



IMPLEMENTING VARIETY

Shaping markets and facilitating choice in short breaks

Report from research and focus groups July – August 2021

Jen Curran, The Lasting Difference

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very grateful to the 19 focus group respondents for sharing their ideas and examples so generously, and to Jen Curran at The Lasting Difference for her diligent investigative work.

FOREWORD

DON WILLIAMSON

Chief Executive, Shared Care Scotland

With breaks from caring high on the political agenda, the purpose of this research was to find out if this increased attention was reflected in local plans and strategies to improve support for carers, and did this go further than broad, general statements about improving short breaks provision.

From the scoping exercise, what has emerged is a rather mixed picture across Scotland, which was not altogether unexpected, but nonetheless gives us very useful intelligence about the status of short breaks planning. It has also provided a baseline position that can be used to track future progress.

In addition to the scoping exercise, the two focus groups give us valuable insights into the challenges faced in translating policy into action and, from a commissioning perspective, what helps or hinders efforts to improve short breaks provision.

The insights and practice examples shared also help to illustrate and interpret the different stages of market facilitation, adding to those contained in our guide to short breaks market facilitation *Promoting Variety*, which we published in 2020 and led to us commissioning this research.

The enthusiastic response from those who attended the focus groups, shows there is a real appetite to innovate and to learn from other areas. We are already planning more opportunities for people to exchange ideas and experience and hope to see you there! And if you have good practice examples that could add to those contained in this report, we'd love to hear from you.



“The enthusiastic response from those who attended the focus groups, shows there is a real appetite to innovate and to learn from other areas.”

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BACKGROUND

Promoting Variety,¹ the guide to using market shaping approaches to facilitate choice in short breaks was published in 2020. During 2021–22 Shared Care Scotland is undertaking a range of work to further develop and share practice to support the implementation of *Promoting Variety*.

As part of this work, desk-based research and focus group sessions have taken place to better understand the status of short breaks planning across Scotland and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) plans for promoting variety and choice.

The research sought to understand:

- Do Carer Strategies reference short breaks and in what ways?
- Is there intentional market shaping activity going on?
- Are there Short Break Strategies or improvement plans for addressing the amount and variety of short breaks?
- Are Short Break Service Statements (SBSS) being actively planned and reviewed?
- Are there interesting practices – or gaps? What's behind these?

Findings and feedback are presented in two parts within this report:

- **Part one:** HSCP document research
- **Part two:** Focus groups

Reflections on the research are included at the end of the report.



¹ sharedcarescotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SCS-Promoting-Variety-2021-V2.pdf



HSCP DOCUMENT RESEARCH

PART ONE: HSCP DOCUMENT RESEARCH

A review of key documents from the 31 HSCPs was undertaken to assess the status of short breaks planning, including Carers Strategies, Short Break Services Statements, Strategic Commissioning Plans and Annual Performance Reports.

Note on methodology: Each of these documents should be publicly available for each HSCP. Where they could not be found by a paid researcher, with time and motivation to do so, it is our view that they are effectively not publicly available (i.e. easily found by carers, carers' organisations and others). The search terms 'short breaks', 'breaks' were used, with the frequency of references being taken as an indicator of the level of focus on short breaks in each location.²

1.1 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORTS

Annual HSCP Performance Reports³ for 2019–20 were reviewed for the number of mentions of short breaks. The average number of mentions of short breaks in Annual Reports was four. However, Annual Reports from five areas had a particularly strong focus on short breaks:

No. mentions of short breaks in Annual Report 2019/20	No. of areas	Some good practice examples (More details on right)
More than 20	1	Glasgow
10-19	4	Falkirk; Dundee; Aberdeenshire; Fife
5-9	6	
1-4	9	
0	11*	

* 2019/20 Annual Performance Report for Highland HSCP could not be found.

Some good practice examples from Annual Performance Reports:

- **Glasgow** noted actions undertaken against two of their key priority areas: 'Providing greater self-determination and choice' and 'Enabling independent living for longer'. Glasgow City Carers Partnership also produced a 2019–20 Annual Report that gave details of spend on short breaks during 2019–20.
- **Falkirk** noted actions in the 'Progress against National Health and Wellbeing Outcome and Strategic Plan Priorities' section of their report. This included reviewing their SBSS; Short Breaks Bureau; support from carers centre to access short breaks and funding; increasing capacity for short break beds.
- **Dundee** noted actions in the 'Performance' section of their report. This included a contract tendering exercise to increase provision options for older people; Wellbeing Point pilot with Penumbra to provide accessible information on carer support options; Dundee Carers Centre Short Break Brokerage Service.
- **Aberdeenshire** noted actions in the 'Prevention and Early Intervention' section of their report. This included a respite⁴ project with Quarriers Aberdeenshire Carers Support Service.
- **Fife** noted actions in the 'Priority 4 – Living well with Long-term Conditions' section of their report. This included the Short Breaks Service for Adults team who support carers and 'On Your Doorstep' website that gives details of short break options.

