

Analysis of Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 funding 2022-2023: responses to Freedom of Information request

March 2024

1. Background

In November 2023, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland (COCIS) submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to all local authority areas in Scotland asking for details of what the funding to support implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 had been spent on during 2022/23. This report presents the findings from analysis of the data provided in FOI responses and concludes with a series of recommendations to improve transparency of reporting and monitoring for Carers Act funding.

1.1 Unpaid carers: rights and support needs

There are estimated to be at least 700,000 to 800,000 unpaid carers in Scotland, including 28,000 young carers¹. The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016², aimed to enable unpaid carers to be better supported so that they could continue to care, if they wished to do so, whilst also having a life alongside caring.

Breaks from caring are vital to carers' health and well-being, yet survey data in Scotland has consistently shown that only 3-4% of carers report having breaks. For full-time carers, providing 35 or more hours of care a week, only 9-10% have access to breaks from caring.³

Since the pandemic, increasing numbers of short break services and day services have closed, or reduced their level of service, due to financial insecurity and unsustainability. This has a profound impact on carers' health and wellbeing, with recent research from Carers UK reporting that 61% of carers have said they needed more support to be able to look after their health and wellbeing.⁴

Moreover, Carers Centres across Scotland report a significant increase in referrals and number of carers registered with their service over the last two years⁵. This is combined with an increase in the complexity of carers' support needs. Many Carers Centres report that demand outstrips their resources and capacity to deliver much needed support.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-carers-update-release-december-2022/>

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/contents>

³ [Annual Scottish Health Survey](#)

⁴ https://www.carersuk.org/media/xgwlj0gn/soc23-health-report_web.pdf

⁵ <https://www.carersnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Carers-Centre-Funding-Report-Aug23FINAL.pdf>

1.2 Funding to support carers and implementation of Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

When the Carers Act came into effect on 1st April 2018, local authorities were provided with additional funding to support implementation. The funding is awarded to local authorities in the first instance, who then allocate this to Health & Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs).

Funding awarded to support Carers Act implementation has increased year on year as follows:

Carers Act funding awarded to local authorities since 2018				
2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
£19.4m	£27.9m	£39.5m	£68m	£88.4m*

*This £88.4m is now the baseline level of funding which is awarded annually.

In a letter to councils and local integration authorities on 9 February 2022⁶, Humza Yousaf, then Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, stated:

“Effective support for carers is not a new issue but the consistent feedback from carer representatives is of sustained pressures on carers; huge demand for carer support; and local carer support organisations running beyond capacity. This makes it even more important that the substantial Carers Act funding uplift for 2022-23 goes to delivering the intended expansion in local carer support services. I therefore ask for your support in ensuring these additional resources are allocated in full to expanding support for unpaid carers.”

This report provides details of the data received from 31* local authorities relating to Carers Act Funding awarded and allocated in 2022/23** to Health & Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs); spend of Carers Act funding allocated to HSCPs; and the reliability of figures provided in FOI responses.

*One local area did not provide an FOI response.

**COCIS also submitted a FOI request for Carer Act funding allocated to HSCPs and associated spend in 2023/24. Some areas were unable to respond as it was too early to report on spend this year. However, brief analysis of figures which some areas did provide, showed that the proportion of awards which were allocated to HSCP was broadly equivalent to 2022/23. Similar spending trends to those contained in this report are therefore predicted in 2023/24.

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-act-funding-letter-to-councils-and-integration-authorities/>

2. Headline findings and recommendations

Carers Scotland Act funding awarded and allocated

FOI responses were received from 31 local authorities. Data provided indicates:

- Of the £88.4m awarded to local authorities only £74.9m was allocated to HSCPs.
- Twelve local authority areas allocated less than 80% of the award received to the HSCP. In ten of these areas the award/allocation ratio was even more pronounced (<70%).

This suggests between £12.4m to £13.5m of Carers Act funding awarded was not passed onto HSCPs (allowing for two areas that did not report their allocations). While a proportion of this funding may have been used by local authorities to deliver young carer services, where this function is not delegated to HSCPs, there is still likely to be a significant shortfall.

