

# Briefing Sheet 16

## Local Authority Carer Strategies and Action Plans: A Review



## Introduction

This Briefing Sheet has been produced to assist local authorities and partners in the development of updated local Carer Strategies and Action Plans. Further, the Briefing Sheet aims to highlight the current need for renewed local carer strategies with the inclusion of specific considerations of the needs of carers with one or more protected characteristics (within the meaning of Section 149(7) of the Equality Act 2010<sup>1</sup>).

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 (implemented as of 1 April 2018) places several equality requirements and measures on local authorities and health boards. Both on the 'face' of the Act and in the accompanying Statutory Guidance, there are requirements for local authorities to consider the needs of adult and young unpaid carers with one or more protected characteristics<sup>2</sup> regarding the identification of outcomes and need for support. The Act (Part 5) and Statutory Guidance also requires local authorities and relevant health boards to produce a local carer strategy, sets timescales for when the strategy must be updated, and provides for what the strategy must contain<sup>3</sup>.

In 2018 a desk based scoping exercise was undertaken by MECOPP to establish a baseline of the preparedness regarding the above and specifically, to identify what consideration was given within local carer strategies to the needs of carers with one or more protected characteristics. This Briefing Sheet provides an update on the accessibility of the strategies and identifies to what extent they have been updated. Further, a comparative analysis is conducted to determine the extent to which consideration is given within local Carer Strategies to the needs of carers with one or more protected characteristics.

## Legislative Context

Section 31 of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 requires each local authority and relevant health board to jointly produce a local carer strategy and provides for what the strategy must contain. Section 33 (1) requires the local authority and relevant health board to jointly publish the local carer strategy, although the method of publication is not prescribed.

Section 33(3) and (4) of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 requires the local authority and relevant health board jointly to review their statutory local carer strategy at least every three years. Following the review, section 33(6) and (7) requires the local authority and relevant health board to revise, and then publish the revised strategy or to publish a statement that they have not revised it.

<sup>1</sup> Equality Act 2010, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

<sup>2</sup> Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/contents/enacted>. Examples of responsibilities regarding carers with one or more protected characteristics are: Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 6 (50); Part 2, Chapter 1, Section 8 (2); Part 2, Chapter 2, Section 12 (7); Part 2, Chapter 2, Section 14 (2); Part 6, Section 34 (4).

<sup>3</sup> Carers (Scotland) Act 2016: statutory guidance, 5.1.12 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-statutory-guidance-updated-july-2021/pages/7/>

### Methodology

There were two main aims of the desk-based scoping exercise: evaluating the accessibility of up-to-date local Carer Strategies and evaluating to what extent the Strategies specifically recognised the needs of carers with one or more protected characteristics.

To determine accessibility, a simple methodology was developed using a ‘string’ of search words: local carer strategy; carer strategy; carer action plan; carer; and strategy. An internet search was conducted on individual local authority websites supplemented by a general ‘Google’ search. The time allocated for each search was 15 minutes. If an up-to-date carer strategy was not found within 15 minutes, the local authority was contacted, and an updated strategy requested.

The local Carer Strategies were evaluated against a set of indicators:

- ▶ Did they include a statement of intent, values or principles which contained an explicit commitment to, or recognition of, equality, diversity, and human rights.
- ▶ Did they contain any information on the number of Black and Minority Ethnic carers (BME) in their local authority area.
- ▶ Did they contain a strategic action, outcome, and measure specifically aimed at unpaid carers with one or more protected characteristics or BME carers specifically.

### Findings

The desk-based scoping exercise showed that almost all local carer strategies were easily accessible, as 30 of 31, including one joint strategy, were found through the above methodology. This constitutes an improvement from the 2018-review, where 27 local carer strategies/action plans were located. 13 of the local carer strategies are new or have been updated since the 2018-review.

Further, the exercise showed that most of the strategies were expired, as 20 of them did not reflect current timescales. Compared to the 2018-review this is a stark increase, as only 2 strategies were outdated at that point. In this regard, it should be noted that 14 of the 20 expired very recently – at the end of 2022. The exercise was conducted in January 2023. However, the 20 local authorities with outdated strategies were contacted with a request for an updated/draft strategy reflecting current timescales. Only three local authorities were able to produce a draft for a new strategy upon request. These three (Aberdeen City, East Lothian and Falkirk) were provided with feedback on the extent to which they consider BME carers and carers with one or more protected characteristics in their draft strategies. The feedback will be considered in the production of their coming carer strategies.

