

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 27th April 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 and Sharlene Ramage and Zoom assistant.

Attendees

There were 22 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.

Nicki O'Neill- Central Wellbeing.

Jessie Anne Malcolm- NHS Forth Valley

IJB Update

- There was conversation about Tygetshaugh, and how the care provision has been changed, some people are happy with the new arrangements and others are not.

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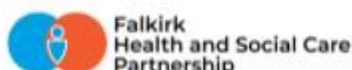
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- The new Strategic plan will be for 10 years rather than 3 years, this is to support long term transformation, there will be regular reviews of this plan, consultation is paused due to elections.
- There will be an IJB development session in May where Carers and Service Users right to vote on the IJB will be discussed.
- Sharon Mwale your IJB Carer Representative asked about early prison release and what supports would be put in place for Carers in the community. Sharlene has been contacted and discussions are ongoing; I will keep you posted on any updates.

Marie Keirs Chief Finance Officer

- There is no new money available for packages of care, resource allocation panels are continuously looking at this.
- There is a £14 million gap.
- More consultation with the public has occurred due to lessons learned.
- Further change is required; there will be communication with staff/others.
- Marie continued
- NHS budget will be approved at the end of March, hopeful that assumptions for next year will be ok, only 1 year funding going forward would like a 5-year agreement from the Scottish Government.
- Care charge increase, letters will go out to people that are impacted.
- Grateful for the additional funding from the council.
- There is a resource allocation panel for care at home and care home places

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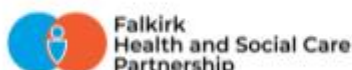
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- Sharon Mwale asked about recruitment savings and asked about risks around savings that will need to be made in the upcoming years, Sharon also took the opportunity to praise Marie for all her efforts. Marie spoke about the new transformation lead coming into place and hopes that this will support positive changes regarding finances.
- David the service user representative stated that large numbers of people are coming back into hospital, he feels that this is a major concern. Gail Woodcock (Chief Officer) commented that NHS Forth Valley has the same rates as the rest of Scotland, shifting the balance of care is ensuring that people are in the right place at the right time.
- Gail Woodcock is also moving on to a new role, we are unsure if there will be a temporary Chief Officer whilst we await Gails' replacement, we will keep you posted!
- The new GP walk in service will be based in the Clackmannanshire Community Health Centre in Sauchie it aims to support the people of Clackmannanshire. Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership is keen to learn from others whose pilots are live such as Edinburgh.
- Sharon our IJB Carer Representative took this opportunity to highlight that this new GP service is the perfect opportunity to raise awareness with staff of unpaid Carers and for staff to ensure that they are recording that someone is an unpaid Carer when they attend the new service, Tom Cowan thanked Sharon for this suggestion. Councillor Collier commented that she also thought Sharon's suggestion was a great idea!
- Sharon took this opportunity to speak about Carers experiences of shifting the balance of care, how some Carers had positive experiences whilst others did not, Sharon asked how Carers can complain when they are not happy about things, she also asked if more work would be done to inform Carers about SDS options and the reality that Carers can change care providers if they are not happy with the service that they are receiving. Caroline commented that recognising the role of the Carer is

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integral and should be involved with hospital discharge teams when this is appropriate, Caroline is keen to have feedback from Carers, Caroline has reached out to Sharlene and discussions are ongoing I will keep you posted.

Mandy in the Sunday Post

Read the article here: <https://centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Carer-Representative-in-newspaper.pdf>

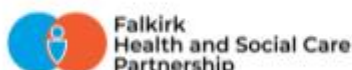
Stirling University Visit

- Joanne McNaughton the programme director for Stirling Universities nursing programme will be joining us. Joanne is looking to hear your views and experiences and most importantly what you feel is important for our future nursing staff to be mindful of when they meet Carers in the hospital wards. Dr Gwenne McIntosh Head of Health Science will also join us. I do hope you can make it Thursday the 7th May from 10am- 12noon.

Yvonne Cairns Dementia and Delerium Lead

- The improvement summary that Chief Executive Ross McGuffie shared (the document all about A and E Forth Valley Improvements) well this work and improvements have been shaped by your views as it was Yvonne Cairns who implemented the changes.
- Yvonne also based her master's essay around your views and experiences, Yvonne highlighted Carers experiences in A and E when their loved one has dementia and how often Carers are excluded, she spoke about providing the Alzheimer's Cards at the Carers Centre Dementia Sessions and educating staff about these cards too!

