



National Carer Organisations

Local Elections 2017 Lobbying and campaigning pack

The national carer organisations have produced this information to support carers and carer organisations in campaigning during the local government elections in Spring 2017. The material is intended to help you in lobbying candidates and parties.

This includes:

- **Background information**
- **About the election, parties and candidates**
- **Suggested media and social media activity**

Copies of the national carer organisations' manifesto for the local elections can be found at <https://goo.gl/LWLa1W>

The National Carer Organisations are: Carers Scotland, Carers Trust Scotland, Coalition of Carers in Scotland, Crossroads Caring Scotland, MECOP, Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance and Shared Care Scotland.

1. Background Information

(a) Carers by Local Authority

The table below shows the number of carers by local authority in Scotland. This is based on Census 2011. It also includes figures for the number of people who begin and cease caring annually.

Local Authority	Number of Carers	Estimated number that begin caring annually	Estimated number that cease caring annually
Scotland	492,231¹	161,290	158,820
Aberdeen City	15,571	5,100	5,020
Aberdeenshire	19,398	6,360	6,260
Angus	10,582	3,470	3,410
Argyll & Bute	8,821	2,890	2,850
Clackmannanshire	4,693	1,540	1,510
Dumfries & Galloway	14,955	4,900	4,830
Dundee City	13,072	4,280	4,220
East Ayrshire	12,620	4,140	4,070
East Dunbartonshire	11,374	3,730	3,670
East Lothian	9,475	3,110	3,060
East Renfrewshire	9,291	3,040	3,000
Edinburgh City	37,859	12,410	12,220
Eilean Siar	2,660	870	860
Falkirk	15,056	4,930	4,860
Fife	34,828	11,410	11,240
Glasgow City	53,914	17,670	17,400
Highland	20,993	6,880	6,770
Inverclyde	8,252	2,700	2,660
Midlothian	8,238	2,700	2,660
Moray	7,809	2,560	3,520
North Ayrshire	13,900	4,560	4,490
North Lanarkshire	34,393	11,270	11,100
Orkney Islands	1,978	650	640
Perth & Kinross	13,308	4,360	4,290
Renfrewshire	17,759	5,820	5,730
Scottish Borders	10,346	3,390	3,340
Shetland Islands	2,304	670	660
South Ayrshire	11,709	3,840	3,780
South Lanarkshire	32,796	10,750	10,580
Stirling	8,265	2,710	2,670
West Dunbartonshire	9,637	3,160	3,110
West Lothian	16,645	5,450	5,370

(b) Information Sources

About my Vote

<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk>

This website, by the Electoral Commission, helps you register to vote and find out more about elections throughout the UK.

¹ Alternative estimates in "Scotland's Carers", which are used by the Scottish Government, recognise the figure of 759,000 carers in Scotland. However, these figures do not yet have a breakdown by local authority.

The Electoral Commission

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk>

The Electoral Commission is an independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament to foster public confidence and participation in the democratic process in the UK. This website has a range of information about elections including participation resources to support carers to become involved.

Scotland's Carers Policies and Legislation

The Scottish Government has a range of policies for carers including the up and coming Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 which will be implemented from 1 April 2018. For more information visit:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Unpaid-Carers>

Scotland's Local Elections Carers Manifesto 2017

Each of the national carer organisations' websites will have the manifesto available to download. Visit

<https://goo.gl/LWLa1W> or

www.carersnet.org

www.carers.org/scotland

www.carerscotland.org

2. About the Election, Parties & Candidates

(a) Voting in local elections

On 4 May 2017, there will be an election in each local authority in Scotland. This means that voters in councils across Scotland will be voting for their new local councillors.

Councillors will be elected using the Single Transferable Vote electoral system (STV) - a form of proportional representation.

Under the STV system, voters mark their ballot paper to show the order in which they want candidates to be elected. Instead of using the traditional cross to mark their ballot paper, voters should mark their first choice with a '1', their second choice '2' and so on. Voters may mark just one preference or as many preferences as there are candidates.

Marking candidates in order of preference means that if your first choice is not elected then your vote may be transferred to your second choice and so on until all your preferences are exhausted or until all seats are filled. A useful site for background information on the new way of electing local councillors is at:

<https://www.yourvotematters.co.uk/how-do-i-vote/what-are-the-different-voting-systems>

(b) To be eligible to vote:

To vote at Scottish council elections you must be:

- 16 years of age or over on polling day
- a British citizen or Irish citizen, or
- a citizen of another European country, or
- a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to remain in the UK or who does not require leave to remain in the UK

(c) Registering to vote

If you are not registered to vote, there is still time to register but you must register by 17 April 2017

How do I register?

Visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk and fill in your postcode which will provide details of your local registration office. You can also register online at: <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

Postal voting

You need to apply for a postal vote if you want to vote by post. Visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk and fill in your postcode which will provide details of your local registration office to apply. The last date for postal vote applications is 5pm on **Tuesday 18 April 2017**.

