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And unpaid carers can be any age, too. For example, many young people look after parents and other family members.

You do not have to be related to, or live with, the person, to be a carer, and you do not need to be registered as a carer.

# How Many Unpaid Carers are there in Orkney?

The short answer to this question is we don't know. The truth is that most people who are caring for someone don't know they are entitled to support; or, more simply, most carers don't know they are carers.

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We think there are around 3500 unpaid carers in Orkney.

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This is a situation not unique to Orkney, as we have seen.

Our carer support services know of around 400 unpaid adult and young carers; but we suspect there are nearer 3,500 people in Orkney who are providing unpaid care to a friend or family member. This means that only 1-in-10 carers are receiving any of the support services to which they are entitled. Whilst there are many people who chose not to receive any services, there are clearly a very large number of carers, here in Orkney, who do not know they are carers.

## Raising the Profile of Unpaid Carers

We have worked hard in recent years to reach these “unknown carers” by promoting the work that carers do locally, helping people to realise that they are a carer, or that a member of their family, a friend, or a neighbour, is a carer.

For example, we've had features in The Orcadian, on Radio Orkney, and, especially, on social media, publicising what unpaid carers do, as well as the help available to them. Here are some of the headlines from the last year, along with links to each story.

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Around 400 people are supported by services in Orkney.

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**Carer wellbeing campaign relaunches in face of rising numbers of carers in Scotland**

**Caring for someone? Support is there for you too.**

**Caring doesn't stop at Christmas - Sarah's story**

**Could you - or someone you know - be an unpaid carer?**

These, along with several other stories, have been posted on social media.

We have also posted videos on social media, some with carers telling people about their circumstances, whilst others tell people how they can get in contact and what services are available to them.

In this example, the Manager of Crossroads Care, Orkney, Arlene Montgomery, talks about the support they can offer carers: <https://youtu.be/2ruA58nWJJc>.

Scottish Government, too, have recognised the need to reach more carers. A publicity campaign on the TV, on social media, and in newspapers and magazines helped people to think about unpaid carers.

Our efforts to promote carers have seen significant success, with a lot more people coming forward to seek support, 50% more than when we began our publicity campaign, about 2 years ago. And this work will continue, as we do everything possible to raise the profile of carers in Orkney.



## What Support is Currently Available to Unpaid Carers?

### Crossroads Care Orkney

Crossroads Care Orkney are commissioned by Orkney Islands Council and NHS Orkney to provide carer support services. (This means the Council and NHS Orkney pay Crossroads to deliver support services in Orkney.) This includes:

- **Information and Advice** about support services such as daycare, homecare, a befriending service, respite breaks, aids and adaptations, power of attorney, and transport. They are also able to signpost where to get expert advice on benefits for both the carer and the cared-for person,
- **Emotional Support** is available from the team. Caring can, at times, be a very isolated and stressful job, and often it is just enough to know there is someone there for a chat - someone who will understand what it is to be a carer. Crossroads also hold a monthly Carers Support Group where there is a small information talk, a chance to bring up any issues for discussion, and then time for a cup of tea and a chance to socialise with other Carers.
- **Advocacy Support** can be given, accompanying carers to meetings regarding their cared-for person, if required.
- **Training** is available, helping carers to learn the skills needed to be a carer, such as moving and handling and first aid.



- **Benefits advice** is offered, as carers or the cared-for person may be entitled to certain allowances.
- **Respite Care** delivers practical help to Carers in the form of a short respite break, where trained attendants can look after a cared-for person, allowing time for carers to get out and meet friends, go shopping, or see a film.

## Age Scotland Orkney

Age Scotland Orkney not only provide support for older people, but also offer help and advice for their carers, too.

One such example is their information, advice, signposting, and ongoing support service for those living with dementia, their family, and carers, which includes dedicated Carer Support Sessions.



## Day Care

Day Care provides supported activities for older people and people with a disability, in a number of facilities, across Orkney, providing an opportunity for carers to take a break from their caring.

