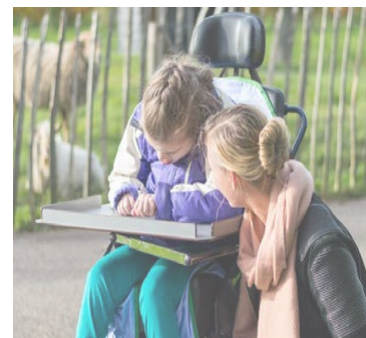


# Carers Strategy

## Communication and Engagement Strategy 2024 - 2025



Supporting **people** who care for others



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## 1. Introduction

West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) recognises the crucial contribution young and adult carers make to their communities across West Lothian. To ensure that carers are supported in their caring role they need to be able to access a wide range of high-quality information, advice and support at the right time and in the right place. This is a priority of the West Lothian Carers' Strategy. We recognise all carers as Equal, Expert and Valued and will continue to learn from those with lived experience in a caring role, to shape our strategy and action plan.

The HSCP is committed to working with partners to deliver the best outcomes for adult carers and young carers as well as for the people they care for. We recognise that while caring for family or friends can be incredibly rewarding, it can also be emotionally, financially, and physically challenging and that carers, may at times, require support to not only continue in their caring role but also to stay in good health themselves.

### Key messages

- Many people do not recognise themselves as carers, and see this simply as part of being a family member, spouse, partner, friend or neighbour.
- In some cultures looking after someone is not considered as being a carer and do not recognise this as a caring role.
- We want to send a message to the West Lothian community that helping to look after someone who could not manage otherwise, is caring.
- The majority of carers take years to recognise their role.
- The longer it takes to identify as a carer the more likely it is that carers will struggle without the support.
- Not receiving help at an early stage can lead to financial difficulty, poorer physical and emotional health, a need to give up work and social isolation.
- We want to avoid people reaching crisis point in their lives.
- People caring for someone with stigmatised conditions such as drugs and alcohol may be reluctant to make their needs known.
- We want all carers to be able to access support and information that will help them in their role.
- We hope that by raising awareness of caring, and through the implementation of the West Lothian Carers' Strategy that more people will self-identify and seek the help they may need and known carers will continue to get the support they need.

### Objective

The Communications and Engagement Strategy will provide the framework to ensure that there are clear communication and engagement plans in place for each of the significant project, service change or redesign.

The individual plans will focus on the key milestones and engagement actions that are relevant to each target audience, and will be reviewed at regular intervals.

The aim of the communications and engagement plan is to ensure the involvement of staff, service user representation groups, patient and public representatives and other stakeholders.

All communications should be:

- Accessible and inclusive - all people within our community have the choice and opportunity to get involved.
- Clear and professional - establishing trust, reliability, and credibility.
- Targeted - the right people get the right information to be involved.
- Open, honest, and transparent - having a clear purpose and that we are honest about any limitations
- Timely and relevant - giving people enough time and notice to get involved.
- Sustainable - to ensure on-going mutually beneficial relationships.
- Two-way - we will have a conversation, listening, not just talking and give responses to feedback received.

## 2. Target Audiences

Level	Target Audience	Information needed	Frequency
Level 1	Staff including volunteers	Organisational Briefings Team Meetings Email Legislation changes / updates	Regular updates on matters concerning carers rights / legislation changes / processes etc.
	IJB Members, Council Elected Members MSPs and MPs	Briefings Meetings Legislation changes / updates	Ad hoc updates on the Carers' Strategy
Level 1	Trade Unions	Face to face Briefings Website Matters concerning our staff	Regular updates on matters concerning our staff
	Professional Bodies	Face to face Briefing Website	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy
	Independent providers	Face to face Briefings Website	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy
	Carers and their cared for person(s)	Press release / Social media Face to face Website Forums eg. SDS groups and forums CoWL groups, forums and communications Legislation changes / updates	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy
Level 2	Health and social care engagement and reference groups	Social media Website Briefings	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy

		Forums Legislation changes / updates	
	Peer support groups and special interest groups	Social media Website Briefings Forums CoWL groups, forums and communications Legislation changes / updates	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy
	BAME	Forums eg. race forum, disability forum, other minority groups	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy
	Partnership staff from NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council	Face to face Briefing Website Intranet CoWL groups, forums and communications Legislation changes / updates	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy
	Third Sector Interface	Representation from TSI at the Carers Strategy Implementation Group Briefing document 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector forums / meetings CoWL groups, forums and communications Legislation changes / updates	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy
	Carer Representative	Attendance at the Carers Strategy Implementation Group	Participation in implementing the Carers Strategy
Level 3	Local media	Press release Website	Regular updates on the Carers' Strategy Related campaigns
	Government and other regulators	Briefing document	Ad hoc updates on the Carers' Strategy
	Partner organisations	Face to face Briefing Website Forums	Ad hoc updates on the Carers' Strategy
Level 4	General public	Press release Website	Ad hoc updates on the Carers' Strategy

All communication to all target audiences will be accurate, easy to read and easy to understand. It will be tailored to the needs to the group, and where necessary, in language and style in a form that appeals to the intended audience.