² The search term 'respite' was used initially, but was so commonly used alongside 'break', that it was substituted.

³ www.hscscotland.scot/hscps

⁴ www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk/respite

1.2 CARERS STRATEGIES

Carers Strategies were also searched for the number of mentions of short break. The average number of mentions of short breaks in Carers Strategies was 26. Many areas have updated their Carers Strategies since the requirement to produce Short Break Services Statements came into effect, likely contributing to an increased focus on short breaks.

Most areas (26) have actions to improve short breaks in their Carer Strategy implementation plans. However, some of these actions are limited to high-level intentions, while others have detailed actions but no progress measurements (although it may be that these exist in other HSCP documents).

No. mentions of short breaks in Carers Strategy	No. of areas	Some good practice examples (More details on right)
More than 50	4	Falkirk; Inverclyde; Aberdeenshire; East Lothian
30-49	6	Edinburgh; North Lanarkshire; Dumfries and Galloway; Clacks and Stirling; Fife; Midlothian
20-29	8	South Lanarkshire; North Ayrshire; Dundee; Perth and Kinross; Shetland; Highland; West Lothian; West Dunbartonshire
10-19	10	
Less than 10	3*	

* Carers Strategy for East Ayrshire could not be found.

Some good practice examples from Annual Performance Reports:

- **Falkirk Carers Strategy 2019–2022** provides an update on implementation of the Carers Act; short breaks and marketing shaping identified as priority areas of development; the development of short break options including community-based support; respite; creative breaks. The action plan has several mentions of future short break development activity and measurements of progress.
- **East Lothian Carers Strategy 2018–2021** lists short breaks among strategic outcomes. A separate Action Plan 2019-2022 document details what will be done including: ensuring breaks are included in support plans; expanding access to breaks via flexible funding; reviewing short break opportunities and commissioning arrangements; monitoring the provision of breaks within support plans.
- **Edinburgh Joint Carers Strategy 2019–2022** identifies short breaks as a priority, with a section focused on short breaks. They give details of carer engagement activity to develop the strategy, actions underway and areas for development including expanding existing short breaks and developing new short break opportunities. The implementation plan outlines actions and progress measurements.
- **Dumfries and Galloway Carers Strategy 2017–2021** details engagement with carers where short breaks were identified as a priority. Implementation plans detail actions and progress measurements.
- **Inverclyde Carer and Young Carer Strategy 2017–2022** identifies access to short breaks as a priority and has a section focused on short breaks which details actions. These include: building on existing short break provision to offer choice and flexibility; developing a range of break options; short break bureau.

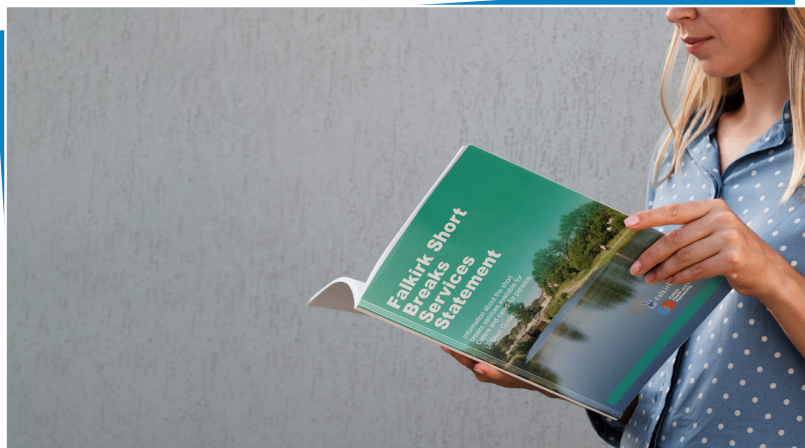
1.3 SHORT BREAK SERVICES STATEMENTS

Section 35 of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 requires local authorities to prepare, publish and review a Short Break Services Statement (SBSS).⁵

The SBSS is primarily for carers and cared-for people, setting out information about short breaks services and support available. The SBSS should help carers and cared-for people understand their rights, options and opportunities for short breaks. The legislation expects there to be involvement of carers and their representatives in preparing the SBSS.⁶

Short Break Services Statements were reviewed to assess if active reviews had taken place since being produced in 2018–2019, in response to the Carers Act.

