

Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM – 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



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Adult Carers Voice Meeting

Held on 24th November 2025

at The Carers Centre Falkirk

Chaired by Sharlene Ramage (Carers Centre Participation Development Worker).
Online option facilitated by Nora Deme (Digital Support Worker).
Notes by Nora Deme and Sharlene Ramage.

Attendees

There were 20 people in attendance, Carers with a variety of caring situations, Carer Representatives, staff and staff who are also unpaid Carers.

Nora Deme – Digital Support Worker.

Jessie Ann Malcolm- NHS.

Lyn McKay – Citizens Advice Bureau.

Kerry Storey – SFAD (Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs).

Lena McMillan -SFAD.

Rachel McIntyre- MECS (Falkirk Councils Medical Emergency Care Service).

Alison Stephen- MECS.

You said, we did!

- ✓ Beth joined us from Age Scotland. Beth sends her thanks to all who attended and has now shared her findings with us, please view it here:
 - Read the summary [here](#)
 - Read the full report [here](#)

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- ✓ Emma (Community Mental Health Team) and Claire came to the Centre to chat about stress and distress and NHS Dementia services, they gained lots of valuable feedback from Carers, thank you to those who attended on Thursday the 27th of November. Emma and Yvonne plan to return on the 15th of January 10-12 noon, we hope you can join us!

Please view their slides [here](#).

- ✓ Regarding State Pension and Carer Support payment, Lyn from CAB and myself attended parliament! Lyn has emailed Tom Arthur and Shirley Anne Sommerville. We will keep you posted on progress!

Attendance at the NHS Annual Review Closed and Open Sessions

John, Mandy and I attended a closed meeting with the NHS Board last week!
I will type up some notes and share with everyone during January's Voice.

Lana Ray Update

- Some people might remember that Lana Ray came along to Septembers Carers Voice group to discuss Care at home and home Care, on the day people had much more questions to ask.
- Lana promised to speak with other professionals about attendance at future Voice meetings or separate consultation events. Lana has been in touch to say she has reached out to others and hopefully she will have some dates for attendance soon!

IJB Update from Sharon and Mandy.

- This is a short summary; full notes are included below.
- MECS services are in the finalist category for providing outstanding care (they won this). Sharon was able to share Carers positive views about the MECS service and also Carers views about the burden that this new cost places on some of Falkirk's Carers.
- Gail Woodcock highlighted a round table discussion hosted by COSLA; Falkirk's good practice was highlighted on the day! Sharon said she was happy to see that Carer

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Representatives time and efforts have been noticed. Sharon also mentioned that she was happy that the Carer Representative Programme was in place in Falkirk.

- Marie Keirs spoke about the budget, there are very limited resources, there is need for significant changes, there will be more budget consultations (please try and contribute to these/ and attend budget consultations if you can).
- David (service user representative) asked if service users will lose more services and asked how people will be consulted about possible changes to services. Marie replied that it would be difficult to say no at this time, however equalities impacts will be conducted, budget consultations will also take place to seek people's views.
- Alison Japp from NHS asked if it would be made clear to people about the possible impacts that budget decisions may have on them? Marie said that lessons have been learned and consultations will be conducted with as many groups as possible.
- Marie said that vacancies in care homes are resulting in savings. Sharon asked about shifting the balance of care and what impact this is having on homecare. Marie said that the need for care at home is rising and the need for current packages of care is not slowing down. Marie explained that shifting the balance of care funding was provided by NHS and would continue to do so if this model was rolled out.
- Mandy Winters was approved as our new Depute IJB Carer representative, **Well Done Mandy!**

[Read the full IJB Update here](#)

Coalition of Carers Update

- During the Coalition of Carers meeting, Mandy, Sharon and other IJB Carer Representatives met with MSP Tom Arthur, one of the main questions asked was for more transparency from local authorities about Carers Funding and where this is being used at a local level.
- Also raised was the need for IJB Carer Reps to have a vote, Tom agreed but raised the need for IJB Carer Reps to have support in place to attend, many other IJB Carer Reps have no staff to support them.
- Mandy said that Tom said he was happy to meet with Carers, do you think we should ask him to meet with us? I'm thinking around Carer Support Payment!

