**East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership**

**Carers Strategy 2025-2028**

**Recognising, Valuing & Supporting Our Carers**

**‘East Ayrshire’s approach to improving outcomes for Young & Adult carers’**

(Logo’s)

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INTRODUCTION

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 became law on 1 April 2018 and places a duty on local authorities and health boards to prepare and publish a local carer’s strategy. The duty to prepare the East Ayrshire Carers Strategy (ACS) is delegated to Integration Joint Board (IJB) which is responsible for planning health and social care services in East Ayrshire.

The duties include preparing a carers strategy with particular focus on the local area. East Ayrshire Carers Strategy sets out our commitments to carers and describes how East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) will support carers of all ages during 2025 -28.

This local strategy supports the delivery of the National Carers Strategy which is reviewed every three years. The National Carers strategy recognises the diverse experiences of carers and sets out a range of actions to ensure they are supported fully in a joined up and cohesive way. It brings together existing initiatives and new approaches and proposes new and better ways to support carers.

The National Carers Strategy 2022 estimates that the economic value of the contribution made by unpaid carers in Scotland is £13.1 billion a year. The role and contribution of Carers is likely to be even more critical as a result of the increasing demand for health and social care which is predicted to grow by 25% by 2031. Without their Carers, many people would not be able to live their lives as they do.

Within dementia care alone, unpaid carers provide up to 100 hours of caring each week. Unpaid care equates to half of the £42billion forecasted cost of dementia in 2024. By 2040 this cost will have increased to £90 billion in the UK. To the UK economy in 2024, unpaid carers contributed £14billion in unpaid labour (Alzheimer’s Society, 2024).

East Ayrshire Carers Centre provides advice, information, support, training, micro grant for a short break, advocacy, and social & leisure activities to carers from the age of 5 living in East Ayrshire. East Ayrshire carers centre vision – ‘To create a carer led service by placing carers at the heart of the organisation and ensuring the services are effective and accessible to all carers regardless of location (rural or urban), personal circumstances or their caring situation’.

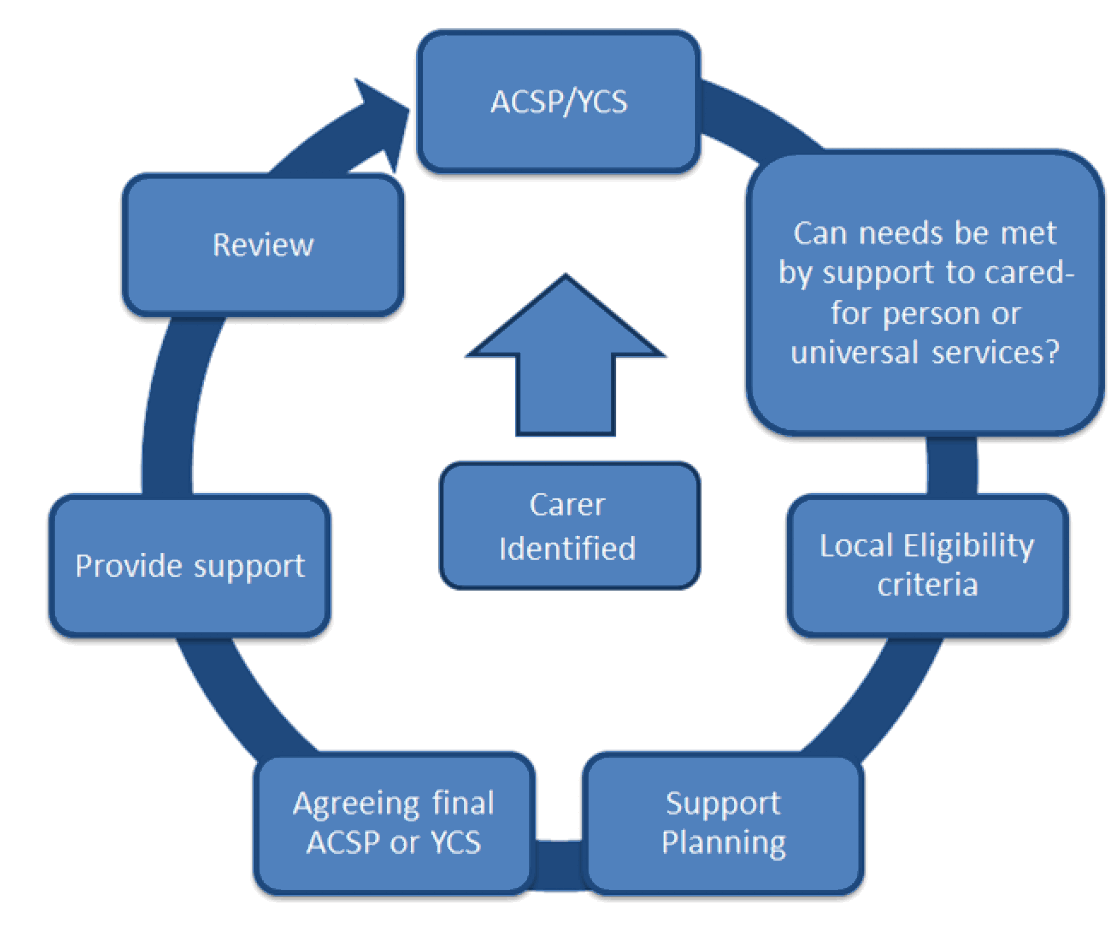
A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a family member or friend who struggles due to illness, disability, mental ill health, problematic substance use or addiction.

This does not include or relate to ‘paid’ care workers. For the purpose of this strategy we will continue to refer to unpaid carers as ‘carers’.

We know that caring for someone can impact on a carer’s mental and physical health, their personal relationships, employment, family finances and life balance. Caring can also impact on the educational attainment of young carers

The following are the statutory requirements and duties of local authorities, health boards, and Integration joint boards:

* To offer an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) or a Young Carer Statement (YCS) to anyone identified as being a carer (this replaces the previous Carer Assessment)
* Publishing a local Carer’s Strategy
* Provide support to carers including a range of information and advice
* Publish local eligibility criteria and support ‘eligible needs’
* Provide information and advice for carers
* Involve careers in the setting of local eligibility criteria and in preparing strategies for short breaks, hospital discharges
* Publishing a local Short Breaks Services Statement



Carer Support Pathway – [Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 : Statutory Guidance, Updated July 2021](https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-statutory-guidance-updated-july-2021/pages/1/)

# Who is the strategy for?

The Carers Strategy sets out how East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership plans to deliver on its commitment to support unpaid carers of all ages in East Ayrshire over the next three years. This includes i) carers who live in East Ayrshire, ii) carers living in East Ayrshire whilst caring for people elsewhere and iii) carers who live within another authority but who care for a person living in East Ayrshire.