Almost all areas (28) mentioned that a review would take place annually (three areas* did not mention when their SBSS would be reviewed). However, in most areas evidence of this annual review could not be found. In two areas (**Aberdeenshire** and **West Lothian**) the SBSS was dated 2020, however it was unclear if these were updated SBSSs.



* The Short Break Services Statement for East Ayrshire could not be found in internet search

Some good practice examples from SBSSs:

- Three areas (**East Renfrewshire, Falkirk, South Ayrshire**) note the date when the annual review was carried out on the front page of their SBSS documents.
- **West Dunbartonshire** similarly note the review date on front page of their SBSS document, however this had not been updated.
- **Perth and Kinross** mentioned the SBSS review in their **Carers Strategy** and **Dundee** mentioned the SBSS review in their **Annual Performance Report**.
- **Falkirk** have produced a separate ‘**Short Break Services Statement Guide**’ for carers (this was mentioned as an example of good practice in one of the focus groups).
- **Aberdeenshire** have produced an ‘**Unpaid Carers Information Pack**’ (updated in 2020) that has information about short breaks.
- **East Lothian** have produced **three SBSSs**: one for adult carers; one for young carers; and one for parent carers, with tailored information in each.
- Several local areas have used the information leaflet developed by the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, Shared Care Scotland and Dundee Carers Centre, ‘**What to expect when you are considering a short break**’.
- Seven areas referenced their Short Break Bureaus or services (**Aberdeenshire; Angus; Falkirk; Inverclyde; Midlothian; North Lanarkshire; South Lanarkshire**).
- Some other areas have dedicated short break teams or hubs within their carers centre (e.g. **Dundee Carers Centre; VOCAL’s Wee Breaks; Dumfries and Galloway Carers Centre Short Break Project**).

⁵ Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, Statutory Guidance

⁶ Making a Statement, Shared Care Scotland, 2018

1.4 MARKET FACILITATION / STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING PLANS

A search was undertaken to assess the prominence of short breaks in market facilitation or strategic commissioning plans. This search was more challenging as local areas call these plans different things, and they appear in different formats e.g. as a standalone plan or as part of the broader HSCP strategic plan.

Overall, in the 26 strategies which were found, specific mention of short breaks was limited.

However, the following areas of interesting practice were noted:

- **Aberdeen City's 'Stay Well, Stay Connected' Market Position Statement 2020–2022** has a section on short breaks, as well as a section on market development opportunities for short breaks.
- **East Renfrewshire's Strategic Commissioning Plan 2018–2021** mentions short breaks in both the 'transformation and sustainability' and 'prevention and early intervention' sections of the plan. Plans to introduce alternative models of creative and short breaks are noted.
- **Falkirk's Carers Strategy** mentions market shaping to build on respite, creative breaks and new commissioning approaches as key priorities for development and action (also included in the Carer Strategy action plan). **Market Facilitation Plan 2016–2019** also mentions the spend on short breaks, current contracts and areas for future contract development.
- **Moray's 'Living Longer, Living Better' Joint Commissioning Strategy 2013–2023** notes the role of short breaks in moving towards community-based support and mentions the development of short breaks as a priority for development in commissioning.
- **South Lanarkshire's Strategic Commissioning Plan 2019–2022** notes increased support to carers, including short breaks, in their strategic commissioning intentions.
- **Clackmannanshire and Stirling's Market Position Statement 2017–2020** notes future opportunities to shape short break initiatives and options under the 'better health' and 'better care' priorities.





FOCUS GROUPS

PART TWO: FOCUS GROUPS

UNDERSTANDING AND SHARING LOCAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

To supplement the desk-based research, two focus group sessions took place in late July and early August.

The sessions were very well attended with a total of 19 people involved from 14 HSCP areas across Scotland (Aberdeenshire; Argyll and Bute; Dumfries and Galloway; Edinburgh; Glasgow; Highland; Inverclyde; North Ayrshire; North Lanarkshire; Perth and Kinross; Scottish Borders; South Ayrshire; South Lanarkshire; West Lothian).

