



Winter Funding Package for Unpaid Carers Impact Report

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Background

In January 2022, the Scottish Government announced additional funding for local carers centres to expand vital support services for unpaid carers during the winter period. The Scottish Government asked Shared Care Scotland to distribute this funding quickly through Time to Live delivery partners, so that funding could begin to support carers as soon as possible over the remaining winter months. Lanarkshire Carers is the Time to Live delivery partner for Lanarkshire – North and South and our Short Break Bureau has well-established operating processes and procedures in place for this.

The additional funding topped up the existing Time to Live micro-grant fund allocated to local delivery partners, with the criteria for this additional funding extended to include all unpaid carers. In line with Scottish Government guidance this funding package was only available to carers until the end of March 2022.

As Time to Live delivery partner for North and South Lanarkshire, Lanarkshire Carers was allocated a proportion of funding (in line with Carer Population Equation) to expand and enhance a range of existing support services for carers living in North and South Lanarkshire during the winter period, including individual grant funding to assist carers:

- Take a short break from caring
- Help with the cost of repair/replacement of white goods, equipment and other essential items
- Help those in financial hardship
- Help reduce isolation and exclusion

Following discussion and recommendation from Lanarkshire Carers, Action for Children were also awarded a proportion of this funding to help support young carers in North and South Lanarkshire.

This report has been produced to show the impact this funding has made to carers in Lanarkshire and to our organisation.

Key Figures

- **949** carers benefitted from Carers Winter Funding Package in Lanarkshire
- **781** individual grants awarded to carers
- **£268,554** worth of individual grants awarded, paid directly to carers within 14 days of receipt of payment information
- **£344** average grant amount awarded
- **123** new carers engaged with Lanarkshire Carers as a result of the funding

Approach

In January 2021, Lanarkshire Carers created and administered the Caring Through Covid Fund, funded by the Scottish Government Winter Support Fund: £750K Additional Funding to Support Unpaid Carers. This was new and unanticipated funding and the approach we took at that time was a direct application form from carers to apply for funding. At that time our usual grant application process (application endorsed and submitted by a carer support worker on behalf of the carer) was not possible due to exponential demand for our services as a result of the pandemic. The usual process was too time consuming, given the restricted timescales involved. Whilst the direct application from carers approach resulted in a high number of applications in a short space of time, we were less able to fully engage with or support carers to better understand their wider support needs and identify other ways they could be supported to achieve their outcomes. This work had to be followed up later in the year. As a result of Caring Through Covid we created a local Flexible Support Fund with contributions from both Health and Social Care Partnerships. We had also progressed with the ScotSpirit Holiday Voucher Scheme towards the end of 2021.

The learning from Caring Through Covid Fund helped inform our approach to the Winter Funding Package for Unpaid Carers in 2022. We decided not to establish a separate fund, but instead top-up existing funding streams and expand or enhance existing service offers. Carer Support Workers continued endorsing and submitting applications on behalf of carers, following a person-centred conversation with the carer to better understand their support needs, the outcomes they want to achieve and how they could achieve them. Taking a holistic, conversation-based approach with carers is a more effective way of helping and supporting carers.

Adult Carer Support Planning in Action

A carer contacted us in distress regarding the significant financial pressure they were experiencing due to rising living costs and a lack of income to pay for essential items, including energy bills and food. The carer was not fully aware of all the benefits they were entitled to. They were referred to an income maximisation service for a benefits review. They were also made aware of and referred to a local food bank for support. They were signposted to Home Energy Scotland for information and advice on how to help reduce their energy bills. An offer was made to refer this carer for financial management counselling through the wellbeing and counselling service on offer, which they declined. The carer was also awarded grant funding to assist with the short-term crisis they were experiencing.

Whilst this carer contacted us for help regarding their financial circumstances, through our conversation-based approach we were able to ascertain they also had other support needs.

The carer was feeling very isolated. They were introduced to the range of services on offer through Lanarkshire Carers and signposted to local community organisations that could also help them achieve their personal outcome of 'building a network of likeminded friends'.