It will inform other East Ayrshire Health & Social Care strategies and transformation plans. This ensures EAHSCP is striving to meet the needs and aspirations of carers and that this is embedded across all partnership services, including those commissioned externally. This is namely East Ayrshire Carers Centre who provide information, advice, signposting and support service where appropriate.

The strategy will be underpinned by an implementation plan with clear actions setting out how we will take a human rights approach to working together to improve the health, wellbeing and experiences of carers.

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[Research in Practice (2020)](https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/media/gejco2xh/2679_fb_embedding_human_rights_in_assessment_web.pdf)

The voices of carers continue to be at the heart of shaping and delivering health and social care services. Their first-hand experiences and insights are invaluable in designing policies and services that truly meet the needs of those they care for. This central role ensures that care provision is based on good relationships and honest, necessary conversations, exploring ‘what matters’ to the carer which supports the real-life challenges carer’s face.

# Why is this Strategy required?

To continue to respond to the changing needs of carers and young carers.

To respect the identities of those who are providing care, including their gender, ethnicity and religion.

To respect the choice of our citizens regarding how they provide support.

To ensure that strong partnership continues to underpin how we support carers across East Ayrshire.

To measure the success of the priorities set out in previous Carer Strategies

To fulfil our statutory requirement to update or develop a new Carer strategy every three years.

### How have we gathered the information so far?

Ongoing support & engagement sessions with carers – facilitated by East Ayrshire Carers centre

Using information from engagement activity such as local conversations, dementia conversations**.**

Using knowledge on current practice, impact, and success measures in East Ayrshire

# Who Cares in East Ayrshire?

We know that many carers, may not self-identify as carers. Often, this is because they see themselves as a spouse or family member with a ‘duty’ to care for their loved ones. The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 defines a carer as ‘an individual who provides or intends to provide care for another individual’ (the cared-for person).

**Parents**: Parents who care for a child or young person under the age of 18 years with a disability or chronic illness.

**Children & Young**: Children & young people who care for a family member, often a parent or sibling, or friends. In East Ayrshire Young Carers are supported from the age of 5-18 years to care for a family member, relative or friend.

**Sibling**: Brothers or sisters who provide care for their siblings.

**Spousal**: Husbands, wives, or partners who care for their significant other.

**Adult:** Adult carers are those over 18 (unless at school, where they still class as a young carer)

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 was updated in July 2021, so that the only distinction of age in the carers act is between young and adult.

# The Importance of Identifying Carers?

The early identification of unpaid carers is a key part of our approach. This allows us to:

1. Identify those who have vital carer roles but do not identify as such

2. Introduce preventative approaches at the right time. Including mitigating, where possible, the impacts on health and wellbeing of carers such as burnout.

3. Develop anticipatory approaches and early planning.

4. Support future planning.

5. Minimise the chances of crisis occurring.

6. Target responses and resources appropriately.

Local carer strategies must set out plans for identifying carers, such as outreach and awareness raising activity, communication and information dissemination, and events for and about carers.

# Why Supporting Carers is Important to our Community

People are living longer but often the increase in longevity comes at a cost of increased years in poor health with complex care needs. This is putting more pressure on the health and social care system.

In response, East Ayrshire is working to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and premature admissions to long-term residential care, to reduce delays in discharge from hospital, reduce demand for formal support services, and to help people remain as independent as possible in their own home.

Unpaid carers in Scotland represent a larger workforce than the paid health and social care support workforces combined. They are integral to good care and are often best placed to understand and advocate for the needs, rights and preferences of the person they support

Although for many, caring can have positive and rewarding aspects, is it is profoundly challenging. Carers often put the interests of the person they care for ahead of their own needs. The care provided by unpaid carers is often physically and emotionally demanding, with consequences for the carer’s own health and wellbeing. Caring responsibilities can affect a carer’s own health and wellbeing, their relationships with others, their access to education, employment opportunities and finances, and limits the time and energy they must do things for themselves.

We recognise the value carers bring and importance of ensuring they are included as equal partners in care. This strategy sets out our commitment to supporting carers to:

Uphold their human rights

• Reduce the impact of their caring role

• Promote their health and wellbeing

• Sustain them in their caring role if they so wish

• Help people to continue to live in their own homes and communities

• Achieve better outcomes for carers

• Achieve better outcomes for the cared for person

• Sustain the health and social care system

• The right to a family life, to have and maintain family relationships – article 8 of Human Rights Act.

Our Vision & Values in East Ayrshire

Our overarching vision and values is set out in East Ayrshire’s Strategic Plan (24-27 update) for our communities which we share with our Community Planning Partners:

*“East Ayrshire is a place with strong, safe and vibrant communities where everyone has a good quality of life and access to opportunities, choices and high quality services which are sustainable, accessible and meet people’s needs”*

*“Working together with all of our communities to improve and sustain wellbeing, care and promote equity”*

People, compassion and partnership are the foundation of our approach to health and social care provision. This is evident in our six strategic priorities set out in our Strategic Plan:

Starting well, living well, dying well,

People at the heart of what we do,

Caring for East Ayrshire,

Caring for our Workforce,

Safe and protected,

Digital connections

# Listening to you

Despite good progress being made over the last few years, we recognise that more needs to be done to support Carers in East Ayrshire.

Through listening to the voice of Carers and working with key stakeholders, the strategy for 2025 -2028 will build on the work already achieved.

East Ayrshire’s Carers Strategy strategic priorities some of which continue to be relevant from previous years and are described below, will focus on and support both Young and Adult carers.

These priorities aim to ensure that all carers are valued, recognised, and supported effectively. They seek to provide carers with support to continue their caring role to improve well-being and quality of life.