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You said, We did?

- Sooooo a huge thank you to everyone who has attended these session, you are being heard and your views are shaping positive change, Yvonne will join Ross and Karen in June and tell you more.
- We have another date planned with Yvonne (Dementia and Delirium Lead) and Emma (Community Mental Health Team), Lisa Wilson from NHS Falls Team will also join us at this session! We hope you can join us on Thursday the 14th of May, 10-12 noon

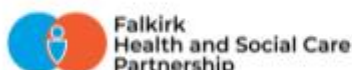
NHS Visit

- Karen Goudie, Executive Nurse Director and Ross McGuffie, Chief Executive and Yvonne Cairns Dementia and Delerium Lead are coming to the centre on Thursday the 18th of June 10am-12 noon, more info and an invite will follow soon! I do hope you can make it on the day!

GP Carer Status Update

- Marie Keirs our Chief finance officer offered to share your views about GP databases and Carer status not being recorded by everyone's GP.
- Marie kindly contacted the primary care team and I received a response. In summary.....
- There is a mechanism for this to happen and Forth Valley Practices are encouraged to do this via what we can an Enhanced Service which is over and above the core services that all are contracted to provide.
- We have a pan Forth Valley Enhanced Service for Carers which all Falkirk Practices (actually all FV Practices) are signed up to. Part of this is to flag Carers in the GP IT system to enable their own healthcare needs to be addressed in light of their carer's role where this is made known to Practices.
- Where possible, details of the person they care for are also included as this may also be a registered patient of that Practice. The GP Practices have just returned their annual declarations confirming they hold the register, have updated as needed during the year and are now re-engaging for 2026-27.

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- They also confirm they have a lead contact GP in each Practice for carers and their needs, supporting them in both their caring role and accessing other services such as routine screening or other preventative measures such as disease monitoring.
- I asked for a list of lead GP's, and unfortunately there is not a list.

I recommend that you check who is currently your lead contact GP.

Quick recap

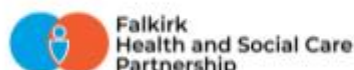
This Carers Voice meeting covered several key updates and discussions. The group heard about changes to care provision and the new 10-year strategic plan, with updates on IJB representation and budget concerns including a £14 million gap. They discussed the new GP walk-in service in Clackmannanshire. Nicki from Central Wellbeing presented their mental health support services, offering 15 monthly groups including Carers Cafe, cinema club, and board games, all free and accessible to carers. The meeting also covered carer benefits, including new improvements to carer support payments and additional payments for caring for multiple people, though challenges with processing times and interactions with other benefits were discussed. Sharlene will reach out to local counsellors to attend a consultation and listen to carers views regarding transport options for people who live in Falkirk with disabilities.

Carers Voice Session

Sharlene informed attendees that they could be added to the involvement list to receive emails about Carers Voice Groups and other consultations please let Sharlene know if you would like to sign up.

Sharlene provided updates on the Integrated Joint Board (IJB), including changes to the strategic plan which will now be 10 years rather than 3 years, and discussed ongoing discussions about early prison release supports for carers. She reported that there is a £14 million gap in care packages and that care charges increases have been communicated to affected individuals. The meeting also covered concerns about hospital discharge rates and the introduction of a new GP walk-in service in Clackmannanshire, with Sharon suggesting that staff should record unpaid carer status in patient records.

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Carer Involvement and Support Updates

Sharlene discussed several updates and upcoming events related to carer involvement and support. She highlighted Caroline Doherty's (Health and Social Care Partnership) efforts to involve carers in hospital discharge processes and mentioned Mandy's (Carer Representative) appearance in the Sunday Post discussing sandwich carers. Upcoming events include a visit from Joanne McNaughton from Stirling University's Nursing program and Dr. Gwenne McIntosh, focusing on carer experiences and nursing staff education. Sharlene also thanked carers for their contributions to improving A&E services and announced future sessions with various NHS representatives, including Karen Goudie and Ross McGuffie.

Carer Support Group Activities

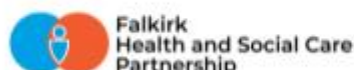
Nikki then introduced Central Wellbeing, a charity based in Falkirk, outlining their mission to improve mental health and wellbeing through free peer support groups, workshops, and community events. She emphasized the organization's values, including the importance of lived experience and the provision of choice for participants.

