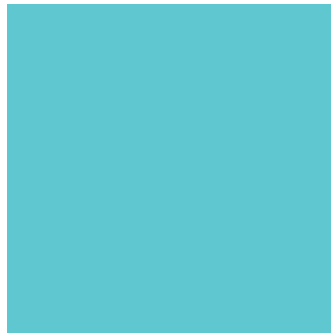




Aberdeenshire
Health & Social Care
Partnership

Aberdeenshire Adult Carer Strategy

2025 to 2030



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This strategy contains links to websites where you can find information. Any link is highlighted, and a list of the websites can be found at the end of the document.

If you require this document in another format, if you need more information or would like to make comment on any part of this strategy please contact: Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership Carer Support Team carersupport@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

The Adult Carer Strategy 2025-2030 sets out Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership's (AHSCP) continued commitment to recognising, valuing and supporting unpaid adult carers. It builds on learning from the first Adult Carer Strategy (2018-2022) and from extensive engagement with carers, staff and partners. The Strategy aligns with national legislation and policy including the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, the National Carers Strategy (2022) and the AHSCP Strategic Plan, ensuring support for carers remains a core priority in local health and social care. This strategy focuses on adult carers, as young carers have a separate strategy due to their distinct needs, rights and experiences that differ significantly from those of adult carers.

Whereas the first strategy focused on establishing core services and meeting statutory duties, the 2025–2030 strategy strengthens this foundation by placing greater emphasis on proactive carer identification, personalised support, meaningful carer involvement and improved access to flexible breaks.

Unpaid carers play an essential role in the health and wellbeing of people across Aberdeenshire. Many carers describe rewarding aspects of their role, but also significant challenges relating to health and wellbeing, finances, access to breaks and feeling recognised and involved. This Strategy focuses on enabling carers to live well alongside caring, through improved prevention, early intervention and clearer, more accessible pathways of support.

BUILDING ON THE FIRST ADULT CARER STRATEGY (2018–2022)

The first strategy aimed to:

- Identify carers earlier
- Provide clear support pathways
- Improve carers' health and wellbeing
- Increase access to breaks from caring
- Strengthen carer involvement in decision making
- Meet all duties under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

Delivery against these aims led to meaningful improvements for carers. AHSCP expanded the Carer Support Service - supported by an 11.5% increase in funding - and created a team of Carer Practitioners dedicated to providing personalised support through Self Directed Support (SDS) to eligible carers.

Earlier identification has improved through strengthened joint screening with the Aberdeenshire Carers Service (VSA) and better information sharing, contributing to wider recognition of carers across services. Aberdeenshire Council achieved Carer Positive Level 2, and NHS Grampian achieved Level 1, reflecting progress in recognising carers within the workforce.

Access to breaks is also being strengthened. The Short Breaks Services Statement was refreshed and Short Breaks Bureau activity resumed following the pandemic. Carers increasingly used SDS flexibly to arrange creative, meaningful breaks.

Transitions for young carers were significantly improved, with 14 transitions completed and 13 in progress during the last year.

Information and support pathways are becoming clearer through updated processes, leaflets and communication. Work is continuing to improve carer involvement in hospital discharge through new materials, training and the development of a link worker role. AHSCP also met key statutory duties including delivering Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSPs), publishing eligibility criteria and we are progressing the development of a Carers Forum and Carers Advisory Group.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR 2025–2030

Drawing on engagement and consultation with carers, third sector organisations and staff, AHSCP has identified four priority themes for the next five years:

1. Carer Identification

Improving early and proactive identification of carers across all services and communities so support is offered before crisis.

2. Carer Support

Providing timely, personalised and proportionate support through clear pathways, Adult Carer Support Plans and coordinated multi agency working.

3. Recognising, Valuing and Involving Carers

Ensuring carers feel heard, respected and actively involved in decisions about the care they provide and in wider service planning.

4. Breaks from Caring

Improving access to regular, meaningful and flexible breaks that help carers maintain their wellbeing and sustain their caring role.

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

A two year Delivery Plan will guide the initial implementation of the Strategy. The AHSCP Carer Support Team will lead delivery, supported by the Adult Carer Strategy Delivery Group, with progress reported to the Strategic Planning Group and the Integration Joint Board (IJB).

As the National Carers Strategy 2021–2026 comes to the end of the parliamentary term, this Strategy is designed to be adaptable. It will evolve in response to national policy developments and local needs.

The Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025 brings in a new universal right to “sufficient breaks from caring” for all adults with no eligibility criteria attached. This strengthens existing duties by ensuring every carer can access a break that supports their wellbeing.

While the Act introduces this universal entitlement, SDS eligibility remains unchanged and continues to be based on assessed substantial or critical impact. Breaks are also available via access to Time to Live Funding and other resources. Definitions of what counts as a “sufficient break” and national timescales for Adult Carer Support Plans are still to be confirmed. These changes align with AHSCP’s focus on prevention, early support, and clear pathways for carers. AHSCP will adapt delivery as new national guidance becomes available.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES BY 2030

By delivering this Strategy, AHSCP aims to ensure that carers:

- Are identified earlier and receive clear, consistent information
- Access timely and personalised support aligned to their own outcomes
- Feel valued, recognised and involved in decisions affecting them
- Have improved and more flexible access to breaks from caring
- Continue to benefit from AHSCP’s full compliance with the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

This Strategy strengthens Aberdeenshire’s commitment to supporting unpaid carers, ensuring they have the help they need to maintain their wellbeing and live well alongside caring.

2030 VISION: WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT FOR CARERS IN ABERDEENSHIRE

By 2030, the Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership will have moved from describing what we do to demonstrating what difference it makes. Carers have clearly told us what matters most, and this strategy translates our intent into lived, visible outcomes that reflect real change in everyday life.

What Carers Will Be Able to Say by 2030

By 2030, adult carers in Aberdeenshire will experience earlier recognition, more consistent support and greater influence. Carers will be able to say:

- I recognised myself as a carer earlier and knew where to go for help
- Professionals routinely ask about my caring role
- I can access meaningful breaks before reaching crisis
- I am involved in decisions that affect the person I care for
- I feel understood, valued and supported across the whole system, not just individual services

Our aim is to shift the focus from systems and processes to the lived experiences that matter to carers.