The carer had not had a break from caring in a long time and was at breaking point. Through discussions with the carer, they were encouraged to look at options that would enable them to take a break from caring when their circumstances allowed.

The carer had no emergency plan in place. The importance of this was highlighted with the carer and an appointment was arranged at a more appropriate time to discuss this further, along with other support needs that might need addressed.

Services Offered to Carers (as part of Winter Funding Package)

Wellbeing and Counselling Services

99

Carers referred to Wellbeing and Counselling Service

The Coronavirus pandemic continues to have a significant impact on carers health and wellbeing. Whilst a range of support services exist in Lanarkshire to help carers with these issues, there is a gap in provision of dedicated counselling services for carers and a demand from carers for this type of service.

Lanarkshire Carers engaged with an independent provider who could scale up their service in short timescales to offer a range of wellbeing and counselling services at no cost to carers, including:

- One to one counselling services, covering topics such as life, family, health, work and finances
- Bereavement Counselling, covering topics such as support strategies to manage anxiety or other mental health issues, referral to bereavement support groups, a dedicated listening service to help cope with grief after an unexpected or accidental death, referral to a therapy resource for continued support and support in understanding and coping with the loss of a loved one
- Probate Advice, covering topics such as explaining the process for obtaining probate after a death, providing guidance to help deal with legal, financial and tax issues following death and helping you to navigate the administrative issues resulting from a death
- A variety of self-help tool kits and resources including online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) Modules could be accessed through a closed webpage or App.

We are currently awaiting an evaluation report from the provider to better understand how carers engaged with this service and how we can take forward the learning and service development within the organisation and with the carers who accessed it.

Carer Feedback:

"This has helped me to declutter my brain and manage challenging scenarios. Having support from someone knowledgeable, someone who understands my situation, has helped give me peace and answers"

"It's really helped me to work through buried emotions. Has also helped me to plan how to manage my caring role better so I don't totally burnout"

"I've been trying to access bereavement counselling for months to no avail and after seeing this advertised on your website, I decided to sign up for it. I can't believe how quickly you managed to sort this. Within a matter of days I was speaking to someone. I cannot thank you enough!"

"I feel there is light at the end of a tunnel. It has changed my life. I am better able to manage my anger issues, I am happy, Feel light, so much relaxed and positive again. Look forward to my sessions and wish there were more than six"

IT Equipment and Assistive Technology

44

Carers supported to access IT Equipment and Assistive Technology purchased by Lanarkshire Carers

Through existing grant funding applications, we knew there was significant need for and demand from carers for IT equipment to support them in their caring roles and to help them achieve personal outcomes. It can be quite challenging for carers to fund and source suitable equipment that meets their needs and outcomes, particularly if they have limited funding, little or no experience acquiring or using IT equipment, as well as difficulties due to supply.

We engaged with our IT supplier to purchase suitable mid-ranged IT equipment that would benefit carers, including:

- Laptops
- Tablets
- Mobile Phones
- Assistive Technology Devices (Amazon Echo Show, Facebook Portal TV)

This equipment helped carers achieve a range of different outcomes, including:

- Having access to regular breaks from caring
- Staying connected with family and friends
- Improving ability, skills, knowledge and understanding
- Helping to reduce feelings of anxiety, isolation and stress
- Sustaining the caring role for longer without formal intervention

Case Study: Getting my lifeline back

A carer known to Lanarkshire Carers had previously purchased a laptop that would enable them to take part in online activities, relax and listen to music and to connect with family and friends through video calling. The carer struggled to obtain a laptop at the time due to global supply shortages and was not very 'tech savvy' so did not know what would be suitable for their needs. They purchased a second-hand laptop at the time which recently broken down beyond repair with no warranty, leaving them disconnected from the outside world and feeling isolated. The carer was supported to access a new laptop through the IT Equipment purchased by Lanarkshire Carers.

