Carers (Scotland) Bill

Stirling Carers Centre

Stirling Carers’ Voice consists of a membership of 42 carers living within the Stirling Council area – this paper acts as a collective response from the group to the call for evidence from the Health and Sport Committee for The Carers (Scotland) Bill.

Overall, the group welcome the Carers Bill and are pleased that the Scottish Government has decided to introduce legislation, which will deliver new rights and entitlements to unpaid carers. They particularly welcome that local authorities will have a duty to support carers who meet eligibility criteria, as the current power means that there is a great deal of variation across Scotland in the level of support which carers can access. There is also no clarity in what support carers are entitled to. We hope the Carers Bill will bring greater equity and transparency for carers.

Some areas of the Bill do require strengthening, including the lack of entitlement to short breaks, the role of Health Boards in delivering change, particularly in relation to hospital discharge, the omission of emergency and anticipatory care planning on the face of the Bill and the need for a stronger equalities focus.

In addition, we are particularly disappointed that the Bill makes provision for a duty on local authorities to provide support to adult carers who meet local eligibility criteria. Carers locally are clear that they believe the eligibility criteria must be national rather than local, as this is the only way to avoid a postcode lottery and to ensure that carers have access to the same rights and entitlements across Scotland.

Universal, Preventative Support

The Bill includes the provision for local authorities to have a power to support carers who do not meet eligibility criteria, as well as a duty to support those who do. This is essential in ensuring a preventative approach is taken to supporting carers and protecting their health and wellbeing.

In addition, the Bill makes provisions for all carers to access an Adult Carer Support Plan and information and advice. What needs to be clarified is what support is viewed as universal and preventative and what support will require a carer to meet eligibility criteria.

To put this in context, only a small percentage of carers access a Carers Assessment and statutory support, with the majority accessing support through universal services. Furthermore, with an increase in the number Adult Carer Support Plans being undertaken there will be a corresponding increase on the demands on universal services. It is essential that these supports continue, are properly resourced and that they are not defined too narrowly.
Eligibility Criteria

The Carers Bill will only be viewed as successful if it delivers real change in the form of a right to support and provides resources to assist carers in their caring role.

In order to access this entitlement, carers must first meet eligibility criteria. In other words the eligibility criteria is the key to them unlocking their right to support. We therefore cannot underestimate how important it is to get this criteria right, because as well as delivering an entitlement to carers it also has the potential to tighten eligibility, undermine the preventative approach and make it harder for carers to access support.

We agree that there needs to be local variation, however we do not believe there needs to be variation in the level of service that carers are able to access. If local authorities have a duty to develop local eligibility, we will continue to have 32 different systems operating across Scotland. Inevitably some local authorities will develop stricter criteria than others, meaning some carers will be at a disadvantage. It will also mean that the system will be less transparent and carers will be unlikely to have an understanding of what they are entitled to. By introducing a national eligibility criteria, this is more likely to provide carers with the right to a consistent level of support regardless of where they live. The type of service to support the carer will be determined by the local service landscape.

Carers Support Plans

The group support many of the intended changes in the Bill in relation to Adult Carer Support Plans, i.e. the name change from 'Carers Assessments' and the removal of the 'regular and substantial' test to ensure that all carers are entitled to a Support Plan. There are however some areas where the group feel that the Bill should further strengthen and improve the intended Adult Carer Support Plan.

In particular, Carers' Voice believe that the Support Plan should be strengthened in relation to emergency, anticipatory or future planning. In order to take an anticipatory approach, it is important that the Support Plan enables carers at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss and identify an emergency plan. This can be overcome by ensuring that Emergency & Anticipatory Care Planning are included as an explicit requirement within the Adult Carer Support Plans.

Within the Bill it states that Local Authorities will be required to set out intended timescales in their local Carer Strategy in relation to the undertaking of an Adult Carer Support Plan following a request. Locally, many carers currently receive a Carers Assessment from the Carers Centre which is undertaken in a timely fashion (i.e. usually no longer than two weeks from request), so this is currently working well. However, issues often arise when carers are assessed by the Local Authority as meeting their current eligibility criteria for support, but then have to wait for a long time to receive the support that they are entitled to. This wait can result in increased pressure for the
carer and the person(s) they care for, and can have a negative impact on both their health and well-being. Therefore, the Bill should ensure that as well as reasonable timescales being set for the undertaking of the Support Plan, there should also be clear guidelines on the intended timescales for support to be put in place for carers who are assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria.

