

Carer Council Communique

March 2024

Update

The Carer Council's second meeting commenced on 5 March 2024 and continued on 13 March 2024. While the initial meeting was scheduled as a full day meeting, the ambitious agenda proved difficult to fulfil, and the Members agreed to meet for a further 2 hours as an evening session to finalise its advice to the Honourable Katrine Hildyard, Minister for Child Protection.

Meeting topics

On the agenda for discussion was:

1. The future of caring: South Australia's strategy for the recruitment and retention of family-based carers 2024-2026 (the Future of Caring Strategy)
2. The Statement of Commitment to SA Foster and Kinship Carers
3. Care Concerns
4. Respite

Rationale for change in topics

The original topics planned for discussion at this meeting included:

- retention and attraction of carers
- carer remuneration
- care concerns, and
- the legislation review.

In consultation with the Minister, discussion of carer remuneration and the legislation review were postponed, the rationale for this postponement being:

- The draft amendment bill of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* is unavailable at this stage and is required to commence the legislation review topic.
- The Minister requested the Carer Council to provide feedback on the Statement of Commitment to Foster and Kinship Carers.
- The Minister and the Carer Council agreed on the topic of respite as a timely choice, given the recent Flexible Respite Policy announcement and availability of existing and extensive feedback from the carer community on respite to brief the Carer Council.

- It was deemed that the carer remuneration topic would be addressed at a later date when adequate time is available, given it is one of the most important topics for the carer community and requires significant attention.

Attendance

5 March 2024

Carer Council Members: Alexandra Ingleton, Dana Wright, Ellese Nelson, Emily Ware, Gai McMichael, Gail Ward, Jakob Schmaal, Kailah Hurditch, Kate Thomas, Lorraine Joy (Chair), Peter Kennedy, Suzanne Scanlon

Support: Dana Shen (Facilitator), Lauren Gibbs (Carer Council Project Lead, CF&KC-SA), Fiona Endacott (CEO, CF&KC-SA)

Apologies: N/A

Guest speakers:

Presentation on the Future of Caring Strategy and the Statement of Commitment (1 hour):

- Jackie Bray, Chief Executive, DCP
- Shirley Smith, A/Executive Director, Strategy, Partnerships and Reform, DCP

Presentation on Care Concerns Reform (1 hour):

- Kitty McLean, Director, Quality and Practice DCP; and
- Isabella Ciekowski, Lead Project Officer – Practice Reform and Improvement

Presentation and discussion on respite (1 hour):

- Susan Lane (CF&KC-SA Member and author of the Final Report on the CAFFSA Respite Care Project (October 2018), as the Policy and Advocacy Lead, October 2018)

13 March (continuation of meeting)

Carer Council Members: Alexandra Ingleton, Dana Wright, Gai McMichael, Gail Ward (Chair), Kailah Hurditch, Lorraine Joy, Peter Kennedy, Suzanne Scanlon

Support: Lauren Gibbs (Carer Council Project Lead, CF&KC-SA)

Apologies: Ellese Nelson, Kate Thomas

Absent: Emily Ware, Jakob Schmaal

Themes arising from the meeting

Overarching themes discussed include:

- The importance of language. Careful consideration of language in policies can make a drastic difference to the audience reading it. Policies and strategies relating to carers should always convey respect and aim to support carers in their important roles.
- Change must be measured by reliable data. Discussions about what data can and should be captured should always feature in reform work.
- Carers do not want any more "tick box" measures that implement no real change and merely "tick off" a requirement to consult.
- Action speaks louder than words. A commitment to follow through with any proposed measures or changes is of the utmost importance.
- Strategies to improve the child protection system need to be bigger and think outside the box.
- Any goals to enact change must be framed as SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-Bound).
- Ongoing review work on the effectiveness of new policies and strategies is crucial to measure success.

Themes that arose in relation to **attraction and retention of carers** include:

- Retention before attraction
- More transparency and honesty
- Data being utilised to measure effectiveness of strategies
- The five pillars of the Statement of Commitment being present
- Strategies that think outside the box and avoid repeating the same ineffective measures without success
- Communication
- Carer remuneration
- Mental health support for carers
- Complaints processes that ensure it is safe to make complaints without repercussions
- Consistency across DCP offices
- Support for burnt out DCP staff
- Accountability of staff

- Working with diverse families
- Collaboration
- Learning from DCP staff who do their jobs well

Discussion themes on the **Statement of Commitment** to Foster and Kinship Carers included:

- A need to acknowledge:
 - The diversity of carers.
 - Carers as the experts on their children and young people.
 - Carers as a voice for their children and young people as trusted adults in their lives.
- Better implementation of the Statement of commitment in practice.

Themes in discussions on **care concerns** included:

- A need to shift from punishing carers to supporting carers.
- Approaching care concerns from a holistic perspective that is therapeutic.
- Ensuring Carers are informed on the care concerns process.
- Lack of fairness to carers in the current model.
- Blame being pushed onto carers, rather than an acknowledgement of the care team as a whole.
- Bias in care concerns.
- A need for independence and transparency.

Themes that arose when discussing **respite** include:

- The need to think outside the traditional model of respite that is currently being used.
- Previous bodies of work in respite reform advocacy, which provide previous recommendations and guidance that can inform good work in this area.
- The Flexible Respite Payment as a great *start* to improving respite for carers.
- Ensuring the spotlight remains on respite, as the need for reform work is not over.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Carer Council will be held on 4 June 2024.

Approved quotes

As Chair of the Carer Council, I am delighted with the insightful contributions from our diverse group, drawing from a wealth of lived experiences and expertise. Their valuable advice on high priority carer topics: Respite Care and Care Concerns underscores our collective commitment to authentically addressing the needs of the carer community.

Lorraine Joy, Carer Council Chair

Contact

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