When updated strategies were requested, representatives of the local authorities highlighted the following reasons for not having an updated carer strategy: the Covid-19 pandemic complicated engagement efforts and slowed internal processes and a number of local authorities were delaying drafting a new strategy until the launch of the National Care Service.

In the 2018-review, none of the located carer strategies contained demographic information on the size of their BME carer population despite this information being available in the National Census. A slight improvement was seen in the recent review as 5 of the 30 strategies contained this information.



11 of the 30 local carer strategies identified contained a statement of values or principles setting out their commitment to equality, diversity, and human rights. This constitutes a drop from 15 out of 27 in the 2018-review. An example of a value statement can be found in the Argyll and Bute strategy, where it is stated that “The principles of equality, diversity and human rights are the underpinning rights for all carers”<sup>4</sup>.

15 of the 30 local carer strategies contained specific strategic outcomes to address the specific needs of BME carers. Despite half of the strategies not containing a strategic outcome, the number constitutes an improvement from the 2018-review, where 11 local carer strategies contained specific strategic outcomes to address the needs of BME carers. In the recent review, 10 of the 15 strategic outcomes were underpinned by actions and measures. Four of them were underpinned by actions but had no measure and 1 had neither action nor measure. Seven of the 11 local carer strategies which contained a commitment to equality and diversity did not reflect this in any strategic outcome, action, or measure.

The strategic outcomes in the strategies that are relevant for this review are typically related to either identifying more carers with an ethnic minority background or improving the circumstances for them. An example of the first can be found in the Renfrewshire strategy, which intends to identify and support more unpaid carers, specifically mentioning BME, Gypsy, and Traveller communities<sup>5</sup>. An example of improved equality of outcomes for young carers with protected characteristics<sup>6</sup> can be found in South Ayrshire’s Strategy.

## Considerations for Local Authorities

This desk-based scoping exercise has highlighted a number of considerations for local authorities to address in developing local Carer Strategies. They have been set out below as thinking points:

- ▶ Have you considered the required content in your local Carer Strategy, as set out in the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 Statutory Guidance<sup>7</sup> from an equalities perspective?
  - This includes sections on; carer identification, evidence, support available to carers, unmet demand, plans for supporting relevant carers, emergency planning, reduce impact on health and wellbeing, intended timescales for preparing adult carer support plans and young carer statements.
- ▶ Is your carer strategy easily accessible to everyone?
  - Consider: can the strategy be easily located on the local authority website; is it clear that translated versions can be requested or are carers signposted to digital technologies that can translate information; is a summary version available in a range of different formats and languages; is terminology that may be unfamiliar to some people avoided; does any imagery reflect the diversity of Scotland’s carer population; is appropriate terminology about race and ethnicity used?
- ▶ Does your carer strategy include a value statement explicitly committing to equality, diversity, and human rights?
  - This could take the form of an explicit reference to the Equality Act 2010 underpinning the strategy or a commitment to equality of access for carers across different ethnic groups, cultures, and communities.

<sup>4</sup> Caring Together – Argyll and Bute Carers’ Strategy and Implementation Plan 2018 – 2023, pp. 21, [https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/finalargyll\\_and\\_bute\\_strategy\\_for\\_carers\\_-\\_v.3.pdf](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/finalargyll_and_bute_strategy_for_carers_-_v.3.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Supporting our Unpaid Carers – Renfrewshire IJB’s Unpaid Adult Carers’ Strategy 2022 – 25, pp. 19, [https://www.renfrewshire.hsc.scot/media/14973/Unpaid-Adult-Carers-Strategy-2022-2025/pdf/Carers\\_Strategy\\_MASTER\\_19\\_08\\_22\\_-\\_v3.pdf?m=1664465808720](https://www.renfrewshire.hsc.scot/media/14973/Unpaid-Adult-Carers-Strategy-2022-2025/pdf/Carers_Strategy_MASTER_19_08_22_-_v3.pdf?m=1664465808720)

