

Annual Activity Report

April 2020-March 2021



This report aims to give you an idea of how the Carers Centre meets its outcomes through the services we deliver to Carers. We hope you will find it interesting and that it gives you at least a glimpse into who uses the service and how Carers are supported.

A YEAR WITH A DIFFERENCE!

Welcome to this year's Activity Report about the work of the Dumfries and Galloway Carers Centre for the year April 2020 – March 2021

Little did we know when reporting at the end of last year and right at the beginning of the first lockdown that the pandemic would become so life changing for everyone.

This last year has emphasised the importance of the contribution Carers make to ensuring that the people they care for are able to continue to be supported either at home, in hospital or in residential placements. Without this the demands on the already stretched Health and Social care services would have been infinitely greater.

Whenever doing any kind of Carer Awareness we often demonstrate the contribution Carers make by saying "if Carers were to stop caring our health and social care system would not cope." Who knew that in 2020 the reverse would actually happen – services across the health and social care service as well as the independent sector were withdrawn or reduced and Carers were left with no option but to continue to cope as best they could. They had no choice.

Society in the light of the pandemic has needed Carers but has also placed more demands on them resulting in an increased number of people having to take on a caring role. The true impact of the pandemic on Carers will only be seen over the months and years to come and it will be crucial that investment and support is made available to enable Carers to get the services that they need and are entitled to.

Now in our 24th year the Carers Centre continues to provide a substantial service and we have been and should be proud of how we have adapted to respond to the pandemic and the increased support that Carers have needed and deserve.

As an organisation locally and as part of the wider network of national Carers organisations we are extremely concerned as to how Carers will be supported moving forward. The pandemic has led to an increasing number of people becoming Carers as well as adding to the huge impact that caring has on those who were already caring and are now continuing to do so without or reduced services.

We will continue to work with our local partners across the health and social care partnership as well as those in the third and independent sector to provide support and to look at how we can work differently to improve things.

This Activity Report gives you a glimpse of how the service has been used throughout the year and what we have achieved. The overarching outcome of the organisation - **to improve the health and wellbeing of Carers across Dumfries and Galloway** - became even more of a driver this year as we quickly focussed on making sure Carers recognised the importance of not overlooking their own health and wellbeing in the face of reducing levels of support, lockdown, isolation, and financial worries.

There is much we can all do to try and improve things. We need to do a whole lot better on improving how the term 'Carers' is understood. It is misused and misinterpreted constantly and this does not help people identify themselves as Carers and know that there is support there to help them. If Covid 19 has taught us anything it is in fact how much society relies upon Carers. In many ways the pandemic has exposed how little is actually understood about what they do and what it costs them. We need to continue to work together to change this and encourage people to see Carers as partners.

~ Claudine Brindle, Chief Officer

How is the Service Provided?

The Carers Centre is commissioned and supported by the local Council and NHS to provide an information, advice and support service to Carers. The Carers Act specifies that each region has to have an accessible information and advice service for Carers and this is a key area of our service.

The Centre employs 20 staff across the region split into management and administration, Adult and Young Adult Carers Support, Young Carers Support and Health and Wellbeing staff. The Centre is governed by a voluntary Management Board of Trustees 50% of whom have to be Carers or ex-Carers. This year we have had 10 active members of the Board.

We have had support from a further 3 volunteers who provide support to the organisation in a variety of roles.

It is only through the dedication of the staff, Board and volunteers that the service continues to provide the range of services on offer to Carers in Dumfries and Galloway and enables us to cope with the increasing numbers of Carers needing support and the complexity of the cases. This expertise, knowledge and value of the people providing our service has become even more apparent over the last 12 months. More about this later in the report.

What Impact does the Service have?

Carers consistently report feeling supported by the organisation and demonstrate positive impact around the following 5 reoccurring themes:

- Carers are supported to make decisions and able to continue caring
- Carers have increased knowledge and feel better informed
- Carers are supported to try new things and have increased networks of support
- Carers have improved health and wellbeing
- Carers feel listened to and feel more valued in their role.

Numbers Using the Service

The following table shows the number of new Carers that have used the service as well as those that have returned to use the service in comparison with last year. The number of Carers that reuse the service indicates that caring is a continuing commitment and Carers require a lot more than initial help and support. The complexity of the cases that we are supporting Carers with continues to increase and indicates the level of support that Carers are now requiring.