Leigh Jolly
Chief Officer
Aberdeenshire Health
and Social Care
Partnership



**Councillor
Anne Stirling**
Chair of Integration
Joint Board



Dr John Tomlinson
Vice Chair of Integration
Joint Board

Introduction

The Aberdeenshire Adult Carer Strategy 2025–2030 explains how we will support unpaid adult carers looking after someone in Aberdeenshire. Carers tell us they want to continue caring for the people they support, but also to live their own lives, stay well, and remain connected.

This strategy follows the Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan (2025–2035) and national policies, including Scotland’s National Carers Strategy and the Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025, which brings new rights to breaks and stronger support for carers. We will implement these changes as they take effect. We also uphold carers’ rights under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and share information on short breaks and support services.

WHO IS AN ADULT CARER?

Under the [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#), an adult carer is anyone aged 18 or over who provides unpaid care to someone needing extra help due to illness, disability, mental health challenges, or substance use. This is not part of paid work or a voluntary role.

Caring situations vary. Many carers support more than one person, such as an older parent with dementia and a loved one with a mental health condition, while also raising children. You don’t need to provide care every day or for long hours to be recognised as a carer. You are still considered a carer even if your support is occasional.

Recognising carers’ diversity ensures the right support is available when and where it’s needed (see [Appendix 1](#) for more information on caring roles in Aberdeenshire).

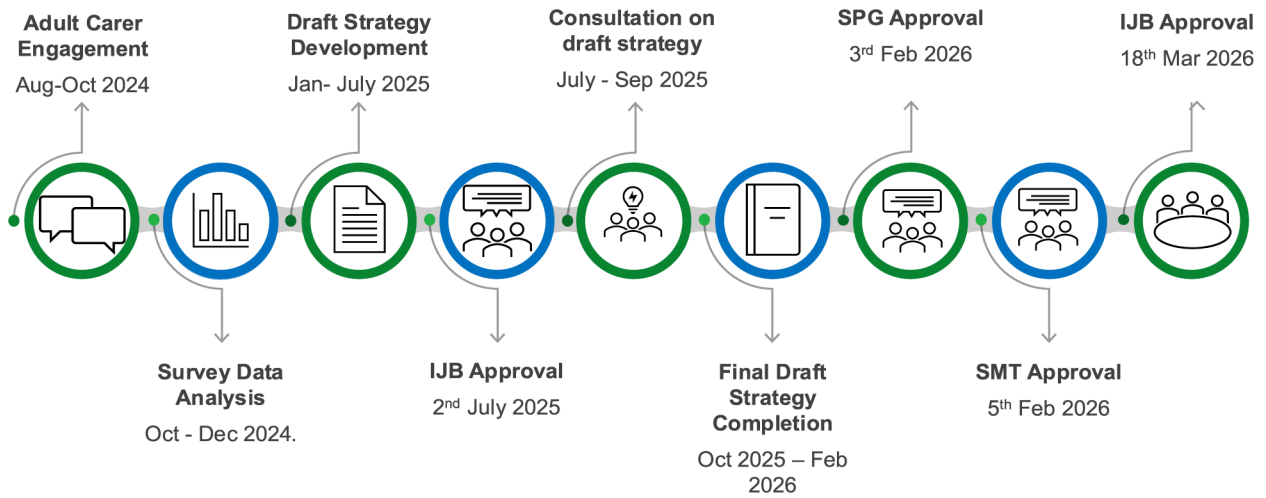
Unpaid care in Scotland is valued at £15.9 billion. Carers’ experience and insight make them experts in their role and deserve respect and recognition.

While only a small proportion of adult carers seek support from services, engagement findings show positive interest in further involvement, with almost 50 carers agreeing to participate in future focus groups and activities to help shape support in Aberdeenshire.

HOW CARERS SHAPED THIS STRATEGY

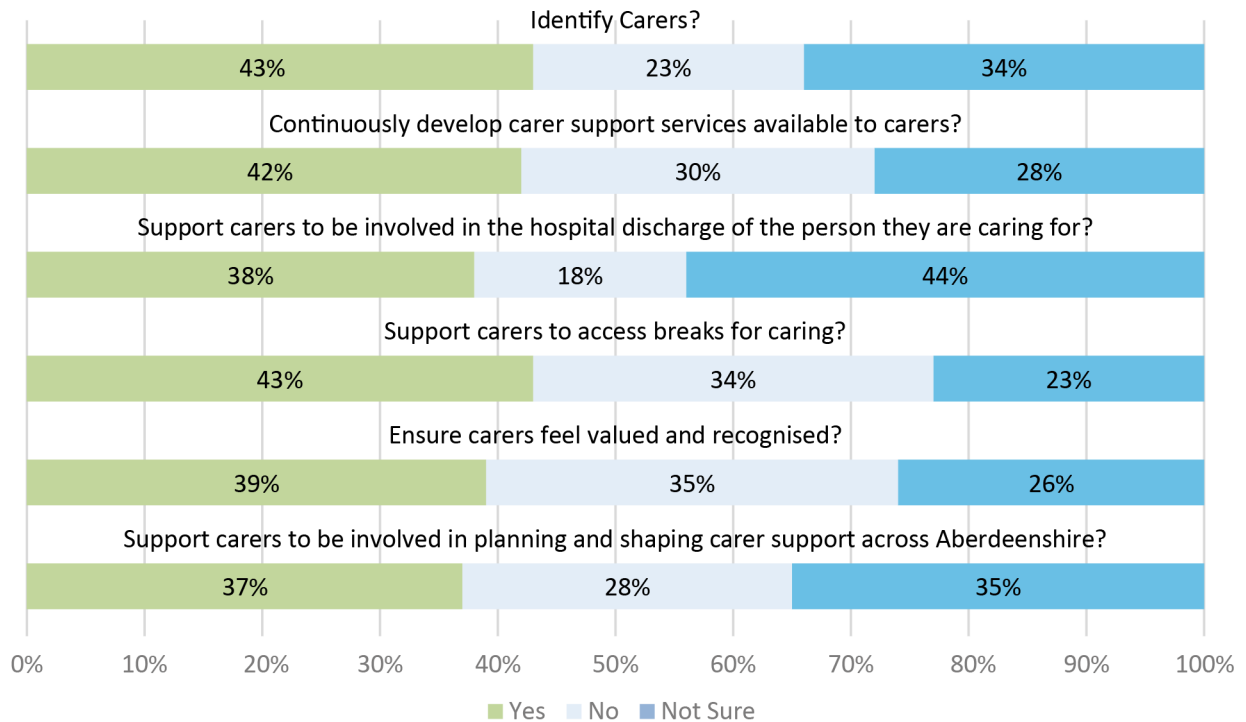
Carers and those who support them played a key role in shaping this strategy. We gathered views through two engagement surveys (August–October 2024) and a consultation survey (July–September 2025) hosted online [Engage Aberdeenshire](#).

