



# Celebrating 10 years of Respitality



# Foreword

## Respitality is celebrating 10 years!

As we celebrate 10 years of Respitality, we take a moment to reflect on the journey that began with a single philosophy – that unpaid carers need meaningful breaks to recharge and reconnect. Over the past decade, the initiative has grown from a local pilot into a powerful national movement, helping to transform lives, build meaningful partnerships, and inspire support from local and national businesses across Scotland.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the businesses who donate and promote Respitality, and to our Respitality delivery partners, all of whom have been instrumental in our success. Our Respitality Delivery Partner Network is made up by a wide range of local carer organisations of various sizes and locations. They are committed to supporting unpaid carers across Scotland to access a short break when they need it most. We have received some fantastic donations over the years and feel immensely proud to have built lasting partnerships with so many organisations who have demonstrated real commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of carers. To every carer, donor, partner and supporter – thank you.



‘Our mission is to make carers’ days with complementary short breaks within the hospitality, leisure & tourism sector as part of the social tourism movement.’

We would also like to thank the Carers Policy Unit at The Scottish Government for their continued support of Respitality.

The results presented in this 10-year celebratory report have been collated using quarterly reports from our delivery partners; data collection from our internal CRM (customer relationship management) system and website gateway; and feedback from our stakeholders – all of which demonstrates the positive impact of Respitality.



## Celebrate with us!

It’s our birthday, and you’re invited! Throughout the year, we’ll host a series of both in-person and online events and days out, connecting unpaid carers and our generous supporters, and shining a spotlight on the history of our work and our aspirations for the future. Visit our **website** and social media platforms for more information.

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# Introduction

## The concept

The concept of Respitality (combining ‘Respite’ and ‘Hospitality’) originated in the 1990s in New Hampshire, USA, thanks to Vicki Pepper. Vicki is an unpaid carer for her daughter, who has Cerebral Palsy. During a conversation with other parent carers in her area, she realised that local hotels will always have vacant rooms. It was then she began building relationships with a small number of these hotels, who could offer rooms free of charge for carers to have a night away.

Fast forward to 2008 in Copenhagen, Denmark, when the concept was presented at the annual International Short Breaks Association conference, at which Shared Care Scotland was in attendance. Don Williamson, former CEO of Shared Care Scotland, then initiated discussions with the hospitality sector about Respitality.

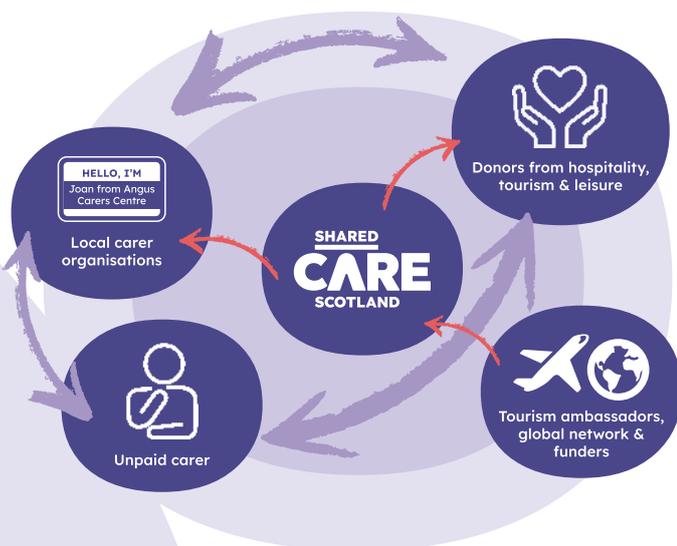
## Our purpose and guiding principles

Caring for someone can be mentally, emotionally and physically challenging, and short breaks are vital for unpaid carers’ mental and physical health. Due to financial, emotional and logistical challenges, carers often need help to access a break that is right for them. This is where Respitality comes in. By connecting carers’ organisations in Scotland with supporting tourism, hospitality and leisure businesses, unpaid carers can access donated breaks that suit their needs and help them to achieve what they want from a break. Respitality aims to create fun and meaningful breaks for unpaid carers across Scotland, providing time out from their caring responsibilities, and providing the opportunity to engage in Scotland’s vibrant tourism community.