Feedback received from carer:

"I can't thank you enough for the laptop I have received. I purchased a second-hand one last year that broke down and I couldn't afford to replace it. Not only have you helped me financially to get my lifeline back, but you have also taken away the hassle of me having to find a new one myself. I know very little about computers and wouldn't really know what to look for. The new laptop has everything I need and more!"

Case Study: Peace of mind and not constantly worrying whilst at work

A carer contacted us for information and advice regarding returning to the office full-time after working remotely for the past 2 years. Their caring role had increased due to the cared-for person's condition deteriorating whilst working remotely. Whilst the cared-for person's condition did not warrant formal support arrangements at this time, the carer was worried about leaving the cared-for person alone during the day for long periods of time. The carer commented: "I just want peace of mind that they are ok when I'm at work and to not be constantly worrying about them".

The carer was supported to access an Amazon Echo Show device through the IT Equipment purchased by Lanarkshire Carers and signposted to online tutorials to set up the device. This would enable the carer to 'drop in' during the day via the video calling function and make sure the cared-for person was ok. They were also signposted to relevant information and advice on speaking with their employer about their caring role and how their employer may be able to support them longer term.

Feedback received from carer:

"This piece of equipment will give me peace of mind when I am at work, knowing [the person I care for] has a way of contacting myself or a neighbour if they are in difficulty. Thanks for providing this for us".

Funded Legal Services

40

Carers accessed funded legal services

There continues to be an identified need in Lanarkshire, particularly through the winter period, for carers to access legal services. Amongst other legal matters, we noted an increase in demand for legal advice and financial support specifically for Wills and Power of Attorneys through the winter period, as well as legal advice in relation to self-directed support, local authority decisions and potential delays assessing eligible need caused by winter pressures on Health and Social Care.

NHS acute services were at a critical point in Lanarkshire during the winter period. This led NHS Lanarkshire to request carers collect loved ones from hospitals with limited or no care packages in place. Depending on the circumstances, Power of Attorney can be helpful in relation to decisions made on someone's behalf.

In collaboration with the Health and Social Care Partnerships, Lanarkshire Carers placed an increased importance on the provision of Emergency Plans and Anticipatory Care Plans, the results of which meant carers often realised they needed legal assistance to put arrangements in place as part of these plans. These services can be complex, timely to resource and difficult to negotiate for carers. Carer Support Workers offered emergency plans and anticipatory care plans alongside the provision of existing legal services as part of a package of support.

We negotiated an agreement with a trusted legal firm, who have experience with carers, to provide a legal service within the tight timescales. Carers had the opportunity to access one of three services, the costs of which would be covered as part of this funding package:

- Power of Attorney
- Will Writing

- Legal Advice covering conveyancing, wills, suitable structures for family trusts including charitable trusts and the administration of same, Powers of Attorney, winding up of estates, co-habitation agreements, separation agreements and any other agreement to suit carers needs

Whilst Lanarkshire Carers cannot and does not endorse or recommend legal services to carers, it gave them an option to consider. Carers were individually supported to determine which level of support met their needs most and where they can best access this support. As with all our work, this was done through Adult Carer Support Planning conversations and personal outcomes-based approaches, focusing on meeting the identified needs of carers.

Case Study: To safeguard my brother's wellbeing in the future

Male carer from South Lanarkshire cares for his brother, who has a disability. The carer recently took on this very demanding caring role following the death of their mother. The carers mother made him promise to care for his brother before she died and he has been trying his best to do this, despite the significant impact this is having on the carer's life, particularly his emotional wellbeing and the relationship he has with his own children. The carer's brother does not have capacity to make decisions for himself, therefore a Guardianship order was required for the carer to make decisions on his brothers behalf. The carer commented: "If I had the legal powers to support my brother with decision-making, I would feel less stressed and more able to support him in the future, but I don't really know where to start and it all seems very overwhelming".