Spend on support for carers / implementation of Carers Act

Of the £74.9m reported as allocated to HSCPs, analysis of the reported spend suggests:

- 92% of funding (approx. £69m) was spent on direct or indirect support for carers / implementation.
- 8% of spend (approx. £6m) did not relate to support for carers / implementation or was categorised as not yet allocated / other.

This indicates that the 'real' spend on support for carers / implementation of Carers Act by Health and Social Care Partnerships in 2022/23 was up to £19m less than the £88.4m of funding awarded.

Reliability of data

There were concerns related to the reliability of data provided in FOI returns, including:

- Differences between figures provided for the funds allocated to the HSCP and actual reported spend suggests there were under/overspends in ten areas.
- Discrepancies were noted by some Carers Centres in relation to the some of the data reported.
- A response to a separate FOI request on Carers Act funding in 22/23 (submitted by an unpaid carer) presented a different set of figures than those which were provided in the FOI response (for the same area) for this report.
- Comparing data provided in FOI responses to forecasting within the Financial Memorandum produced for the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill suggests the estimated figures for existing spend on Short Breaks may be unreliable, overestimating the amount spent.

As Carers Act funding is not ringfenced, many HSCPs do not appear to routinely record, track and monitor spend, which affects the reliability and transparency of data.

Recommendations

To improve transparency in the reporting and monitoring of Carers Act funding the following recommendations are made for Scottish Government and local authorities:

1. Provide significantly more funding directly to third sector organisations (including Carer Centres) to expand and develop services to support unpaid carers, including a wider range of short breaks opportunities
2. Ring-fence Carers Act funding and develop consistent budget headings for use by all local areas.
3. Develop financial reporting processes to ensure robust tracking, monitoring and forecasting of spend under each budget heading.
4. Ensure HSCP Annual Performance Reports provide details of support for carers / Carers Act implementation and Annual Accounts provide figures for Carers Act funding, to improve transparent reporting of impact and spend.

3. Carers (Scotland) Act funding awarded and allocated 2022/23

FOI response data indicates that, of the £88.4m Carers Act funding awarded to local authorities in 2022/23, £74.9m was then allocated to HSCPs. This suggests that between £12.4m to £13.5 m of Carers Act funding awarded to local authorities was not passed on to HSCPs (see 5.1 below for more detail).

