The Angus Carers Centre generally welcomes the Carers (Scotland) Bill and is pleased the Government has brought forward legislation that improves the rights and entitlements of unpaid carers. However, some aspects of the Bill require strengthening and many carers have expressed strong views that in its current form it will not make a genuine difference to their lives or fully deliver the Government’s aims.

- National eligibility criteria for carer support. The introduction of local eligibility criteria will lead to a postcode lottery of support for carers. We fully support the concept of best local practice and scope for local variation to meet varying needs and caring trends which can be lead within Health & Social Work Integration Board by the Carers representative. However, we do not believe there is any justification for a variation in the levels of need which trigger an entitlement to support.

- The Bill recommends that the Carers Information Strategy monies are integrated into the Integration Fund. This created, in real terms an inequality and disinvestment of young carer and young adult care services. Integration funding can only be used for services ‘in scope’ and for those who are 18 plus resulting in a loss of current and potential future funding Scotland’s 7,000 plus young carers.

- We agree that each council should present a Short Breaks Strategy. This should bring together all services and provision available to carers whether provided by local community activities (which do not required to be registered under SDS) and support can be accessed through of the 4 SDS options. This local strategy would clarify the relationship between the care provided to the cared for person and the carer’s entitlement to a short break. Currently respite is provided based on the carers caring role rather than the impact this has on them. This could be resolved as part of the Bill.

- The Bill does not mention the huge support required by carers when their caring role ends through bereavement. Carers find their financial situation change very quickly at a time when they are at their most social isolated. Most Carers Centres support ‘Former Carers’ to some extent or another, although national this is a very mixed picture. We know that Carers health and well being is affected adversely by their caring role and we also know that social isolation is a greater contributor to poor health than any long term condition. As the Bill recognises the significant savings that carers make to the NHS and local councils, by providing the care they would otherwise have to provide, we should provide access to a “Transition Plan” for bereaved
carers allowing Carers Centre to support them for a period of up to 12 months as part of their core funded service.

- Information and advice centres for carers are already established for each local authority through the local Carers Centre. Local authorities should be required to sustain these centres in the long term by main streaming a core element of their funding. The Health & Social Care Integration Strategic Plans are based on the principles of investment in preventative services at a local level which should include partnership working with the third sector. The long term future of the Carers Centres certainly matched this standard. Each Centre has been developed to meet a core level of minimum standards but also reflects local need and local partnership working. Time and time again carers tell us that the Carers Centre, as an independent source of support, is pivotal in them receiving the right information ant the right time, by experienced staff. All Carers Centres in Scotland are part of the Scotland Network of Managers and Trustees. This brings together all Carers Centres in Scotland regardless of their membership of all or some of the National Carers organisations. The Government would be best placed to continue to support the development of this network of centres which will provide the consistency and experience to ensure that the carer’s voice is heard in all decision about planning and delivery of services.

- We believe that it is a positive move that all carers be offered a support plan or statement. However experience so far tell us that any carers support plan/statement which is developed to take forward carer choice under SDS must have clear guidance fro statutory staff on the how the Plan/Statement should be completed and how any resource identified through the Support Plan is best utilised the carer. As with the need for a national eligibility framework, national guidance should also be developed to ensure that access to quality and timely support plans are available to all carers, no matter what their caring role or how this impacts on their life outside of caring other wise the post code lottery described as a consequence of a local eligibility framework will be reflected within support plans.

- Emergency planning and future planning for carers. It has been stated that this will be included in secondary legislation, but we think this is a missed opportunity and provision for emergency planning and future planning should be included as a key part of the Adult Carer Support Plan and Young Carers Statement.

- The impact of the Bill on the wider third sector. Increased identification of carers and a duty to provide support to carers will mean that the third sector will experience additional demand on their services. We do not feel that third sector services, particularly dedicated carers’ services, have been recognised sufficiently as part of the duty to provide support to carers.
• Personal outcomes for carers. The Bill defines personal outcomes for carers related to their caring role. We believe there should be recognition that carers are entitled to a life outside of caring, rather than just a life alongside caring. The type of support that councils provide for carers should include provision for time away from caring. However the Carers Support Plan should inform the support that carers need from the council, or other providers through SDS. The type of support available to carers should arranged through the Health & Social Work Integration Board as Carer Support will be best arranged by all sectors (statutory, third and private sectors) working together with carer representative groups to establish how carers support is best provided, from high level personal care for the cared for person to local volunteer befriending services carers respite.

• A clear equality statement and action plan. Despite commitments in Scotland’s Carers Strategy to ensure actions are taken forward to improve equality issues in carer support, there is substantial evidence of differential levels of access to services for carers from minority groups.

• A duty on hospital discharge. Given the Scottish government’s major investment on multi-agency working to improve hospital discharge times and further work to avoid hospital admissions the role of the family carer is central to ensuring that local pathways meet these targets. As the Bill does not include a duty on health boards to inform and involve carers in hospital admission and discharge procedures for those they care for this is a major missed opportunity in ensuring that carers are recognised and supported as key partners in the planning and delivery of care.

Angus Carers Centre