



# Broker Bites



Your quarterly update from The Community Brokerage Network

## Hello there!

Welcome to this special Carers' Week edition of Broker Bites!

Carers are amazing. That's why we at The Community Brokerage Network want to celebrate the work and value of unpaid carers all over the UK; their time, energy and care; and how they put others before themselves on a daily basis.

We hear from two incredible carers, Karen and Deborah, who tell us about their experiences as carers and what they think about the support currently available to them.

We also hear from North, South and East Ayrshire Carers' Centres about the services they offer carers and the support they can provide.

Our short animated video, 'Carers' Week 2021', gives some facts and figures about the number of people across the UK who have caring responsibilities, along with the impact being a carer can have on a person's mental and physical well-being. Just [click here](#) to view!

We hope you enjoy the issue!

Happy Carers' Week 2021,

The Community Brokerage Network



## Carer in Focus: Karen Albrow

Karen Albrow works part time as an Assistant Support Worker within a carers' centre and is currently a student on our SQA course. She is also a carer for her 14-year-old son Ben, who has epilepsy and profound learning difficulties.

*“Being a carer is a tough gig. We thrive on chaos..”*

“My job is to listen to folk: the words they use; the tone of their voice. I listen to the anxiety in their voice and try to give solutions and information and reassure them. I recommend things that might help them, like yoga and breathing sessions to help calm them down.”

“Being a carer is a tough gig. We thrive on chaos and your family is run like a business when you have a child with disabilities. [The government] has announced support for lots of areas in social work but there's no talk of support for unpaid carers. I don't understand why we're not recognised as a stronger force in society. We're just invisible. It's helpful speaking to other carers to try and make sense of it all.”

Our former chairperson Anne-Marie got in touch with Karen about our SQA course, The Community Brokerage Award, a few years ago, which Karen says gave her the knowledge to help another carer at her work:

“He was anxious as his mother had been diagnosed with dementia, he was middle-aged at the time and didn't know what the future would bring. The SQA course gave me knowledge that I could pass down to him about applying for telecare equipment through his mother's SDS budget. There's a lot of misinformation and confusion surrounding SDS and a lot of information provided for carers is just guidelines (which is often different from what local authority offers). There are two other unpaid carers on the SQA course.”

*“I don't understand why we're not recognised as a stronger force in society. We're just invisible.”*

Over the years Karen has become used to the non-stop pace of life as a carer and says it's a routine that nobody can prepare for:

“As a carer you become used to dealing with whatever comes your way and very quickly. You may or may not make the right decisions but life is like a ball that keeps on rolling for

decades and you're just constantly trying to put the brakes on it. Anybody can suddenly become a carer too. You're told that you might get married and have children but nobody ever tells you that you could also become a carer.”

“My advice to new carers would be to get in contact with as many people and groups as possible and to link in with those who understand. The Community Brokerage Network would be one of them.”

# NHS 'Near Me'

NHS 'Near Me' is a secure online platform that allows health professionals and their clients to participate in video meetings. It enables person-centred care through health and social care consultations while maintaining physical distancing. We are currently trialling the 'Near Me' service with a view to offering it as a new way of allowing our brokers to keep in touch with you and accompany you in any social care meeting you would like us to be present at.

To find out more about the NHS 'Near Me' service, click [here](#).



## Carer in Focus: Deborah Gardner

*Deborah and her husband Adam are carers for their two-year-old son, Arizona. Here, she tells us of the mental and physical struggles faced by unpaid carers and why carers everywhere should be better supported. . .*

Mine and millions of others are the carers' faces the government doesn't see or care about when formulating policy. We save the UK literally millions of pounds in care costs. But when we burn out, what happens? Who picks up the pieces?

With [my husband] Adam and I, when one of us is out of action, it's an absolutely overwhelming load for the other person. There's no room for us to be anything other than 100%.

For example, before Adam's surgery, I was signed off sick for 2 weeks. I have been unwell. But then he had to have an operation and so his unwell trumps my unwell. This is neither of our faults - it's simply life. But when you're dealing with medically complex children, there's no margin of error.



Deborah says more needs to be done to support the mental and physical health of unpaid carers.

It's not even close to caring for a typical 2-year-old. It's everything a regular experience demands and then 100% more on daily therapies, appointments, medical administration, hospital visits, fundraising for vital equipment, researching the best treatments, chasing and complaining about medical practitioners, and so much more. Constantly fighting for your child's basic rights and needs. All on an extreme level of exhaustion, and while 'working' full-time - and by that, I mean working for money.



*“The pressure we feel is constantly beyond what we’d wish on anyone ...the longer carers are left without support, the more precarious the state of their mental and physical health becomes.”*

We've repeatedly told our local authority that we are burnt out after 2 and a half years of extreme trauma and exhaustion. We're both battling chronic health issues and our mental health hangs on by a thread a lot of the time. I've sat in front of local social workers and sobbed, explaining how there's been so many nights I've almost gone to A&E and said I simply can't do it anymore. It makes no difference to them.

“He's too young...”, “All toddlers are hard work...” and “He gets his needs met by you, family and friends...” are included in the excuses we get for providing us no respite whatsoever. We are extremely lucky that neither of our health problems are enough to render us incapable, and that there are two of us in the first place - but the pressure we feel constantly is beyond what I'd wish on anyone. And the longer carers are left without support, the more precarious the state of their mental and physical health becomes.

If you have the energy and would like to help support carers like us, there's loads of ways to take action on the [Carers UK website](#).

# Carers' Centres Near You

**South Ayrshire Carers' Centre** supports both Adult and Young carers who are unpaid and who look after family or friends throughout South Ayrshire by providing practical and emotional support, information & advice, benefit maximization, support groups, signposting, 1:1 support.