Priority 1. Raising awareness of unpaid carers

Priority 2 Access to Information and advice

Priority 3. Carers fully involved in the shaping and planning of services

Priority 4. A life outside of caring (which includes short breaks)

Priority 5. Improving Carer awareness and experience around Hospital discharge

Priority 6. Financial & employment

## Summary of Previous Carers Strategy: key themes and priorities:

We continued to use creative ways that ensure the voices of carers/young carers and their families are heard and influence the development of information, advice and support services.

We made sure that carers are at the heart of service design, evaluation and delivery.

We expanded use of social media and digital stories to enable carers to access sources of information, advice and support;

We developed a Young Carers Card to enable young people to share their status as a young carer with key individuals and agencies; The YC Card was launched and adopted prior to the pandemic. During this time. Schools were closed and young carer cards were not used in the same way. (This was re - introduced)

We worked to ensure that a range of short break and activity opportunities are available to support carers in their role;

Below refers to information gathered for previous strategy

## Barriers to Having a Break

52% of carers identified worrying about their relative and feeling guilt as the main barriers to having a break from their caring role.

“Lack of money, panic that something is going to happen to my mum whilst I’m gone.”

“My relative doesn’t want anyone else to help care for him, so having a break is difficult and often feel guilty for feeling that I need one”

30% of carers told us that financial constraints we often a barrier to having a break from their caring role. “I felt I had no choice but to give up work to care…..limited time and money is barrier to having a break”

24% carers also highlighted poor local transport as a key barrier to having a break from their caring role

## Making Caring Easier

51% of carers felt that their caring role is often misunderstood or unrecognised within communities including by employers. Young Carers also felt that not all teachers understood the impact of caring for a relative.

33% of carers felt that information, advice, support services were crucial in helping with their caring role.

12% carers felt that specific help to cope with the emotional demands of caring would help

## Addressing stigma

79% carers felt that services could do more to educate the public about caring for a relative/friend/neighbour. The felt that this would help individuals to recognise themselves as carers and increase awareness of what caring involves and the impact that it can have on many areas of their lives.

Young Carers advised that the Young Carers card scheme in school would help and they would like to see this rolled out across all schools and colleges in East Ayrshire

# Moving Forward……

As we progress this strategy and continue to raise awareness every unpaid carer in East Ayrshire should:

• Be able to identify themselves as a carer early in their caring journey

• Have timely access to the information and advice they need

• Know and understand their rights

• Feel listened to and valued as an equal and expert partner by people working in services

• Be fully engaged in the planning and delivery of services and feel supported

• Be empowered to manage their caring role and have access to effective support which enables them to look after their own health and wellbeing

• Have access to breaks from their caring role

• Be able to achieve their own outcomes, free from discrimination, and be able to maintain their education and/or employment as they wish

National Context

[The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016](https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-statutory-guidance-updated-july-2021/pages/1/) outlines the Scottish Government’s expectations on how Carers Support is provided in each Local Authority Area. The Act is designed to support Carers’ health and wellbeing and help make caring more sustainable. It introduces a shift from previous reactive approaches to Carers support to one with prevention at the centre. The Act brought in new duties and powers in relation to: Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements; Eligibility Criteria; Carer Involvement; Local Carer Strategies; Information and Advice and Short Break Statements.

The Act is accompanied by Statutory Guidance and [the Carers Charter](https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-charter/) which outline the key rights Carers have in relation to: Am I a Carer? Adult Carer Support Plans; Young Carer Statements; Support as a Carer; Carer involvement in services; Hospital Discharge.

The importance for supporting Carers and the potential impact of caring is recognised within the Scottish [Government’s National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes](https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/1282/national-health-and-wellbeing-outcomes-a-framework-for-improving.pdf) “People who provide unpaid care are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing, including to reduce any negative impact of their caring role on their own health and wellbeing.”

The national landscape of health and social care is complex and evolving. Local plans and initiatives are in turn shaped and influenced by national policies and developments. Examples of legislation and policies that impact on how we deliver services in East Ayrshire are listed.

The importance of Carers is reflected in the Scottish Government commissioned [Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/independent-report/2021/02/independent-review-adult-social-care-scotland/documents/independent-review-adult-care-scotland/independent-review-adult-care-scotland/govscot%3Adocument/independent-review-adult-care-scotland.pdf) which includes four recommendations in relation to unpaid Carers: Better, more consistent support to carry out their caring role well; A human rights based approach to the support of Carers, including improved information and complaints process; Local assessment of Carers’ needs must better involve the person themselves in planning support; Carers must be represented as full partners on the IJB and on the Board of the National Care Service. As a result of these recommendations, [the National Care Service (Scotland)](https://www.gov.scot/policies/social-care/national-care-service/) Bill proposes legislative changes that will impact on Carers. The details of these proposals remain to be developed. The Care Inspectorate Inquiry into Adult Carer support services (December 2022) recognised that the contribution of Carers is critical to the sustainability of the health and social care system.

In December 2022 the Scottish Government published a [National Carers Strategy](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-carers-strategy/) which sets out a range of actions to ensure Carers are supported fully in a joined up and cohesive way.

As well as meeting the aspirations of carers locally, our Carer Strategy also needs to align with the aims of the National Carers Strategy and its five pillars, which are:

1. Living with COVID-19

2. Valuing, Recognising and Supporting Carers

3. Health and Social Care Support

4. Social and Financial Inclusion

5. Young Carers

# Supporting Carers in East Ayrshire

The role of a carer can be wide and varied and each carer will be responding to a unique set of circumstances.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 requires each local authority to set local eligibility criteria which help local authorities to prioritise support and to ensure resources are directed effectively and efficiently as possible. The duty to set local eligibility criteria for Carers has been delegated to the IJB. It aims to ensure a clear and transparent system to determine eligibility so that Carers in East Ayrshire are appropriately supported.

The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 places a duty on local authorities to offer people who are eligible for social care a range of choices over how they receive their support.

There are four main legal reference points for the guidance:

• The legal basis for choice over care and support: [The Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013](https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-accompany-social-care-self-directed-support-scotland-act-2013-2/pages/3/)

• The duty to assess an adult‘s need for care and support: [Section 12A of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1968/49/section/12)

• The legal basis for support to children: [Sections 22 and 23 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1995/36/section/22)

• The legal basis for identifying carers’ needs and providing support: [Parts 2 and 3 of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/contents)

Self-directed Support (SDS) is ‘the way that care and support is delivered, making the principles of choice and control central to care and support, and giving individuals full opportunity to take control of their support and their lives.’