	2019-2020	2020-21
New Adult Carers	586	480
Returning Adult Carers	550	549
New Young Carers	115	108
Returning Young Carers	185	185
Total	1436	1322

Although the overall numbers are slightly lower than last year the cases that Support Workers are dealing with are increasing in complexity specifically as a result of the pandemic. Support is provided via a range of formats and this was increased with the move to offer virtual one to one via zoom or other platform. With the lockdown enforced on us staff were moved out of their usual bases facilitated by our own administration officer and our external IT company. Never did our staff think they would need to learn so quickly how to use tablets, lap tops etc and offer increased levels of support via telephone or video link. Staff also had to find

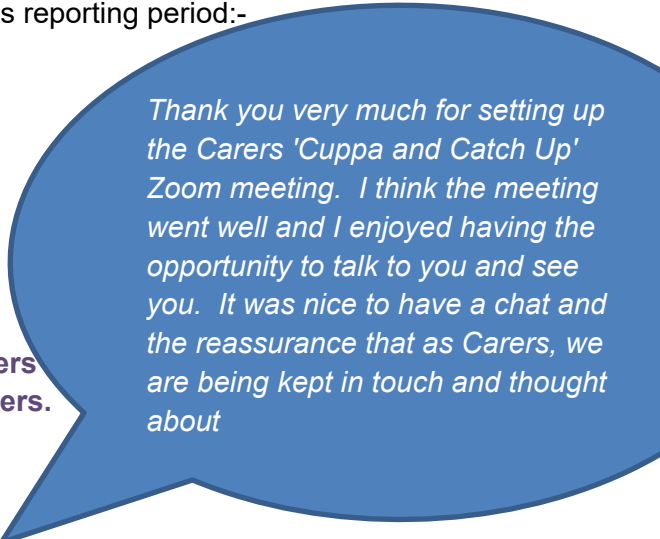
new ways to speak to each other and provide support to each other – something that is so vital in the work that we do. In between lockdown and afterwards we started to offer face to face appointments outside or within hospitality settings where there was the need for this. Gradually we started to move staff back into the office bases and the Carers Centre using a combination of home and office working. The following gives you an idea of the Carers Centre Service during Covid 19.

COVID 19 RESPONSE - What Did We Do?

Staff were able to quickly identify people on their caseloads who needed enhanced level of support at the start of the first lockdown. These Carers were contacted and offered support to make sure they had the correct information to cope with decreased services, shielding issues, access to food and medication.

Staff were also quick to respond to the needs of Young Carers, many of whom found themselves with increasing caring roles due to schools being closed and other services being reduced or stopped. We support many families with 3 or more children and in a lot of cases there was only one or two digital devices within the household severely limiting their contact with friends, families and their ability to successfully take part in homeschooling. Staff were able to identify families in greatest need and target resources and funding to where it was most needed providing lap tops, tablets etc. In this reporting period:-

- ✚ 6194 contacts were made with Adult Carers
(support via telephone calls, emails, txts)
- ✚ 3615 contacts were made with Young Carers
- ✚ 272 video calls were made with Adult Carers
- ✚ 726 video calls were made with Young Carers
- ✚ 197 face to face appointments were made with Adult Carers
- ✚ 106 face to face appointments were made with Young Carers.
- ✚ Once schools returned we offered 50 drop in sessions.



Thank you very much for setting up the Carers 'Cuppa and Catch Up' Zoom meeting. I think the meeting went well and I enjoyed having the opportunity to talk to you and see you. It was nice to have a chat and the reassurance that as Carers, we are being kept in touch and thought about

Group work had to be offered virtually and although some of these had more engagement than others 65 group sessions were held across all age groups during this year. The phrase 'everyday is a school day' became the norm amongst staff as we all learnt how to hold a group online!!

What did Carers Need?

As well as the increasing support calls and contacts made the Centre worked with the local Health and Social Care Partnership to give Carers access to:

- ❖ Key Status letters – this enabled Carers to be given a letter identifying themselves as key and essential 'workers' which made it easier when accessing supermarkets and for essential travel during lockdown.
- ❖ PPE Provision and Distribution – We supported over 60 Carers and their families to access PPE either by arranging for it to be delivered, collected from the Carers Centre or delivered by Carers Centre staff.
- ❖ Vaccination Information – Once Carers were entitled to receive their vaccines the Centre provided updates ensuring full information was available. During this time many Carers believed that they had to be registered with a Carers service to access the vaccine and while this wasn't the case it resulted in a large number of new Carers registering with the service.

