

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 23rd March 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 and Dana Horsburgh (Carer Representative) and Zoom assistant.

Attendees

There were 21 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.

Lyn McKay- Citizens Advice.

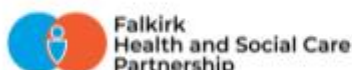
Jack Ryan- Forth Valley Advocacy.

Julie Hayward- Balliefields.

Quick recap

- The meeting covered two main presentations: Julie Hayward about Balliefields Community Hub and Jack Ryan from Forth Valley Advocacy. Sharlene reported on recent visits from NHS senior leadership team members and announced upcoming meetings, Sharlene also provided updates on COVID-19 vaccination programs and discussed care service redesign initiatives. Julie Hayward then presented Balliefields Community Hub, describing their facilities, programs including Try Something New dementia group and Social Cafe, and various community activities. The conversation

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ended with Jack presenting on advocacy services, explaining the role of independent advocates and discussing challenges around Carer advocacy support.

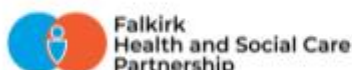
Next steps

- Sharlene-Falkirk: Circulate the minutes of the recent NHS senior leadership team meeting as soon as possible.
- Sharlene-Falkirk: Send out invites for the follow-up meeting with Ross and Karen on Thursday 18th June from 10am to 12noon.
- Sharlene-Falkirk: Send out invites for meeting with Nicola Millar, Social Work Assistant Manager, to the Centre on Friday 24th April, 10am-12noon.
- Sharlene-Falkirk: Send out invites for Laura Wilson's visit on Thursday 21st May, 1:30-3:30pm, to discuss flu, COVID, and RSV vaccines.
- Sharlene-Falkirk: Share the new website link for local dementia supports and services.
- Sharlene-Falkirk: Follow up with Amy (CONSOLIDATE), regarding the dementia consultation and notify group when the analysis/write-up is complete and next steps are available.
- Jack (Forth Valley Advocacy): Send out new leaflets to group members when available (next week or start of following week).

Healthcare Updates and Visits Planning

- Sharlene provided updates on several key developments and upcoming events. NHS senior leadership team members Karen Goudie and Ross McGuffie visited the centre in March and will return on June 18th for a follow-up meeting. Nicola Millar from the Children with Disability social work team will visit the centre on April 24th to discuss experiences with Carers. The Spring 26 COVID-19 vaccination program will include care home residents in care homes, those aged 75 and over, those aged 6 months or older who are immunosuppressed, unpaid carers remain ineligible. Laura Wilson from the

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Scottish Government will visit on May 21st to discuss flu, COVID, and RSV vaccines, and Carers will have the opportunity to raise questions about unpaid carers' vaccine eligibility. Sharlene would like to thank Diana Morgan from NHS Forth Valley for helping to make this session possible. You can find out more about vaccines by clicking the link below.

- [Spring 2026 COVID-19 vaccination programme - News - Public Health Scotland](#)

NHS senior leadership team members Karen Goudie and Ross McGuffie visit the Centre

- Carers had the opportunity to share things that have went well for them and also where improvements are required.
- Key points shared were experiences of hospital admissions, communication amongst NHS departments and with Carers, prescribing, hospital discharge and initiatives such as shifting the balance of care and discharge to assess.
- During the meeting it became apparent that this would be a great starting point to continue working together to make improvements for Falkirk's Carers. Ross and Karen said that they would happily arrange a follow-up meeting.

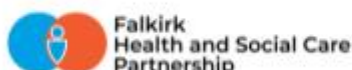
You can find the minutes form this meeting here: <https://centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/NHS-Forth-Valley-Consultation-12.03.26.pdf>

And you can find the summary provided by Ross during the meeting about the improvements that NHS Forth Valley have made so far: <https://centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Improvment-Summary.pdf>

You said we did!

- Parent Carers have asked for someone from the Children with Disability Social Work team to come to the centre to speak with Carers about things that are working well for them and where improvements are needed.

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- Nicola Millar Social Work Assistant Manager is coming to the centre on Friday the 24th of April from 10am- 12 noon. An invite will follow nearer the time.

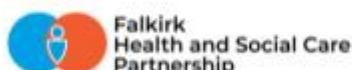
Carer Representatives meeting with Daniel Stoddart Care at home lead.

- Daniel and his team have a focus on developing and redesigning the Care at home service.
- Daniel wants his team to move away from time and task, with focus on promoting care receivers' personal independence.
- Daniel wants the new care to focus on helping people to regain skills or functions that they might have lost.
- Daniel believes that relationships are key to providing really good care and the current model isn't allowing time for this.
- Daniel hopes that a hospital prevention service would help people to stay at home rather than having to go into hospital.
- Daniel wants these new services to be guided by staff, service users, hospital staff and Carers.
- All new services will be delivered taking note of other areas good practice/research that others have done and once in place the new services will be regularly evaluated by measuring the outcomes and improvements.

Questions and points raised by Carer Representatives to Daniel.