As well as providing support to maintain the carers health and wellbeing, Lanarkshire Carers supported the carer to access legal advice through the funded legal services. Following this session, the carer commented "I feel better informed now about what Guardianship entails and how I would go about accessing this. Thank you so much for all the support you have provided me. I'm reassured that this is the right thing to do".

Feedback from carers:

"I am so thankful for the legal help I got for the Power of Attorney. I did not have the finances to do this on my own. This is an incredible service. Mum and I got free advice, the process went so fast. I feel good about this because I know my relatives cannot harass my mother over the property. My mum feels secure too as she knows that when needed, I can speak for her. For us this free legal help could not have come at a better time."

"At first I was frightened about the whole process and solicitors being involved, very quickly I was put to ease by Lanarkshire Carers staff and the solicitor himself was very pleasant and easy to talk to. He explained everything in an easy and understandable manner, I felt supported and now am going ahead with power of attorney and will making, I feel a weight has been lifted and thank you to all at Lanarkshire carers for looking after me"

"I found the legal service beneficial and easy to understand, it was very informative and relaxed my stress around power of attorney, I am now in the process of applying for one with the solicitor. Thank you for making it an easy process"

"I felt heard and the legal service was very efficient and I'm delighted to now have a power of attorney and a will in place. I feel much less stress now that this is done and I am happy it was explained very well by Lanarkshire carers prior to attending the legal clinic. Very happy with this service."

“Legal service was great and straight forward, we came in and he listened to us and not long after that we were in signing the papers and it was done which has made me feel better and gave me peace of mind”.

Creative Breaks Time to Live

£167,194

Amount awarded to carers

£67,726 South Lanarkshire

£99,468 North Lanarkshire

Creative Breaks Time to Live is a funding programme of the Short Breaks Fund, operated by Shared Care Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. Lanarkshire Carers has proudly administered this grant fund since 2012, enabling carers in Lanarkshire to take a short break from caring.

Using the Winter Funding Package for Unpaid Carers, we increased the amount of individual grant funding available through this initiative, including the maximum amount we could award (from £250 to £500) to help meet carers needs during the winter period. This also responded to rising costs and constraints on carers limited family budgets.

We also assisted carers who had accessed a short break through the ScotSpirit initiative to cover travel and other costs associated with the break, if they required this support.

522

Carers benefitting

204 South Lanarkshire

318 North Lanarkshire

Case Study: Something to distract me from the routine of caring

A male young adult carer from South Lanarkshire carers for his dad with multiple health issues. The carer assists with most of his dad's care including mobility, personal care, help with medications, shopping, managing the household finances and emotional support. The carer feels stressed with the caring role as there is a lot of responsibility on him at such a young age. The carer commented: "It is difficult seeing dad unable to do certain things for himself. It can be stressful being a full-time carer for my dad. I worry I am not doing it all the correct way".

During conversations with the carer, it became apparent that the carer needed a break due to the demands of caring but does not have support in place to take a break away from the house or his dad at present. "As I am the main carer for my dad I am unable to take a break away anywhere as it would be really difficult for him so I haven't tried to go book anywhere. I don't have the funds for a holiday and could not leave my dad here without my support. I would rather stay at home and keep him company".

The carer was asked what he likes to do to help him relax and de-stress. The carer mentioned that he has a passion for Lego. It helps distract him from the caring role and helps with his concentration. It's also a distraction for his dad, who loves to sit and watch him build things and sometimes gets involved. The carer and his dad can spend hours building things and switch off from reality.

The carer was awarded £245 towards the cost of lego models and equipment to help give them a break from caring. Upon receipt of funding the carer contacted us with feedback: "I

wanted to thank you very much indeed. The Lego was ordered last week and has now arrived, which is really great. It is going to be lots of fun working together with dad building Lego models, particularly as the weather outside his window is very wintery, so he doesn't have much of a view. This will be the perfect distraction from that".

The carer is also accessing ongoing support from Lanarkshire Carers and conversations are progressing with the Health and Social Care Partnership to identify ways of providing respite for the cared for person to give the carer more regular and substantial breaks from caring in future.