The Scottish Government produced [Social Care (Self-directed Support (Scotland) Act 2013: Statutory Guidance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-accompany-social-care-self-directed-support-scotland-act-2013-2/pages/3).

Not all carers will require support, however thresholds of eligibility have been defined to ensure that those carers most in need of support get the right levels of support at the right time. **The Right Support in the Right Way at the Right Time**

*What matters to carers* (their personal) outcomes will be part of good, honest and transparent conversations, outcome focused (meaning: what is important to the carer) involving the carer and social work assessor or carers centre staff and will be recorded as part of the **My Life My Plan or Adult Carer Support Plan / Young Carer Statement**.

The Health & Social care partnership have a **duty** to provide this opportunity alongside the commissioned partner, East Ayrshire carers centre.

The wellbeing indicators of [Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected and Responsible and Included (SHANARRI)](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2022/09/getting-right-child-girfec-statutory-guidance-assessment-wellbeing-2022-part-18-section-96-children-young-people-scotland-act-2014/documents/getting-right-child-statutory-guidance-assessment-wellbeing-2022-part-18-section-96-children-young-people-scotland-act-2014/getting-right-child-statutory-guidance-assessment-wellbeing-2022-part-18-section-96-children-young-people-scotland-act-2014/govscot%3Adocument/getting-right-child-statutory-guidance-assessment-wellbeing-2022-part-18-section-96-children-young-people-scotland-act-2014.pdf) are used in respect of supporting Young Carers. This is used to support the achievements of the young person’s potential in relation to the eight indicators of GIRFEC (Getting it right for every child).

**Resources are finite for both the Health and Social Care Partnership and Third Sector organisations and in developing the model of support for carers in East Ayrshire we need to ensure those most requiring support access a resource appropriate to their needs.**

The principle of The Act is to provide preventative support to carers to support them in their caring role and assist carers to continue to care in good health and wellbeing.

Providing good quality, appropriate and timely information and advice to carers has the dual benefits of improving health and wellbeing of carers, and the cared-for person, reducing the potential need for, and cost of crisis management.

The aim of information and advice services for carer’s is to enable them to access independent and comprehensive information and advice, to assist with decision making in relation to their caring role and to have a life alongside caring.

The areas of information and advice identified within the Carer Scotland (Act) 2016 are:

• carers’ rights

• income maximisation

• education and training

• advocacy

• health and wellbeing (including counselling)

• bereavement support services

• emergency care planning and future care planning

Carers should be provided with information and advice about Self-Directed Support (SDS) options. If a Carer has eligible needs, staff **must** offer and explain a range of choices to carers about how support can be provided.

The Carer (Scotland) 2016 Act guidance describes a carer’s eligible needs as “those identified needs for support that cannot be met through support to the cared-for person or through accessing services that are available generally, and which meet the threshold for support set by the local eligibility criteria.” In some circumstances support for the cared for person can be the best route to supporting the carer.

**East Ayrshire the Carers Centre & the Local Authority provides the opportunity to complete an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) and Young Carer Statement (YCS) for carers.**

Carers who are eligible for support funded by the local authority can choose how to access that support using any of the four [Self-Directed Support Options](https://www.gov.scot/publications/self-directed-support-guide-carers/pages/5/). These are:

1. Direct Payment – this is a cash payment to enable the person to purchase the support they need. The person must be willing and able to manage the payment and provide appropriate information relating to expenditure and support.

2. Individual Service Fund – this is where the person directs the use of the available budget by choosing the services to be purchased. Payment is made directly to the provider(s) on behalf of the person.

3. Arranged Services – this is where the person instructs the local authority/HSCP to make arrangements for service provision to meet the agreed outcomes. These services will be purchased using any existing contractual arrangements.

4. Mixed option – this is where the person chooses more that one of the above options for different parts of their support.

# Scotland Carers Census

The latest Carers Census for Scotland (2023-24) was published by the Scottish Government

Key findings in the Carers Census include:

* 52,000 unpaid carers were supported by local services across Scotland in 2023-24.
* Female carers significantly outnumber male carers across all age groups (73%), with the most significant difference in the working-age carer group (80%).
* 56% of unpaid carers spent an average of 50+ hours providing unpaid care. The HACE estimate for the entire caring population was 31%.

**The census highlighted a notable deprivation effect, indicating that unpaid carers from deprived areas were more likely to need support.**

# Carers in East Ayrshire

According to the 2022 Scotland’s census there is a total of **15,485** unpaid carers in East Ayrshire, equating to **13%** of the aged 3 + population.

A caveat to these figures is that not every carer identifies as a carer.

The national Carer Census is not intended to report on every carer.

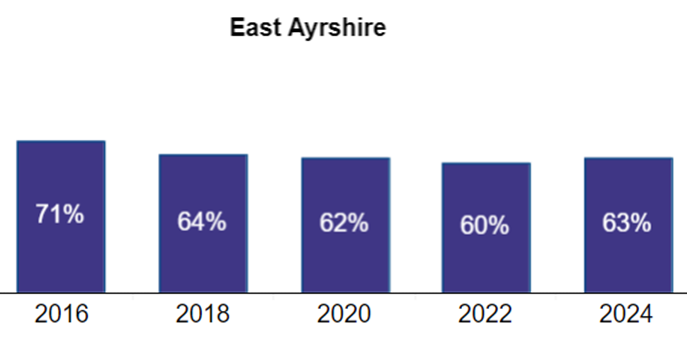
This makes it difficult to state with any certainty how many carers we have within our area or the demography around who is caring for who.

East Ayrshire’s population is currently around 122,010 people. Scotland’s Census reports there are 15,485 unpaid carers in East Ayrshire with many known to carer organisations and/or to East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership. They are the backbone of our health and social care system (Carers Scotland, 2024).

However, we believe that there may be many more people delivering some form of unpaid care locally at present. This information would be in keeping with wider research on unpaid caring, which suggests that two out of three people will be a carer at some point in their lives.

The biennial Scottish Health and Care Experience Survey (HACE) add hyperlink asks a sample of carers about their experiences of specific aspects of caring and the impact on their wellbeing – example below.

