

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 23th February 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 17 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.

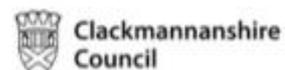
Sean and Danielle- from Sustainable Thinking Scotland.

Gordon McKenzie- Social Work Team Manager.

Quick recap

The meeting focused on discussing support options for Carers, including Self-Directed Support (SDS) options and respite care services. Gordon shared his personal experience caring for his mother with dementia and highlighted some challenges and solutions that worked for him and his family. Participants explored the importance of advance planning, including power of attorney and anticipated care plans. The meeting also addressed the need for better communication and flexibility in providing respite care services. Sharlene and Gordon emphasized the importance of

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supporting Carers before they reach burnout and the need for more proactive planning to ensure this.

IJB Update from Sharon and Mandy.

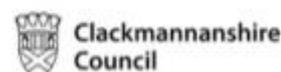
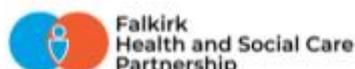
This is a short summary; full notes will be included with January's Voice minutes.

Integrated Join Board Update

- Care Opinion subscription will no longer be paid for by HSCP, this is a cost saving. Carers can still use this platform and please do.
- IJB Carer Reps, Third Sector Reps and Service User Reps are likely to have voting rights as of September 2026. Gail Woodcock Chief Officer and many others around the table highlighted the importance of lived experiences, however voting rights was met with a mixed response.
- Caroline Doherty spoke about the need to continue to work with Carers whilst changes are taking place, particularly around Care at Home/Shifting the Balance of Care and Hospital Discharge processes.
- Mandy shared her views regarding Carer Reps having a vote on the IJB and emphasised that she and Sharon represent the various views of Carers who attend the Voice and other Carer support groups.
- We have asked to share some notes about the role of the Carer Rep with the attendees of the IJB.
- Mandy raised the reality that some Carers are struggling to access social work supports and also that some kinship Carers can feel left out of decisions, Sara Lacey (Chief Social Work Officer/Head of Children and Families) said she would be happy to meet with Mandy to discuss this.

Please find the full update here: <https://centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/IJB-January-2026-notes-to-feedback-to-Carers.pdf>

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Chief Finance Officer Marie Keirs IJB main points.

- Care at home and residential care costs are still causes of concern.
- There is no additional funding from the Scottish Government for extra packages of care.
- The Scottish Government is not providing enough money for the Scottish living wage.
- Really enjoyed her visit to the Carers Centre and sent her thanks to those who came along on the day.

Lana Ray (Care at home manager) and Lynn Adams (MECS manager) Visit

- Lana and Lynn came to talk with Carers about Care at home, shifting the balance of care and hospital discharge.
- Lana said that their team were looking for a way to gather Carers experiences, it is likely that there will be a box in the centre and Sharlene is also happy to gather your views via email.
- Carers asked for Mental Health Leads to visit the centre, Lana will reach out and Sharlene will keep you all posted with updates!
- **Please find the minutes for this meeting here:** <https://centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/Care-at-home-and-Hospital-discharge-Consultation-minutes.pdf>

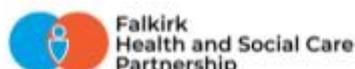
NHS Visit

- Karen Goudie, Executive Nurse Director and Ross McGuffie, Chief Executive are coming to the centre on Thursday the 12th of March 10am-12 noon I do hope you can make it on the day!

Welcoming Danielle and Sean from Sustainable Thinking Scotland C.I.C

Sharlene introduced Danielle and Sean from Sustainable Thinking Scotland, they are based at Kinneil Estate in Boness (<https://sustainablethinking.scot>). Sean discussed the amazing work that their team do to protect the environment whilst also proving meaningful training opportunities

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for all ages, their initiatives, including food growing, carbon capture projects, and community well-being programs and groups. Sean also spoke about the teamwork that has occurred between the Carers Centre and themselves.

Biochar: Wastewater to Fertilizer

Sean discussed their biochar project, which involves using wastewater to create a high-performance fertilizer for food production while also cleaning rivers. They have developed a system that captures phosphorus from wastewater and purifies it before returning it to the environment. Sean also highlighted their community initiatives, including educational programs for schools and courses in rural skills, horticulture, and social entrepreneurship. The project aims to provide alternative learning opportunities for young people who may struggle in traditional academic settings.

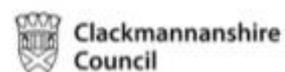
ASN Support Programs Overview

Sean discussed various programs and initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with ASN (Additional Support Needs) and their families. Sean highlighted a comprehensive pathway of courses designed for ASN students from primary to secondary levels, emphasizing the importance of peer support and flexible entry points. Sean also mentioned successful projects like the John Muir Award and the Growing Connections program, which provides specialized training and social opportunities for young people. Sean concluded by advertising free group sessions run by Danielle, including photography, gardening, craft, creative writing and family support groups, and encouraged feedback on potential new group ideas.

Community Engagement and Inclusivity Initiatives

Danielle discussed the community activities and events organized by her group, please follow their social media for updates such as community garden projects, and seasonal events like the Easter Bunny Cup, Summer Social, and Christmas event with Santa. Danielle emphasized the importance of accessibility and inclusivity, mentioning initiatives like a sensory garden at Boness Community Hospital and collaborations with local businesses and organizations. Danielle also highlighted the group's efforts to coordinate with other community hubs and encouraged community members to visit their facilities, participate in activities, and provide feedback.