A range of engagement tools will be used. Where possible, a mix of qualitative and quantitative engagement methods will enable a greater diversity of opinions.

We will engage with service users via a variety of methods including:

- Through Carers of West Lothian engagement methods
- Digital feedback methods i.e., online survey
- Forums
- Group Meetings
- Social Media including facebook and other social media platforms used by partners
- Letter
- Email

### **Accessibility**

We recognise that our approach to engagement and communication needs to be accessible to all. Consideration will be given to ensure, that where possible all communication and engagement is inclusive particularly to those individuals with learning disabilities, cognitive impairment, sensory impairment, or where English is not their first language.

We will achieve this by:

- Using everyday language and, where possible, images to assist with meaning.
- Avoiding jargon.
- Being mindful of the nuances of language.
- Use of inclusive language: avoid labels, generic terms, and emotive language.
- We will use a mix of engagement methods and feedback.
- Use consistent style.
- Create easy read versions/translations of text documents when required.
- Consider, where cost allows to use videos with audio or animations to convey information
- Make use of infographic and images to make information more accessible

### **3. Carers Days/Events for 2024/25**

The table below outlines a range of campaigning days and weeks that the Carers' Strategy Implementation Group may wish to engage with and/or promote. The ones highlighted in blue are events where the CSIG would be the lead group for West Lothian HSCP.

Campaign/ Event	Next delivery date	Owner	Stakeholder/ Audience
Carers Week	June 2025	Carers' Strategy Implementation Group	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector
Volunteers Week	June 2025	Communication and Engagement Lead	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector
Senior People's Forum	As required	Communication and Engagement Lead	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector
Care at Home Providers Forum	As required	Communication and Engagement Lead	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector
Carers' Right Day	November 2024	Carers' Strategy Implementation Group	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector
International Volunteer Day	December 2024	Communication and Engagement Lead	Public Staff Third Sector
National Care Day	February 2025	Carers' Strategy Implementation Group	Public Staff Third Sector
Young Carers' Action Day	March 2025	Carers' Strategy Implementation Group	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector
Dementia Awareness Week	May 2025	Communication and Engagement Lead	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector
Learning Disabilities Week	May 2025	Communication and Engagement Lead	Carers of West Lothian Public Staff Third Sector



## 4. Action Plan

Action	Stakeholder/ Audience	Owner
<b>Brand and identity</b>		
Update Carers branding and ensure that it is applied across all workstreams to give the programme a strong identity.	Public Staff Third sector providers	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Create new communications materials including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Banner</li> <li>Leaflets</li> <li>Social media assets</li> </ul>	Public Staff Third sector providers	Carer Strategy Implementation Group Media Team
<b>Media relations</b>		
Operate a rolling planner of potential communications activity.	Public Media Third sector providers	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Selective engagement with traditional media and social media - blogs, opinion pieces and news releases.	Media	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Raise awareness of the benefits of promoting services among staff so they can promote good news stories for Carers. Work with Carers of West Lothian to find suitable case studies.	Carers of West Lothian Staff Partners Third sector providers	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>		
Undertake stakeholder mapping to produce a stakeholder list for communications, participation, and engagement.	Staff	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Audit of all workstreams to identify their individual communication and engagement needs.	Staff	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Produce regular updates of the strategy for use with staff, elected members and other external stakeholders. As required	Elected members Staff	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Consider potential for joint campaigns with Third Sector Partners as a shared resource hub.	Third Sector Partners	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
<b>Accessibility</b>		
Where appropriate, develop informational videos for use on carers webpages to explain the range of services available to carers.	Public	Carer Strategy Implementation Group



Action	Stakeholder/ Audience	Owner
Update website pages and review all information to see if useful and pertinent.	Public	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
In conjunction with the wider review of online materials and channels, review needs for digital excluded individuals – such as print format leaflets, newsletters or briefings, and face-to-face communication methods.	Public	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Develop a ‘for professionals’ page on the Partnership’s website regarding carers for easily accessible guidance, briefings and signposting information.	Staff	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
<b>Measurement and evaluation</b>		
Rerun or adapt communications, participation, and engagement workshop sessions with wider stakeholders to steer and inform implementation of this strategy and its recommendations.	Staff	Carer Strategy Implementation Group
Establish a point of review of this strategy.	Public Staff Third Sector	Carer Strategy Implementation Group