ABERDEENSHIRE ADULT CARER STRATEGY TIMELINE



Consultation feedback on the draft carer strategy priorities is shown below:

PRIORITIES - ARE WE TAKING THE RIGHT ACTIONS TO:



Legislative and Policy Context

NATIONAL CONTEXT

[Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#): Places a number of duties on local authorities and health boards to support unpaid adult and young carers, including the preparation of local carer strategies, eligibility criteria, a Short Breaks Services Statement and involving carers in the hospital discharge process. The Act also gives carers the right to an Adult Carer Support Plan (or Young Carer Statement), access to local information and advice, and be consulted on for services.

[National Carers Strategy 2022](#): Scotland's vision: enable unpaid carers to care meaningfully while having a life beyond caring. Actions cover: Living with Covid-19, Valuing and Supporting Carers, Health and Social Care, Social and Financial Inclusion, and Young Carers.

[National Health & Wellbeing Outcome 6](#): Recognises caring impact: "People who provide unpaid care are supported to look after their own health and wellbeing, including reducing any negative impact of their caring role."

[Care Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#): Introduces rights to breaks for carers, stronger care regulation, and improved visiting rights under 'Anne's Law'. Our strategy will reflect these reforms.

[Self-Directed Support Plan 2023–2027](#): Promotes choice and control for carers and supported people, ensuring access to advice, advocacy, quality support, and involvement in decisions.

[Equality Act 2010](#): Protects nine characteristics.

[Carers UK](#) campaigns for unpaid caring to become the 10th protected characteristic. Our plan will strengthen carers' equality by raising awareness and making caring more visible.

As good practice within the Carer Strategy delivery plan, we will promote the strengthening of carers equalities by identifying where there is a need for more focus on increasing awareness of unpaid caring and making caring more visible and more widely understood.

LOCAL CONTEXT

AHSCP Strategic Plan 2025–2035: Sets priorities for health and social care, including Prevention and Early Intervention, which underpins this strategy.

Aberdeenshire Adult Carer Strategy 2025–2030: Required under the Carers Act. Separate strategies for adult and young carers reflect different needs. This strategy focuses on unpaid adult carers, their value, and what matters most to them. Carer feedback shapes priorities and actions.

[Aberdeenshire Carers' Charter:](#) Adopts the National Carers Charter, outlining carers' rights under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016.

[Health and Social Care Strategies, Plans and Reports - Aberdeenshire Council](#)
Central source of key strategies, plans and reports across AHSCP.

Potential Impact of Caring

Caring can be deeply rewarding. Many carers feel a strong sense of purpose, knowing they make a real difference to someone's life. It can strengthen relationships, build resilience, and develop confidence and practical skills.

However, caring often brings challenges. It can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion, stress, and mental health difficulties. Many carers juggle work, family, and caring responsibilities, leaving little time for their own wellbeing. The impact varies depending on age, health, ethnicity, and available support.

Caring for someone with complex needs, such as addiction, mental illness, disability, or a progressive condition can add extra pressure. Intensive caring roles increase vulnerability to poor health and isolation. Minority ethnic carers may face additional barriers, including cultural expectations and communication challenges, which can heighten risks of poverty and social exclusion.

Research shows the scale of these challenges:

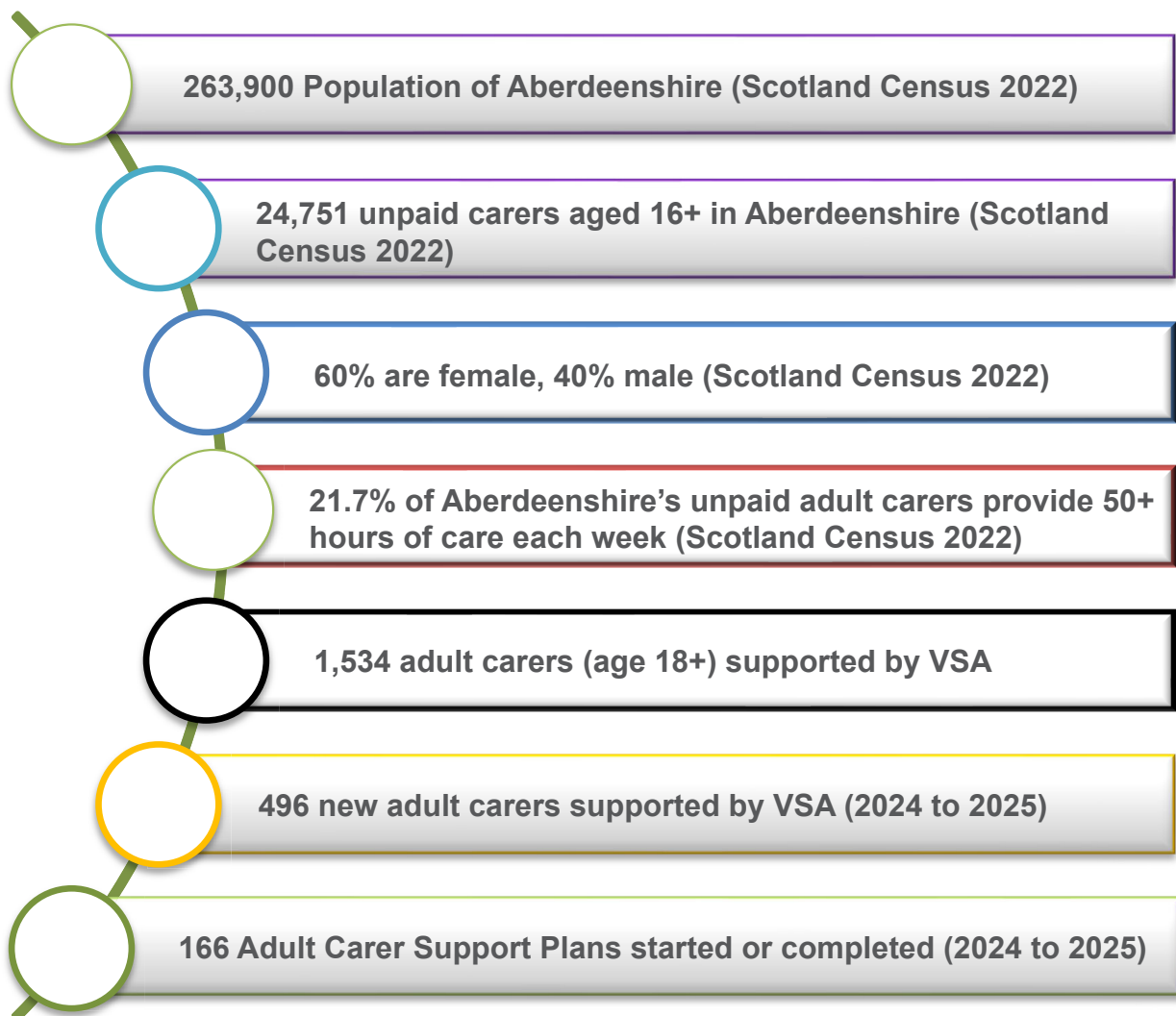
- [Carers UK \(2022\)](#): Unpaid carers report poor mental health, stress, anxiety, and loneliness.
- [Carers UK \(2023\)](#): Rising living costs add financial strain and anxiety.
- [Carers Scotland \(2025\)](#): Many carers neglect their own health due to caring demands.