Case Study: To get a complete mental and physical break from caring and improve the relationship with my family

A female carer from South Lanarkshire had self-referred to Lanarkshire Carers following a recommendation from another carer. She is the main carer for her mother and despite being one of four siblings, she feels everything in terms of her mums' needs is left to her. Due to the increased amount of hours spent with her mum, she feels the relationship with her husband has taken a backseat and therefore she felt they have grown apart slightly. The carer commented: "The caring role is exhausting and really there should be no need for this as there is 4 of us, but everything is left to me. If I don't do something soon to spend more time with my husband I worry it will affect us long term". The carer wanted to spend some quality time with her husband and would really benefit from getting away for a few nights together.

The Carer Support Worker discussed the caring role and asked if another family member could cover the caring role to allow her some respite. The carer stated that her sister could step into the caring role, however notice would need to be given as her sister would need to take time off work. The financial pressure also impacted the carers ability to take a substantial break away from caring.

Funding options to take a break from caring were discussed and an application was completed on behalf of the carer to allow her time away from her caring role and family issues. The carer was awarded funding towards the cost of a break away with her husband.

Cared-for assessments through social work were also discussed with the carer to allow her to understand the process, giving her peace of mind for the future should she ever feel formal support was needed to support her mum.

Feedback received from carer:

"I am going to sit down with the family and discuss this to come to a better solution – thank you for all of your support to give me the confidence to do this. I can care for everyone without feeling the constant guilt. I delegate to others more confidently now and looking forward to my break away".

Lanarkshire Carers Flexible Support Fund

£101,360

Amount awarded to carers

£51,245 South Lanarkshire
£50,115 North Lanarkshire

259

Carers benefitting

133 South Lanarkshire
126 North Lanarkshire

Lanarkshire Carers Flexible Support Fund supports carers going through financial hardship or distress. It helps improve financial security by creating a safety net that can be used to meet unanticipated expenses as quickly as possible, as well as short break opportunities. There are 2 streams within this fund:

Carer Emergency: This can be used for a range of purposes including transport costs, fuel, furniture, clothing, top-up cards for mobile phones, gas and electricity, bed linen, emergency food vouchers, one-off practical costs such as repair/replacement of white goods and other things that may be exacerbating isolation and exclusion.

Short Breaks: This is offered to carers who are not currently eligible to access funding from other sources currently available, due to their personal circumstances or particular eligibility criteria.

This initiative is funded locally by the Health and Social Care Partnerships in North and South Lanarkshire, however we increased the amount of funding available to carers through this initiative (Carer Emergency stream) using the Winter Funding Package for Unpaid Carers to help meet their needs during the winter period. Carers could access an amount (up to £500) to help meet one or more of their short-term support needs or personal outcomes.

Case Study: Help with living costs and improving my financial situation

A male carer from North Lanarkshire, who cares for his 2 children with autism (both young adults) and his disabled wife, contacted Lanarkshire Carers after receiving an email from us regarding the Winter Funding Package for unpaid carers. The carer had recently retired and was no longer in receipt of Carers Allowance, which was having a significant impact on the family's finances. The carer disclosed that he had contacted Social Work for help with his benefits, but there had been no update for several weeks. The carer had to borrow money from his wider family to help pay for heating during the festive period. On one occasion the carer had to take money from their child's piggy bank to help pay for petrol and food. This was a very challenging and upsetting situation for the carer, who was struggling mentally to cope with life in general as well as the demands of his heavy caring role.

The carer was supported to access funding through Lanarkshire Carers Flexible Support Fund to help repay the debt owed to family for heating costs, as well as an amount to top-up his pre-paid gas and electricity account and some fuel for his car. This would help ease the financial pressures for this carer in the short term whilst his benefits were being reviewed. A carer support worker contacted the Income Maximisation team in North Lanarkshire to check the progress of the carers case to help speed things up on behalf of the carer. The carer was also signposted to Home Energy Scotland for further help and advice on how to reduce energy costs.

