

Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM - 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

Adult Carers Voice Meeting

Held on 26th January 2026

at The Carers Centre Falkirk

Chaired by Sharlene Ramage (Carers Centre Participation Development Worker) and Nora Deme.

Online option facilitated by Nora Deme (Digital Support Worker).

Notes by Nora Deme, Sharlene Ramage Dana Horsburgh (Carer Representative) and Zoom assistant.

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.

Marie Keirs- Chief Finance Officer Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

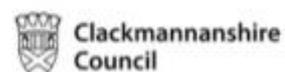
Jennifer Faichney- (HSCP)

Gail Aitken-Short Break Bureau

Quick recap

The meeting focused on discussing the new Carers Strategy and current budget challenges, including proposed changes to care charges within the Health and Social Care Partnership. The discussion highlighted concerns about the financial impact on Carers. Marie emphasized that the proposed changes are part of efforts to align Falkirk's care charges with other areas

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM - 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

in Scotland. The meeting also touched on the development of a new strategic plan for health and social care, which will incorporate feedback from Carers and other stakeholders.

You said, we did!

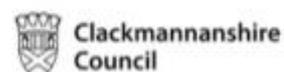
- We have another date planned with Yvonne (Dementia and Delirium Lead) and Emma (Community Mental Health Team), Thursday the 5th of March, 10-12 noon, we hope you can join us!
- When Falkirk Foundation visited you said there was a lack of groups for males age 16-25+, great news they will start a new group soon for this age group, I have asked for more details which I now have, if you are interested, please let Sharlene know.

IJB Update from Sharon and Mandy.

This is a short summary; full notes will be included with January's Voice minutes.

- A proposal has been submitted regarding funding for a new GP walk in service, an update will be provided at the next IJB.
- There was discussion around merging some of Falkirk and Clackmannanshire's services, the staff representative raised concerns that in the past this has not worked.
- Gail Woodcock commented that there is already some good collaborative work occurring between the councils. Gail also highlighted that these initial proposals were discussed at an officer level, however future proposals will come to the IJB for scrutiny.
- Marie Keirs Chief Finance Officer spoke about: -
- Prison services and how the team are reaching out to the Scottish Government for more funding.
- Care homes and care at home places are on the increase and this is adding to funding concerns.
- Set aside budget and how IJB's can really influence how this is spent, the team are looking for more clarification around this.

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM - 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

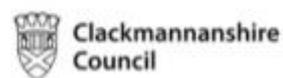
- Spend to save and how conversations will occur later in the afternoon with the senior leadership team.
- Commissioned providers work will be looked at to make sure they are providing the supports that they said that they would deliver.
- Mandy raised issues around private care providers and how this care is very different from company to company. Mandy shared Carers need to have reliable, good quality staff providing care for their loved ones. Mandy asked for staff to have set basic training that is a mandatory requirement of being contracted by Falkirk Council. Mandy also spoke about the need for Carers to be involved with discharge planning as this is not always happening.
- Mandy spoke about MECS's visit to the centre and raised her concerns and other Carers around the number of staff providing this support, Caroline said that staff levels are constantly monitored to ensure there is safe levels of staffing in place at all times.
- Mandy raised the importance of unpaid Carers being well supported during the shifting the balance of care process, Claire said that there is a dedicated worker who involves Carers in this process, if high levels of Carer stress are apparent, they will look at ways to support the Carer. Marie emphasised the importance of unpaid Carers in this process and highlighted the need to keep Carers involved.

Read the full IJB update [here](#).

Parenting Across Scotland Update

- Ami and Arran have submitted a letter to Scottish Parliament, it has been addressed to the Equalities, Human Rights, and Civil Justice Committee.
- PAS highlighted within the letter that they feel parents are currently invisible within national policy and consequently miss out on accessing support that would improve the lives of themselves and their adult children.

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM - 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

- As the parliamentary session is coming to an end, Ami and Arran have asked that this topic is included in the committee's legacy report for incoming committee members to look at.
- PAS have also asked to discuss this matter with the Equalities, Human Rights, and Civil Justice Committee.