Timely support is vital. Regular breaks help carers rest, reduce stress, and reconnect socially, preventing burnout and sustaining caring relationships. When carers are recognised and supported, both they and the people they care for benefit.

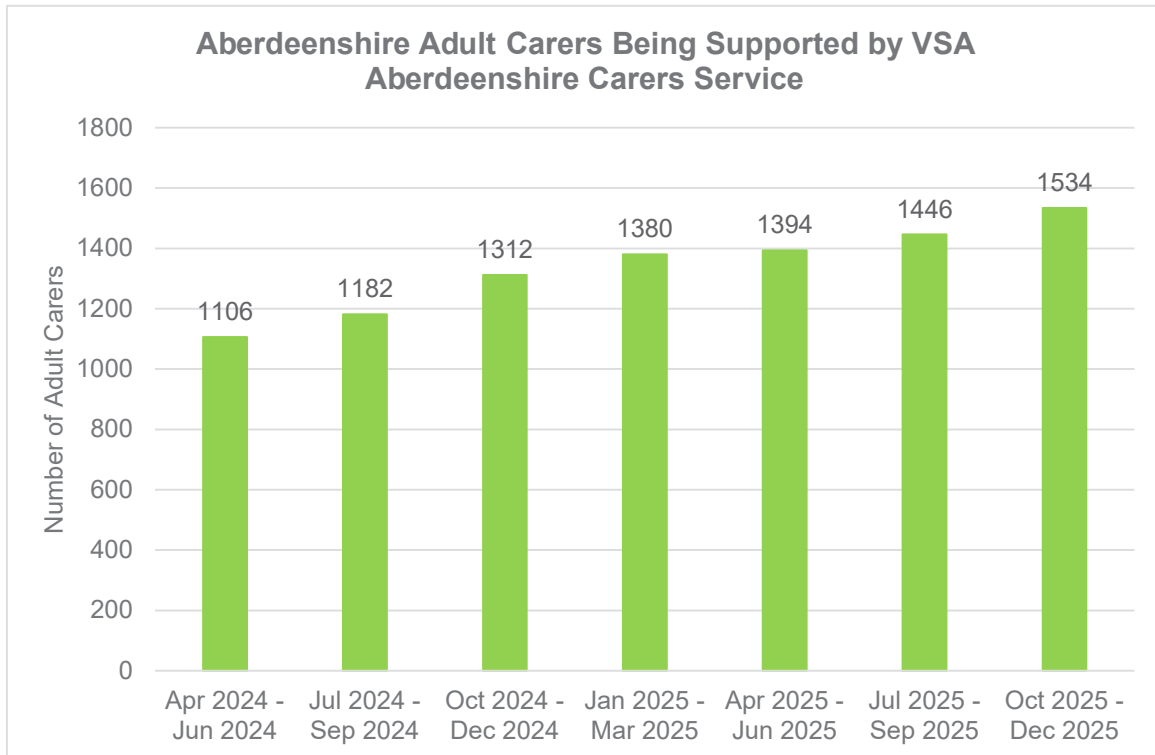
Our strategy aims to ensure carers receive the recognition and support they need to protect their health and wellbeing, enabling them to continue caring without compromising their own quality of life.

Strategic Needs Assessment for Support

The [2022 Scotland Census](#) recorded 627,700 unpaid carers in Scotland, representing 12% of the population. More recent estimates suggest the number to be between 700,000 and 800,000 unpaid carers. In Aberdeenshire, the census reported a population of 263,900, including 24,757 unpaid carers. Among those aged 16 and over (215,024), 11.5% were unpaid carers (24,751). 59.6% of carers in Aberdeenshire were female compared to males at 40.4%. During this time 5,364 carers aged 16 and over provided 50 hours and more of care per week.



As of December 2025, 1,534 adult carers have registered with the [Aberdeenshire Carer Support Service \(VSA\)](#), with 318 adult carers currently being actively supported by VSA's Carer Advisors.



Of the 1,534 carers registered, 306 adult carers who meet the eligibility criteria are currently being supported by AHSCP Carer Practitioners, via Self-directed Support.

