Core Principles for working with carers and young carers
How to use these principles

The principles are based on key outcomes for carers and young carers. Each outcome is linked to the knowledge and skills workers need to work effectively with carers to achieve this outcome.

You can use the principles to inform learning outcomes for workforce education in relation to carers, such as:

- induction and CPD modules for staff
- health and social care courses in higher and further education
- reflecting on your own practice

Managers and employers can use the principles to support staff to improve their practice with carers, which can be linked to their career development frameworks.

The full version of the principles contains links to existing skills and career development frameworks such as the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework, Continuous Learning Framework, the National Occupational Standards and relevant codes of practice.

Visit www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/equalpartnersincare for links to related information and learning resources to help you reflect on and improve your practice.
How the levels work

There are three levels which are designed to work cumulatively. Every worker who may come into contact with carers in any setting should have least level 1 awareness of carers. Those with more regular contact with carers should also have level 2, while those with a leadership role should also have level 3. Progression through the levels should not be restricted by job role but guided by your level of involvement in working towards a culture where carers are recognised and valued as equal partners.

Level 1

Carer Aware

This level is for all workers (including volunteers) who may come into contact with the public and therefore carers. This supports the Carers Strategy vision that ‘it is everyone’s job to identify and support carers.’

Level 2

Caring Together

This level is for all workers who have regular contact with carers and families, or who have a specific role in carer support.

Level 3

Planning with Carers as Equal Partners

This level is for those with a leadership role in planning, shaping, delivering or commissioning services. This may include workforce training and supporting staff.

Please note: this document is a summary of the principles. You can download the full version from www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/equalpartnersincare
Key knowledge and skills

The full version of the principles has more detail of the knowledge and skills workers need for each outcome and at each level. However, there are overarching themes which will help you work towards all of the outcomes and improve your practice in working with carers.

**Level 1: Carer Aware**
- Understand that anyone can be a carer
- Provide relevant information at the right time
- Signpost to support and assessment

*Personalisation, person-centred and personal outcomes are different approaches but they all involve working with people in a way that starts with what they want to achieve and working together to achieve that. People and carers should feel that they are listened to and valued rather than just receiving services. Health and social services are both trying to change how we work so that people are at the centre of what we do.*

**Level 2: Caring Together**
- Understand and use a person-centred, outcomes-focused approach
- Sensitively manage conflict in the caring relationship
- Be aware of equality and diversity issues

*Some groups have barriers to accessing support due to age, disability, ethnicity, sexuality or other reasons. You can help to overcome these in a way that is appropriate to their needs. This is sometimes called ‘cultural competence’.*

**Level 3: Planning with Carers as Equal Partners**
- Involve carers in planning services
- Support staff to reflect on their practice and work in a person-centred way
- Contribute to change in culture

*There are major changes taking place in health and social services in Scotland which all promote a focus on personal outcomes for people using services and their carers. The principles have been designed to link to these and help contribute to a culture where workers, carers and the people they care for are recognised and valued as equal partners.*
Who are carers?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a family member or friend. They may care for an older person, someone who is disabled, has a long-term illness, mental health problems or is affected by alcohol or drug misuse.

Carers can be any age, from children to older people, and from every culture and community. Some carers may be disabled or have care needs themselves. They may be parents, spouses, grandparents, daughters, brothers, same sex partners, friends or neighbours.

A young carer is a child or young person who has a significant role in looking after someone in their family. They may have practical caring responsibilities or be emotionally affected by a family member’s care needs.

Sometimes the word ‘carer’ can cause confusion as people use it to describe care workers or personal assistants. In the Carers Strategy and throughout these principles, we mean unpaid carers. Carers receiving benefits related to their caring role are still considered unpaid. Although people with a parenting role are often called carers too, the Strategy refers to parents who care for a child with additional care or support needs.

The care provided by carers saves the Scottish taxpayer more than £10 billion a year – the cost of a second NHS. It’s important to recognise and support carers and enable them to continue caring while ensuring their quality of life is maintained.

Note: In this document, the word ‘carer’ means carers of all ages unless we refer specifically to young carers.
Why equal partners in care?

Carers have a unique role in the life of the person they care for. When we are planning and delivering care for that person, it’s important that we involve their carer. They have valuable knowledge to contribute and any decision will have an impact on their caring role. Carers, the person they care for, and workers from health and social services should work together as partners to achieve better outcomes for all involved.

Carers have the right to play an equal and active role in care planning and decisions. This does not mean that all carers are the same or that the caring is shared equally. Every carer has a different role, but the same right to have the support and information they need and to be as involved as they choose to be. Equality is about having rights and choices.

It’s important that workers also feel valued as equal partners. This will help create a culture of mutual respect and partnership.

“We recognise carers as equal partners in the delivery of care in Scotland and fully acknowledge the expertise, knowledge and the quality of care they give.”

*Caring Together* the Carers Strategy for Scotland 2010-15

What are the core principles for?

The health and social services workforce is very diverse and we recognise that learning can take place in many different settings. The core principles are intended to underpin workforce education and ensure that workers in health, social services and other services that work with carers have a shared understanding of the knowledge and skills they need.

The principles have been developed at a time of significant change in the public sector in Scotland. With the Integration of Health and Social Care, the principles will help ensure a consistent approach among workers in the public services.

Other major changes include Self-Directed Support and the personalisation agenda, the Promoting Excellence framework for working with people with dementia and Person-centred Health and Care, which all promote a focus on personal outcomes for people using services and their carers. The principles have been designed to complement and link to these areas. Rather than add to the list, the principles will support these existing workstreams and help ensure that we are all working in a consistent way to achieve better outcomes for all.