

We asked, you said, we did How-to Guide



This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Title	WE ASKED, YOU SAID, WE DID - Tackling The Cost-Of-Living Emergency For Unpaid Carers in North Lanarkshire
Organisation	North Lanarkshire Carers Together
Category	Promising Practice
Poverty Impact	Mitigation
Introduction to the Project	
<p>North Lanarkshire Carers Together (NLCT) are an information and advice service for unpaid carers and professionals, offering a range of services ensuring carers rights and needs are known, upheld, and considered as part of local and national policy and guidance development. NLCT launched their “<i>Tackling the Cost-Of-Living Emergency for Unpaid Carers in North Lanarkshire WE ASKED, YOU SAID, WE DID</i>” Campaign to support unpaid carers who are experiencing ever increasing levels of financial hardship. NLCT speak to unpaid carers daily and gather local data on how current financial pressures affect unpaid carers and the people they care for. NLCT’s findings and recommendations have been successful in implementing much needed measures in North Lanarkshire.</p>	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?
Colin Smith (NLCT manager)
How did the idea for the project come about?
The initial idea for the project came off the back of attending a meeting with ALLIANCE which discussed the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's findings and further reports by Carers Scotland and Family Fund Scotland. Conversations as a workplace stemming from these reports encouraged NLCT to want to gather some local North Lanarkshire data on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on unpaid carers, knowing they are disproportionately affected.
Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans? <i>If so, please add details to the box below.</i>
As above.
Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
All of NLCT's consultation work is planned by their staff team, ratified by their directorship, and includes consultation with forum and the wider carer population.
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
No. However, those with lived experience were indirectly involved as first-hand accounts and experiences reported by carers drove the initial idea of the project.
What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?
NLCT are commissioned to support and campaign for unpaid carers, so the only additional funding required was digital funding to purchase iPads and the use of Mentimeter.

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What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	
Facilities	N/A
Equipment	Survey Monkey, Microsoft Teams, iPads, and Mentimeter
Local Knowledge	Reports and consultation from carers
Food and Drink	N/A
What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?	
No specific barriers, the only barrier in hindsight was that NLCT wish they could have reached more unpaid carers.	
What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?	
Staff knowledge and teamwork was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project. The partnership between NLCT and North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership was also very helpful when developing the project. Finally, the carers openness and honesty regarding their needs was helpful when developing the project.	
What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?	
3 months. The idea came about in Spring 2022 and was implemented in November 2022.	
Who made the decision to introduce the project?	
Colin Smith (NLCT Manager)	

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Early Development of the Project

Did you run a pilot project or carry out a feasibility study?

No.

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)

Yes. The referral process works through other agencies referring to NLCT and carers are also identified from an existing database. Every new carer now identified is automatically referred to North Lanarkshire Council's Tackling Poverty Team and offered support. All statutory and voluntary partners have a responsibility to make an automatic referral when new carers are identified. Another referral process is through the North Lanarkshire Advice Network which NLCT are included. This is a network of organisations who provide information and advice on housing, finances etc. However, the overall aim is that anyone can sign up to this service..

How are potential clients made aware of the project?

- The report has been shared widely within North Lanarkshire & national carer organisations such as Carers UK and Coalition of Carers in Scotland.
- The referral process from external agencies.
- Social media.

How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?

- Clients can telephone NLCT.
- NLCT sometimes telephone carers but this is not done routinely.
- Resources are shared with service users registered on the database.
- Mailchimp email updates.
- Survey Monkey email updates.
- Regular consultation via the forum.
- Four online meetings a year.

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in delivering the project? *If so, please describe below.*

No.

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in managing the project or project governance? *If so, please describe below.*

No.

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in any other aspect of the project? *If so, please describe below.*

Yes. The feedback and discussions with carers experiencing poverty shapes the campaigns and the work NLCT do. NLCT does not operate on what they decide carers need, instead what carers express they need and want shapes the work NLCT do.

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Board of Directors – Elizabeth Seaton BEM, Harry Robertson, Annabel Main, Ann Muir MBE, Fiona Johnson, Agnes Hadden, Kaye Harmon, and Marc Howard.• Manager - Colin Smith
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? <i>If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.</i>
Wider consultations with other themes are undertaken and detailed reports/findings and recommendations are shared.
Is there a Project Steering Group? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i>
No. However, tackling poverty remains a priority within North Lanarkshire and NLCT actively sit on other steering groups with this agenda – ensuring unpaid carers representation.
If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?
The Board of Directors review strategy and performance closely.

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? <i>If so, please give details.</i>
Scottish Government anti-poverty strategies.
Is the project part of any other strategy? <i>If so, please give details.</i>
N/A.
Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. <i>If so, please give details.</i>
Carers (Scotland) Act Self-directed Support (Scotland) Act.

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Funding

Who funds the project? *Please give details.*

Health and Social Care commission North Lanarkshire Carers Together (NLCT) to develop and provide information. Staffing costs are the biggest cost and project/campaign costs are absorbed within staff salaries as they are commissioned to carry out this work

How much does the project cost?

Unsure on exact cost but estimated a few thousand-pounds for graphic designers and digital funding (costs for projects are absorbed within staff salaries)..

Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?

Yes, third-sector organisations go through a retendering process. Around 5 years ago NLCT went through a retendering process so they will have to start considering this again within the next year. However, NLCT provide robust and detailed reporting on outcomes achieved and are confident they are delivering what is being asked of them.

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Staffing and Resources

Which paid staff are involved in delivering the project?	
Yes, there are 10 paid staff.	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? <i>Please describe their role and their contribution.</i>	
No. Volunteers were involved in letter/booklet drops prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as restrictions eased the project had adapted towards an electronic newsletter distribution rather than paper; this reduced the need for volunteer involvement. However, reintroducing volunteer involvement would be welcomed if the resources were available to fund it.	
What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?	
Facilities	Office space
Equipment	IT equipment such as iPads and Laptops
Local Knowledge	Staff team working within the office together one day a week is crucial to have conversations that form a collective voice.
Food and Drink	N/A
For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?	
Facilities	Community centre
Equipment	NLCT
Local Knowledge	N/A
Food and Drink	N/A
Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project? <i>Please describe below.</i>	
Microsoft 365 was implemented during COVID-19 to deliver the project remotely..	

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Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? *If so, please describe.*

- With the implementation of Microsoft 365, additional training through the Workforce Development Fund at New College Lanarkshire to support staff with the adjustment.
- VANL IT staff also supported staff early on with adjusting to remote working.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

What information, if any, do you collect about your project?	
Number of users	Around 7,000 carers on database
Profile of users	Unpaid carers
Experience of users	Data on the experiences and feedback from carers is collected
Anything else	Not applicable
How often is data collected? Who collects the data?	
NLCT collect the data. The data collection process happens firstly by identifying the need for it, on a quarterly period themes and gaps are identified, and this springboards consultation work. Every three months the project manager takes the information collated.	
Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project? <i>Please describe the type of baseline data that you have.</i>	
Baseline data for NLCT was using the feedback that happened prior to the consultation (two years during the pandemic) when there was the coalition and different national organisations doing surveys with carers.	
Do you produce an annual report? <i>Please provide details of what this includes.</i>	
Yes. The annual report will not be solely about this cost-of-living campaign, but the campaign will be included alongside anything consulted on within the year..	
In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?	
The data collected is used to adapt the service provided. For example, conversations with carers and feedback they express is used to improve the service and springboard new campaigns.	

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Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project? *If yes, please provide details.*

No.

Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future? *If yes, please provide details.*

No.

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Reach and Impact

What difference has the project made?

As a result of the project, important measures have been implemented in North Lanarkshire.

- The implementation of £1000 hospital discharge payments offered to carers upon hospital discharge of the person they care for which is enabling people to leave hospital and fund carers for up to a six-week period to provide essential care.
- An effort to increase the number of unpaid carers who access their own Self-Directed Support (SDS) budgets to support them in their caring roles.
- An immediate implementation of the latest Scottish Government guidance around increased flexibility around what current SDS payments can be used for.
- A new approach from North Lanarkshire Council's Tackling Poverty team that prioritises identifying unpaid carers during support calls and signposts them to specific services and supports to alleviate specific caring role-related financial stressors.

How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?

Feedback and recommendations being upheld.

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?

Yes, the aims of the campaign have been achieved. From the feedback, quotes, and surveys carers are expressing that they have benefited from the changes..

How, if at all, have conditions changed since the project was introduced?

The demand has remained the same as the need to tackle the cost-of-living crisis is very much still there. There have been more carers identified as every new carer is automatically referred to the Tackling Poverty Locally team and offered that service and support. This has increased the scale of service users.

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If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand? *Please describe and explain below.*

Yes, NLCT are always aiming to identify carers to support throughout North Lanarkshire.

Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes? *If so, whether positive or negative, please describe.*

The hospital provision was an unintended but helpful outcome from the campaign as it was not something NLCT directly asked for but was a concern they expressed in meetings

In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling child poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.

Yes. Many unpaid carers find themselves living in absolute poverty and NLCT provides support to unpaid carers while putting forward recommendations for high impact, low barrier measures to achieve immediate positive impact. This has been evident in the recommendations that have already been implemented around the cost-of-living crisis campaign explained above, including the number of unpaid carers accessing SDS budgets.

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?
Close partnership working between NLCT as well as NLCT and partners helps the project work well. Trust and transparency within the team encourages the production of more robust data.
What, if anything, is working less well?
NLCT are always looking for ways to improve on demographics and where and how data is collected. For example, if there was low uptake of a survey in a particular area of North Lanarkshire this would be something they would explore in the future.
What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners? For example, is there anything that you would do differently?
NLCT would encourage practitioners to set up a forum and give choice to service users regarding interaction with the service. For example, it cannot be assumed everyone will fill out a survey or have the time to attend meetings etc.
What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?
Off the back of this campaign, NLCT are working with a coalition of carers in Scotland to devise a local training programme for carers in North Lanarkshire which starts September 2023. NLCT also plan to do more work around the cost-of-living emergency in the future.
How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?
This project could very easily be replicated in other local authorities across the country. While local authorities operate differently, generally speaking the issues are all the same.

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