1. I have a good balance between caring and other things in my life





# The Facts

### Finances

The value of unpaid care in Scotland is estimated to be **£13.1 Billion** per year.

No carer should find themselves in poverty as a result of their caring role, yet recent research by Carers Scotland found that the poverty rate for carers is **56% higher** than for those without caring responsibilities[1] <https://www.carersuk.org/media/irmjazgw/poverty-report_scotland_web.pdf>

Research by Carers Trust Scotland into the Experiences of Older Adult Carers[2] found that **82% of unpaid carers over 65 felt that their caring role had financially impacted them.**

Many were significantly impacted by the overlapping benefit rule between State Pension and Carer’s Allowance (Carer Support Payment).

The overlapping benefit rule prevents people receiving more than one earnings-replacement benefit at the same time. State Pension and Carer’s Allowance are both categorised as earnings-replacement benefits. This means that despite older unpaid carers meeting all other aspects of the eligibility criteria for Carer’s Allowance, most do not receive financial payments as they are in receipt of State Pension (this is known as underlying entitlement).

According to a [Scottish Commission on Social Security report](https://carers.org/downloads/older-adult-unpaid-carers-in-scotland-report.pdf) published in 2023, around one third of people who claim Carer’s Allowance are affected by this rule[3].

### Breaks from Caring

Scottish Government figures indicate that only a small proportion of carers are able to access a break from caring.

Approximately 3% of carers currently access short breaks through an assessed route.

The latest figures from the Scottish Health and Care Experience survey reveal that 2% of unpaid carers receive personal support to enable them to have breaks from caring

Only 31% of carers reported that they felt supported to continue caring.

Your Rights to a Support Plan

**Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements are prepared by Social Work and by East Ayrshire Carers Centre.**

1. Adult carers have a **right** to an ‘Adult Carer Support Plan’.

An Adult Carer Support Plan (previously named carer’s assessment.) It is a conversation that identifies the extent to which the carer is able and willing to provide care and the ‘personal outcomes’ which matter to the carer in order to carry out their caring responsibilities, as well as any needs a carer may have.

2. Young carers have a **right** to a ‘Young Carer Statement’.

A Young Carer Statement is a plan that sets out information about the young carer’s circumstances and caring role. The plan will set out a young carer’s ‘personal outcomes’, the goals which matter to the young carer in order continue to provide care, while still, attending school, to access opportunities for friendship and to have a life alongside caring. It will set out the needs a young carer may have and the support available to meet the carer’s needs.

3. Carers have a **right** to support to meet any ‘eligible needs’.

The local eligibility criteria is a framework used to identify whether an adult or young carer should receive support from East Ayrshire Council Health & Social Care Partnership to meet their identified needs.

If a carer meets the local eligibility criteria, support may take the form of Self-Directed Support (SDS).

Carers may also be offered support such as breaks from caring.

If a carer’s identified needs do not meet the local eligibility criteria, support can still be provided for example, information and advice; education and training delivered by the Carers Centre and/or general support available in the local community.

**East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership Short Breaks Services Statement has information about short breaks services available for local carers.** [**https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/H/HSCP-Short-Break-Statement.pdf**](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/H/HSCP-Short-Break-Statement.pdf)

4. Carers have a **right** to be involved in services. East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership has a duty to consult with carers when shaping services which impact on their caring role. This includes preparing local carer strategies. Engagement with carers has informed the development of this strategy and carers will be offered opportunities to continue to be involved.

5. Carers have a **right** to be involved in the hospital discharge process of the cared-for person. Work is ongoing in partnership with East Ayrshire carers centre to provide an information service and direct support for carers throughout the hospital discharge process.

The health board **must** ensure it involves the unpaid carer in hospital discharge planning.

6. Information and advice for carers

There is a **duty** on East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership to have access for carers to information and advice services, covering a range of mandatory areas, including emergency planning

East Ayrshire Carers Centre is commissioned to provide information, advice and support to carers in East Ayrshire.

Support is provided to carers of all ages by East Ayrshire Carers Centre from their office bases in Kilmarnock, Cumnock and Dalmellington.

### Waiving of charges

Support and/or services to meet caring related needs identified within an Adult Carer Support Plan cannot be charged for. Any charges must be waived.

### Breaks from caring

The Scottish Government has intimated an intention to pass legislation ensuring that carers will have a legal right to a break from caring.

The UK Government has progressed a Bill enabling carers in paid employment to have five days unpaid from caring.

Our approach to breaks from caring is set out within our Short Breaks Services Statement, which complements this strategy.

# Engagement

### Listening to and learning from carers

East Ayrshire Carers Strategy 2025-28 has been informed by ongoing consultation with carers. Many strategic priorities from 2018-21 remain relevant in 2025, which will be addressed within this Strategy.

The strategy has also been informed by anonymised feedback provided to the East Ayrshire Carers Centre collected from general enquiries and direct feedback from carers given while creating an Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) and a Young Carer Statement (YCS).

East Ayrshire Health & Social Care partnership recognises the significant contribution unpaid carers make every day enabling the people they care for to stay as well as possible and continue living at home. We recognise they are key to the sustainability of our health and care system but that their caring role is often at the detriment of their own health and wellbeing, education and employment opportunities, finances and aspirations to live the life they choose.

We are committed to working with local carers and partners to create positive change which reduces the negative impact of the caring role and improve carers’ experiences. This Strategy 2025-2028 will build on what is currently in place, address gaps in provision and improve support to all carers in East Ayrshire

To further shape this document and ensure that the strategy represents the needs of carers and can be understood by carers. We will continue ongoing consultations and engagement opportunities across East Ayrshire including surveys, conversation cafes, focus groups and conferences to ensure there is an opportunity to get involved or represent carers in various forums.

The delivery of this strategy and associated implementation plans will only be achieved by working with carers themselves, alongside partners in the third sector, education, housing, employment support, and health and social care, to support and meet the needs of young carers and adult carers.

In order to implement the East Ayrshire Carers Strategy over the next three years, we will work with carers, partners and stakeholders to form a strategy development & implementation group. This group will support the development of a detailed plan, working towards the priorities, agree how and when agreed actions will be delivered, and coordinate the work.