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Carer Representatives Celebrations

- Bamidele won a writing competition, her short story was published in the Scottish Book Trusts book called Friendship! There are a few copies on the leaflet stand, on p64 you shall find Bamidele's story!
- Bamidele is such a talented writer, our staff team were very touched by your powerful story, thank you for sharing!
- Danny has been working closely with Paragon Housing to make sure that the communication methods they use are accessible for everyone, their hard work has paid off, they won the Excellence in Customer Services Award!
- Winners - Scotland Housing Awards <https://share.google/yWcXzin6knlTOxu91>
- Tenant Communication Profile <https://share.google/QPGBXSHidFDKJ56nr>

Carers Parliament

- This is a short summary; full notes are included below.
- Sharon and I attended in person and Mandy joined online, it is a great opportunity to be heard, all Carers are welcome to attend the Carers Parliament!
- People in positions of power attend on the day such as Tom Arthur (MSP) and Paul Johnstone Chief Ex of Public Health Scotland.
- On the day Carers raised many concerns, such as, the need for unpaid Carers to be involved when decisions are being made that will impact them, the lack of social work assessments leading to no access to breaks, rural communities having fewer resources.
- Carers having to stop/pause their career, due to unsupportive employers, lack of alternative care, one Carer shared her story that she had to ask her employer for less hours and less money as she was "worse off working", this Carer loved her job as it gave her "something for me", older Carers on the day also shared their frustration that they cannot claim Carer Support Payment when their state pension starts.

[Notes from Carers Parliament](#)

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Welcoming Kerry from SFAD.

Kerry spoke about the difficulties that many of the families she meets have with recognising that they too are in an unpaid Caring role, often many of these Carers are stigmatised against, and often Carers feel that they cannot share their caring role with others due to the stigma attached to drug and alcohol use. Kerry has created a 7-week course that she runs which empowers Carers to know their rights and supports them to ensure that professionals uphold these rights, this course is called My Family, My Rights. This course was created by families for families. Carers need to be receiving support from SFAD to access this course as applications to attend are made internally.

Kerry spoke about the importance of self-advocacy, more information about this is included in Kerry's slides attached below. Kerry also emphasised the importance of familiarising yourself with the NHS patients charter as this highlights what you can expect from services, more useful links are attached to Kerry's slides. Kerry also emphasised the importance of Carers being aware of Section 28 of the Carers Act, which highlights the need for Carers to be included in the discharge process.



SFAD strives to work together with the Carers that they support, they provide a variety of different supports, from 1-1 support, group support, outings, relaxation/self-care sessions,

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advocacy support and support with formal complaints. Kerry spoke about different models that they use to support complaints and help people to recognise their rights, one of these is the FAIR model – human rights based approach, this model is discussed during the 7 week course, and in 1-2-1s, for formal complaints, it's an acronym that stands for facts, analysis, identify responsibilities, review (see slides for more info). PANEL is another model that SFAD use, please see slides for more info.

You can self-refer to SFAD's main services or professionals that you are working with may be able to help you to refer too!

Many Carers in the room spoke about the need for GPs to signpost them at the start of their caring journey to supports like SFAD and the Carers centre, Lena told Carers that her team have been trying to attend GP meetings to upskill them, however as yet they have had no reply. Lena spoke about the differences in support for Carers and how this is often dependant on the GP, some can be supportive, however other Carers have had very negative experiences.

[View Kerry's slides here](#)

Welcoming Alison and Rachel from MECS.

Alison and Rachel very kindly brought some equipment into the centre to show everyone; they showcased a variety of different electronical supports that the MECS team can provide for you!

There are many fantastic resources that can support you and the person that you care for to remain as independent as possible. Some of the resources discussed were box and buttons, falls alarm, pendants, 2-way speaker systems, door alarms, bed mats, infrared alarm and room sensors, there is also a pager option for some resources if the Carer would like to be a responder (for example an internal pendant can be linked to the pager, meaning no need for MECS staff as the Carer will respond). The general MECS service works through a sim card and not through a telephone line.

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MECS equipment can also be provided to assist with hospital discharge, there is an 8-week lifestyle monitoring option, with motion sensors, canary system etc, this is only for people who live alone and helps people to see how the person is managing alone and if they need further supports in place.

MECS also mentioned activity sensors these can be attached to kettles, bin lids etc to help you to see if someone is using these items.

Alison described how calls for assistance are prioritised dependant on need, for example if they received a notification that someone's fall alarm was raised and they tried to call the person with no answer this person would be an urgent priority. Rachel said that the falls alarm only triggers if someone has a severe fall, you need to press the button in most cases. Alison suggested leaving someone if they fall until the MECS team arrives as they have specialist equipment to ensure the person is not hurt and the staff do not hurt themselves too.

Rachael spoke about interlinked smoke and heat alarms, if you have these installed, they can be linked to the MECS team too, if you decided to do this MECS can call emergency services on your behalf as they will be notified if any of the alarms go off.

