

**Consultation with Samantha Baird Senior Charge Nurse Woodlands Resource Team
and Elizabeth McIntyre Nurse at Woodlands Resource Centre**

Held on 1st June 2026

at The Carers Centre, Falkirk

Quick recap

This meeting was a session for Carers hosted by Sharlene, the Carers Participation Development Worker, to inform Dayna, the Carers Centre's Training Coordinator what topics/training Carers would like to see in the centre. The discussion focused on Woodlands, a secondary care mental health service that provides specialist support for people aged 18-65 with severe mental health issues including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and personality disorders. Sammy and Liz from Woodlands explained their service structure, assessment processes, and various therapeutic programs including Decider Skills, Safety and Stabilisation, and DBT (Dialectical Behavioural Therapy) pathways. The session included detailed discussions about how services are adapted for neurodivergent individuals and the challenges Carers face when navigating mental health systems, particularly around crisis support, out-of-hours care, and the lack of clear information for family members. Carers shared extensive feedback about training needs, suggesting sessions on medication management for ADHD, manual handling techniques, substance misuse education, and better understanding of social work processes and equipment access. The conversation ended with Carers requesting more practical support materials, clearer information about crisis services, and better peer support opportunities, while also highlighting ongoing challenges with long waiting times and the need for more comprehensive Carer involvement in professional assessments.

You said, we did!

- Carers said that they wanted to speak with a councillor regarding public transport for wheelchair users, I have reached out to Fiona Collie.
- You would like Sandra McAllister from Children's Services to come and chat with you Sandra will join us alongside Val from FDAMH on the 22nd June 10am-12noon.

Meeting Minutes

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NHS Visitors

- Karen Goudie, Executive Nurse Director and Ross McGuffie, Chief Executive and Yvonne Cairns Dementia and Delirium 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!

Next steps

Dayna

- Coordinate and schedule training/information sessions on topics such as ADHD medication process, waiting times support, manual handling, substance misuse, menopause, anxiety, and decider skills; confirm speakers and logistics.
- Explore and, if feasible, organize peer support sessions for Carers, including those in specific situations (e.g., mental health, dementia, life after caring).
- Work with Woodlands team (Sammy, Liz, etc.) to consider delivering condition-specific sessions (e.g., schizophrenia, anxiety, menopause) and explore the feasibility of Carer participation in decider skills training.
- Consider inviting Alzheimer Scotland or similar organizations to deliver sessions on dementia, including managing family relationships and communication strategies.

Sharlene

- Follow up with Fiona Collie to see when she can come to speak with Carers about public transport for wheelchair users.
- Organize additional sessions to cover topics not addressed in this meeting, including mental health support for over 65s and other Carer-identified needs; invite relevant speakers as requested by Carers.

Meeting Minutes

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organisations

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FALKIRK
CARERS

Meeting Introduction and Welcome Session

Sharlene opened the meeting and welcomed participants, noting that the session might be emotive and offering support if anyone felt upset. Sharlene informed attendees that the session would be recorded for minute taking purposes only. Sharlene introduced herself as the Carers Participation Development Worker and Dayna as the Training Coordinator, explaining that Dayna wanted to coordinate training sessions based on Carer feedback. Sammy and Liz from Woodlands provided an overview of their secondary care mental health service, explaining their assessment process and multidisciplinary team meetings.

Mental Health Services Overview

Sammy presented an overview of mental health services at Woodlands, describing the multidisciplinary team structure including psychiatrists, community psychiatric nurses, therapists, and support staff. She detailed various clinical programs offered including Decider Skills, Safety and Stabilisation, anxiety management, and DBT pathways, with most interventions available in both group and one-to-one formats. When asked about adaptations for neurodivergent patients, Liz explained that services are individualized based on specific needs, with some programs delivered one-to-one rather than in groups, and noted ongoing work to better support neurodivergent individuals through collaboration with the Learning Disability Service.

Their Mental Health Pathway is generally – referral, multi-disciplinary team meeting, initial assessment, multi-disciplinary team meeting, discharge, intervention, or further referral. Sammy explained that outcomes of meetings are written down and sent out to clients so that they have time to understand and reflect on their meetings.

Sharlene asked if those being assessed could bring Carers with them to the meetings – they can.

Liz talked through some of the groups offered: there are key workers who are prepared for groups and 1:1 meetings.

Decider Skills is 4 sessions of group covering 12 decider skills (mindfulness, managing emotions and grounding techniques). This is also offered in 1:1.

Meeting Minutes

Consultations for
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views with external
organisations

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FALKIRK
CARERS

Safety & Stabilisation is phase 1 trauma work, giving the person skills to enable them to do in depth trauma work as a next step. This generally works better in a group environment due to peer support. This is 7 sessions looking at self-care, grounding, mindfulness and risk management.

A Carer asked how these sessions are adapted for neurodivergent people – Liz explained that people must meet the criteria for secondary care firstly, and then they will work more in a 1:1 basis adapted to their needs which are identified via their key workers and assessments. Sharlene suggested that Carers could learn the Decider Skills, for example, alongside the cared for person to help them recall and retain the information.

Anxiety Management is generally anxiety and depression management as there is often an overlap between these illnesses. This is based on CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) and is 8 sessions.

EUPD Pathway (Emotional Unstable Personality Disorder) offered key worker. Mindfulness and MERG is 10 sessions. We recommend after the sessions people come off the pathway and maybe try **DBT** which is a yearlong therapy (dialectical behavioural therapy). People work 1:1 with a therapist and group therapy on a weekly basis for this time. The results are great but unfortunately the team is very small so there is a strict eligibility criterion.

