

Unpaid Carer support

About the Proposal

Title of Proposal.

Unpaid Carer support

Intended outcome of the proposal.

The proposal is intended to deliver a 15% reduction in commissioned unpaid carer support services provided by carer organisations across Argyll and Bute, generating a recurring saving of £189,850 per year over the period 2026/27.

How does your proposal align with strategy?

The proposal sits within the Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership Joint Strategic Plan 2022–2025, which prioritises helping people to live longer, healthier, more independent lives at home and in their communities. It is also directly related to the commitments set out in the Argyll and Bute Carers' Strategy 2024–2027 ("Caring Together"), which focuses on identifying **unpaid carers** early, supporting their health and wellbeing, and sustaining their ability to continue caring where they wish to do so.

Commissioned carer organisations deliver statutory support services on behalf of the HSCP, enabling the Partnership to meet its delegated duties in relation to **unpaid carers**. A 15% reduction in funding creates clear tension with these strategic commitments and carries a risk of increasing pressure on **unpaid carers** and on wider health and social care services.

Description of proposal.

The proposal is to apply a 15% reduction to all commissioned unpaid carer support contracts across Argyll and Bute that provide information and advice services, Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements, carers' groups, short breaks support, and crisis and resilience support for carers. Following review of local provision and need in Cowal and Bute, it is proposed that Crossroads Cowal and Bute Carers Centre should instead receive a lower reduction of 7%.

It is anticipated that this proposal will result in a reduction in service capacity across all Argyll and Bute carers' services commissioned by the HSCP, including Crossroads Cowal and Bute Carer Centre, Dochas Carer Centre, Helensburgh and Lomond Carer Centre, North Argyll Carer Centre, Mid Argyll Youth Development Service (MAYDS), and Crossroads North Argyll respite services. The differentiated 7% reduction for Crossroads Cowal and Bute reflects its comparatively low existing allocation, local demographic and demand, and the requirement to provide services to the Isle of Bute, and is intended to avoid disproportionately destabilising provision in an area where alternative carer support options are more limited and travel and island factors already constrain access.

The 15% reduction in contract value (and 7% for Crossroads Cowal and Bute) is expected to impact island outreach activity, increase waiting times for support, reduce responsiveness to carers' needs, and place pressure on the statutory delivery of duties under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, including the provision of Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements.

Knock on affect.

The reduction will create delays in completing Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSPs) and Young Carer Statements (YCS) - the gateway to identifying personal outcomes and accessing statutory and preventative support. These delays are particularly concerning given the current 10-day turnaround requirement for carers supporting someone with a terminal illness. More than 51% of existing cases are already assessed as high risk of carer breakdown, amplifying the impact of any loss of capacity.

Forthcoming duties and timescales associated with the Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 will introduce further requirements for personalised short breaks and assessment processes, adding significant operational pressure at a time when resources are contracting.

At a national level, recent evidence highlights worsening outcomes for **unpaid carers** under conditions of reduced support. The State of Caring 2025 report found that 48% of **unpaid carers** have cut back on essentials such as food and heating, 35% have taken on debt, and 39% report poor mental health. **Critically, only 13% currently receive a formal break from caring, underscoring the limited availability of preventative respite.** Reduced capacity within local carer services will further restrict access to breaks, increasing pressures on carers' mental and physical health.

Through internal consultations we know Carers across A&B fed back that they also have heightened financial, employment, educational concerns not to mention the impact on health and wellbeing. However, we do also know that with timely intervention and by acting quickly to meet the individual outcomes identified through an ACSP or YCS carers can be supported.

For rural and island communities, where alternative provision is limited, reductions in outreach and in-person support are likely to intensify social isolation - an issue frequently raised in national research on older and geographically remote carers. Diminished preventative respite may also accelerate the requirement for full-time residential care, increasing both long-term demand and cost across the wider health and social care system.

Overall, the proposed reduction shifts the model of support away from prevention and early intervention and toward a crisis-driven approach, with increased risk of emergency hospital admissions and permanent care placements - outcomes consistent with national findings on the consequences of reduced carer support.

Impact on service users

Service users	Impact
Mainland rural population	Negative
Island population	Negative
Low income	Negative
Low wealth	Negative
Material deprivation	Negative
Area deprivation	Negative
Socio-economic	Negative
Communities of place	Negative
Communities of interest	Negative

Children Rights and Wellbeing

Are there any aspects to your proposal which directly impact on children?

Children's Rights and Wellbeing

Young carers in Argyll and Bute are children and young people aged 5–18 who provide care for a parent, step-parent, sibling, grandparent, other relative, neighbour or friend, often where the cared-for person has a long-term illness, disability, mental health condition, substance misuse issue, additional support need, frailty or multiple complex needs. At present there are approximately 750 young carers registered in Argyll and Bute, and many more are likely to be hidden.

A reduction in Carers (Scotland) Act funding to local carer organisations (Crossroads Caring for Carers Cowal and Bute, Helensburgh and Lomond Carers Centre, North Argyll Carers Centre and Mid Argyll Youth Development Service) is likely to have a direct negative impact on young carers' rights and wellbeing under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 and the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Reduced capacity will increase waiting times for the statutory offer, preparation and review of Young Carer Statements, which are a key mechanism for identifying individual needs, worries, safety concerns, isolation and support requirements at home, in education and in the community, and for agreeing personalised action plans.

Children rights

Children rights	Impact
Article 2: (non-discrimination) The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, sex, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.	May limit equity of access for young carers across Argyll & Bute. Decrease young carers opportunities to access activities and experiences similar to their peers. Decrease opportunities for young carers vulnerable young carers in accessing services in response to their individual needs.
Article 3: (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.	Reductions to funding may not be in the best interests of young carers development, wellbeing and attainment. (Direct impacts as above)
Article 6: (life, survival and development) Every child has the right to life. The council must do all it can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.	Direct impact to young carers health, emotional and mental wellbeing, educational attendance and attainment and overall life opportunities to achieve their full potential. Increases further inequity of

	services and supports in remote and rural geographical location.
Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.	Reduction to funding could impact on opportunities for young carers to participate and share their views.