Feedback received from carer:

"This has really helped me get through this turbulent period, particularly with the increase in energy costs. I was able to pay back my family and have topped up my gas and electricity

accounts. I still got a little bit of funding remaining, which I am putting towards food and fuel for the car. The benefits check is still ongoing, but it should all be resolved in the next couple of weeks. I'm in a much better place now than I was before I spoke to you. I cannot thank you enough for the help and support you have provided."

Case Study: Improve my mental health and take control of my life again

Female carer from North Lanarkshire is currently being supported through a partnership arrangement between Social Work and Lanarkshire Carers. The carer cares for her 3 children, all with various health issues. Social Work are providing ongoing support with the children and a limited amount of support with the carer, mainly due to a breakdown in trust and understanding of the carer's circumstances. Social Work had engaged with Lanarkshire Carers to help improve the carers situation.

The carer's relationship with her ex-husband broke down several years ago. He no longer resides in the country, leaving the carer to deal with the children alone. The carer was struggling to provide care for her children and was dealing with significant mental health issues herself. She lacked the motivation, energy or desire to deal with the basic of tasks, including general housekeeping. The carers living environment had become a concern. It was very untidy and problematic, particularly as it was impacting the support required for the children. The carer commented "due to my lack of energy and motivation, when I do the tasks that are required as part of the caring role it can affect me physically, I get really tired quickly and if I push through when I do get a burst of energy, I pay for it over the next few days as I'm in pain and extra lethargic due to the activity. This is why the cleaning of the house has gotten out of hand. I physically can't manage at times, most of the time".

Through ongoing conversations between the carer, a Carer Support Worker from Lanarkshire Carers and Social Work, understanding and trust started to develop again. The carer was persuaded to deal with her issues through a range of support available to her and to improve the living environment for herself and her children.

The carer was supported to access funding through Lanarkshire Carers Flexible Support Fund to help pay for a deep clean of her home, which was also part-funded by Social Work. This would help motivate the carer to improve her mental health and wellbeing, to keep on top of daily chores and enable Social Work to provide the relevant support for the carers children.

Feedback received from carer:

"Lanarkshire Carers helped with a deep clean of my house and assisted me to get control of my life. I haven't been in my bedroom for ages, now back in after the deep clean, what a difference it has made to me. All the family has a lift from the work that was done and I feel grateful for all the help from Lanarkshire carers, not only for the financial help but really for listening and understanding my situation when other organisations didn't get it so thank you for just getting it when others didn't. It has made a huge difference to all of us and I am now ready to have support come into the house for my kids whereas before I wouldn't allow anyone in. I have had a look at the Lanarkshire Carers website, and I am ready to get involved with some of the services you have for carers. Thank you so much, you have made a difference".

Calm Café: Mindfulness with Friends (4 Week Course)

24

Carers participated in Calm Café sessions

Peer support is a great way for carers to establish support networks and social contacts. Calm Café: Mindfulness with Friends helped carers to relax and unwind in 5 small groups with fellow carers through 4 virtual sessions in each group.

These sessions were established at short notice through existing relationships we have with providers through our ongoing Carer Training Programme.

Each session kicked off with a refreshing meditation and a short talk by the facilitator, then carers were invited to un-mute your microphones for a 'good gab'. Discussion topics for each session included Letting go of guilt (session 1), Coping with anger (session 2), Dealing with a fear of loss (session 3), and Managing loneliness (session 4).

It was anticipated that carers who took part in this course would feel empowered to pursue the friendships made, independent of our service, but still using all of Lanarkshire Carers services as wished.