Rachael also spoke about the door alarms, these can only be used in the evening, family need to be available to respond during the night, MECS will turn the alarm off in the morning. Carr Gomm can provide a responder service from the hours of 11pm to 7am, social work can look into this service if your needs meet the criteria for this support.

The basic MECS service costs £5 per week, sometimes there is no cost for example if someone was receiving end of life support. There is a waiting list for MECS services, people most in need will receive support first. There is currently around 150 people on the waiting list for MECS services. MECS will not provide support until a key safe is in place. A Carer raised concerns about the safety of key safes, Alison said that she has never heard of someone's key safe being broken into. Lyn for citizens advice suggested having a ring doorbell for additional security.

When applying for the MECS service please put as much information as possible ie if you are a high risk of falling, let them know your key safe is already installed etc.

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If you have MECS in place, please let them know if you change the number on your key safe and please ensure you return your keys into the box. There are around 3,500 people using the MECS services.

Carers were keen to know how big the staff team are, Alison informed everyone that there are around 4 staff during the day and 6 in the evening, Carers were surprised that such a small team, provide support for so many people.

Links for MECS information and to refer to the service.

[Social care: Care and support at home - Mobile Emergency Care Service \(MECS\) - Falkirk Council](#)

To put in a referral for MECS service: [MECS referral - MyFalkirk](#)

Some of the Carers' Situations/Views

- During Carers Kerry's discussion a Carer asked what MAT standards are, Lena from SFAD explained that these are a set of 10 standards that are in place to ensure that there are safe, accessible and high-quality drug treatment services in place, which enhance the care for people with substance use issues.
- When discussing electronic supports a Carer said that they thought the equipment was good but feels that we still need humans.
- A Carer asked if they could access advocacy support at the hospital for them, we explained that Forth Valley Advocacy Support can support people who are in the hospital.
- A Carer highlighted the importance of knowing your rights so that you can make sure "support is provided".
- A professional in the room asked if a Carer and the Cared for person were both using substances or alcohol in a problematic way, if they could complete the My Family My Rights course, Kerry said the focus would be on signposting

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the person to treatment supports as often people need to prioritise recovery before they can successfully advocate for others. Lena said that the SFAD family support service will support people if there are times of the day when they are not under the influence.

- A Carer approached Michael Mathieson MSP for support, this Carer said Michael raised his concern and they were very happy with the outcome.
- Jessie Ann NHS said that people that she had spoken to are concerned that having key safe boxes at their property is unsafe, Jessie Ann feels that this can highlight that a vulnerable person lives in the property.
- Jessie Ann also highlighted that you have to fit your own key safe as Falkirk council will not provide this service.
- Jocks locks was mentioned for providing key safe and installing for around £80.
- A Carer asked MECS if family are contacted first, Alison said only if this is requested by the MECS service user or the family if the person no longer has capacity and POA is in place.
- Jessie Ann NHS raised concerns about older/ lone people not being able to get a key safe installed if they have no family to help them.
- A Carer raised concerns key safes safety and thought that people might be able to break into these easily.
- A Carer asked how the MECS system would work if there is no service available, Alison said that this is a problem that they are trying to address.
- A Carer asked if MECS could be connected to smartwatches, Alison said that they will investigate this.
- A Carer asked MECS if they need to inform their insurance company of the key safe, Alison advised to inform your home insurance company.
- A Carer asked if they could be the first responder to a fall for their cared for person, MECS advised that you can't as MECS have specialist equipment for this.
- A Carer commented that £5 a week is a lot when you are on a pension and not in receipt of Carer Support payment.

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- A Carer mentioned that they were told that MECS would be in place for the cared for person being discharged from hospital, this did not happen, other Carers have had a similar experience.
- Carers asked MECS if agency staff are used, Alison said at times they can be, however they try to avoid this.
- A Carer spoke about using CCTV, MECS staff must be made aware if this is used in the property.

Future Voice Dates

In January on the 26th we will welcome Jennifer from the HSCP who will discuss the New Carers Strategy, as this is such a crucial development the whole session will be dedicated to finding out from you what Falkirk needs to prioritise for all of Falkirk's Carers.

In February on the 23rd we will welcome Gordon from the Social Work team who will talk to us about our experiences of attending hospital when we have a loved with who cannot remain at home alone and Danielle from Shared Sustainable Thinking who will tell you about local groups and supports that they provide.

In March on the 23rd we will welcome Jack from Forth Valley Advocacy Services who will tell you more about their advocacy services and Julie from Balliefields who will tell you about local groups and supports that they provide.

Hopefully see you all in January 2026! Many thanks Sharlene 😊

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