

CÙRAM IS SLAINTE NAN EILEAN SIAR

INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD



Meeting date: 17 September 2026

Item: 5.3

Title: Western Isles Carers Strategy Update

Responsible Officer: Emma Macsween

Report Author: Fiona Knape

1 Purpose

This is presented to the Committee for:

- Decision

This report relates to a:

- Legal requirement
- NHS Board/ LA /Integration Joint Board Strategy

Competence:

- In accordance with the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 Statutory Guidance, the preparation of a local Carers Strategy is a requirement for each local authority and relevant health board, delegated to Integration Joint Boards under the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Amendment (No.2) Regulations 2017.

2 Report summary

2.1 Situation

To present the findings of the Western Isles Carers Strategy 2019–2022 review and to seek approval to undertake formal consultation on a refreshed Western Isles Carers Strategy.

2.2 Background

Section 31 of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on local authorities and relevant health boards to jointly prepare and publish a local Carers Strategy.

The Western Isles Carers Strategy 2019–2022 was developed to support implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and improve outcomes for unpaid carers across the Western Isles and was approved by the Integration Joint Board in September 2019. Although the Strategy formally concluded in 2022, activity continued during the period 2023–2026 through statutory services, NHS Western Isles, commissioned providers and third-sector organisations.

Development of a refreshed Strategy was delayed as services continued to focus on recovery and service delivery following the COVID-19 pandemic, together with wider workforce and service pressures across health and social care. During this period support for carers continued through existing statutory, commissioned and third-sector services.

During May to August 2026, the Carers Strategy Group was tasked with reviewing progress against the previous Strategy and developing proposals for a refreshed Strategy. Evidence was gathered from partner organisations, commissioned services, NHS Western Isles, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and members of the Carers Strategy Group.

An End of Strategy Progress and Closure Report (Appendix 1) has now been completed to assess delivery against the Strategy, identify key achievements, challenges and learning, and inform development of a refreshed Strategy. The report is supported by Appendix 2: Examples of Delivery and Impact (2023–2026); and Appendix 3: Detailed Progress Assessment Against Strategic Actions.

2.3 Assessment

The review found that substantial progress has been made in supporting unpaid carers through information and advice services, advocacy, respite opportunities, peer support, community engagement and partnership working.

Of the 35 strategic actions contained within the Strategy:

- 15 actions (42.9%) were assessed as substantially delivered;
- 19 actions (54.3%) were assessed as partially delivered or ongoing; and
- 1 action (2.9%) was assessed as not delivered or lacked sufficient evidence of delivery.

The review identified a number of key strengths, including:

- strong partnership working;
- continued delivery of support services;
- increased awareness and recognition of carers;
- development of respite and short break opportunities; and
- support for carers' health and wellbeing.

The review also identified continuing challenges relating to:

- workforce sustainability;
- respite and replacement care capacity;

- identification of hidden carers;
- Young Carer Statements and transition arrangements;
- strategic performance monitoring; and
- data collection and reporting arrangements.

The findings suggest that the existing strategic priorities remain broadly relevant and should inform development of a refreshed Strategy.

2.3.1 Quality/ Patient Care

The report does not impact directly.

2.3.2 Workforce

The report has no direct workforce implications. However, workforce sustainability was identified as a key theme arising from the review and will require consideration during development of the refreshed Strategy.

2.3.3 Financial

There is no financial impact associated with the recommendations.

Accountants Name	Signature

Comment from the Chief Finance Officer:

2.3.4 Risk Assessment/Management

There are no direct risks associated with the recommendations. However, failure to refresh the Strategy and undertake consultation may limit the Partnership's ability to demonstrate continued compliance with the strategic intent of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and respond to emerging needs of unpaid carers.

2.3.5 Equality and Diversity, including health inequalities

An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of development of the refreshed Strategy, where required.

2.3.6 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Development

The report does not contain any impact on the Scottish Government's Climate Emergency and Sustainability Development Policy.

2.3.7 Other impacts

No other relevant impacts.

2.3.8 Communication, involvement, engagement and consultation

During summer 2026, the Carers Strategy Group undertook an informal engagement exercise to gather early feedback from carers and stakeholders on priorities for the next Strategy.

Subject to approval, a formal consultation exercise will now be undertaken with carers, partner organisations, service providers and other stakeholders. The findings from the review, supporting appendices and consultation process will be used to develop a refreshed Western Isles Carers Strategy for future consideration through the appropriate governance arrangements.

2.3.9 Route to the Meeting

This has been previously considered by the following groups as part of its development. The groups have either supported the content, or their feedback has informed the development of the content presented in this report.

- Carers Strategy Group
- H&SC Departmental Management Team
- Integrated Corporate Management Team

2.4 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

2.4.1 Note

the findings of the Western Isles Carers Strategy End of Strategy Progress and Closure Report and supporting appendices.

2.4.2 Agree

that the findings and learning identified through the review should inform development of a refreshed Western Isles Carers Strategy.

2.4.3 Approve

the commencement of formal consultation on a refreshed Western Isles Carers Strategy.

2.4.4 Note

that a draft Strategy will be presented through the appropriate governance routes following completion of the consultation process.

3 List of appendices

The following appendices are included with this report:

- Appendix 1: End of Strategy Progress and Closure Report
- Appendix 2: Examples of delivery and impact 2023-2026
- Appendix 3: Detailed progress assessment against strategic actions.

END