## Carer Assessments

Anyone providing regular unpaid care for someone can ask for a Carers Assessment. This isn't a test of the carer's abilities, but the chance for carers to say how caring affects them, both physically and emotionally. The assessment will find out what support the carer needs and if they're happy to carry on caring. A plan will then be produced, called an Adult Carer Support Plan (or Young Carer Statement, for young carers), setting out what support a carer may need to carry on as a carer.



*Carers Scotland is a national organisation providing a huge amount of help and advice to carers.*

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The assessment will find out what support the carer needs.

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An excellent explanation of both the Carer Assessment and the Adult Carer Support Plan is available from Carers Scotland, a national carer support organisation. You can read about carer assessments [here](#), and Adult Carer Support Plans [here](#).

## Young Carers



A young carer is any young person (under the age of 18) who regularly provides care for another person. This will usually be a brother or sister, a parent or grandparent, who has a long-term illness, a disability, or who may have an alcohol or substance problem. Sometimes, they can be caring for more than one person.

The pressures of caring often mean young carers will miss out on school, as well as time with their friends. Many young carers don't know they can ask for help, or are frightened of what will happen if they do ask for help.

But just like adult carers, there is help at hand. Orkney Young Carers can provide confidential support and advice for young carers and their families. Just like adult carers, they can help with arranging an assessment to see what help might be needed (if the young person would like one), and help to put in place a plan, called a Young Carer Statement, to help them with their caring. (You can read more about the help that Orkney Young Carers can provide [here](#).)

All the services available to adult carers are available to young carers, too. But we know that, often, young people need extra help. To make sure they get the support they need, we will be writing a strategy especially for young carers, and plan to publish this during 2024.

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All services available to adult carers are available to young carers.

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## Unpaid Carer Consultation

### How Best to Consult Unpaid Carers?

We think it is vital that carers are involved in the preparation of our Unpaid Carers Strategy. In the past, we have written a first draft of the Strategy and then asked carers if they think we have the right priorities for them.

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We wanted to find out exactly what matters to carers.

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But this time, we wanted to do something different: we wanted to spend time with our carers and find out exactly what matters to them. We wanted to know what they consider are the most important things we should be doing to support them to be carers.

We could have asked carers to complete a survey, but we really wanted the chance to sit down with as many carers as possible and speak to them. We also wanted to do something that would celebrate what carers do; something that would acknowledge how important they are.

In the end, we decided we would hold Scotland's first Unpaid Carer Conference.

## The Unpaid Carer Conference

Our first Unpaid Carers Conference was held in Kirkwall, in May of 2023. We welcomed more than 150 delegates, including speakers from across Scotland, as well as key local folk, and, most importantly, unpaid carers from across Orkney.

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Around 150 people attended the first Unpaid Carer Conference.

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We heard how unpaid carers are the essential strand that hold social care services together, as well as some of the great ideas that are improving the support for carers.

The main session of the afternoon was given over to speaking to carers, where we learned exactly what they felt were the most important ways that services could improve their lives.



## Post-Conference Survey

We published a survey shortly after the conference. We wanted to get feedback on how the conference went, of course, but we also wanted to hear from carers who were unable to make the conference.

Feedback on the conference was extremely positive. There were some who felt access to the displays was limited, or that the day could have been longer or, indeed, shorter, and we have made extensive notes of what to do, and not to do, next time. But everyone who responded had something positive to say, with many extremely pleased to have had the opportunity to attend an event specifically for carers. We are looking at themes for a future conference and will definitely hold another by 2025, at the latest.

## What Did Our Unpaid Carers Tell Us?

Whether hearing directly from carers at the conference, or reading their responses to our survey, the messages were consistent, and can be summarised, as follows:

1. Unsurprisingly, almost all carers said they are looking for a break. They clearly cared, very much, for the person they care for, but many needed a little time to themselves. Some just wanted an hour or two to pop into town or meet a friend for a coffee.
2. The next most common response was that many of our carers have money concerns. In fact, some carers told us they didn't even know they could claim Carers Allowance.
3. Next up was support with their mental health and was often linked to the opportunity for a break – simply looking forward to a break was enough to keep folk going.
4. Another common theme was that a lot of carers feel “time poor”: they don't have the time, or the energy, to do the small jobs at home, like Hoovering the carpets, mowing the lawn, or even doing the washing-up.
5. Carers also told us they find it very hard to juggle their work commitments with their caring commitments. Many said they would like to see employers take a more compassionate and understanding attitude to carers, perhaps along the lines of the many employers who offer flexible working, especially for staff with children.