The focus groups sought to gather feedback on:

- **Positive policy and practice developments** that have supported the development of short break variety, including the use of Promoting Variety principles.
- **Any challenges or gaps** – and what would help in future.

Headline feedback aligned with findings from the desk-based research – and the three stages of market shaping identified in Promoting Variety. Feedback themes from focus group discussions have therefore been grouped under these three stages:

- **Stage 1: Intelligence**
- **Stage 2: Ideas**
- **Stage 3: Implementation**

Five polls were also conducted at each focus group, with results included after the headline narrative feedback below.



STAGE 1: INTELLIGENCE

LEARNING FROM COVID-19

- Several participants felt Covid-19 had increased awareness and appreciation in their local area of the work that unpaid carers do.
- Others noted that Covid-19 had highlighted that carers are not asking for a lot – small things had often made a big difference.
- Many areas noted that the third sector has been very creative during Covid-19 and felt that these positive ways of working and thinking creatively should continue to be encouraged and supported.
- Several areas noted that some carers are keen to return to ‘what they know’ and access more ‘traditional’ breaks such as respite and day care.

COPRODUCTION AND INVOLVEMENT

- Several participants highlighted the importance of carer involvement in the design and development of creative short breaks. A coproduction approach was reported as helping to better understand what carers want, and what will make the biggest difference to their lives.
- Some areas have tested a range of approaches and models during Covid in collaboration with carers. This has been very positive and allowed models to be quickly adapted, and at times discarded, based on carers’ needs and feedback.

SHORT BREAK SERVICES STATEMENTS

- One area highlighted that their SBSS had given a framework to have conversations with partner organisations and carers. It had also led to the review of strategic direction and expansion of their short break options.

GATHERING DATA AND INTELLIGENCE

- Some areas are undertaking a data gathering exercise, to get a better understanding of carer numbers and demographics in the area.
- One area highlighted that there is a difference between ‘data’ and ‘intelligence’, noting that they have lots of data but less intelligence about what carers want in terms of short breaks. The carers centre is now engaging with carers to gather this intelligence.
- Another area shared feedback from a recent carer survey which showed that most carers who responded hadn’t accessed a short break. This contrasted with a huge amount of local innovation around short breaks during Covid-19 and a high-level of uptake reported by commissioned services. It was suggested that greater clarity of the distinction between contracts (and possibly terminology) for short breaks and carer support may be helpful for future commissioning and monitoring.



STAGE 2: IDEAS

INNOVATIVE, OUTCOMES-FOCUSED APPROACHES

- The importance of not being bound by 'what we procure or commission' was highlighted. It was more important to focus on understanding what is meaningful for carers and the impact of short breaks.
- In many areas short break grants had been used for practical items to support carers' wellbeing e.g.
 - *a new fence (to play in the garden with pets)*
 - *a bike to allow the carer to get outside and exercise.*
- One area noted that overnight breaks are highly valued by carers. The HSCP set up have set up and funded independent properties (through existing budgets) to provide individualised and flexible overnight breaks. Relationships are being built with local providers to support this new development and identify carers who might benefit.

SUPPORTING CREATIVITY AND CHOICE

- One area noted they are considering the whole range of short break opportunities and have invited applications for unallocated Carers Act funding to bring in fresh ideas. Ideas will be sense-checked with the carers centre before implementation.
- Several areas mentioned the use of SDS options to encourage choice and creative breaks. However, some noted that carers sometimes prefer 'traditional' forms of respite (and not to use Option One), others mentioned that carers have preferred to use Option Two which had allowed for greater flexibility.
- Creativity requires individual and organisational capacity. If people and organisations (e.g. social workers; local organisations) are working over capacity then it is difficult for them to be creative. More capacity needs to be created in the system to support creative thinking.

RESOURCES FROM NCOS

- The value of the resources produced by Shared Care Scotland and the other National Carer Organisations was highlighted. These were seen as hugely helpful in sparking ideas, providing frameworks and designing new ways of doing things.
- One area noted they used Promoting Variety to inform strategic discussions at the IJB and as evidence in their Integrated Impact Assessment. Another area had come across the guide after designing their approach to short breaks which gave reassurance that they had taken the right principles and practices into account.

USING TECHNOLOGY

- Some areas are exploring the greater use of technology and telecare to support delivery of short breaks. This included:
 - *apps to signpost people to services*
 - *apps to support independent travel*
 - *grants for devices to allow digital support*
 - *having tech-enabled show homes where people can try out technology.*
- One area is considering how existing technological developments (an Overnight Emergency Responder Service), could potentially be used or adapted to support carers who need unplanned short breaks.