Extra Support Made Available

Throughout the pandemic and particularly during the 2 periods of lockdown there has been additional funding made available locally and nationally to enable innovative and creative ways to support Carers. The majority of this focussed on improving wellbeing, providing assistance in emergencies and access to digital supports.

Support	What was provided	Funding accessed from?
Digital Support	90 tablets, lap tops or chromebooks For Adult and Young Carers	SCVO – Connecting Scotland Holywood Trust
Emergency Support	Tesco vouchers totalling £12,895 were provided to 224 Carers / Young Carers to assist with household bill particularly around Christmas time £4500 grant funding made available to 23 Carers / Young Carers to assist in emergency type situations £1000 from the local Barfill Trust was then donated to offer additional Emergency Funding to Carers	Cash for Kids SP Energy Carers Trust Barfill Trust
Wellbeing Support	Over 300 Carers and Young Carers received wellbeing treats, bags or vouchers over xmas 2020 350 Young Carers received activity packs over the 2 lockdown periods 6 Carers referred to counselling for support around grief and loss	Cash for Kids, Caring for Carers, Dumfries Lions Club, The Usual Place NHS Endowment Fund



Wishing you a happy new year and thank you for the surprise package and doorstep visit for Christmas. It was a lovely surprise I have really enjoyed the many treats in the bag. It was good to know that you and the Carers service was available over the festive season at this difficult time."

A BUSY YEAR FOR SHORT BREAKS

Stay Home Stay Safe – Taking a Break During Lockdown

The Carers Centre has hosted a Short Breaks Fund for nearly 10 years enabling Carers to apply for funding to give them a break of some kind. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of lockdown on Carers it was recognised that the existing Short Break Fund may not meet the needs of Carers and a different approach was needed.

The Stay Home – Stay Safe Grant was set up which enabled Carers to apply for a small grant assisting them to still focus on taking a break from their caring role and promoting the importance of this during lockdown. This was vital to support the health and wellbeing of Carers at a time where direct support

services to the cared for person had been stopped or significantly reduced. Being in lockdown was a difficult time, without the usual support networks available.

Additional funding of over £10,000 was secured from Shared Care Scotland and the local Health and Social Care Partnership which together with some existing Short Breaks Funding enabled the Stay Home Stay Safe fund to be opened by April 2020. Applications were approved by 2 staff members, a Carer and a member of the Board of Trustees and were invited for up to £70. A wide range of applications were received ~ craft / baking equipment, gardening and gaming equipment, tablets, kindles, vouchers for takeaway meals and even a kitten for one of your Young Carers!

241 applications were supported with £14,812 being awarded



Thank you for my stay at home pennies. I was getting fed up not being allowed out to play with my friends and feeling a bit lonely in the house so Fred has been a godsend! We go everywhere together and cuddle up to watch a film in bed every night. Thank you for making lockdown amazing with my new best friend Fred xxx



The Stay Home – Stay Safe grant enabled the Carers Centre to:

- ☺ Provide extra support to Carers of all ages at a time where many were worried, anxious and experiencing higher levels of stress.
- ☺ Encourage Carers to promote their own health and wellbeing
- ☺ Provide Carers with the opportunity to recognise how a short break can still be taken during lockdown
- ☺ Offer a personalised approach to identifying a suitable short break
- ☺ Offer quick and easy access to a small amount of funding which, as the evaluations showed has provided large rewards for a substantial amount of Carers and their families.

Short Breaks Funding Continues

The original Short Break Fund has continued to be open to Carers throughout the pandemic and awards were made where not affected by restrictions.

70 applications have been supported this year with a total of £21,245

This takes the total funding awarded in this way to £379,685 since 2011



Extra Short Breaks Funding

Additional funding was announced by the Scottish Government in January 2021 to support Carers to take a Short Break. Carers Centres were given the option of hosting the local funding and a process was quickly put in place to manage this taking the learning from the Stay Home Stay Safe grants and the existing Short Breaks fund. The local allocation was for just over £23,000 which was topped up by existing short breaks funding locally. Staff worked hard to manage over 220 applications in just over 3 weeks and 7 decision making panels were held virtually. A whole range of applications were received but were predominantly for computer equipment, garden furniture, TVs and subscriptions of some kind.