Carer Feedback:

"It was good to listen to others with similar experiences. I felt that I was not going through this alone"

"The course helped me to cope better, it also made me more aware of how to manage my own mental health"

"I loved meeting other carers knowing other people in the same boat. It helps take the focus off of yourself. I think the course is a great idea"

"It helped me practice Mindfulness more often which has helped me greatly. Also, the support from other carers was amazing. Makes you realise you are not alone. It also gave me some "me" time to look forward to every week along with the relaxation too, it really did make a difference to my week"

Funded Podiatry Service

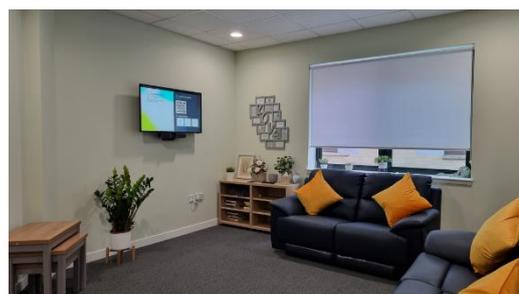
25

Carers benefitted from funded Podiatry service

We offered carers with an identified need the option to access funded podiatry through a local independent provider. This provider normally offers a discounted rate to carers through our Lanarkshire Carers - Carer Card scheme. We were also able to target carers who had accessed this service previously.

Other Initiatives Supported

Acquiring Video Conferencing equipment and Furniture for Lanarkshire Carers Centre: Hamilton enabled us to engage with carers both face to face and virtually through the services we enhanced or scaled up as a result of the Winter Funding Package. This equipment will support the future delivery of hybrid carers training and other group work activity, enabling carers to participate in a way that suits their personal circumstances. We were also able to conduct decision making panel meetings better virtually and will be looking to invest in similar equipment in our other premises (Lanarkshire Carers Centre: Airdrie) because it worked so well.



We also used some funding to support our Lanarkshire Carers - Carer Card initiative, enabling more carers to access offers and discounts through local providers. We also implemented an appointment booking system for the legal services being delivered in person at Lanarkshire Carers Centre: Hamilton.

Additional Resources

We funded a part-time administrator, identified through our volunteer team who was able to join the team at short notice for a fixed term period to assist with the high volume of grant applications that needed to be processed. Staff also volunteered to work extra hours within the organisation over the period that the funding was available. We had teams of staff working three evenings each week throughout the funding period to ensure that the maximum number of applications were processed. New referrals were picked up quickly with staff reporting that this evening work made it easier to contact carers and begin the conversations required about their support needs and interest in the grant funding. All of this work came at a time when the organisation was already extremely busy and it would not have been possible within the timescales set without these extra staff hours and the willingness of our fantastic staff team to do everything possible to achieve what we have.

Conclusion

Impact on carers: It is clear that carers benefitted from this short-term funding during the winter period, assisting those struggling financially and those in need of a break from caring. Sustainability of funding is crucial to continue meeting both the short and long-term needs of carers who require financial support. Supporting carers in financial hardship remains a key priority for many carers centres. Whilst financial support may be available through other sources, the time it can take to access this support can be a hurdle for many carers, exacerbating their circumstances further. Access to micro-grant funding is a proven and effective way of meeting carers short-term needs quickly, creating a safety net that gives them more time to deal with things in the longer-term and often improving their circumstances significantly.

Lanarkshire Carers is in a position to continue offering financial hardship funding to carers using funding received by both local authorities, but not all carers centres will have this in place. There is also no guarantee that local funding will continue to meet carers needs in this

way. Consideration should be given to establishing a national carer hardship micro-grant fund.

Impact on service planning and delivery: Whilst Lanarkshire Carers had the infrastructure and capacity to cope with increased demand, certain aspects of our service were impacted. Key areas of work had to be delayed and re-prioritised to accommodate the distribution of funding at short notice by the March 2022 deadline. Conversations with carers were mainly focused on meeting immediate and short-term support needs, rather than discussing wider aspects of caring and personal outcomes they wanted to achieve in the longer-term. All of these conversations will now need to be picked up again to progress our relationship with each individual carer. The impact on our finance department to process payments was also significant, particularly nearing the year end. Due diligence and procedure needs particular attention when distributing large volumes of individual grants to carers, which can be impacted when dealing with tight timescales.