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If you are interested in finding out more about the free groups and events, please contact Sharlene or visit Sustainable Thinking Scotland's Facebook page here:
<https://www.facebook.com/SustainableThinkingScotlandCIC>

Introducing Gordon McKenzie Social Work Manager.

Gordon discussed his experience as a Carer for his mother with dementia, highlighting the challenges faced by his family and how they have overcome these. Gordon shared that using SDS Option 2, has been beneficial for his family, as it handles the employment and scheduling of caregivers. Gordon emphasized that while this approach works well for them, it may not suit everyone's needs and encouraged Carers to consider different options based on their individual circumstances.

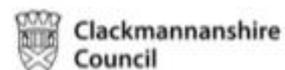
Gordon explained the difference between respite (this is a planned break) and replacement care via the social work team (this is usually used in an emergency when there are no other options available).

Care Options and Communication Review

Gordon discussed various options for organizing care, emphasizing the flexibility of Option 2, which allows for more control over care scheduling, including adjustments for appointments and personal needs. Gordon highlighted the importance of informing Carers about all available options, as many Carers are not currently aware of the full range of SDS choices. Gordon also mentioned the availability of respite care at home as an alternative to care homes, noting its cost-effectiveness compared to residential care. The conversation ended with a plan to review how SDS options are communicated and offered, as current practices are not reaching all potential users effectively.

Gordon briefly discussed the process of booking respite care, explaining that while it can be challenging to secure bookings during peak periods like summer holidays, there is a system in place for checking availability. Gordon mentioned that senior leaders are currently reviewing respite offers across different areas, including learning disabilities, older people, and physical disabilities, with specific managers assigned to each area.

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Gordon spoke about the informal care supports that we all use such as friends, family, community groups, technology supports (such as camera's and alexa's) and day centre supports whilst recognising that some Carers don't have any of these options.

Gordon shared personal experiences of using various support options, including day services, technology, and informal supports, while emphasizing the importance of having a flexible system to respond to emergency situations. Gordon spoke about the systems used that allow external care companies to bid to provide care packages, there are standards that these companies must adhere to in order to be offered packages from the partnership.

Gordon spoke about the supports available from the short breaks bureau and emphasised that other local authorities don't have this support in place.

Planning for Caregiver Support Challenges

Gordon discussed the importance of having power of attorney and financial planning in place to avoid complications in case of emergencies. Gordon emphasized the need for better forward planning and communication with Carers to prevent burnout and reduce the gap between adult carer support plans and social work assessments.

Sharlene mentioned that Daniel, who oversees Lana's team and care at home services, is working on improving the system by gathering anonymized feedback. Gordon emphasized that if care providers are not meeting expectations, Carers can raise complaints and ask to switch agencies, he also emphasised that care companies are monitored and graded by care inspectors.

Gordon will speak with the people below regarding coming along to the centre to speak with Falkirk's Carers.

- Jodie (Learning Disability Manager) and Marilyn Gardner: Lead review of respite offers for learning disability.
- Graeme McLean: Lead review of respite offers for adults with physical disabilities.
- Julia Ferrari: Lead review of respite offers for mental health.
- Gordon (as manager): Come back to Carer groups with updates and engagement on the review of Self-Directed Support (SDS) options and respite offers.

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Carers experiences

A Carer shared their experience of accessing their cared for persons financial information and the challenges faced when trying to stop their attendance allowance.

A Carer highlighted the difficulties in accessing respite care, stating that care home occupancy rates are high, making it difficult to secure respite care.

Some Carers expressed concerns about the quality of care provided by agencies, particularly regarding infections and skincare.

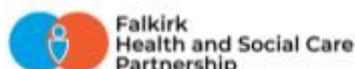
A Carer highlighted the need for more training for care staff and proper monitoring of care providers.

A Carer discussed concerns about catheter care and infections among older patients, highlighting the need for proper training and standardized paperwork to prevent medication mix-ups.

Some parent Carers in the room spoke about the lack of providers for respite that is inclusive of children with additional support needs.

A Carer spoke about their difficulties trying to access respite even when they asked for this 6 month in advance, issues arose due to the Carer not being informed that she was in charge of contacting the care provider, this Carer is still in limbo as to whether she will get her holiday.

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A Carer asked about options for parent Carers and Kasia from the partnership said that Glenbervie can provide this service.

A Carer asked what supports can be provided if the social work team are not working with the family, Gordon said that this is usually when the emergency replacement supports are used.

A Carer commented that Falkirk Council care staff are excellent, other Carers echoed this view.

A Carer asked if Sean and Danielle work with local community hubs, they do and are more than happy to help others.

A Carer said that they regularly walk with the Scottish walking women's group at Kinneil Estate, this Carer was unaware of the activities that are on at the estate, Danielle welcomed the group to pop in for a coffee.

A Carer asked if you have a young adult at home that requires care can you use respite at home, Gordon said that you can.

A parent Carer said that there is not much flexibility that match their care needs, this Carer feels that they cannot explore all SDS options.

A Carer stated that they felt the social worker who came to their home did not feel confident talking about the various SDS options. Gordon said he feels there is room for improvement regarding staff training around SDS.

A Carer spoke about their cared for persons admission to hospital due to catheter infection, she said that these infections are common and believes that hospital admissions could be reduced if paid Carers had training, this Carer was provided with a catheter passport at the hospital, many Carers had not heard of this.

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A Carer spoke about their poor experience with an external care provider and how they changed the care provider, things are much better, this Carer is using SDS option 2.

A Carer asked if there was seen to be a pattern of poor care from external providers would this be investigated, Gordon said it would be raised.

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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