Preventative support is essential to sustain caring roles and reduce the negative impact on carers' health and wellbeing. The new £3.6 million funding (over 5 years) for the commissioned Carers Support Service with VSA (an 11.5% increase), reflects the rising demand for carer support, including within hospital discharge planning.

The Covid 19 pandemic significantly disrupted traditional care services and changed how carers access and engage with support. In response, we aim to scope and expand flexible respite opportunities, increase awareness of carers' rights to a break, and work with partners to develop more creative and responsive options. This strategy therefore places a strong emphasis on offering a wider variety of short breaks tailored to carers' individual needs, moving beyond traditional planned respite to provide more flexible, accessible and suitable support.

Support for Carers in Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) recognises the vital role carers play and offers a wide range of support through the Aberdeenshire Carer Support Service, delivered by [VSA](#).

This includes:

- Information & Advice – on local services, benefits, carers' rights, and resources
- Adult Carer Support Plans (ACSPs) – personalised plans to identify needs and outcomes
- Carer Advisor support - to develop Adult Carer Support Plans
- Emergency & Future Care Planning – including [Emergency Planning Toolkit](#) and information on [Future Care Planning](#)
- Counselling & Peer Support
- Hospital Discharge Support – guidance and involvement to ensure carers are included in planning, decision making, and arrangements when the person they care for is preparing to leave hospital
- Funding for Breaks – Time to Live, Creative Breaks, Respite, and CareFree Breaks

ADULT CARER SUPPORT PLANS (ACSP)

Under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, we have a duty to offer an ACSP when a carer is identified and a duty to prepare an ACSP for anyone who accepts this offer. We must also prepare an ACSP for any adult carer who asks for one. This sets out what matters most to the carer and the support needed to achieve those outcomes. Referrals can be made by the carer, a friend, relative, or professional (with consent).

TRANSITION FROM YOUNG CARER TO ADULT CARER

Young carers make the transition to adult carers at the age of 18 when they move on to adult carer services. If they already have a Young Carer Statement, it remains in place until an ACSP is created, ensuring no gap in support.

TERMINAL ILLNESS

For carers supporting someone with a terminal illness, statutory guidance requires contact

within 2 working days and completion of the ACSP within 10 working days. More info here [Carers Scotland Act – Terminal Illness Directions](#).

SUPPORT FOR FORMER CARERS

Aberdeenshire Carers Services offers up to six months of post caring support to help carers adjust to life after their caring role. This personalised support helps individuals manage emotional, practical, and social changes through tailored guidance, information and advice, emotional support, and appropriate signposting or referrals to community and specialist services. The aim is to support carers to rebuild confidence, regain independence, and move towards a positive and sustainable future.

SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT (SDS)

Carers with substantial or critical impact from their caring role may be eligible for a [Self-directed Support](#) budget, giving choice and control in how their support is arranged. Carers will be provided with an indicative budget giving an early estimate of what it may cost to meet their needs. The final budget is agreed through the carers SDS Support Plan and will show how the funding will be used to meet the carer's eligible needs and outcomes. Eligibility criteria can be viewed at [Carers' Eligibility Criteria - Aberdeenshire Council](#).

Carers who do not meet eligibility criteria for SDS can access support from VSA.

OTHER SERVICES

- [Advocacy North-East](#) – independent advocacy
- [Alzheimer Scotland](#) – dementia cafés and peer support
- [Cornerstone SDS](#) – guidance on Self-Directed Support

SHORT BREAKS FOR ADULT CARERS IN ABERDEENSHIRE

We recognise that carers do not always have consistent or easy access to short breaks. Gaps remain in the availability of traditional respite, access to replacement care, and the development of flexible and innovative break options. We also know that information and processes can sometimes feel unclear or difficult to navigate.

Our focus over the coming years is to:

- Improve the clarity and accessibility of information through a regularly updated Short Breaks Services Statement and clearer pathways for carers and staff
- Increase the range and flexibility of break options, including expanding innovative and personalised respite opportunities
- Strengthen access to replacement care, so that taking a break does not depend solely on the availability of traditional services

- Work with carers and partners such as VSA to co design improvements, ensuring lived experience shapes future support
- Identify and address gaps in our local provision, using carer feedback, data, and ongoing review to guide decisions

We are committed to improving the clarity of information, expanding the range of short break options, strengthening replacement care pathways, and working with carers and partners to identify and close gaps in provision. Our aim is to make short breaks easier to find, easier to plan, and easier to access, so carers can get the restorative time they need.

The [Aberdeenshire Short Breaks Services Statement](#) (SBSS) is a statement of information about the short breaks services available in Aberdeenshire, and across Scotland, for carers and the people they care for.

Short breaks (respite) give unpaid carers time to rest, recharge, and look after their own wellbeing. Breaks are based on what matters to the carer and can be arranged in different ways. Carers can plan a short break through their Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP) if they choose, but an ACSP is not required to access support. Short breaks can also be arranged directly through the Short Breaks Bureau or through the Aberdeenshire Carer Support Service for Creative Breaks, without needing to be formally registered.

Short breaks can be:

- Time away for the carer
- A break together with the carer and cared-for person
- Replacement care so the carer can have time to themselves

They may last a few hours, a day, overnight, or longer. Breaks can take place at home, in the community, or in specialist settings.

HOW TO ACCESS SHORT BREAKS

Carers can get support through:

- **[Short Breaks Bureau \(SBB\)](#):** Helps plan personalised and creative breaks, including equipment and accommodation.
- **VSA Carers Service:** One to one support, groups, training, and Creative Breaks funding.
- **Respite and Carefree:** Donated or low cost short stays and wellbeing activities available via VSA Carers Service.
- **Day Services and Community Supports:** Regular activities for cared for people, giving carers planned time off.
- **Self Directed Support (SDS):** Flexible options for eligible carers (Options 1–4).

OTHER SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO ADULT CARERS IN ABERDEENSHIRE:

The [Aberdeenshire Unpaid Carers' Information Pack](#) includes details on support services, practical tips, and ways to stay involved in the community.

Live Life Aberdeenshire - concessions are available to carers in receipt of Carer Support Payment from [Live Life Aberdeenshire](#)

TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

Carers can access training to build skills and confidence in their caring role. VSA Carer Advisors can help carers explore training options through their Adult Carer Support Plan.