Sharlene discussed Decider Skills which had fantastic results, this person was neurodiverse and had tried many groups with no results previously. The impact was so great her and her colleagues were trained to deliver Decider Skills.

Mental Health Team

Sammy discussed the complexities of managing a mental health team, including the need for flexibility in daily operations and staff supervision. She explained that the psychology team at Stirling Health Village operates separately from the Woodlands team, with different services including secondary care and Adult Psychological Therapy Services. The discussion covered out-of-hours mental health support, with NHS 24 and MHAT providing coverage when services are not available from 9-5, Carers feel that there are gaps in crisis support.

Meeting Minutes

Consultations for
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views with external
organisations

FOR

FALKIRK
CARERS

Carer Support Information Sessions

Dayna, a training coordinator at the Centre, introduced information sessions and invited feedback on topics of interest to Carers. Participants suggested sessions on ADHD medication processes, strategies for managing long waiting times, manual handling techniques, and Carer health and wellness. The group emphasized the importance of providing practical support and resources for Carers to effectively care for their loved ones.

Carer Support Services Improvement Discussion

The meeting focused on discussing support services for Carers and potential improvements to existing offerings. Participants discussed challenges with accessing services, including transportation and communication barriers, with many expressing preferences for email updates about upcoming sessions. The group explored topics for future training sessions, with particular interest in mental health support, stress management, and understanding of conditions like dementia and learning disabilities. Several participants shared specific experiences with social work support and suggested improvements to the referral process, including the need for more comprehensive information when making referrals to services.

Future Training Sessions

Training Coordinator Dayna Faulds attended the meeting to understand what types of information sessions Carers are looking for and any barriers preventing them from being able to attend.

Topics suggested by Carers

Process for when a child is going to be medicated for ADHD – what happens after diagnosis.

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Meeting Minutes

Consultations for
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FALKIRK
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With waiting times being so long, what do people do in the interim (strategies).

Manual Handling.

Night awakenings and toilet trips.

Autism & Neurodiversity Richard Ibbotson was great previously in relation with people getting into work with autism.

MECS.

Managing Challenging Behaviours – covers all Carers from parents to those supporting older individuals.

SFAD/CADS in relation to substance misuse and also prescription medications.

CAMHS.

Addiction in general – covering more than alcohol and drugs.

Alzheimer's Scotland to support family members.

Benefits Service – Lyn from CAB.

Scottish Autism.

Mental Health Sammy and Liz are happy to deliver some sessions a few times a year on specific conditions – covering depression, anxiety, schizophrenia and how to support people with those disorders. Most interest in what anxiety is and what you can do to help yourself and your cared for people. Intrusive thoughts.

Decider skills.

Mindfulness and relaxation.

Mental Health in over 65s. How to deal with it.

Menopause – FDAMH.

Social Work Overview on Processes – who do you contact, what's happening etc.

Social Work Transition Process.

Learning Disabilities & Mental Health Support.

Conflict Resolution.

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Meeting Minutes

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FALKIRK
CARERS

Dementia and challenging behaviours – self regulation and how to respond to behaviours.

Power of Attorney.

Guardianship.

Informal catch ups/peer support groups.

Life after caring.

Day of the week

Monday was mentioned.

Mornings are best across the week

Barriers to attend

Parking

No working lift in Howgate car park

Care for cared for person

Childcare

Lack of disabled parking

Being able to attend online is good – some people work from home or don't drive.

How to advertise

Emails are best

Social media

6-week Parent Information Session by Scottish Autism will commence in August.

More information and registration link can be found here: <https://centralcarers.org/parent-info-prog>

Register for this course here: <https://forms.office.com/e/151ZJQZEiE>

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Carers Views/Idea's/Comments

- Carers would like the bungalows to develop and distribute a simple A5 leaflet or guide for Carers/family members outlining key contacts, crisis numbers, and what to do in mental health emergencies, including out-of-hours support information.
- A Carer mentioned that sometimes the person being assessed may not reveal the full truth. Carers can still pass on information to the assessors even if they are not involved in the meetings (for whatever reason, cared for person's request etc.).
- A Carer asked what happens out with working hours – if there is a crisis, people are told to call NHS24, which is linked into FV Mental Health Services (MHAT).
- A Carer said there is a disconnect between services –files are not checked – information is not available – Carers are not included, information about groups and supports are not told to the Carer only the cared for person, if the Carer knew about the supports, they could encourage the cared for person to attend.
- Some Carers stated that they are being informed too late of issues with their cared for people. How can they be more involved in meetings and assessments etc.
- The cost to health and mental health of family members who have struggled to support their cared for people is great, this could be prevented if the Carers were involved earlier and supported in their caring role.
- Sharlene is going to try to cover more sessions for things not covered today – e.g. support for those over 65 – she will investigate and invite those involved to talk at future Voice meetings.
- Bipolar Scotland was mentioned as a useful support.
- Many Carers stated that services are only available 9-5, one Carer commented that people's mental health doesn't improve at 5pm.
- Sharlene added that we have Hospital Support Workers who can act as advocates and support Carers in hospital settings.
- A Carer mentioned that MECS can help assist people to the toilet however another Carer stated that the MECS team are taking up to 3 hours to attend, whilst the cared for person is wet/soiled. Sharlene suggested that this Carer get in touch with her via email.