Proxy voting

If you are not able to vote in person or by post then you can apply to vote by proxy. This means you can ask someone to go to a polling station and vote for you. Your proxy can also apply to vote by post, if you apply early enough. You must apply for a proxy vote in advance. Visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk and fill in your postcode which will provide details of your local registration office to apply. The last date for normal proxy applications is 5pm on **Tuesday 25 April 2017**.

Emergency proxy

If you have a medical or work emergency, you can apply for an emergency proxy up until 5pm on polling day.

3. Finding your candidate

Each political party publishes full listings of their candidates for each local authority. These details will be published on individual party websites (listed below). We will provide full details on the national carers organisations websites as soon as complete listings are available.

Scottish Conservatives	http://www.scottishconservatives.com
Scottish Green Party	https://greens.scot/
Scottish Labour Party	http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk
Scottish Liberal Democrats	http://www.scotlibdems.org.uk
Scottish National Party	http://www.snp.org
Scottish Socialist Party	http://www.scottishsocialistparty.org

In addition, in many local authorities independent candidates will also be standing for election. Your local council can help provide details of all the candidates standing in your area. They will also be likely to be in touch with local voters directly through leaflets and canvassing in your area, and in the local press.

(a) What the parties are saying about carers

You can find out information on what each of the parties' national policies is on supporting carers by visiting their websites. You can also get information about their candidates in your area. In local elections, most parties and candidates will also provide specific local information on how they will support carers in your area.

You can also ask your local council candidate what s/he proposes to do to support carers if elected.

The Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party
www.scottishconservatives.com

The Scottish Green Party
www.scottishgreens.org.uk

The Scottish Labour Party
www.scottishlabour.org.uk

The Scottish Liberal Democrats
www.scotlibdems.org.uk

The Scottish Nationalist Party
www.snp.org

The Scottish Socialist Party
www.scottishsocialistparty.org

There may also be other parties standing in your area. For details of other parties in Scotland visit: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Scotland

4. Using media and social media

(a) Using the elections to raise the profile of carers in your area

Often there is a great deal of apathy around party politics and elections, with the world-weary question 'why bother – it doesn't make any difference?'

For carers, their local councils make a big difference. Nationally, for example, we have seen the passage of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and the recognition of carers' vital role in supporting health and social care in Scotland.

However, in most cases, although the Parliament legislates for and introduces policy, it is local councils who implement and deliver services and support and, often allocate funds on the basis of local priorities. It is therefore essential to raise the profile of carers' issues at a local level and to gather support from candidates in these local government elections. By gaining support and raising the profile of carers in your area, you can raise carers' needs higher up the political agenda and it a priority for local councillors.

Carers represent 16% of the voting population in Scotland (13% of the total population) – an important section of the electorate. Now is the time to make 'Carer power' felt!

(b) What can we do?

Council candidates want to come and meet local people, to have the chance to influence them and lobby for their vote – use this opportunity.

Visits

Invite candidates to visit your group or centre. Show them a copy of the manifesto for unpaid carers, talk to them about the sections that are relevant to your area and your local concerns. Use the visit as a photo opportunity. Press release the visit to your local paper or onto your Facebook page or twitter feed.

Surgeries

You can visit your current councillor at their local surgery, present them with the manifesto – discuss with them about your local concerns. Details of councillors' surgeries will be available in the local press, library, on their Facebook pages, or on your council's website

Emails

As a group, contact each candidate, enclose the manifesto, raise your own concerns, and ask them how they would improve life for carers in your area. Ask your members to consider writing to them individually.

Facebook

Many councillors now have their own Facebook pages which they use to update people on their work. If you have councillors signed up to your own Facebook page, you can find out if they are having local campaign events and visit to seek their support!

Facebook can also be a good way to lobby your councillor about key issues and make them aware of your work. You should include social networking as part of any campaign or lobbying – it's free and can help you to promote your message widely.

Twitter

Many candidates will use Twitter so this can be a great way to campaign in your area. We've provided some sample tweets below which you can amend to add to your social media channels. Where [insert link] is noted this could be to a page on your website with information, the national carer organisations manifesto, a photo or story.

The National Carer Organisations have three images (from the postcards) available for use on social media. Contact coalition@carersnet.org for copies.

The hashtag that we use is #fairerforcarers – please use this on every tweet. Sample tweets are just a suggestion! Also use #council17 which is the hashtag for the local council elections.

Feel free to tweet directly at candidates – something like “@candidatename please support the pledges in our manifesto for unpaid carers <https://goo.gl/LWLa1W>

- We are calling on all candidates to make things #fairerforcarers in #council17 <https://goo.gl/LWLa1W>

- [Your organisation name] is calling for enough resources for carers to cope with increasing demand #fairerforcarers #council17 [insert link]
- Short breaks from caring are vital for carer wellbeing, but access to breaks must be improved by [insert council name] #fairerforcarers #council17
- Carers need more employability, training & education support to harness their skills. #fairerforcarers #council17 [insert link]
- Carers in [insert council name] need access to free or reduced transport to help them care #fairerforcarers #council17
- [insert council name] Carers Act money must be invested in addition to current carer support funding #fairerforcarers #council17

(c) Using the local press and media

Don't forget that your campaigning is an ideal opportunity to get carers' issues in the press, so if candidates are visiting your group or centre try and use this opportunity.