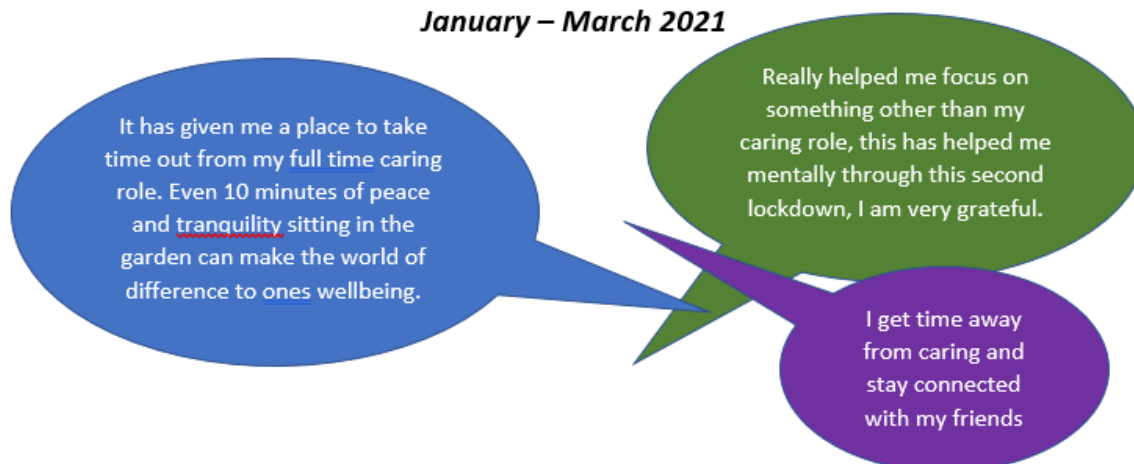
The advertising around this additional funding resulted in 66 new Carers using the service



199 applications were supported with a total of £40,704 awarded.

Hearing how the funding helped

January – March 2021



Comments from Carers demonstrated impact across the following themes:

- Reduced isolation – keeping in touch with family and friends, assisting with 'hospital visiting'
- Taking a break / taking your mind off the caring role and responsibilities
- Benefits to the cared for – strengthened relationships, shared interests
- Accessing new opportunities / experiences, online classes, online shopping
- Positive impact on health and wellbeing – reduced stress, improved fitness and aiding relaxation
- Sustaining the caring relationship – making it easier to cope with the stress and

Young Carers Project



Young Carers have coped with so much more as a result of the pandemic.

Isolation from their friends, lockdown, shielding and home schooling together with increasing caring roles. Many had the added worry, concern and stress of family members who could be more susceptible to COVID 19 as well as reductions in support services. Young Carers staff provided support and lots of treats to try and help with taking a break, and let them know the service was still here. Here are some of the things staff did :

Online Groups – This was something new that we had not delivered before, it was a huge learning experience and one the Young Carers Team had to embrace.

There was a variety of different groups that Young Carers were invited to come along to and help to maintain contact with their peers.

What did we deliver?

- Bingo and Quizzes
- Arts and Crafts and Origami
- Pamper sessions (face masks, hot chocolate, and nail painting)
- Scavenger Hunts
- Drawing for Enjoyment and Doodle Groups
- Sign Language

Notes of Kindness

This idea behind this was to bring some joy and cheer to an Adult Carer who may be feeling lonely or isolated by sending a card or picture from a Young Carer. Young Carers were invited to complete a Note of Kindness and we coordinated this being sent to Adult Carers and in turn they had the opportunity to reply to the Young Carers. This was an amazing piece of work to be involved in and the response from Young Carers was great. The feedback from both Adult and Young Carers was very positive and certainly made many Carers smile 😊

POSITIVITY STATEMENTS FROM THE NOTES OF KINDNESS 😊

Always turn that frown upside down.

You are never alone.

Be Happy!

**Always remember you are special
and important.**

Tough times don't last, tough people do.

Alternative Festival

Every year there is a Scottish Young Cares Festival but this year the funding for this was open to projects to apply for a festival with a difference.

We offered each Young Carer the opportunity to choose one thing from a variety of options whether that be a voucher, activity, game etc... This allowed the Young Carer to choose something that best met their individual needs and choose who they would like to do it with.

There was a choice of:

- Pamper Bag
- DVD for a movie night
- Arts Activity Pack
- Ice Cream Voucher
- Amazon, Netflix, Gaming voucher
- Local soft play
- Costa or Starbucks voucher
- Meal voucher

Christmas DVD

Normally at Christmas we would offer a Christmas group which would bring Young Carers together. Despite not being able to do this we didn't want to let the Christmas Spirit disappear. All Young Carers were asked to pick a DVD film from a list, to tell us who they would watch it with and to write a Christmas message to the Young Carers staff team.