<sup>6</sup> Young Carers Strategy 2021-2026 – Getting it Right for Young Carers, pp. 34, [https://hsc.scot.nhs.uk/media/2649/Young-Carers-Strategy-2021-2026/pdf/Young\\_Carers\\_Strategy\\_2021-26.pdf?m=637667027699700000](https://hsc.scot.nhs.uk/media/2649/Young-Carers-Strategy-2021-2026/pdf/Young_Carers_Strategy_2021-26.pdf?m=637667027699700000)

<sup>7</sup> Carers (Scotland) Act 2016: statutory guidance, 5.1.12 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-statutory-guidance-updated-july-2021/pages/7/>

- ▶ Does your carer strategy include demographic information on the number of BME carers in your local authority area?
  - This information is available from data in the National Census<sup>8</sup>.
- ▶ Is your value statement supported by strategic actions, outcomes, and measures set out in the Carer Strategy and accompanying Action Plan?
- ▶ Have you conducted an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) prior to the development of the Carer Strategy and does the Strategy address the issues identified in the EQIA?

Briefing Sheets published by MECOPP<sup>9</sup> may provide useful sources of information and support in developing local Carer Strategies and Action Plans.

## Conclusion

The review of local authority carer strategies and action plans showed that almost all the strategies are accessible and easily found through a simple internet search. However, it is also evident that many of the local authorities have not fulfilled their duty under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 to review and update their strategies within the required timescales.

The Act also requires local authorities to consider the needs of adult and young carers with one or more protected characteristics. Unfortunately, many of the strategies do not fulfil the requirement. The review showed that very few of the strategies included demographic data on the number of BME unpaid carers in their local authority area. The number of value statements explicitly committing to equality, diversity, and human rights and the number of strategic actions, outcomes, and measures specifically aimed at unpaid carers with one or more protected characteristics or BME carers were also low. Furthermore, no significant increase in the amount of value statements, strategic actions, outcomes, and measures specifically mentioning BME carers from the 2018 review was identified.

## Appendix

The following table gives an outline of the desk-based scoping exercise, which is the basis of this Briefing Sheet. In cases where strategies were outdated but extensive drafts were available, the review was based on the drafts. An initial search for strategies was conducted in November 2022. As many strategies were about to expire at that point, a repeated search was conducted in January 2023 to establish to what extent ready updates were in place.

<sup>8</sup> Scotland's Census 2011, <https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/search-the-census#/location/topics>

<sup>9</sup> MECOPP Briefing Sheets, <https://www.mecopp.org.uk/resources/briefing-sheets>

Local Authority	Period	1st search (Nov 22)	2nd search (Jan 23)	Values statement	BAME demographics	Strategic outcome	Action	Measure
Aberdeen City	2022-2026 draft	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Aberdeenshire	2018-2022	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Angus	2019-2022	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Argyll & Bute	2018-2023	Y	–	Y	N	N	N	N
Clackmannanshire*	2019-2022	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dumfries & Galloway	2017-2021	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Dundee City	2021-2024	Y	–	N	N	N	N	N
East Ayrshire	–	N	N					
East Dunbartonshire	2019-2022	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	N
East Lothian	2018-2021	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N
East Renfrewshire	2021-2022	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N
Edinburgh City	2019-2022 draft	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Falkirk	2019-2022	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Fife	2018-2021	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Glasgow City	2022-2025	Y	–	N	N	Y	Y	N
Highland	2020-2023	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Inverclyde	2017-2022	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Midlothian	2022-2025	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N
Moray	2016-2019	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
North Ayrshire	2014-2018	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
North Lanarkshire	2019-2024 draft	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N
Orkney Islands	2019-2022	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
Perth & Kinross	2019-2022	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Renfrewshire	2022-2025	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Scottish Borders	2019-2022	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Shetland Islands	2016-2020	N	N	N	N	Y	N	N
South Ayrshire	2019-2024	Y	–	N	N	Y	Y	N
South Lanarkshire	2019-2022	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Stirling*	2019-2022	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
West Dunbartonshire	2020-2023	Y	–	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Western Isles	2019-2022	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N
West Lothian	2020-2023	Y	–	N	N	Y	Y	Y

\*Clackmannanshire Council and Stirling Council publish a joint strategy.