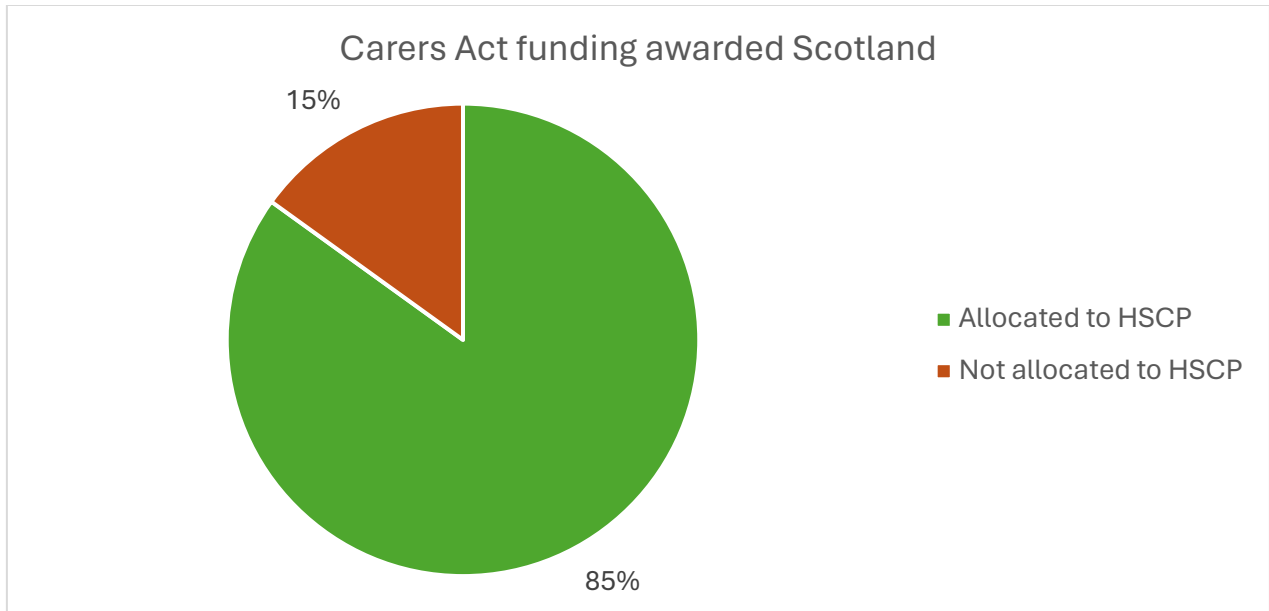


Figure 1: Carers Act funding awarded / allocated in Scotland

Figure 2 below shows the breakdown of Carers Act funding awarded compared to funds allocated to the HSCP in each local authority area.