# Dementia Local Conversations

The Partnership was approached by our Independent Care Lead, Arlene Bunton and Age Scotland Community Development Officer (Dementia) Colm McBriarty around the ongoing community engagement and feedback into the national dementia 10-year strategy for Scotland [‘Everyone’s Story’](https://www.gov.scot/publications/new-dementia-strategy-scotland-everyones-story/).

Supporting this engagement allowed for input into the national strategy along with gaining a snapshot of experience at the local East Ayrshire level and enabling discussions on dementia friendly communities.

Additionally, it provided the opportunity for collaboration with not only Scottish Care and Age Scotland but our local Third Sector providers: Alzheimer’s Scotland, East Ayrshire Carers Centre and East Ayrshire Advocacy Services.

Three events were held in Galston, Kilmarnock and Cumnock with total attendance of 38 members of the public. This comprised of people living with dementia, unpaid carers, friends and family. From across the Partnership and Third Sector 31 members of staff attended.

### We Heard What Was Important to Carers

The format was consistent across the three events however a flexible approach was required as there were instances of more time being required, quite upsetting subject matters being discussed and joyful moments.

**We heard:**

* **Individual experience** – importance of understanding the individual’s perspective with dementia being a varied and different experience for each individual.
* **Being an unpaid carer** – recognition from services and self, feelings of guilt, being helpless, overwhelmed. Challenges in accessing supports from the practical to emotional.
* **Support from Services** – time spent waiting for diagnosis was an issue; overwhelmed by supports/signposting; tailoring support to the individual was needed; awareness of early onset dementia; budget restrictions on support received; attitudes and behaviours of professionals; need for ongoing and consistent relationships.
* **Social Connections** - Importance of neighbours, wider community along with targeted peer support groups to feel comfortable and safe to socialise.
* **Finances** - Financial impact of dementia and caring with the earning potential in a family often dramatically reduced.
* **Stigma** - around the individual with dementia and carer, the reactions from within their own families, friends and wider communities often resulting in support networks becoming smaller.

**Strategy Thematic Priorities**, participants considered the eight thematic priorities in the Strategy’s Delivery Plan sharing their experiences, their ideas, and their suggestions.

* **Brain Health** - Little awareness of what this is and what preventative steps you could take. Increased focus needed with more information, sharing of research, promotion, and conversations in a variety of settings within communities from school age onwards.
* **Care Partners / Unpaid Carers –** Language used and assumptions made impacting on that individual’s autonomy. Challenges around interacting with services, need for clear communication and supportive staff. Benefits of local support services. Impact on carer’s health in particular mental health.
* **Workforce –** Value of time being taken, flexible approach, regular training and awareness, including family and carers in discussions, importance of clear communication and information especially at transitions. Care at Home and Older People’s Mental Health teams highlighted as being of real importance.
* **Resilient Communities -** Importance of our communities and neighbours as a source of support, need for awareness training in particular businesses highlighted. Value of hubs and centres providing safe and supportive spaces.
* **Challenging Stigma –** Stigma still being encountered regularly in our communities. Alcohol related dementia particularly highlighted. Benefits of national campaigns but need for local training and awareness raising.
* **Digital -** Positive impact of digital on daily life such as information available and safety equipment. Still difficult for some older people to understand and access. For a person living with dementia there is a need for older technology to be maintained. Rural connectivity and financial challenges creating barriers.
* **Diagnosis and Post-Diagnostic Support (PDS) –** time taken to achieve a diagnosis challenging. PDS positive however feeling that one year is not enough, also need to include carer and family more with a focus on future planning. Positive experiences around medication supports.
* **The Hospital Experience –** attending a hospital can be a stressful experience, challenges around being admitted to general wards. Positive experiences with well trained staff in specialist wards. Importance of including family and carers in treatment and discharge planning.

KEY PRIORITIES

To achieve the vision, we will focus improvement actions for carers under these strategic priority areas:

**Raising Awareness of Unpaid Carers:**

(The workforce, all organisations involved to ensure a positive and informed experience for carers including identification of carers)

We know that getting the right support at the right time can make a significant difference to the health and wellbeing of the unpaid carer – sometimes people need help to understand that while they may be a family member, they also have rights and needs, which in the long run will improve outcomes for the cared for person and the carer – taking this whole family approach also helps to reduce the discrimination and stigmas which still exists around being a carer.

If carers are identified sooner in their caring journey, they will feel better supported and will be able to balance a life alongside their caring.

**Access to Information and Advice:**

Our goal is to ensure that all unpaid carers in East Ayrshire have timely and easy access to high-quality, relevant information and advice that empowers them to effectively manage their caring roles. This includes the availability of user-friendly information within universal services and the community which consolidates resources, support services, and guidance tailored to carers' needs. Additionally, we aim to provide proactive outreach programmes, including workshops, seminars, and personalised advice sessions, to address specific concerns and equip carers with the knowledge they need to navigate available support. By offering clear, accessible, and practical information, we strive to enhance carers' confidence, reduce stress, and improve their overall wellbeing.

**Carers Fully Involved in Shaping and Planning Services:**

To ensure that unpaid carers are actively and meaningfully involved in the development, design, and delivery of services that affect them. By fostering a participatory approach, we aim to create a system that is truly responsive to the needs and experiences of carers. This involves establishing dedicated carer advisory groups and regular consultation events where carers can share their insights, feedback, and suggestions. By incorporating carers' voices in decision-making processes, we can better understand their challenges and priorities, leading to more effective and tailored support services. This priority reflects our commitment to empowering carers, recognising their expertise, and ensuring that their perspectives shape the services they rely on.

**A Life Outside of Caring:**

To ensure that unpaid carers have the opportunity to lead fulfilling lives beyond their caring responsibilities. We recognise that caring can be demanding and that carers need regular and sufficient breaks to maintain their own health and wellbeing. Additionally, we aim to promote and facilitate access to social, recreational, and personal development activities, helping carers to engage in interests and hobbies that enrich their lives. By supporting carers in achieving a healthy balance between their caring duties and personal lives, we aim to hopefully reduce stress, prevent burnout, and enhance their overall quality of life.

**Improving Carer awareness and experience around Hospital discharge**

To ensure that unpaid carers are fully informed and supported throughout the hospital discharge process, reducing the stress and challenges associated with transitioning care from hospital to home. Hospital Discharge workers will work closely with healthcare providers to ensure carers receive timely, accurate, and relevant information about the discharge plan, including care instructions, follow-up appointments, and available support services.