Newspapers

The Newspaper Society has a links to local newspapers throughout Scotland.

<http://www.newspapersoc.org.uk/a-to-z-of-local-newspaper-websites>

These websites will have contact details. Alternatively a copy of your local paper will give you details of fax numbers and e-mail addresses for press releases.

Radio

Scotland Internet has a list of websites for local, independent, community and hospital radio stations at

<http://www.radio-now.co.uk/scot.htm>.

You can also use the letters page of your local newspaper

Use the letters page of your local paper to raise carers' issues during the election. Keep an eye on the coverage and write in about anything that's relevant to carers. It's often a much easier way of getting into the paper than writing a press release. You can also use the letters page to highlight events e.g. meetings with candidates that will be taking place.

Below is an example letter

	Your name
	Your address
	Date
Dear Sirs	
I am writing, as on one of xxxxx unpaid carers in xx (council name), to highlight of Scotland's Carers Local Election Manifesto 2017.	
I care for [use this space to give some background on your caring situation]. I have been a carer for xx years and caring has had a significant impact on my life. [use this space to give details of the impact caring has had on your life e.g. you have given up work, you live on benefits, your health has been affected].	
The National Carer Organisations Local Manifesto calls for all candidates to become support carers and protect the vital services that carers and the people they care rely on. Carers are represented in every sector of society. They are older people, they are parents, they are from rural and BME communities. The issues that effect carers are issues for us all – caring for ageing relatives, caring for loved ones if they become ill, expecting high quality care when we need it ourselves.	
Supporting carers makes financial sense. In Scotland, carers save the economy £10.8 billion every year. A small amount of investment in supporting carers can sustain someone in their caring role. Not investing and having to replace the care they provide is hugely expensive; supporting carers can reduce the need for local authority and health interventions for care and cared for people.	
I think all of your readers will agree that supporting carers makes sense and that they will use the local elections to gather support and highlight these issues with candidates.	
Yours faithfully	
[your name]	

You can also email or write directly to candidates

Below is an example email/letter to send to candidates in the elections. You can also highlight the key messages for candidates (overleaf) which gives details of things that they can commit to within their local campaigns to take forward if they are elected.

	Your name Your address
	Date
Dear Candidate	
Scotland's Carers - Local election manifesto 2017	
I am writing, as on one of XXXXX unpaid carers in your local authority area, to seek your support.	
I care for [use this space to give some background on your caring situation].	
I have been a carer for XX years and caring has had a significant impact on my life. [use this space to give details of the impact caring has had on your life e.g. you have given up work, you live on benefits, your health has been affected].	
We are calling on all candidates in the local council elections to agree to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect funding for carer support & ensure there are adequate resources to implement the Carers Act• Increase efforts to improve short breaks provision• Promote better, preventative support for carers of all ages• Improve financial support for carers• Support carers in and into employment	
Although national government have a significant role in providing investment to support for carers, local government has a vital role to play in ensuring that local services are available, effective and responsive to the needs of carers.	
I hope that you will become a champion for carers, highlight the rights of carers in your election campaign and, if elected, advocate for investment and services that provide effective and appropriate support for carers in our Council.	
Yours sincerely	
[your name]	

Key Messages

- Carers' votes count!
- There are thousands of carers in your area – each has a vote!
- The issues affecting carers are cross-cutting. Carers are represented in every sector of society. They are older people, they are parents, they are from rural and black and minority ethnic communities. The issues that affect carers are issues for us all – caring for ageing relatives, caring for loved ones if they become ill, expecting high quality care when we need it ourselves. Decisions about services other than health and social care can impact directly on the lives of carers and their families e.g. in education, housing and employment.
- Carers are being squeezed by increasing demands on services and decreasing resources. The focus on reshaping care must not lead to an increased burden of care; carers are critical to the delivery of health and social care in every local authority area in Scotland.
- Supporting carers makes financial sense. A small amount of investment in carer support can sustain someone in their caring role. Not investing in carers and having to replace the care they provide is hugely expensive; supporting carers can reduce the need for local authority interventions for care and cared for.

5 Things candidates can do

- Become a Local Champion for carers.

- Visit your local carers' group and find out what the big issues are for carers in your constituency.
- Make a commitment to take account of the needs of carers when making important decisions about local budgets, service planning and delivery.
- Keep in contact with carers' organisations and consult and involve them before developing local policy that will impact on carers.
- Protect the vital services that carers rely on, such as short breaks and services provided through local carer organisations.

Contacts

For further information or to discuss the Manifesto for Carers, please contact:

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