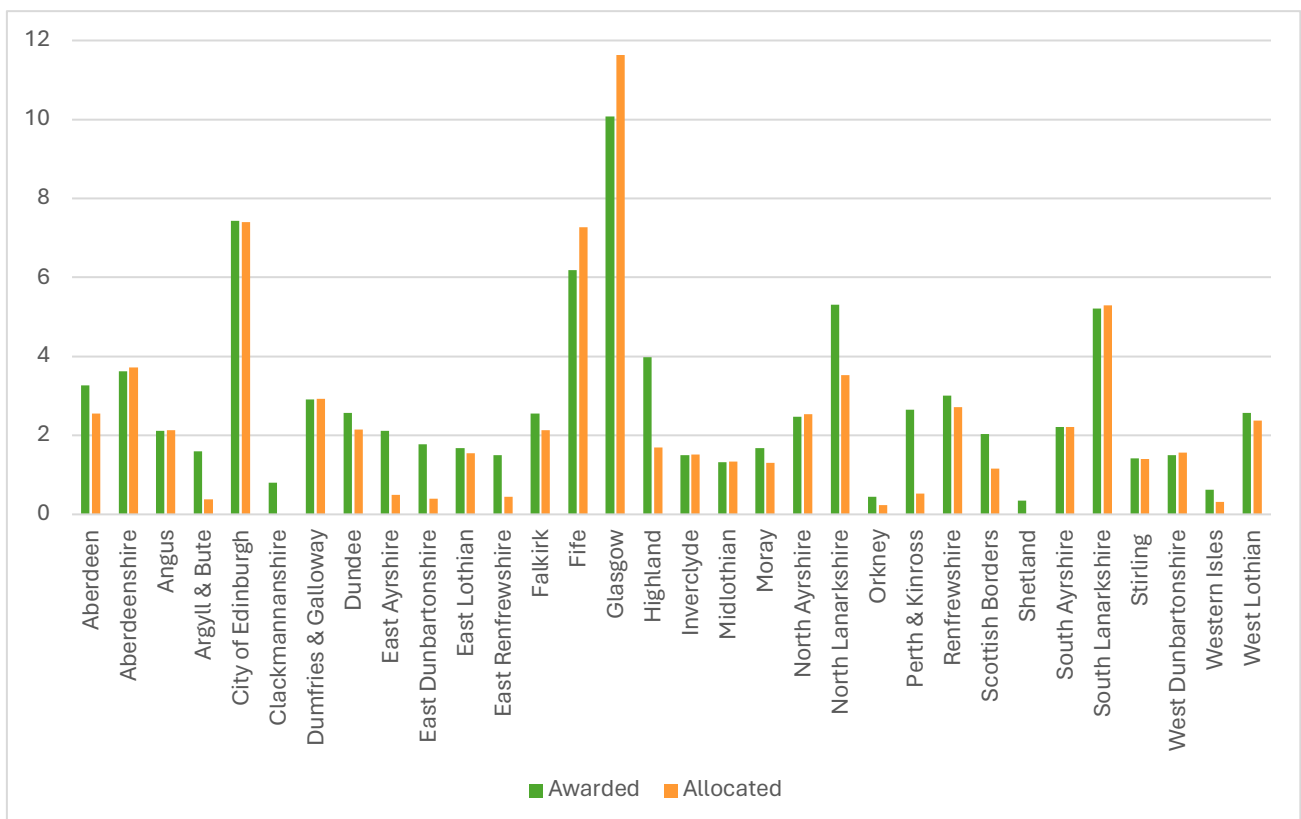


Figure 2: Carers Act funding awarded and allocated by area (in £m's)

FOI responses show that 16 areas reported award and allocation totals that were broadly similar (where between 110% and 80% of awards were allocated to HSCP). Two areas reported moderately higher allocations (>110%) to the HSCP than funding awarded (Fife 117%; Glasgow 115%).

However, in the remaining 12 areas the funding allocated to HSCP was less than 80% of the grant awarded. Of these, more significant disparity between awards and allocations (<70% allocated to HSCP) was reported by ten areas (Argyll & Bute 23%; East Ayrshire 23%; East Dunbartonshire 23%; East Renfrewshire 30%; Highland 43%; North Lanarkshire 67%; Orkney 54%; Perth & Kinross 20%; Scottish Borders 57%; Western Isles 50%). Shetland did not provide a figure for their allocation to HSCP and explained that this was because funding was "not separately listed as ring-fenced therefore difficult to identify". Clackmannanshire did not submit a FOI response.

4. Spend of Carers Act funding

To support the collection and analysis of data in the FOI request COCIS collaborated with HSCP Carers Leads to identify key spend categories which were aligned with the Carers Act (see Appendix 1).

These categories were then grouped under four main headings:

- Direct support for carers / implementation of Carers Act
- Indirect support for carers / implementation of Carers Act*
- Not related to carer support / implementation of Carers Act
- Not yet allocated / other

*For the purposes of this report, spend reported as ‘Strategic Posts within the HSCP’ and ‘Health Board’ was categorised as indirect support for carers / implementation as no further information was available to fully analyse/breakdown these figures.

4.1 Spend of Carers Act funding awarded to local authorities

Of the **total funding awarded to local authority areas (£88.4m)** across Scotland the percentage spend under each of these headings can be seen in Figure 3 below:

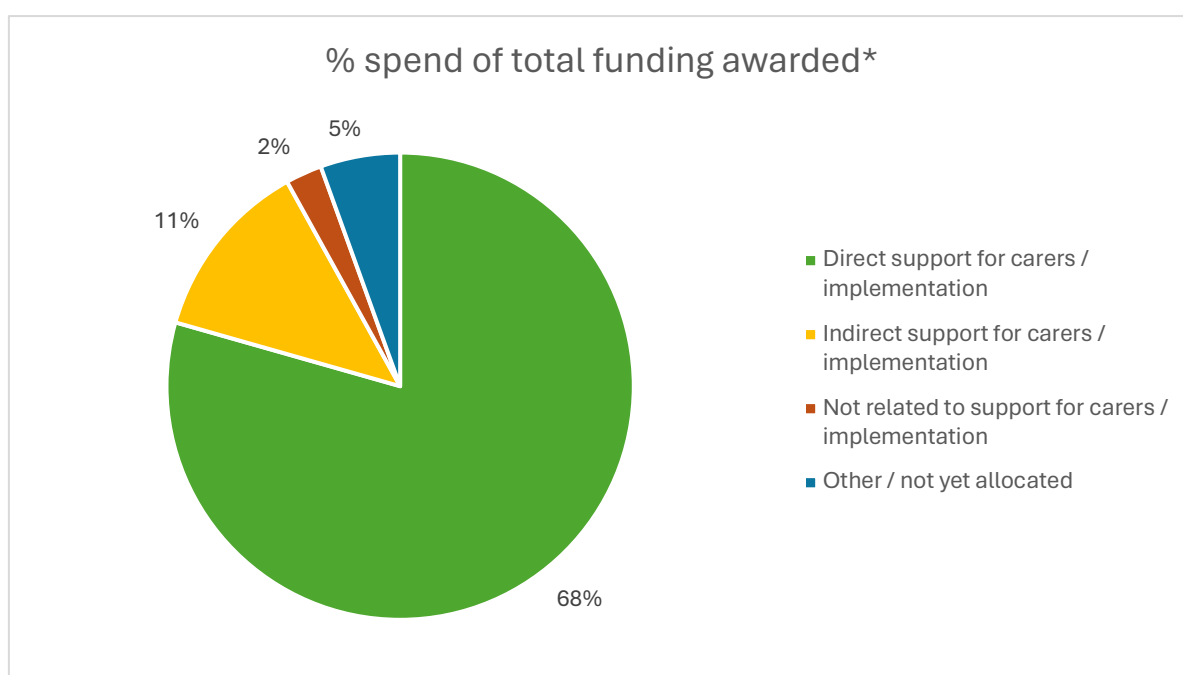


Figure 3: Scottish average % spend of Carers Act funding awarded to local authorities

*The ‘missing’ 15% in this figure relates to the funding which was not allocated to HSCPs.

4.2 Spend of Carers Act funding allocated to HSCPs

When reported spend was analysed against the £74.9m of funding that was reported as actually **allocated to HSCPs**, there was a 12% variance in the ‘direct support for carers/implementation’ heading.

FOI responses suggest that of the £74.9m allocated to HSCPs:

- £59m was spent on direct support for carers / implementation
- £9m was spent on indirect support for carers / implementation
- £2m of spend was not related to support for carers / implementation
- £4m was either not yet allocated or related to ‘other’ spend

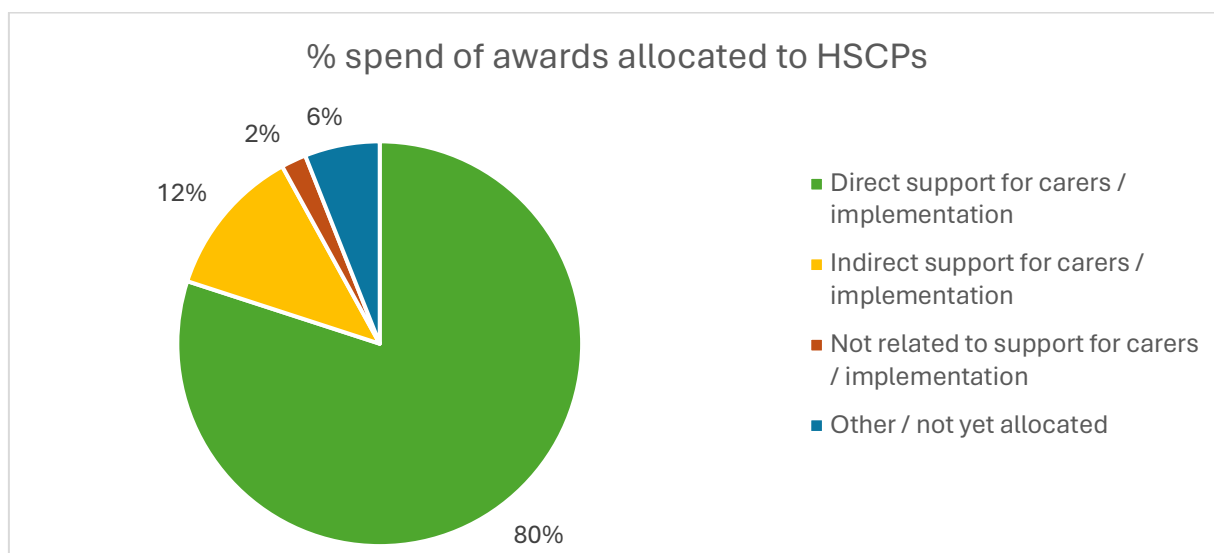


Figure 4: Scottish average % spend of Carers Act funding allocated to HSCPs

4.3 Spend by local authority area

Figure 5 below shows reported spend by local authority area.