But perhaps the most important lesson learned on the day was that it seemed everyone attending - from carers and their family and friends, through to support professionals – everyone seemed to know someone who cared for a spouse, a parent, or a friend, but had never sought help and support.

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Most carers don't realise they are carers!

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In short, it was clear that our greatest priority needs to be publicising the role of carers, the support available, and how to get that support.

## Our Priorities

## What We Will Do to Make Life Better for Our Unpaid Carers.

The Unpaid Carers Conference and our conversations with carers, as well as the survey which followed the conference, means we are confident we understand the most important things to our carers in Orkney, especially around what we can do to make their caring lives easier.

This new strategy is, effectively, our promise to do those things that will directly address the most pressing concerns and issues of our carers.

There are also some things we have decided to do that will help us to keep our promises. For example, we have decided to create two new jobs: a Carer Lead and a Carer Support Worker. Both of these brand-new roles will mean that there are two staff who will spend all of their time working for the benefit of carers.

Furthermore, we are now working on a project to develop more innovative ideas for how we can provide respite for carers and hope to launch a pilot project soon.

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The strategy is our promise to address the most pressing concerns of carers.

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We're developing plans to ensure carers have faster access to income maximisation services, including the Orkney Money Matters initiative, which is addressing financial insecurity by increasing access to cash-based advice and support.

We're also close to publishing an Orkney Islands Council Unpaid Carer-Friendly Policy, which will ensure carers who work for the Council (Orkney's largest employer) can balance their work and their caring responsibilities. This will be the first step in developing a carer-friendly

accreditation scheme for employers across Orkney.

But what can we do to help all those carers who don't know what support is available for them? In other words, how do we help carers to realise they are carers?

We will feature regular pieces in both traditional and social media, such as The Orcadian, Radio Orkney, Facebook, and Twitter / X, raising the profile of carers.

And, perhaps most importantly, we're about to begin a training programme that we're calling "Think Carer!" The programme will train all frontline workers, in health services, social care services, education, and advice services, about how to advise carers of the help and support available to them.

## Action Plan

This is our Action Plan. In the left-hand column, we have said what we will do, and, in the right-hand column, we have said how we will measure whether we have been successful or not.

Delivery Milestones	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a 2nd Orkney Unpaid Carer Conference.</li> <li>• We will reach more people delivering care to family or friends, who have not sought carer services, and measure that number.</li> <li>• Offer an assessment to all unpaid carers seeking support and measure that number.</li> <li>• Appoint a dedicated Unpaid Carer Lead, as well as an Unpaid Carer Support Worker.</li> <li>• Prepare and publish a dedicated Young Carer Strategy</li> <li>• Develop referral processes to ensure Unpaid Carers have access to the Orkney Money Matters initiative.</li> <li>• Deliver an Unpaid Carer-Friendly policy for staff employed by Orkney Islands Council (OIC).</li> <li>• Develop a pilot programme to test more innovative ways of improving respite for our carers</li> <li>• Begin training frontline workers throughout statutory and third sector organisations, making them “carer-aware”.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold the conference before the Autumn of 2025.</li> <li>• Increase the number of unpaid carers contacting Crossroads Care Orkney, for support, from 78, in 2022, to 150, by 2025.</li> <li>• Increase the number of carers offered an assessment from 33 in 2022, to 60 by the end of 2024.</li> <li>• Both posts to be filled by summer 2024.</li> <li>• Young Carer Strategy to be published by the end of 2024.</li> <li>• Make sure every carer who would like to can access the Orkney Money matters initiative.</li> <li>• Prepare and publish an OIC Unpaid Carer-Friendly policy by the end of 2024.</li> <li>• Implement a respite pilot programme before the end of 2024.</li> <li>• Undertake training of at least 100 frontline workers by the end of 2024.</li> </ul>