Nikki explained the preventative approach of their carer support groups, emphasizing that they are welcoming spaces where members can share as much or as little as they want. Nikki detailed various group activities including cinema trips, board games, book clubs, and supper clubs, all funded through charity and core funding sources. Nikki clarified that while some groups are specifically for carers, others like art groups and board games are open to the public, and new members can be supported through one-on-one meetings before joining group sessions.

Community Support Groups Overview

Nikki discussed various support groups available, including Craft for All on Thursdays and Little Conversations at the Acoustic Cafe for over-50s. Nikki highlighted a new peer-to-peer group starting for carers of people living with dementia, emphasizing its flexible format and the opportunity for carers to lead the discussions. Nikki also mentioned the Denny group for over-60s facing loneliness and various other activities like board games and cinema club.

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She provided information on accessing group details, suggesting visiting the Central Wellbeing website or contacting them directly for more information.

Nicki mentioned that the Carers Centre provides support for up to 2 years once the cared for person has died, Sharlene discussed support services at the Carer centre, explaining their goal is to help people transition from support after two years by connecting them with groups and activities. Sharlene requested paper copies of group schedules be provided to ensure accessibility for those without online access.

Carer Support Payment Issues

Lyn discussed issues with carer support payments, highlighting problems with processing times and backdating rules. She explained that while carer support payments can take 6-8 months to process, DWP only allows backdating for 3 months, resulting in lost benefits for many claimants. Lyn also described a new additional person payment of £10.40 per week for carers supporting multiple people, clarifying that this payment doesn't affect the main carer's benefits.

Carers views/comments

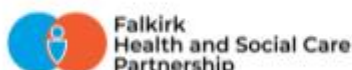
A Carer commented on her care at Tryst medical practice, this Carer said that this GP practice is really good, the practice provide the carer and cared for person with a health check and this carer says that they are always included in conversation/treatment plans etc for the cared for person, this practice listened to the needs of the carer whilst observing the needs of the cared for person who communicates in ways that are not always easy for a new person to understand.

Really good feedback about Nicki from many Carers in the group who attend the groups that Nicki hosts, comments such as "we are now friends who meet up".

Nicki and the team are happy to speak to Carers if they find starting a new group daunting, they can meet you first and then take you along to the group.

A Carer spoke about being new to Nicki's Carers group that is held in the Carers Centre on Wednesday mornings at 10am, this Carer said that the group is "escapism" for him, the "best thing in the world" as it "can be hard being a Carer and when you have a laugh it is good for my mental wellbeing, it's the best group I have ever been too".

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A Carer said that he has asked for respite and he thinks that the person that he carers for should be able to attend some of the non-Carer groups that are ran by Central wellbeing, this Carer stated that he has asked for respite and by the person he cares for attending these groups that would give him a break, this Carer was saddened that the mental health team did not tell him about the groups at Central Wellbeing.

A Carer said the “carers café is really good, there is also a craft session that’s great you can bring your own things or they have lots of things you can use, I learned to do diamond art there, its great to connect with others that have the same interests as you, someone even brings there wee sewing machine”.

A Carer said that the central wellbeing groups are like having a “wee family that support each other”.

A Carer commented that Lyn at the citizens advice team helped them to get council tax for the person that they care for, this Carer asked Carers in the room if they were aware that some people with dementia can get discounted council tax.

A Carer asked Lyn if the department for working pensions can access your bank account and Lyn said that they can.

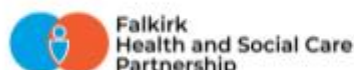
A Carer who is also a staff member spoke about the lack of wheelchair accessible taxis in Falkirk, this is causing isolation as the Carer and the person that they care for cannot go into the town for a meal in the evening as they worry that they won’t be able to get home.

A Carer commented that they avoid school times for accessible taxis as they cannot get one during school drop off’s and pick up’s.

Jessie Ann Malcolm commented that there are very similar problems in stirling and suggested that Sharlene contacts Fiona Collie who is a local councillor, Sharlene will take Jessie Ann’s advice and reach out to Fiona.

A Carer spoke about power of attorney and how after sending the forms and being told they were ok they are not, this Carer is worried about the outcome of this.

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

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.

In July on the 27th we will welcome Donald Johnstone from the Fire Service who will tell you about the services and supports that they provide and Heidi Anderson at Dial a journey who will tell you about the supports and services they provide that might help you in your caring role.

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

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