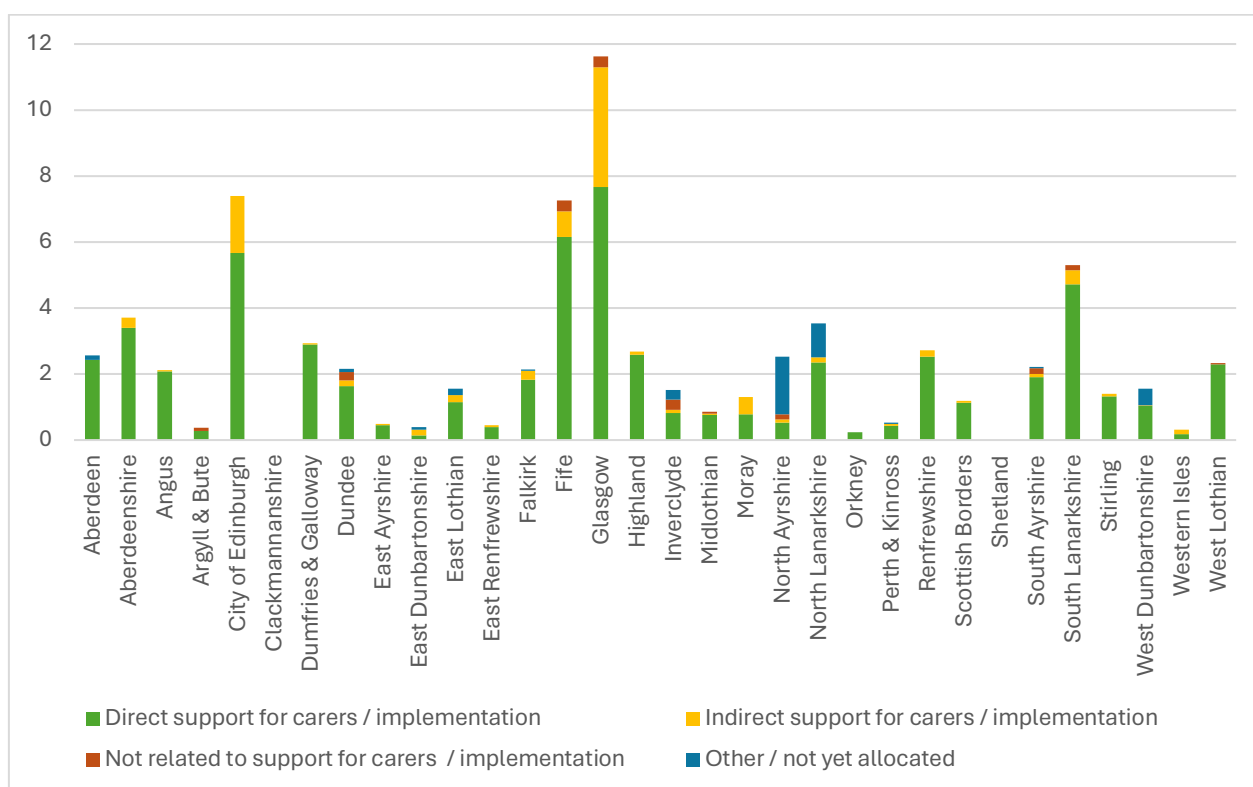


Figure 5: local authority spend of funding allocated to HSCPs (in £m's)

Two areas (Clackmannanshire and Shetland) did not report on any spend. As noted above, Clackmannanshire did not submit a FOI response and Shetland explained they could not provide information on funds allocated to the HSCP / spend due to Carers Act funding not being ringfenced therefore difficult to identify.

4.4 Not related to support for carers / implementation

Figures provided suggest that a total of £1.9m of reported spend was not related to support for carers / implementation. This comprised of ten areas which reported funds being used to offset 'Loss of income / Waiving Charges' (Argyll & Bute £103k; Dundee £250k; Fife £332k; Glasgow £331k; Inverclyde £317k; Midlothian £60k; North Ayrshire £157k; South Ayrshire £170k; South Lanarkshire £150k; West Lothian £29k).