- If Carers will be involved at all stages of these new service developments, Carers will be.
- The importance of continuity of paid Care staff for both the Carer and the person that they care for.
- The need for somewhere that Carers can complain if things aren't working for them with care companies.
- Carers can worry about complaining directly to care companies, there needs to be alternatives.
- Catheter training needs for care companies as some Carers felt that this is not happening and people are going into hospital due to poor hygiene.

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- The importance of Carers knowing all Self-Directed Support options.
- If small care companies are merging with others and creating a larger company the standard of care may drop and has for one of our Carer Rep's they shared their experiences with Daniel.

John Dementia Strategy Carer Representative sharing new support service.

Please find below a link kindly provided by John that can tell you all about Dementia supports in the area: [Dementia Services – NHS Forth Valley](#)

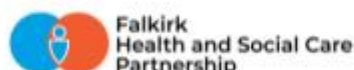
Dementia Consultation Process Updates

Sharlene provided updates on the dementia consultation (CONSOLIDATE), explaining that the team are currently in the analysis stage where they are coding data from scoping workshops and community champion sessions to establish grand challenges. She mentioned that once analysis is complete, a document will be shared with contributors and groups will be invited to continue participating in the research. Sharlene then introduced Julie Hayward from Balliefields Community Hub, who presented an overview of the organization's history, structure, and facilities, including their nursery partnership with Glenbervie and the Boundary Cafe.

Welcoming Julie Hayward from Balliefields.

Julie presented updates on various activities and facilities at Balliefields, including improvements like a new ramp and a changing places toilet. She discussed funding sources, including grants from sporting organizations and the council, and outlined several ongoing programs, such as the Social Cafe, Try Something New Dementia group, walking cricket, and parasize classes. Julie emphasized the inclusivity and accessibility of these activities, noting that Carers can attend with those they care for, and highlighted the success of the Try Something New group, which is supported by Alzheimer's Scotland.

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Julie discussed various community activities at the Hub, including line dancing classes, children's language classes, and a crochet group. Julie also shared details about a recent curry quiz night that raised approximately £1200, highlighting its dual purpose of fundraising and community building.

Julie highlighted the challenges of managing multiple activities with limited volunteer hours and expressed interest in supporting self-led groups.

Minibus Usage and Requirements Discussion

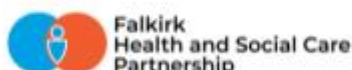
Julie discussed availability for minibus use, explaining that while midweek bookings are more likely due to cricket bookings on weekends, potential users need a D1 license and to be over 25. She clarified that the vehicle cannot be hired but can be borrowed, and offered to check availability by email, with Graham handling the license verification process. The bus has 17 seats and space for a wheelchair, they do not take money for the bus hire however they suggest a donation of £50 and the tank to be refilled when returned, they don't provide a driver

Julie explained that the boundaries café is open 7 days a week and is fully accessible, there is also a changing places toilet here. The spaces/rooms cannot be hired for birthday parties but can be hired for groups/activities etc. There is disability cricket for young and old, there are volunteers there to help people if this is needed too.

Julie emphasised that Volunteers are always welcome, if you are interested in volunteering, please let Julie know or reach out to Sharlene who will link you up. Julie is also happy to help people who might be interested in starting up a group, again please reach out to Julie or Sharlene who will link you up with Julie.

As there is a changing places toilet on site Julie is keen for more groups who need this facility to use it, please reach out to Julie or Sharlene who will link you up with Julie.

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There will be a tree planting day, information about this will be shared on social media.

Julie mentioned that Plus Forth Valley run a group for children and parents, this group is specifically for children with additional support needs, information about this group can be found on their website/Facebook page.

You can find details of the groups on the attached slides:

<https://centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Bailliefields-Community-Hub-presentation.pptx> (please note this downloads onto your computer, please look for the file in your downloads folder)

Welcoming Jack Ryan from Forth Valley Advocacy.

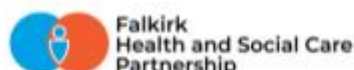
Advocacy Role and Service Expansion

Jack discussed the role and importance of advocacy, their team support over a thousand individuals annually, with a focus on mental health advocacy. Jack outlined the key functions of advocacy, including supporting individuals to express their views, making informed choices, and navigating complex systems, while emphasizing the importance of representing the individual's views rather than personal opinions. Jack mentioned that the service is currently recruiting new board members, volunteers and expanding their peer advocacy services. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to Jack or Sharlene who will put you in touch with Jack.

Independent Advocacy Roles and Benefits

Jack discussed the limitations and role of independent advocates, emphasizing that they cannot speak on behalf of individuals without explicit consent, provide advice, or take sides. Jack highlighted the benefits of advocacy, such as providing emotional distance and professional credibility, especially in challenging situations. Jack also noted variability in how different professionals and organizations approach advocacy, with some embracing its value while others may not.

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The discussion also covered legislation around protecting vulnerable adults, including adults with incapacity and those at risk of harm, emphasizing the importance of representing individuals' views and supporting them through various processes.