Engagement from carers for wider support also increased during this period. Since announcing the winter funding package for unpaid on 18 January 2022 until the end of March 2022 we engaged with 2,701 carers on one or more occasions, with 13,940 interactions with carers recorded, 986 Adult Carer Support Plans progressed and 1,222 personal outcomes recorded.

Consideration should be given to the lead in times for funding of this nature. Earlier notice and longer timescales for distribution of funding will enable carers centres to plan and coordinate this work more effectively.

Being able to scale up and expand existing services, as well as introducing new ways of engaging with and supporting carers was a positive outcome of this initiative. The wellbeing and counselling services, as well as the legal services for example enabled us to try something new and expand vital support options for carers, where there was an identified need for this support. Having the ability to engage with and support carers both virtually and in person via Lanarkshire Carers Centre: Hamilton will assist us in our recovery and remobilisation efforts going forward.

We increased the frequency of decision-making panel meetings to cope with demand for funding during this period. Decision-making panels were observed by partners from Health and Social Care Partnerships in North and South Lanarkshire, as well as our grant funding contacts from Shared Care Scotland, so they could better understand the process we followed and to gain insight into some of the challenges carers were currently experiencing. The wider staff team from Lanarkshire Carers also participated in decision-making panel meetings to help them develop and share good practice in relation to outcome-based conversations. We will continue to offer wider participation with decision-making panel meetings going forward.

Impact on Reputation: The learning from this initiative helped us evaluate and improve our processes and procedures for delivery of micro-grant funding to carers, strengthening the organisations reputation as a trusted, competent and reliable distributor of micro-grant funding for carers in Lanarkshire.

Whilst Lanarkshire Carers is the main Time to Live micro-grant delivery partner for Lanarkshire, other local and national sources benefitted from the funding distributed by the Scottish Government also. To safeguard and avoid any potential double funding, we took steps to ensure carers did not access funding from multiple sources to meet similar outcomes.

Feedback from Carers

On a daily basis staff shared comments and feedback from carers shared by phone calls, cards and emails to the organisation. The difference this support from our organisation has made is clearly evident throughout. Here is a snapshot of some of the feedback we have received:

"Lanarkshire carers have saved me and my kids from a grim time. I can now cover fuel and grocery costs. You have helped when no one else would"

Carer Flexible Support Fund

"Can't believe I have been awarded funding to buy a new oven. You've no idea how this has taken a load of worry off my mind as I thought I would have to get into debt, which is the last thing I need"

Carer Flexible Support Fund

"I am absolutely overjoyed with the funding I have been awarded. I have never had anything like it before and can't wait to book a tour of the north of Scotland, I have always wanted to go there. I can't thank Lanarkshire carers enough for what they have done. "

Creative Breaks Time to Live Fund

"Thank you so very much. I'm so grateful and will very much enjoy using it for a break"

Creative Breaks Time to Live Fund

"You are marvellous. I will need to go and sit down now after getting the news about the funding being awarded. I am in tears, thank you so much"

Creative Breaks Time to Live Fund

"I am so grateful as I can pay my bills and fees without any stress so thank you again for all your help"

Carer Flexible Support Fund

"Thank you so much, this has taken a huge weight of my mind, it is very much appreciated"

Carer Flexible Support Fund

"This is an incredible service which helps carers who are in need of financial help thank you so much for your excellent staff and all the help received "

Carers Flexible Support Fund

"Thank you so much for the laptop. Now I can talk to my dad on a video call better and not have a shady connection because my old laptop was playing up. I can now do stuff with my music so much quicker and not wait ages for a page to load up. I am very grateful"

Creative Breaks Time to Live Fund

"I would like to thank the Carer Support Worker for the time she spent with me on the phone advising me and helping me through what has been, and still is, a very difficult time. My partner suffered a stroke. She also made a request for funding, I am so thankful as this fund has helped with stress and worry I have during this time"

Carers Flexible Support Fund