4.5 Not yet allocated / other

Within FOI responses ten areas reported spending that was categorised as either 'not yet allocated' or 'other'. This amounted to £4.1m. As the 2022/23 financial year ended in March 2023, it is assumed that spend identified as 'not yet allocated' was not spent within 2022/23.

Area	Not yet allocated / other
Aberdeen	£132,604
Dundee	£98,461
East Dunbartonshire	£88,538
East Lothian	£186,413
Falkirk	£23,000
Inverclyde	£284,120
North Ayrshire	£1,743,307
North Lanarkshire	£1,032,017
Perth & Kinross	£26,000
South Ayrshire	£40,000
West Dunbartonshire	£505,505

4.6 'Real' spend of Carers Act funding on support for carers / implementation

Removing both the 'not related to support / implementation' (£1.9m) and 'unallocated / other' (£4.1m) figures from the total reported as allocated to HSCPs (£74.9m) suggests the 'real' spend which can be accounted for was approximately £69m. This means that potentially, up to £19m of Carers Act funding awarded to local authorities in 2022/23 was not spent for on supporting carers (allowing for the two areas which did not report on spend).

5. Reliability of figures provided in FOI responses

A number of discrepancies were noted through analysis of the data provided in FOI responses. These are summarised below, alongside any additional comments provided.

5.1 Carers Act funding awarded and allocated

As noted above, of the £88.4m Carers Act funding awarded in 2022/23, only £74.9m was reported as allocated to HSCPs. This indicates that up to £13.5m was not passed on. Allowing for variances in reporting (i.e. grants awarded to Clackmannanshire and Shetland which were not reported on and 'differences in reported allocations and spend' (see point 5.2 below)) this figure could be slightly lower at £12.4m. While a proportion of this funding may have been used by local authorities to deliver young carer services, where this function is not delegated to HSCPs, there is still likely to be a significant shortfall.

5.2 Differences in funds allocated and reported spend

In eleven areas there were differences between the funds reported as allocated to the HSCP, compared to the actual spend figures provided (resulting in a total reported overspend of £470k). In seven of these areas the discrepancies were minimal (< £25k over/underspend), however in the remaining four areas these were more notable:

- **Overspends:** two areas provided figures which indicated spending was higher than the funds allocated to the HSCP (Highland £977k; Scottish Borders £28k). Highland provided an explanation that *"NHS Highland have a budget for Carers Services that is comprised of both Carers Act Implementation funds and additional funding NHS provides from its general grant funding"*.
- **Underspends:** two areas provided figures which indicated that Carers Act funding allocated HSCP was not fully spent during 2022/23 (Midlothian £477k; West Lothian £43k). Midlothian provided an additional comment that the *'Shortfall in financial year 2022/23 has been committed to other years. Note that expenditure in 2023/24 exceeds budget. It would not give an accurate year on year comparison if the shortfall was marked as 'used for a different purpose/not allocated' without a corresponding adjustment in financial year 23/24.'* Whilst noting this, it has been included here as an underspend as this report was only able to assess figures provided for 2022/23 financial year.

5.3 Voluntary sector funding and Carer Centre feedback

Voluntary sector organisations (including Carer Centres) provide a range of services and support to meet the needs of carers and are key stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the Carers Act. As such, HSCPs provide a level of funding to Carer Centres and other voluntary sector organisations to undertake these services. FOI responses suggest funding in 2022/23 for Carer Centres, Young Carer Services and other voluntary sector organisations across Scotland amounted to £17.2m. Interestingly, within FOI responses 12 areas reported no spend at all against 'Carer Centres'. One of these areas (West Lothian) provided additional information that their funding to Carers Centres comes from *'core funding and not from the funding allocated to support the implementation of the duties in the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016'*. It is unclear from FOI responses whether this may be the case in other 11 areas and/or if funding was allocated / categorised within one of the other budget headings.