ALDO (Aberdeenshire Learning and Development Online – Aberdeenshire Council): Carers can access free online courses, including personal care and condition-specific topics like dementia. VSA coordinates access and a course directory will be developed.

SVQ Qualification - Carers can gain formal recognition for their skills by undertaking a SVQ qualification. To apply or learn more, visit [Aberdeenshire Council Training and Qualifications webpage](#), email carersvq@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, or call 01467 535655.

ONLINE LEARNING FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE STAFF

NHS TURAS:

[Equal Partners In Care \(EPiC\) – Caring for Unpaid Carers](#) - enables staff to identify, include and support unpaid carers as equal partners in care.

[Carer Involvement In Hospital Discharge](#) - helps staff understand their duties under Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 to involve carers in hospital discharge planning.

Aberdeenshire Council - ALDO

- *Carer Awareness” provides carer awareness for all staff*
- *Caring Counts in the Workplace’ - for managers to support staff with unpaid caring role out with workplace.*

Carer Involvement, Engagement and Consultation

We use a range of ways to hear from carers and the organisations that support them in Aberdeenshire. While we've been consulting with carers for some time, the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 requires us to involve carers in specific areas of decision-making.

INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD (IJB)

An unpaid carer representative with lived experience sits on the IJB, helping shape AHSCP policy and making sure carers are considered in all decisions. The Carer Support Team will continue supporting them, and the IJB, by highlighting how decisions may impact carers, using the Integrated Impact Assessment tool. Following the Minister for Social Care and Mental Wellbeing's announcement in December 2025, unpaid carers, people who use services, and third sector representatives will have full voting rights on IJBs from September 2026.

THIRD SECTOR NETWORK

We work closely with third-sector organisations that support carers. This network is vital for sharing information and shaping carer support across Aberdeenshire.

ADULT CARER STRATEGY DELIVERY GROUP (ACSDG)

The ACSDG helped shape this strategy around what matters most to carers. It leads delivery through an outcomes-focused plan, regular meetings, and smaller working groups on specific issues. The group brings carers, staff and third-sector partners together to ensure:

- Work aligns with legislation and policy
- Training needs are identified
- Local initiatives are supported
- Good practice is shared locally and nationally

The group also makes sure carers' voices are represented in wider strategic work.

Strategy on a Page

Aberdeenshire Adult Carers Strategy 2025 - 2030

Carers have told us

We want our voices to be heard

“ We need support too ”



“ It is easy to lose your sense of self when you are putting someone else first ”

Our Delivery Plan Priorities

Carer Identification

Carer Support

Recognising, Valuing, and Involving Carers

Breaks from Caring

Supporting the Delivery Plan

AHSCP Carer Support Team

Aberdeenshire Carer Support Service - VSA

Adult Carer Strategy Delivery Group

Adult Carer Representatives

Organisations, teams and individuals who support Adult Carers in Aberdeenshire

ABERDEENSHIRE IJB STRATEGIC PLAN PRIORITIES LINKED TO CARERS STRATEGY

- Priority 1: Prevention and Early Intervention
- Priority 2: Health and Social Care Services supporting those with greatest need in our community

NATIONAL CARERS STRATEGY 2022: STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

LIVING WITH COVID-19

VALUING, RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING CARERS

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SUPPORT

SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION

YOUNG CARERS

Priority 1: Carer Identification

CARERS TOLD US

- “ Not enough information out in the public domain. ”*
- “ Who exactly is going to recognise that I am a carer?
I feel invisible as far as the authorities are concerned. ”*
- “ I think carers don't always see themselves as carers,
particularly older spouses. ”*

OUR AIMS

To raise the profile of carers in Aberdeenshire, support individuals to recognise as carers and support people to identify a carer as early as possible.

OUR ACTIONS

- Provide carer awareness training in various formats across AHSCP
- Improve access to information via public promotions, media resources, to reach Carers across Aberdeenshire
- Continue to have active involvement in Carers Week and Carers Rights Day
- Provide direct engagement throughout each year with dedicated support from other agencies to ensure wide variety of information is available and shared directly with communities.
- Review and simplify referral and registration pathways to Carer Support Service (VSA)
- Continue to support and provide services for young carers transitioning to adult carers

HOW WE WILL KNOW THIS IS WORKING

- Numbers completing carer awareness training
- Carers report easy access to the commissioned Carer Support Service.
- Carer events show strong engagement across Aberdeenshire
- Carers report improved experiences at points of change in their lives and caring role.
- Young carers' transitions are highlighted in advance of the move

VISIBLE CHANGE FOR CARERS

By 2030 Carers will say:

- *I am recognised early as a carer through routine conversations across GPs, hospitals, social work and community settings.*
- *I am recognised and supported before I reach crisis.*
- *I have clear, simple pathways into advice and support, without needing to self advocate repeatedly.*
- *As a young carer moving into adult services, I am recognised and supported throughout my transition.*

Priority 2: Carer Support

CARERS TOLD US

“ Peer support is a lifeline, offering the opportunity to meet with others facing similar experiences. ”

“ Great support & understanding from carer advisor has made an amazing difference in our family life. ”

“ I do feel that a lot of the time I am missed. I am not a young carer or care for an older person. There seem more visible activities available for those groups. ”

OUR AIMS

To empower carers to manage their caring role, look after their own health and wellbeing, and maintain a life of their own alongside caring.