If you would like more information, please contact us:

Telephone: 01292 263000

Email: [southayrshire.carers@unity-enterprise.com](mailto:southayrshire.carers@unity-enterprise.com)



**Unity Support for Carers**  
SOUTH AYRSHIRE

## East Ayrshire Carers' Centre

Our vision is to create a carer-led service by placing carers at the heart of the organisation and ensuring the services are effective and accessible to all carers, regardless of location (rural or urban), personal circumstances or their caring situation.

Over the past year, we have managed to -

- Secure £1.5 million in benefits for carers
- Give out £19,410 in individual grants for carers' respite activities
- Register 701 carers with our service
- Save carers £26,470 in their energy bills
- Provide 1:1 support to carers 23,785 times

Email: [admin@eastayrshirecarers.org.uk](mailto:admin@eastayrshirecarers.org.uk)

Kilmarnock: 01563 571533

Cumnock: 01290 426404

Dalmellington: 01292 550696



**North Ayrshire Carers' Centre** offers information, advice and support to young and adult carers living within North Ayrshire, Arran & Cumbrae.

If you provide practical and/or emotional support to another person who needs help due to an illness, drug or alcohol misuse, disability or the effects of age, then you would be regarded as an unpaid carer.

We can assist you with:

- Information, e.g. on benefits, respite and transport;
- Advice on Carers' Rights;
- Contact with other Carers;
- Help with form filling;
- Advocacy;
- Information on Adult Carers Support Plans & Young Carers Statements;
- Relaxation through alternative therapies;
- Regular Drop-in Groups;
- Outreach;
- Training;
- Access to the Carers Appreciation Card;
- 1:1 Support;
- Young Carers Support.

If you think you are a carer, contact the Carers' Centre today:

Tel: 01294-311333

Email: [northayrshire.carers@unity-enterprise.com](mailto:northayrshire.carers@unity-enterprise.com)



## Our Carers' Week Animation



Click [here](#) to view our latest YouTube video for Carers' Week 2021.

While you're there, why not check out the other videos on our channel too!

# Carers Trust: Going Further For Student Carers

*The Carers Trust 'Going Further for Student Carers: Recognition Award' is designed to encourage universities and colleges across Scotland to step up their support for student carers. Here, Carers Trust tells Broker Bites more on how they hope the award will bring about real change...*

[The award] aims to make it easier for Scotland's 27 colleges to identify, support and report on student carers and recognise good practice.

Launched on 14 March 2019, this award incentivises and encourages colleges to adopt a sustainable and whole institution approach.

Carers Trust Scotland is grateful to the Scottish Funding Council for their generous support, which has made the Going Further for Student Carers Recognition Award and the work surrounding it possible.

*It's time for student carers  
to be heard in Scotland.*

All in all, carers face a difficult time at college. Often student carers feel that they are being pulled two ways, often more, if you take employment and trying to have time to socialise with friends and family. On the one hand carers want to do well in their studies, be independent, achieve their goals, ambitions and aspirations; and they also feel that they need to care for their families or friends.

That is why we are asking all 27 colleges in Scotland to make student carers count when they look at the different groups that may need extra support to fulfil their potential.

Our engagement with student carers and other stakeholders demonstrates time and again the extremely challenging conditions endured by student carers that is negatively impacting on them being able to enter, sustain and meet their true potential at college.

It's time for student carers to be heard in Scotland.

Click [here](#) for more information about the Going Further For Student



# The Community Brokerage Award

Introducing our very own SQA certified course:  
The Community Brokerage Award!

Covering all aspects of community brokerage relating to self-directed support, the course is worth 30 credits at SCQF Level 7 and is comprised of 5 modules, delivered over 9 months.



## Comments from past participants. . .

*“This course has enabled me to see how SDS principles and values can be applied to different areas of my own and other people’s lives.”*

*“My confidence has improved by doing this [course], both personally and professionally.”*

*“You all did a great job and I’m proud to have been a part of it.”*

*“I would definitely recommend the award—their presentations have been superb and the support is second to none.”*



For more information about the course and details on how to sign up for the next intake, please contact our SQA Advisor and Co-ordinator, Jenny Reekie.

[jennyreekie@communitybrokeragenetwork.co.uk](mailto:jennyreekie@communitybrokeragenetwork.co.uk)

# About Us

We are The Community Brokerage Network and we work across Ayrshire, supporting people who receive social care. We help people get the most appropriate and beneficial care possible by providing a broker to assist them, free of charge.



The brokers at the network can help people prepare for social care assessments that may be carried out by their local health and social care partnership or, if this has already taken place, they can help people make the most of any budget or resource that is made available to them through any self directed support option

Regardless of whether a person requires formal support or not, our priority is to help them develop their informal support networks. This can be done by connecting them with relevant activity groups and services available in their community and with people who share their hobbies and interests.

Where a person qualifies for formal support, we can help them make the most of the support and care they receive.

## Our Goals

We are funded by the Scottish Government through the **Support in the Right Direction** funding stream. We have three main outcomes:

- To help people and their carers feel more informed, listened to and less stressed.
- To ensure people and their carers can creatively and flexibly plan to achieve personal outcomes, including accessing community assets.
- To ensure people and their carers have increased skills so are better able to manage social care packages.

**Inspiring Scotland** monitor our work on behalf of the Scottish Government and we send regular performance reports to enable the release of our ongoing funding.

This funding enables us to provide our services free of charge.

To find out more, visit:

[www.inspiringscotland.org.uk](http://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk)

**INSPIRING  
SCOTLAND**

## Contact Us...



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[www.communitybrokeragenetwork.co.uk](http://www.communitybrokeragenetwork.co.uk)



You can also reach us on our hotline: 07769 698 606