Mental Health Advocacy Work Discussion

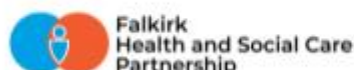
Jack discussed the organization's mental health advocacy work, noting that mental health cases make up 53% of their cases, often involving people who have been sanctioned and require a 24-hour response. The discussion addressed scenarios where Carers are at risk of harm from the person they care for, with Jack explaining that they can provide advocacy support in such cases, though typically through two different workers to maintain objectivity. Jack highlighted a gap in Carer support, particularly for non-statutory cases. There was discussion regarding Carers legal right to advocacy support Sharlene has reached out to a National Carers Organisation for clarify around the legislative right to advocacy for Carers, an update will be provided at a future Voice.

Carer Rights and Advocacy Challenges

Sharlene discussed challenges faced by Carers in Falkirk, particularly regarding the lack of support for Carers when the cared for person may cause them harm. The discussion touched on the role of independent advocacy, emphasizing its time-limited and issue-specific nature, and the importance of maintaining objectivity in advocacy work.

Sharlene mentioned her concerns that we have more and more Carers living with very challenging Caring roles, which sometimes involved Carers being physically or mentally harmed, Sharlene asked if Carers in these situations can have support from Jack's advocacy services, Jack said that in some cases they will support the Carer and the Cared for person, but currently situations involving advanced dementia and autism are non-statutory.

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Sharlene mentioned that our hospital team can support Carers (act as your advocate) during hospital meetings if you wish this support.

Please find Jack Ryan's slides here: <https://centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/FVA-CarersVoice.pptx> (please note this downloads onto your computer, please look for the file in your downloads folder)

Carers experiences

Some of the Carers in attendance also attend the Carers Café, which is ran by Central Wellbeing, these Carers are arranging a small day trip and asked if they could hire the bus, Julie is happy to help.

Nora (staff) asked if you needed to book the groups at Balliefields in advance, there is no need to book for the free groups you can just show up.

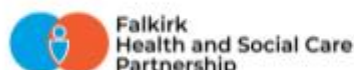
Nora (staff) asked if the café offers gluten free/dairy free products, Julie said that they do.

A Carer asked if the person that they care for can also attend the free groups and activities at Balliefields, Julie said everyone is welcome. For the Tuesday classes there is someone from Alzheimer's Scotland in attendance too.

A Carer asked if there were craft groups, there is not at the moment, but this is something that Julie would consider if many people wanted this.

A Carer asked if virtual reality sessions are suitable for people living with Dementia, people in the room thought that this would depend on the individual.

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A Carer mentioned how fascinating the dementia room at Stirling University is and mentioned that Donna Mulder at the Carers Centre arranged this.

Lyn at citizens advice mentioned that technology can be confusing for some people.

A Carer asked Julie if the groups are suitable for people who are deaf or blind, Julie said many of the groups are, however as yet there is no specific group for the deaf/blind community.

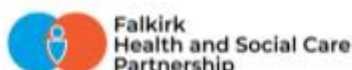
A Carer who lives in the surrounding area of Balliefields was unaware that it was there, another Carer who accessed the centre said she struggled to find it, there was discussion about signage in the street.

A Carer spoke about their experiences of their cared for person having the support of the advocacy team, this support was great for the cared for person but hard for the Carer as the Carers views were not considered by the advocate, the Carer was asked to leave the room so that the advocate could chat with the cared for person.

A Carer asked if Jack's team can take both views, Jack emphasised that the advocate would advocate on behalf of one individual.

A Carer said that advocacy support can be useful, as they can help you to know your rights.

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A Carer said that in their experience professionals may not mention that you have the right to advocacy support.

A Carer asked Jack if there was a risk to life would they have to inform social work, Jack said that the team would.

A Carer spoke about their experiences when the person they care for was sectioned, they spoke about their frustrations of not being listened to and fear for their own safety when the person was being discharged home.

A Carer stated that crisis seems to be priority.

A Carer said that their GP had told them to reach out to the Carers Centre, this Carer stated that the support from the Carers Centres staff "has been a god send".

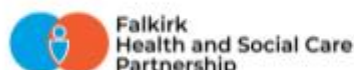
Long waits for guardianship was mentioned.

A Carer shared their experiences of caring and stated that although continuously asking for help, it wasn't until they were admitted to hospital that they got help/respite, other Carers in the room had similar experiences.

Future Voice Dates at meetings are from 10am-12noon.

In April on the 27th we will welcome Lyn McKay from the Citizens Advice Team who will tell you more about the new Carer payments and a member of the team from Central Wellbeing will tell you about local groups and supports that they provide.

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In May on the 25th we will welcome Hollie Houghton from Pharmacy First who will tell you more about this service and Rachael Scott from Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs who will tell you about local groups and supports that they provide.

In June on the 22nd we will welcome Nicola Millar Assistant Team Manager from the Children with Disabilities Team who is seeking your views about what is working well for you and when improvements could be made and Val McInroy from FDAMH Falkirk District Mental Health Association will tell you all about the services and supports they provide that might help you in your caring role

Hopefully see you all at April's Voice! Many thanks Sharlene 😊

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