Provide training and resources to all staff to enhance their understanding of carers' needs and perspectives, promoting a more empathetic and inclusive approach. By improving carer awareness and experience around hospital discharge, we strive to ensure that carers feel confident and prepared to manage the transition, ultimately enhancing the quality of care provided to the cared-for person and supporting the wellbeing of carers.

**Financial & Employment Support:**

Ensure that carers have access to the necessary resources and guidance to manage their finances effectively and explore employment opportunities that accommodate their caregiving responsibilities. This includes offering specialised financial advice services to help carers navigate benefits, grants, and other financial support options. Additionally, we will advocate for and promote flexible working arrangements, enabling carers to balance their work and caring roles more effectively. By addressing both financial stability and employment flexibility, we seek to empower carers to achieve greater economic security and career satisfaction, ultimately enhancing their overall wellbeing.

We are committed to fostering a culture of empathy and respect, ensuring that carers are acknowledged and celebrated for their dedication. By working in partnership with carers, we aim to develop innovative and sustainable solutions that address the unique challenges they face.

# How will we know that we have made a difference?

The priorities will be detailed within the delivery plan and progress will be monitored by the carer implementation group, we will ensure partners progress the work in their area and report back to the group.

The Carers Strategic Delivery Plan will provide details on the programmes of work and projects to be undertaken in relation to each priority, and the timescale within which it will be delivered. This is a working document which will be reviewed, and progress monitored via the SPG and the IJB. Specific actions may be added, updated or amended in response to emerging needs.

Appendix 1 – Relevant Policy and Legislation

[East Ayrshire Community Plan 2015-2030](https://www.eastayrshirecommunityplan.org/resources/files/COMMUNITY-PLAN-2015-2030.pdf) provides the overarching strategic policy framework for the delivery of services by all Community Planning Partners and has the guiding principle to ensure effective community engagement in the planning and delivery of local services.

[East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan 2021-2030](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/E/EAHSCP-Strategic-Plan-2021-30.pdf), the Strategic Priority of ‘People at the Heart of What We Do’ sets out that people are at the centre of all we do and support is a positive experience.

[Ayrshire Shared Equality Outcomes](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/E/equality-outcomes-2021-25-progress-2023.pdf), progress towards achieving our equality outcomes and to mainstreaming equalities is detailed in our Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report 2020-2022

[East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan (2024-2027):](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/E/EAHSCP-Strategic-Plan-2024-2027.pdf)

This plan outlines the shared priorities for health and social care in East Ayrshire, focusing on improving Community Wellbeing Support for Children and Young People and reduced poverty and inequality.

National Health and Wellbeing outcome 6 People who provide unpaid care are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing, including to reduce any negative impact of their caring role on their own health and wellbeing.

[East Ayrshire Community Plan (2015-2030):](https://www.eastayrshirecommunityplan.org/resources/files/COMMUNITY-PLAN-2015-2030.pdf) This plan emphasises the importance of wellbeing and aims to work with communities to improve and sustain health, care, and promote equity

[Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP](https://www.eastayrshirecommunityplan.org/Performance/Local-Outcomes-Improvement-Plan.aspx)): This plan focuses on achieving better outcomes for local communities, including the wellbeing of carers and those they care for. The LOIP is developed in alignment with the East Ayrshire Community Plan and is reviewed every three years to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

[Children and Young People’s Services Plan (2023-2026):](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/C/Children-and-Young-Peoples-Services-Plan.pdf) This plan aims to ensure that children and young people get the best start in life, which includes supporting their carers

[Digital Strategy (2022-2027):](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/D/digital-strategy.pdf) This strategy aims to use digital technology to improve local wellbeing and transform health and care services

The [Participation and Engagement Strategy (2023-2026](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/H/Participation-Engagement-Strategy.pdf)): focuses on ensuring that people are involved, consulted with, and actively engaged in the design and development of health and social care services:

[Communication Strategy (2024-2027):](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/H/HSCP-Communication-Strategy.pdf) aims to meet the communication needs of the partnership and its workforce

[Human Rights](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/Resources/PDF/H/HSCP-Communication-Strategy.pdf)

[Rights of the Child](https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/)

[Children and Young People Scotland Act 2014](https://www.gov.scot/publications/children-young-people-scotland-act-2014-national-guidance-part-12/pages/3/)

[Independent Review of Adult Social Care](https://www.gov.scot/groups/independent-review-of-adult-social-care/) in Scotland carried out by Derek Feely in 2021, which sets out a number of recommendations for Social Care moving forward with user and carer involvement throughout.

[Carers (Scotland) Act 2016](https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-statutory-guidance-updated-july-2021/pages/1/) came into force on 1 April 2018, with Carer involvement being a key principle. Carers should be involved in individual level decisions that affect them as well as strategic decision making.

[The Promise](https://thepromise.scot/) was developed in 2020 following the Independent Care Review which took into account the views of over 5,500 children, adults and families with lived experience of care. The Promise Plan 21-24 outlines key outcomes that aim to ensure children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential.

[Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 (SDS)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-accompany-social-care-self-directed-support-scotland-act-2013-2/pages/3/)

[Self-directed Support Framework of Standards (2021).](https://www.gov.scot/publications/self-directed-support-framework-standards-including-standard-descriptor-practice-statement-core-components-practice-guidance-updated-2024/pages/2/)

SDS is for everyone in Scotland who needs social care services or support, including children, adults and unpaid carers. The guidance sets out what local authorities should do to make sure people are able to access the support that is right for them. The act ensures that local authorities give access to SDS in a way that supports people’s rights to choice, dignity and ability to take part in the life of their communities.

[Caring for Ayrshire](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/SocialCareAndHealth/East-Ayrshire-Health-and-Social-Care-Partnership/Caring-for-East-Ayrshire/About-Caring-for-East-Ayrshire.aspx), is a transformational change programme led by NHS Ayrshire and Arran and the three Health and Social Care partnerships in the area (South, North and East) with the principles of engagement and collaboration with our communities embedded within.

This strategy sits alongside and complements the direction and objectives set out in the East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Communication Strategy, which sets out the mechanisms for how we inform our communities of the activities we undertake and the importance of promoting the range of engagement and involvement opportunities. These plans collectively help shape the East Ayrshire Carers Strategy, ensuring it aligns with broader health and social care outcomes and local requirements.