This was a real success and the Young Carers Staff team loved getting their messages.



- ♦ *Thank you so much for helping me through hard times and I hope you have a brilliant Christmas*
- ♦ *Merry Christmas to all the young carers staff, thank you for caring, for organising all the fun stuff and everything else for us, really appreciate it. Have a lovely Christmas*

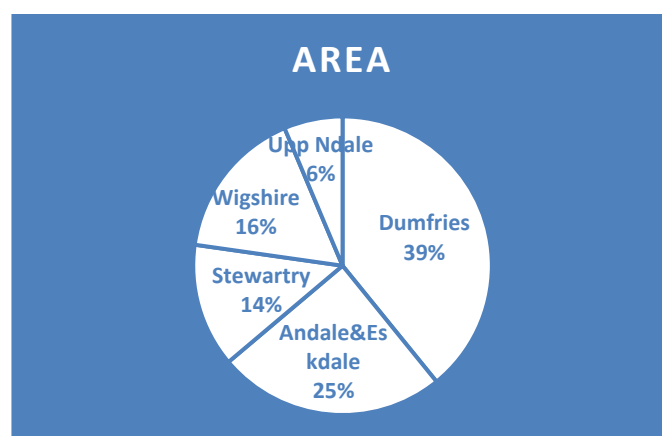
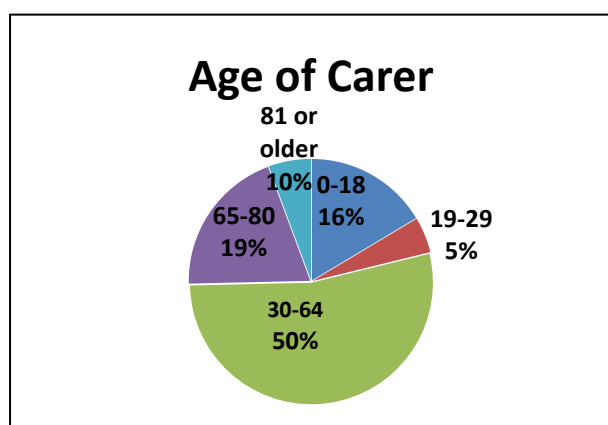
REFLECTION

The work we have managed to achieve during the lockdown and since has amazed all involved with the Centre. There was never any question of closing or reducing the service, even for a short period of time. We knew that Carers couldn't stop what they were doing and were having to increase their caring roles. We knew that they would need increased support from all areas of the organisation and this has been shown in how the service has responded. The service has reacted and responded to the changes needed as a result of the pandemic extremely well and we should all be proud of what has been achieved over this year. Staff have been there for Carers in a different way **but we have still been there** and supported Carers with increasingly complex caring roles.

Staff needed and deserved support too. Staff were having to deal with lockdown and the pandemic outside of work as well as dealing with all the changes and challenges of how the service has had to change. Many staff were working alongside home schooling and / or their own caring roles. We were also coping with not seeing each other in the same way – staff always relied on each other to discuss cases, issues and for support. It became more apparent that those providing support need support too. For the first time we had staff catch ups virtually and funnily enough those who worked in other parts of the region stated that they actually felt more in touch with the staff team than they ever had. Staff were given the opportunity to work with the local health and wellbeing team for some support and those staff have then created their own staff health and wellbeing group emphasising how important it is to look after the staff. **The Board and management team have often reflected over this 12 months how very lucky the organisation is to have the staff team we have and that their commitment and dedication to their role has been even more evident during this time. No Annual Report for this period would be complete without emphasising this point.**

FACTS AND FIGURES

Due to the additional work to be reported on this year in the light of the pandemic the usual facts and figures of who the service have not been included in this report in the same way. Additional reports in relation to this can be provided. The following 2 graphs show the ages of the Carers and where they reside in the region.



CARERS CENTRE FINANCIAL REPORT

The Centre has financial reports for the year April 2020-March 2021 that are independently audited. Should you wish to view these a set of accounts can be made available to you.

We hope you have enjoyed reading this Annual Activity Report and if you require any further information or a copy of the annual accounts please contact the Carers Centre on 01387 248600 or by emailing info@dgalcarers.org