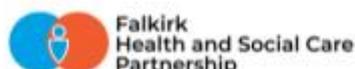
Update from Carer Representative Danny

- Danny has been keen to reach out to care companies to make them Carer Aware, we have started this work and will keep you posted on any outcomes.
- Danny also recently attended the Digital Health and Care Support Programme Board Meeting; he raised Carers concerns regarding withheld numbers, problems with Participate+ and the use of MECS in remote areas. You can read the full response [here](#).

NHS Annual Review Update

- During this meeting pharmacy first was discussed, someone from the team will come to a future Voice to tell you more about this service.
- John and Mandy are still awaiting a few answers to their questions, however.....
- Karen Goudie, Executive Nurse Director and Ross McGuffie, Chief Executive of NHS FV will join us on the 12th of March 10-12noon, more info and invite to follow soon.

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM – 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

Welcoming Jennifer from the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Jennifer came along today to speak about Falkirk's new Carers Strategy. Jennifer mentioned that she had been looking at information from adult carer support plans to see what things are important to Carers.

Carers were keen to know how they will be updated as the strategy develops, Jennifer reassured Carers that there will be lots of opportunities to share your views and also Dana (Carer Representative) will continue to attend the Carers Strategy Group meetings, so Dana will feedback to Carers at the Voice too.

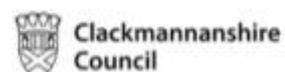
Jennifer discussed the importance of defining Carers broadly in the strategy to recognize diverse caring roles and challenges, including caring for neurodiverse children and managing addiction. She emphasized the need for a holistic approach that addresses multiple caring roles and reduces stigma. Jennifer also highlighted the challenges Carers face in accessing breaks and respite services, particularly for complex care situations.

Sharlene took this opportunity to say to Carers who are caring for someone that is using drugs or alcohol to think about what a break is for them as many cannot access traditional respite options. Carers in the room added that they cannot access breaks when their caring for someone who is using alcohol and drugs and mentioned the "ripple effect" that addiction has on families. It was mentioned at this point the importance of completing your adult carer support plan, a Carer said that they did not realise the full extent of their caring role until they had completed this.

Whilst discussing allocation of respite, Marie spoke about allocation panels and how these are used to make sure people get the right support at the right time. It is also worth noting that there has to be funding available from the Scottish Government to pay for this care/support, unless Carers choose to self-fund care options.

Jennifer spoke about the need for the Carers Strategy to have outcomes that are realistic and achievable.

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM – 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

Marie spoke about the importance of resources being available in the community and also the importance of supporting people to be at home when it is safe to do so rather than in a hospital environment. There was discussion around the need for health service to be more proactive rather than reactive.

Jennifer has kindly asked that Carers complete the survey on Participate Plus by Sunday 15th February: <https://participateplus.falkirk.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/falkirk-carers-strategy-2026-2029>

Welcoming Marie Keirs Chief Finance Officer (HSCP)

Marie discussed the challenges of funding care services in Scotland, highlighting that current budgets are insufficient to meet all needs. Marie explained that the council is exploring collaboration with other authorities and mentioned that the team are trying to transform services to make savings. Marie needs to balance the budget to ensure the council and NHS are not bankrupt.

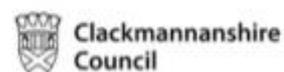
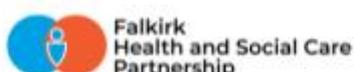
Marie also mentioned ongoing reviews of community hospitals, respite services, and low-level care packages to identify cost savings and improve efficiency. She emphasized that there is no additional funding available, and the council must find ways to manage increasing pressures, through savings elsewhere.

Marie mentioned sending information to primary care colleagues to improve identification of unpaid Carers and ensure GPs are educated about unpaid caring roles. Marie thanked the Carer who provided this feedback as did Sharlene.