OUR ACTIONS

- Review and improve ACSPs to identify the diversity of carer needs and the support required to achieve personal outcomes
- Ensure Carers of all ages are supported to plan for the future (their own and that of the person they care for)
- Develop and provide Advocacy awareness for carers
- Develop a clear approach to care in emergency situations
- Ensure carers have access to skills development and training/awareness opportunities
- Provide practical support to help Carers manage the impact of their caring role
- Improve identification of support for Carers of family members with an alcohol and/or substance dependency, and other complex conditions
- Support flexible use of SDS to access breaks for Carers if eligible

HOW WE WILL KNOW THIS IS WORKING

- The commissioned Carer Support Service can evidence satisfaction from carers
- Carers report increased confidence and ability to manage their caring role
- The number of carers with Emergency/Contingency Plans in place has increased
- Increased numbers of people who identify as Carers of family members with alcohol and/or drug dependency, or other complex needs, complete an Adult Carer Support Plan
- Increased numbers of carers accessing SDS to support breaks

VISIBLE CHANGE FOR CARERS

By 2030 Carers will say:

- *I receive support that is personalised and timely, not reliant on reaching breaking point*
- *I have improved confidence in navigating health and social care, with clearer information and consistent guidance from professionals.*
- *I am able to access practical, emotional, and financial support that matches my personal goals*

Priority 3:

Recognising, Valuing and Involving Carers

CARERS TOLD US

“ We are unseen and unvalued. ”

“ Carers need to be involved in planning and shaping support in Aberdeenshire. ”

“ It is always important to involve carers here (hospital discharge) as they know the cared for person best. ”

OUR AIMS

Involve, respect and listen to carers in planning the care and support of the person they care for, themselves and that of other local support services.

OUR ACTIONS

- Develop appropriate consultation and feedback opportunities for carers; including a Carers Forum and Carer Advisory Group
- Develop a carer pathway of support across hospital settings, to aid the carer journey when the person they care for is admitted, through to discharge and beyond
- Improve access to information and guidance to support carers in their role and changing circumstances

HOW WE WILL KNOW THIS IS WORKING

- More carers are actively involved in sharing their lived experience knowledge in planning and decision-making processes
- An increase in referrals to the commissioned Carers Support Service
- Carers report that they were/are involved in hospital planning processes and decision making prior to discharge of the person they care for

VISIBLE CHANGE FOR CARERS

By 2030 Carers will say:

- *I am recognised as an equal partner in care planning and decision making*
- *I have Carer involvement which is meaningful, not tokenistic, and I am feeling heard and influential in shaping services*
- *I feel my contribution is valued, which improves my wellbeing and reduces feelings of isolation*

Priority 4: Breaks from Caring

CARERS TOLD US

“ I feel guilty if I go away and not sure how to deal with this feeling. ”

“ Respite is very rarely available, this is leading to carer burnout, illness and relationship breakdown. ”

“ In my case, just providing me with the flexibility to access the kind and frequency of respite care is most beneficial to me. ”

OUR AIMS

Develop carer respite, short breaks processes and identify more creative breaks opportunities.

OUR ACTIONS

- Review AHSCP Short Breaks Services Statement, which outlines breaks both locally and nationally
- Scope out what short breaks are available and where across Aberdeenshire and beyond
- Facilitate an increase in and variety of carer breaks, including Respitality
- Review pathways to support access to replacement care
- Develop a Resource Pack for Carer Breaks

HOW WE WILL KNOW THIS IS WORKING

- Regularly seeking carer feedback to monitor and evaluate their experience of short breaks
- The number and variety of short breaks have increased, and people are accessing them with greater ease

VISIBLE CHANGE FOR CARERS

By 2030 Carers will say:

- *I know where to find information and guidance on breaks available locally and nationally*
- *I have access to flexible, meaningful breaks that are more consistent and easier to arrange*
- *I get breaks that help me recharge so I can keep caring, but also still have time for myself and my own life*

2030 Vision for Adult Carers In Aberdeenshire

This section explains how we will continue to improve support for carers, remain realistic about what can be delivered, and ensure carers guide our work.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS

By 2030, we aim to demonstrate:

- An increased proportion of carers who know where to get help: Increased number of carers registered with VSA and other Carer Support Services and data from Annual Carer Survey
- A reduction in carers reporting that they reached crisis before receiving support: Annual Carer Survey responses; ACSP data; monitoring of unplanned or emergency contacts
- Improved carer confidence in navigating health and social care: Annual Carer Survey confidence question; qualitative feedback from ACSP conversations and Carer Forums
- Greater carer satisfaction with involvement in decision making: Annual Carer Survey questions aligned to Carers (Scotland) Act duties; feedback gathered by the Carer Support Service

CONSTRAINTS AND CHOICES

Carers have asked for clarity on what can realistically be achieved within a complex system and finite resources. This strategy therefore:

- Prioritises prevention and early support, as these have the greatest long term impact
- Targets support when universal provision is not possible
- Strengthens partnership working across services, communities and carers, rather than relying on statutory services alone

HOW CARERS WILL INFLUENCE AND SHAPE CHANGE

Our approach will move from ad hoc consultation to ongoing influence. We will:

- Establish annual feedback loops to refresh delivery plans
- Create clear routes for carers to influence service redesign, including through the Adult Carer Strategy Delivery Group, the Carer Advisory Group, Carer Forum and locality structures such as carer events, Engage Aberdeenshire and Lived Experience Groups
- Provide regular “You said / We did” updates so carers can see the impact of their input
- Build shared accountability across AHSCP for responding to carers’ voices

WHY SUPPORTING CARERS MATTERS

Strengthening support for carers contributes to a more sustainable health and social care system. By 2030, we expect:

- Reduced escalation of need through earlier intervention
- Improved workforce sustainability, as supported carers can better balance caring and employment
- Fewer unplanned care episodes, including avoidable admissions and crisis responses
- Reduced financial strain, recognising the link between caring, poverty and unmet need

OUR COMMITMENT MOVING FORWARD

This strategy reinforces our commitment to recognising, valuing and supporting unpaid carers across Aberdeenshire. It sets a shared direction for partners, services and communities, grounded in collaboration, fairness and respect.

Looking ahead to 2030, we aim to create a way of working that evolves with carers’ changing needs, responds earlier, and recognises carers as equal partners.

By continuing to listen, learn and work alongside carers, we will deliver meaningful, lasting improvements that support wellbeing, independence and quality of life. This strategy is the foundation for ongoing progress, ensuring support remains accessible, meaningful and sustainable for the future.

Appendix 1:

DIVERSE CARING ROLES



Parent Carers

Parents caring for a child with additional support needs. Their role goes beyond every day parenting and often involves managing complex care.



Carers of People with Dementia

They may help with communication, daily routines and navigating services.



Caring for someone living with a Mental Health Condition

Often providing emotional support, structure, and advocacy.