**Information & Advice**

Within the Bill it states that Local Authorities will have a Duty to establish and maintain an information and advice service. We believe that emphasis should be placed on supporting and resourcing existing local carer support services and therefore the wording should be changed to “the local authority will have a responsibility to maintain existing carer support information & advice organisations or where there is no existing one, then they will have a responsibility to establish a service where required’. The group feel that the Bill should further safeguard and support local Carers Centres, which are a vital lifeline for many, and worry that the current terminology of ‘establish and maintain’ could result in the de-commissioning of valuable local services.

Stirling Carers’ Voice welcomes any feedback from this submission, and are happy to further discuss and clarify any points made within this paper. Again, we would like to echo our overall support for the Bill, and are extremely hopeful that in Scotland there will be specific legislation for carers which addresses the key issues and inequalities that carers face.

*James Marshall (Development Manager)*  
Stirling Carers’ Voice
The Carers (Scotland) Bill - Share Your Views

What are the main strengths of the Carers Bill? (What are you most pleased about)

Careers a careers avg. being consulted
a realised too

What areas do you feel need to be strengthened?

Support for Carers Centres.

Is there anything you think should not be in the Carers Bill or anything you think is missing and needs to be added?

Inoculation of Health Boards to
Adviser consult carers on patients discharge from hospital.

What do you think about councils setting local criteria for those who would be eligible for support?

Not On

What difference do you think the Carers Bill will make to the lives of carers?

Hopefully give support as a right.
The Carers (Scotland) Bill - Share Your Views

What are the main strengths of the Carers Bill? (What are you most pleased about)

I support the Bill as believe it will benefit all carers and the people who are cared for.

What areas do you feel need to be strengthened?

Emergency planning should be introduced to the Carers Support Plan.

Is there anything you think should not be in the Carers Bill or anything you think is missing and needs to be added?

I believe the Carers Support Plan should be national and not local.

What do you think about councils setting local criteria for those who would be eligible for support?

Each council should have the same criteria for assessing carers.

What difference do you think the Carers Bill will make to the lives of carers?

I hope Support Carers having more hours able to cope with.
### The Carers (Scotland) Bill - Share Your Views

**What are the main strengths of the Carers Bill? (What are you most pleased about)**

-getting listened to.

**What areas do you feel need to be strengthened?**

-hospital discharge

**Is there anything you think should not be in the Carers Bill or anything you think is missing and needs to be added?**

-more support

**What do you think about councils setting local criteria for those who would be eligible for support?**

**What difference do you think the Carers Bill will make to the lives of carers?**

-less pressure
The Carers (Scotland) Bill - Share Your Views

What are the main strengths of the Carers Bill? (What are you most pleased about)

I am pleased that help will be readily available if I become ill and require immediate help.

What areas do you feel need to be strengthened?

Is there anything you think should not be in the Carers Bill or anything you think is missing and needs to be added?

What do you think about councils setting local criteria for those who would be eligible for support?

What difference do you think the Carers Bill will make to the lives of carers?

Careers will be less stressed and more relaxed, knowing their health is a concern too.
The Carers (Scotland) Bill - Share Your Views

What are the main strengths of the Carers Bill? (What are you most pleased about)

STREAMLINING ELIGIBILITY ACROSS SCOTLAND

What areas do you feel need to be strengthened?

HOSPITAL ARRANGEMENTS

Is there anything you think should not be in the Carers Bill or anything you think is missing and needs to be added?

ONGOING INcreasing SUPPORT FOR CarERS CENTRES

What do you think about councils setting local criteria for those who would be eligible for support?

Don't like this ARRANGEMENT - TOO VARIANCE BETWEEN LA's

What difference do you think the Carers Bill will make to the lives of carers?

BETTER RECOGNITION FOR CARERS & LOCAL CENTRES
The Carers (Scotland) Bill - Share Your Views

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The Carers (Scotland) Bill - Share Your Views

What are the main strengths of the Carers Bill? (What are you most pleased about)

- Respite care being recognised
- Duty to do carers' support plans is good

What areas do you feel need to be strengthened?

- Respite care should be a duty, albeit there will need to be some kind of cap.
- Information/care plans - essential that NHS has duty to liaise with carers of family on discharge.

Is there anything you think should not be in the Carers Bill or anything you think is missing and needs to be added?

No.

What do you think about councils setting local criteria for those who would be eligible for support?

- We should set national criteria to avoid a postcode lottery.

What difference do you think the Carers Bill will make to the lives of carers?

- Carers should feel more supported.
- Carers should be healthier.