Falkirk Council Funding Shortfall

Marie explained that Falkirk Council faces a £1.4 million shortfall in funding before even accounting for the Scottish living wage, which must be paid for without additional

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM - 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

government support. A one-off additional funding payment split between (NHS and Falkirk Council) has been provided to address budget gaps.

Budget Management and Resource Efficiency

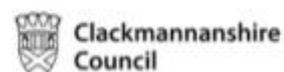
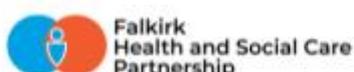
Marie discussed the current budget gap of 14.7 million over five years and emphasized the need to find recurring solutions within existing resources, as one-off funding from NHS and the Council cannot continue indefinitely. She highlighted ongoing efforts to reduce spending through reviews, efficiency measures, and financial oversight, while also addressing challenges such as pay uplifts, care at home demand, and transitions from children to adult care services. Marie stressed the importance of managing within budgets and ensuring managers have the necessary information to make informed decisions, while also noting the need to address inflationary pressures and the Scottish living wage shortfall.

Marie discussed efforts to reduce medication waste, including polypharmacy reviews and implementing a system where patients only receive medications when needed. She highlighted the importance of pharmacy contracts and patient responsibility in managing prescriptions. Marie also suggested a potential medicine waste campaign using social media and local newspapers to raise awareness about unnecessary medication use.

Budget Review and Care Charges

Marie emphasized the importance of funding early intervention and prevention care despite budget constraints; Marie spoke about a successful project that reduced hospital ward costs. Marie also announced a public consultation on proposed care charge increases.

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM – 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

Care Charges Proposal Discussion

Marie discussed financial assessments for residential and non-residential care, explaining how they determine affordability based on factors like pensions and savings. Marie highlighted a proposal to increase weekly care charges for users, noting that Falkirk's charges are currently among the lowest in Scotland. Marie also mentioned plans to restructure daycare charges and increase non-personal care support fees.

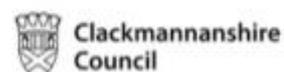
Marie emphasized the need for public consultation and engagement on these proposed changes, which will be shared through various channels including libraries and the Falkirk Herald.

You can view Jennifer and Marie's slides [here](#).

Some of the Carers' Situations/Views

- When discussing the Carers Strategy a Carer asked where Young Carers were as we had not discussed Young Carers, Jennifer reassured everyone that consultation had happened and will continue to do so with Young Carers and Young Adult Carers.
- Carers are keen that monitoring and accountability will be focused on when the new Carers Strategy is implemented.
- Regarding Carers right to a break, some Carers in the room were keen to find out what the criteria is and more about how decisions are made.
- A Carer spoke about their caring role and how they feel the need to fight for everything, they worry "who will fight for them when I am no longer here".
- A few Carers in the room spoke about the stigma attached to caring for someone who is using alcohol and drugs, sometimes this judgement is from other unpaid Carers.

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658



Falkirk Carers' Voice



Monthly on Mondays
10.00 AM - 12.00 PM



Falkirk Carers Centre
or via Zoom



falkirk & clackmannanshire
carerscentre

- Carers spoke about GP services; some had very positive experiences “my GP has been fantastic” and others felt that GP services had a “lack of understanding of their caring role”.
- Carers spoke about medication being wasted that had been prescribed by GP’s and also in hospital.
- Carers shared their frustrations that they are not aware where to return equipment to (NHS loaned equipment).
- A Carer spoke about the difficulty in recruiting personal assistants to allow them to choose care packages in a way that works for them, this is particularly challenging for parent Carers.
- A Carer spoke about their experiences of their child reaching adulthood, they feel that services strive to keep families together when the child is young, however they feel that this changes as the child enters adult services.
- Carers who are caring for family members using drugs and alcohol often cannot access short breaks/respite.

Future Voice Dates

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 one 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.

Please find the reply regarding the eligibility criteria for COVID vaccines [here](#).

Hopefully see you all at February’s Voice! Many thanks Sharlene 😊

Central Carers Association Company Limited by Guarantee | Company No SC184443 | Scottish Charity No SC023658

