

NDCAN at the Carers Parliament

The Carers Parliament is an annual forum that brings together unpaid carers, carer support organisations, and decision makers to discuss carers experiences and the support carers need now and in the future. On 8 November, the 2023 Carers Parliament brought together 150 unpaid carers in Edinburgh and online, and NDCAN members Thea Laurie and Marion Ritchie were there to speak up on behalf of dementia carers.



Marion & Thea, NDCAN

The morning session provided an opportunity to hear from Maree Todd MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing & Sport, who acknowledged the value of unpaid carers and spoke about the importance of hearing directly from carers to inform decisions to change and improve how they are supported.

Later in the morning attendees had the opportunity to question the Minister; Councillor Paul Kelly, COSLA Health & Social Care Spokesperson; and Lindsay McCurley, an adult carer. The session explored issues including financial support for unpaid carers; carers' rights; and the cost of social care.

There was also an 'In Conversation' session with an adult carer and a young carer, and a presentation from two young carers ambassadors about their experiences and what they feel needs to be done to support young carers.

The afternoon brought multiple table discussions exploring issues including transitions; social security; employment and breaks from caring. Thea and Marion participated in a discussion 'Valuing Care – A Scotland that Cares'. This focused on the 5-yearly review by the Scottish Government of the National Performance Framework, which sets out a vision for national wellbeing in Scotland. The Framework has 11 National Outcomes, but no specific outcome on care. 'A Scotland That Cares' is a campaign, supported by around 60 organisations including Alzheimer Scotland, calling on the Scottish Government to create a dedicated National Outcome on Care and then to ensure it drives the new actions needed to fully value and invest in care right across Scotland.



NDCAN info stand

The discussion covered what the National Outcome could look like and what it should be measured against. Thea and Marion highlighted the importance of measuring poverty in order to improve financial support for carers; and spoke about the important role played by women, highlighting that 70% of carers are women, and the impact that caring responsibilities can have on, among other things, employment prospects and pension contributions for women. The discussion covered a range of other issues including quality of life for carers, and the importance of respite breaks. You can read more about the 'A Scotland That Cares' campaign on their [website](#).

Throughout the day Thea and Marion also hosted an NDCAN information stand, sharing information about the group's campaigning and awareness raising work and about the supports and services available from Alzheimer Scotland. The stand was a hive of activity at every break and conversations were always two ways with lots of new knowledge and information being exchanged, and valuable contacts made.

A great opportunity to advocate on behalf of dementia carers.