The [Scottish Government’s Carers’ Charter](https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-charter/) tells you more about your rights under the act and there are a range of organisations on hand to give you any information or support you may need.

Our Carers' Charter (published March 2018) sets out carers' rights under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. Add hyperlink These are as follows:

• The right to a personalised plan to identify what is important to them

• The right to support to meet their eligible needs and to choose how that support is delivered through self-directed support

• Every area must have a local carer strategy and carer information and advice service

• The rights to be involved in assessing the needs of the cared-for person and in decisions about discharging the cared-for person from hospital

[The Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/1/contents) gave a statutory basis to partnership working between all agencies responsible for delivering public services in an area, at the heart of which is ‘making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in decisions made on public services which will affect them’.

[Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015](https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/) gave new rights to community bodies and new duties to public sector authorities to help empower communities by strengthening their voices in decisions about public services.

[Equality Act (2010)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance) legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society and places a duty on Public Sector organisations to consider all individuals when carrying out their day to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

All public authorities in Scotland must comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and show how they will:

• Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act

• Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it

• Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

[Fairer Scotland Duty](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-guidance-public-bodies/pages/2/) places a responsibility on public bodies to seek to alleviate the effects of inequality created by socio-economic disadvantage when making decisions.

# APPENDIX 2 – Carers in East Ayrshire state of caring report

This year’s (2024) survey found that:

* 61% of unpaid carers are worried about living costs and managing in the future, and over a third (35%) don’t feel confident they will be able to manage financially over the next 12 months
* 28% of carers are cutting back on essentials like food and heating, an increase from 25% in 2022.
* 28% of carers said they have had to use credit cards, 22% have used their overdraft and 14% of carers are in debt because of caring.
* 68% of carers have cut back on hobbies and leisure activities and 60% have reduced time spent seeing family and friends
* Over half of carers (51%) said that their financial situation is having a negative impact on their mental health, and 61% feel stressed or anxious when they think about their financial situation.
* 42% of carers on Carer’s Allowance are struggling to make ends meet, compared to 27% of all carers, and 19% of carers in receipt of Universal Credit use food banks compared to 7% of all carers.

A screenshot of a phone

Description automatically generated A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generatedA couple of white cards with red text

Description automatically generated

[(State of Caring Report 2023)](https://www.carersuk.org/media/xgwlj0gn/soc23-health-report_web.pdf)

# Appendix 3 - Resources and Support for unpaid carers



Kilmarnock Dementia Resource Centre, run by Alzheimer Scotland, is a resource for people with dementia, their families, and carers they also run a support group in Cumnock at Netherthird Community Centre Location: 8-12 College Wynd, Kilmarnock, KA1 1HN Services Offered: Information and advice, community activities, peer support groups, and technological aids. You can reach them at 01563 542621 or visit their website.

East Ayrshire Council: They provide various supports and services for carers 

More information can be found on their website

East Ayrshire Citizens Advice Bureau: is a local, independent charity that provides free, impartial, and confidential advice and information to help you deal with various issues. You can contact them at 01563 543379 or visit their website for more information.



Ayrshire Hospice are committed to reaching and improving the lives of those affected by life-limiting illness in Ayrshire by delivering exceptional care.

They also run a carers support group.

https://www.ayrshirehospice.org/Pages/Category/carers



East Ayrshire Advocacy Services is a registered charity providing independent advocacy for local residents who support various groups.

Their services are free, independent, and confidential, ensuring that local people with support needs are heard. You can contact them at 01563 574442 or visit their website for more information. Digital resources for carers



Carers in East Ayrshire can access a range of digital resources from Carers UK, providing free advice and information that is available 24/7.

Visit Carers UK and create an account using your free access code: DGTL4112

Use this code to get free access to all the digital products and online resources, covering:

* health and wellbeing
* support for caring
* technology and caring
* financial planning
* working and skills

Technology can play a key role in helping individuals and their families to enjoy a better quality of life. It can support independent living within the home and the community by providing an immediate response to emergency situations. Around 4,000 people in East Ayrshire are supported through our Smart Supports and [**Community Alarm services**](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/SocialCareAndHealth/Support-available-in-East-Ayrshire/Community-alarm-service/CommunityAlarmServices.aspx).

A range of specialist equipment technology can support carers by helping the person they care for live at home independently or alert the carer if help is needed. The range of technology available from Health and Social Care include @ [SMART support](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/SocialCareAndHealth/Support-available-in-East-Ayrshire/Smart-Supports/Smart-supports.aspx).



Care Opinion

Offers supported people and carers an online platform with which to provide anonymised feedback on their experiences of care and support. Access: <https://www.careopinion.org.uk/services/s37000008>

Equal Partners in care (EPIC)

Honeypot – based in Cumnock

Digital resources for carers

Carers in East Ayrshire can access a range of digital resources from Carers UK, providing free advice and information that is available 24/7.

Visit Carers UK and create an account using your free access code: DGTL4112

Use this code to get free access to all the digital products and online resources

Scotland’s National Carer Organisations are

Carers Scotland, Carers Trust Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, MECOPP, Shared Care Scotland, and the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance.

# Appendix 4 – commissioned service

East Ayrshire HSCP has a duty to establish and maintain an information and advice service, covering a range of mandatory areas for carers who either reside in East Ayrshire, or for someone caring for someone who lives in East Ayrshire. East Ayrshire are commissioned and receive grant funding from the partnership to provide this service for Carers.

THE SUPPORT WE PROVIDE

• Provision of information

• Reduce isolation

• Improve health and wellbeing

• Referring to other relevant organisations

• 1:1 support

• Benefit advice, form completion and maximisation of income

• Outreach work including home visits

• Dedicated Hospital Discharge support for carers

• Carer led forums

• Money management/debt management and personal finances

• Fuel poverty awareness including energy efficiency measures

• Assistance to access other key services

• Emotional support

• Respite breaks for young carers, adults and families

• Training sessions and well-being support sessions

• Group support via coffee mornings and dedicated carers support groups, fun days, days out and other social activities during festive and seasonal holiday periods

• Dedicated and age specific weekly young carers and young adult carers respite groups

• Next Steps employability skills and training for young people aged 14-25

Alternative language options