Older Carers

Many people aged 65 and over are carers—often for a spouse, partner, or adult child—while managing their own health needs.



Kinship Carers are family or friends caring for a child when parents can't. Some are formally supported by social work, others are informal. If the child has special needs, these carers may be eligible for support.



Sandwich Carers Adults

Often in their 40s to 60s, who care for both children and aging parents at the same time. It's a tough balancing act.



Carers of those with problematic drug or alcohol use

These carers often face stigma and emotional strain.



Caring for someone with a Physical Disability

This includes caring for someone with conditions like MS, Parkinson's, spinal cord injuries, amputations, Cerebral Palsy, stroke related impairments and others.



People who are supporting someone nearing the end of life

Often in emotionally intense and time-sensitive situations.

Appendix 2:

GLOSSARY

Adult Carer	Individual aged 18 and over, who provides or intends to provide care for another individual. This may be due to either old age, physical or mental illness, disability, alcohol or drug dependency.
Adult Carer Support Plan (ACSP)	A written plan coproduced with adult carers which covers personal outcomes, identified support needs and the support to be provided to meet those needs.
Advocacy	Independent Advocacy supports carers to understand their rights, obtain information to make informed decisions and have a say in matters that are affecting them.
Break from caring	Time away from caring for someone. These are sometimes called short breaks. Examples of short breaks might be overnight hotel stays, gym membership, holistic therapies or materials to start new hobbies.
Cared-for person	The person who the unpaid carer is supporting.
Carer Practitioner	Social work staff who support eligible carers, following completion of an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement, to look at how they can be supported to meet their identified outcomes through use of a Self-directed Support budget.
Carers (Scotland) Act 2016	A law that says what support must be given to carers, and who must give that support.
Eligibility Criteria	Sets out the level of impact that a carer must have to access support, including Self-directed Support. The criteria may include whether a carer is likely to be able to meet their needs through services in their community, or reduce the impact of their caring role on their health.
Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCP)	Organisations formed as part of the integration of some services provided by Health Boards and local authorities in Scotland.

Identified need	An area of an individual's life which they currently need support with. Not all identified needs will require, or be eligible for, social care services.
Indicative budget and Final SDS Budget	<p>Indicative budget is an early estimate of what it may cost to meet an individual's needs. It is not the final or guaranteed amount, but it helps start the planning process.</p> <p>The final SDS budget is agreed through the Support Plan and will show how the funding will be used to meet the carer's eligible needs and outcomes.</p>
Options (SDS)	With Self-directed Support (SDS) people can choose how much or little involvement they want. The choices are known as Options.
Personal outcome	The specific goal or aim of a carer which is unique to their situation.
Respite	Respite is a Scotland-wide initiative that partners with hospitality providers to offer short breaks for unpaid carers, often free or at reduced cost.
Self-directed Support	Process to allow individuals who require support to have greater choice and control over how they are supported.
Short break or respite	This is where arrangements are put in place that allow the carer to have a break from their normal routine and their caring responsibilities. This can be provided in many forms, and can be on a regular, planned basis or as a one-off. They can involve the carer, cared-for person or both together.
Strategy	A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim
Terminally ill	When someone has a progressive disease, that cannot be treated and is expected to live for less than six months (Carers (Scotland) Act 2016).
Universal Services	Services, for example libraries, transport and leisure facilities that are accessible to everyone in a local area and are not dependent on an assessment or eligibility to access.
Young Carer	Individual under 18 years old (or 18 and still at school) who provides or intends to provide care for another individual.
Young Carer Statement (YCS)	A written plan provided to young carers which covers personal outcomes, identified support needs and the support to be provided to meet those needs.

Appendix 3:

WEBSITE LINKS FROM DOCUMENT

Aberdeenshire Carer Support Service (VSA):

<https://www.vsa.org.uk/our-services/aberdeenshire-carers>

Aberdeenshire Unpaid Carer's Information Pack:

<https://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/aberdeenshire-unpaid-carers-information-pack>

Aberdeenshire Young Carers Strategy:

<https://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/local-carer-strategies>

Advocacy North East: www.advocacyne.org.uk

Alzheimer Scotland: www.alzscot.org

Care Reform (Scotland) Act 2025:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2025/9/contents>

Carers' Charter AHSCP:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/22744/ahscp-carers-charter-final-2018.pdf>

Carer Positive: www.carerpositive.org

Carers (Scotland) Act 2016:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/contents/enacted>

Carers UK Report 2022:

<https://www.carersuk.org/media/p4kblx5n/cukstateofcaring2022report.pdf>

Carers UK Report 2023:

<https://www.carersuk.org/media/ktmpiuwll/cuk-soc-finance-report-2023.pdf>

Carers Scotland State of Caring Report 2025:

<https://www.carersuk.org/media/yqzk0fjv/state-of-caring-the-cost-of-caring-in-scotland-2025-web-version.pdf>

Cornerstone SDS: www.cornerstonesds.org.uk

Eligibility Criteria for Provision of Support to Adult Carers:

<https://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/carers-eligibility-criteria>

Enable’s Emergency Planning Toolkit:

<https://www.enable.org.uk/about-us/reports-and-resources/emergency-planning-toolkit>

Engage Aberdeenshire – Adult Carers:

<https://engage.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/adult-carers>

Equal Partners in Care (EPiC):

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/19211/person-centred-care-zone/carers>

Future Care Planning - NHS inform:

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/decisions-about-care/future-care-planning/>

Health and Social Care Strategies, Plans, Reports:

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/ahscp/health-and-social-care-strategies-plans-and-reports/>

Live Life Aberdeenshire: www.livelifeaberdeenshire.org.uk/

National Carers Strategy:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-carers-strategy/>

Scotland Census 2022:

<https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/2022-results/>

Self-Directed Support National Improvement Plan 2023-2027:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/self-directed-support-improvement-plan-20232027/>

Short Breaks Bureau (SBB):

<https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/caring-for-others/short-breaks-respite-care/short-breaks-bureau/>

Short Breaks Services Statement (SBSS):

<https://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/aberdeenshire-short-breaks-services-statement>

Terminal Illness Regulations In Carers (Scotland) Act:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-terminal-illness-directions-local-authorities-july-2021/>