FOI responses were also shared with Carers Centres, some of whom noted a number of additional discrepancies:

- **Inconsistencies in categorisation of spend:** the way spend was categorised made it unclear how funds had actually been allocated and spent. For example, one area reported spend against 'Carer Support Plans' (generally undertaken by Carers Centres) but this funding was not allocated to the Carers Centre; and as highlighted above, 11 areas reported no funding at all being allocated to Carers Centres.
- **Variations in funding allocated and received:** some FOI responses reported a higher level of funding allocated to Carers Centres than that which was actually received.
- **Un/reliability of FOI figures provided:** in one local area an unpaid carer submitted a separate FOI request on spend of Carers Act funding in 2022/23. The figures provided in response to this separate request⁷⁷ were different to those received in the FOI response for this report (for the same area). It is therefore unclear which set of figures is correct.

⁷⁷ https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/request_for_detailed_information_6?nocache=incoming-2532145#incoming-2532145

5.4 Reviewing and forecasting Short Break funding

As well as highlighting challenges with the accurate recording and reporting of Carers Act funding, the information provided in the FOI returns also raised questions around the reliability of financial forecasting.

The National Care Service (Scotland) Bill includes costings for the implementation of a right to breaks from caring within the Financial Memorandum (FM). In the FM the total cost to implement a right to breaks from caring have been calculated, and the *current estimated spend* by local authorities on short breaks has then been deducted from this total. Within these calculations £57.7m of Carers Act funding has been included as part of the estimated *current spend* on short breaks (adults and young carers)⁸. However, FOI responses submitted for this report suggest the *actual spend* on short breaks totalled £26.8m in 2022/23. This would leave a shortfall of £30.9m in the calculations for the Financial Memorandum.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The FOI responses have raised a number of concerns around both the allocation of Carers Act funding and the actual spend on supporting carers / implementation. This included funding awards which were not fully allocated to the HSCP, as well as reported spend on areas which were not related to support for carers / implementation or funds which were reported as ‘not yet allocated/other’.

In addition, as Carers Act funding is not ring-fenced, the availability, reliability and transparency of data showing how money was (and is being) spent is challenging. Indeed, Equal, Expert and Valued reports produced by COCIS in 2022 and 2023⁹ show that details of Carers Act funding and spend very rarely appear within HSCP Annual Performance Reports or Annual Accounts.

These key areas of concern combine to make it extremely challenging to fully track, understand and assess the impact of funding on the lives of unpaid carers, and the implementation of the Carers Act.

This report therefore makes the following recommendations for Scottish Government, councils and local integration authorities to improve transparency in the reporting and monitoring of Carers Act funding:

1. Provide significantly more funding directly to third sector organisations (including Carer Centres) to expand and develop services to support unpaid carers, including a wider range of short breaks opportunities
2. Ring-fence Carers Act funding and develop consistent budget headings for use by all local areas.
3. Develop financial reporting processes to ensure robust tracking, monitoring and forecasting of spend under each budget heading.
4. Ensure HSCP Annual Performance Reports provide details of support for carers / Carers Act implementation and Annual Accounts provide figures for Carers Act funding, to improve transparent reporting of impact and spend.

⁸ [Social Work Scotland \(2024\): Costing Carers' Rights to a Break Comments on the Revised Financial Memorandum of December 2023 to the National Care Service \(Scotland\) Bill 2022, pages 21-22: \[1\]](#)

⁹ <https://www.carersnet.org/carers-collaborative/>

Appendix 1

Categorisation of reported figures within the headings used in this report to analyse spend of Carers Act funding:

Direct support for carers / implementation

- Carer Centres
- Young Carers Services
- Other voluntary sector
- Short breaks (adult carers)
- Short breaks (young carers)
- Other (adult carers)
- Other (young carers)
- Awareness raising
- Engagement / consultation
- Carer support posts in HSCPs

Indirect support for carers / implementation

- Strategic posts in HSCPs
- Health board

Not related to support for carers / implementation

- Loss of income (Waiving Charges)
- Implement Living Wage

Other / not yet allocated

- Other / not yet allocated