STAGE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

LOCAL COORDINATION AND ACTION PLANNING

- Several areas had set up specific working groups, such as a Carer Strategy Implementation Groups or Advisory Groups, to coordinate and implement actions.
- Others have set up working groups to specifically look at options for short breaks, as well as how best to use funding to increase choice and variety.

BUREAUCRACY

- Some participants highlighted the slow-moving bureaucratic processes within HSCPs, which they felt were a challenge to the development of creative approaches and the pace of change. However, others felt these bureaucratic processes were ‘a necessary evil’ to ensure robust outcomes.
- Some areas noted that they were often keen to ‘get the funding out the door’ to commissioned organisations as quickly as possible, to enable flexible and quick responses.
- Another area noted challenges with using SDS, with some carers being reluctant to engage with the bureaucratic assessment process.

TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS

- Many participants spoke of the importance of building relationships and trust – within the HSCP; with other HSCP areas; with carers; with the third sector (particularly carers centres) and commissioned organisations. Working together was seen as key to delivering change.
- A few areas noted that it was sometimes a difficult balancing act to meet the carer and cared-for person’s needs and ensure the short break was person-centred.
- Several areas highlighted that it was important to listen to and understand different perspectives and expectations, and to provide information about what alternative break opportunities might be available.

COMMISSIONING CONSISTENCY

- A few areas noted inconsistencies in the availability of short break opportunities across their area (both rural and urban areas). Work is underway to develop commissioning approaches that address these inconsistencies.
- One area noted that the way their short breaks budgets are currently set (based on the number of nights) is unhelpful. It was felt that an outcomes-focused approach to commissioning would help increase equality and consistency of opportunities.

INVESTING IN CARERS SUPPORT

- Several areas noted that responsibility for carers support and short breaks is often picked up by local workers as an add-on to their already busy role and workload. This approach meant it was sometimes difficult to understand where responsibility for carers support fits within local structures.
- The importance of resourcing carers/short break support and development was highlighted by several areas, for example, having a dedicated post or team. A few areas noted that they were considering resourcing a dedicated short break worker or team.
- It was felt short break workers/teams (or bureaux) should take a networking role (not just brokerage) to provide coordination and specialist short break advice and support to carers and social care professionals.
- Others also noted the importance of adequately resourcing carers centres to be able to provide support.

LEADERSHIP

- Several areas noted the importance of strategic leadership within the HSCP. For example, having a senior manager or lead commissioner who supports a collaborative approach to commissioning can help strengthen relationships with commissioned organisations (e.g. via Alliance contracting) and with carers.
- Senior managers or lead commissioners who support experimentation and testing of different approaches – with an understanding and acceptance that some of these won't work – was also seen as key to developing new ways of working.

DRIVERS OF CHANGE

- Many participants noted the importance of policy and legislative developments, such as the Carers Act and the Feeley Review. It was felt that these developments had put the spotlight on the importance of supporting carers and given a framework and impetus to drive changes. Several areas mentioned that their IJBs are now seeking to move forward at pace with this work.
- It was noted that it will be interesting to see how the recommendations of the Feeley Review are implemented in relation to short breaks. For example, will this result in services being provided across HSCP boundaries, or could it mean a more centralised approach to funding and budgets for short breaks?



FOCUS GROUP POLL RESULTS

Does your Carers Strategy explain your approach to providing a variety of short breaks?



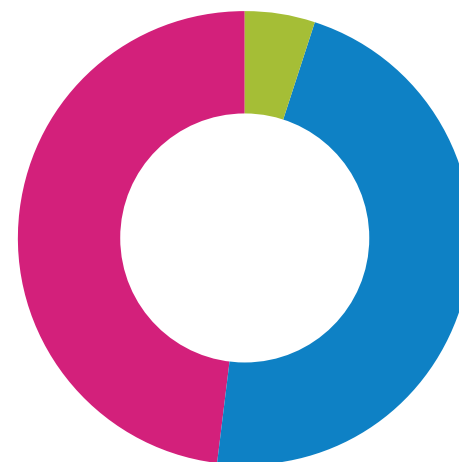
- Yes 50%
- Not yet – still updating our strategy 30%
- No 20%

Has your Short Break Services Statement improved the amount and variety of short breaks in your area?



- Yes – really helped 9%
- To a degree 17%
- Not really 30%
- Unsure 44%

Has your Short Break Services Statement helped carers understand their short break options?



- Yes – really helped 5%
- To a degree 47%
- No / unsure 48%

Do/did you directly involve carers in the development and review of your Short Break Services Statement?

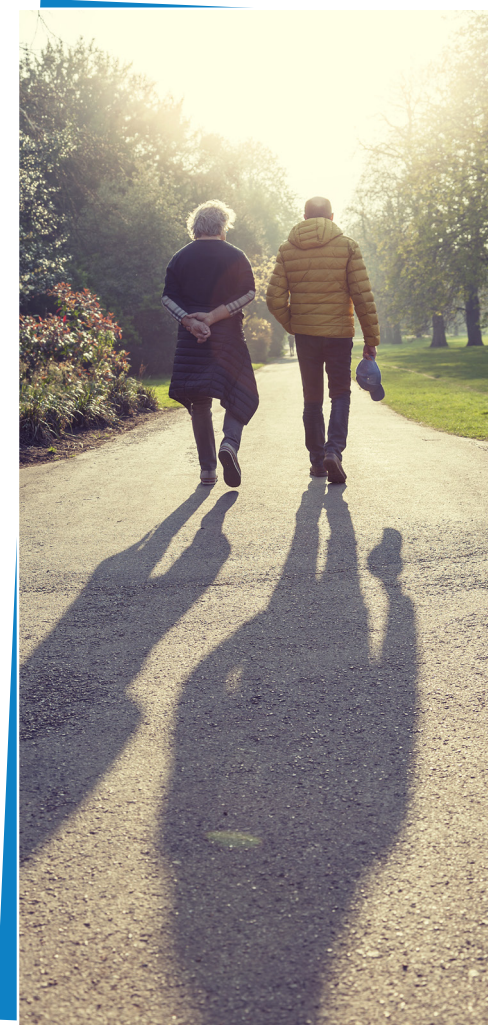


- Yes – e.g. events/meetings with carers 38%
- To a degree – e.g. shared for consultation 14%
- Unsure 48%

Have you used Promoting Variety to help with market shaping for short breaks?



- Yes a lot 5%
- To a degree 20%
- Not really 15%
- Unsure 60%



RESEARCH REFLECTIONS

Some reflections and potential ideas for future development based on the research findings are offered for consideration:



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

It was notable that when strategies for carers and commissioning reference short breaks, they do so in regard to independence, choice, prevention, sustainability and coproduction. This suggests a good alignment between Promoting Variety principles and HSCP priorities.

MEASURES AND INDICATORS OF PROGRESS

The research suggests it may be helpful to have a set of indicators that could be used to evidence progress towards the increased variety and choice of short break options. Some areas are already using indicators such as:

- number of carers accessing a short break
- types of carer breaks
- impact of carer break
- % of carers who feel supported to continue their caring role.

However, these indicators are not used consistently across HSCP areas. Moreover the consistency (or inconsistency) of current language and terminology poses a challenge to easily or accurately measure progress. A consistent and common language to describe short breaks, respite (traditional and innovative) and carer support would help future progress measurement.

SHARED CARE SCOTLAND AND NCO RESOURCES

These resources were noted for their value, informing commissioning planning and practice. Some areas had made limited use of these resources in the development of their commissioning approaches. It may be useful to provide additional support to help HSCPs to understand how make best use of these resources. This could include, 'how to use...' sessions or inviting HSCPs to share examples of how resources have been used.

SHARING EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICE

The focus group attendance and discussions illustrated a clear desire for future practice sharing around short breaks.

COMMON THEMES

It was noted that many of the topics and themes discussed by commissioners at the focus groups align with discussions with carers centres and carers themselves. Future opportunities could be sought to highlight or explore these system-wide shared aspirations for change.

RESOURCING SHORT BREAK / CARER SUPPORT

There were notable mentions of the importance of adequately resourcing and focusing on carer support and short break activities – and that this support should be more than a brokerage role. For example short break workers, teams or bureaux taking a coordination, facilitative and advisory role for carers and for social care staff. Examples of where this works well could be shared as good practice, to build understanding of how this approach has a positive impact on the promotion, delivery and coordination of short breaks.

LEARNING ABOUT THE THREE STAGES OF MARKET SHAPING

The importance of the three stages of market shaping were reaffirmed, with examples of the creative ideas and coproduction that can follow. HSCPs are increasingly familiar with improvement methodology. Making more explicit links between this and the three stages may promote wider understanding of Promoting Variety's principles as valuable parts of the design, commissioning and improvement cycle.

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