The six guiding principles of Respitality directly link to our core values as an organisation, reflected in everything that Respitality does and through the actions of all those involved:

- ◆ **Warmth and kindness**
- ◆ **Spark**
- ◆ **Proficient**
- ◆ **Integrity**
- ◆ **Understanding**
- ◆ **Scottish**

Respitality breaks have evolved over the years, expanding beyond traditional accommodation breaks. The variety of breaks include arts and crafts; beauty therapy; leisure activities; attending events; and visiting attractions. Days out at visitor attractions and attendance at sporting events have emerged as the most common break choice in recent years.



## Respitality in Scotland: the beginning

St Andrews, Fife. Backed by Debbie MacCallum, local businesswoman; David Cochrane MBE, CEO of **HIT Scotland**; and Jim Leishman, Provost of Fife, the project set out to trial the effectiveness of a social tourism initiative for carers in Fife. The pilot was funded by both the Tourism and Events Division and the Carers Policy Unit of The Scottish Government, establishing the first time that funding has been split between two divisions for a pilot.



In February 2014, after many conversations with tourism titans, government and third sector partners, a 12-month pilot project was formally launched by Shared Care Scotland in



### 2014 highlights

- ◆ David Cochrane MBE was key in supporting the launch of Respitality in Scotland, by helping to build the reputation and awareness of Respitality within the hospitality industry. His rich experience and knowledge of the hospitality sector has been a great support to Shared Care Scotland, especially in the beginning when Shared Care Scotland had limited knowledge and contacts within hospitality. David is also one of our Respitality ambassadors, also known as a 'Tourism Champion'. We consult with these passionate individuals on a regular basis to ensure we are 'in the know' on all things Scottish tourism, ensuring Respitality is responsive to this ever-changing industry.

**"I've always been very happy to work with the great team at Shared Care Scotland. They have taken an idea and made it a reality and many years further on, Respitality is going from strength to strength. Hospitality is a very inclusive sector and has always been leading the charge when it comes to giving support to others. Respitality is a shining example of collaboration, innovation and people who care."**

David Cochrane MBE

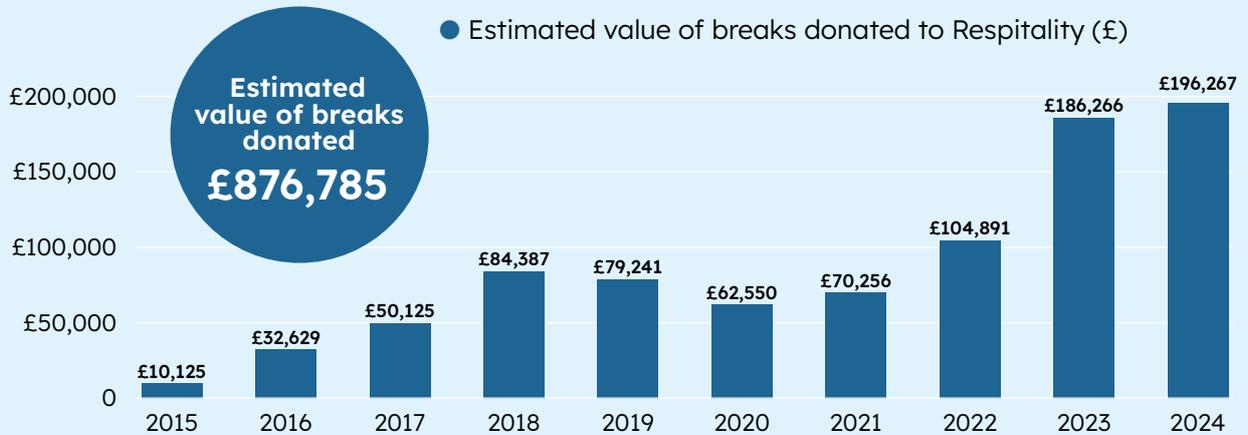
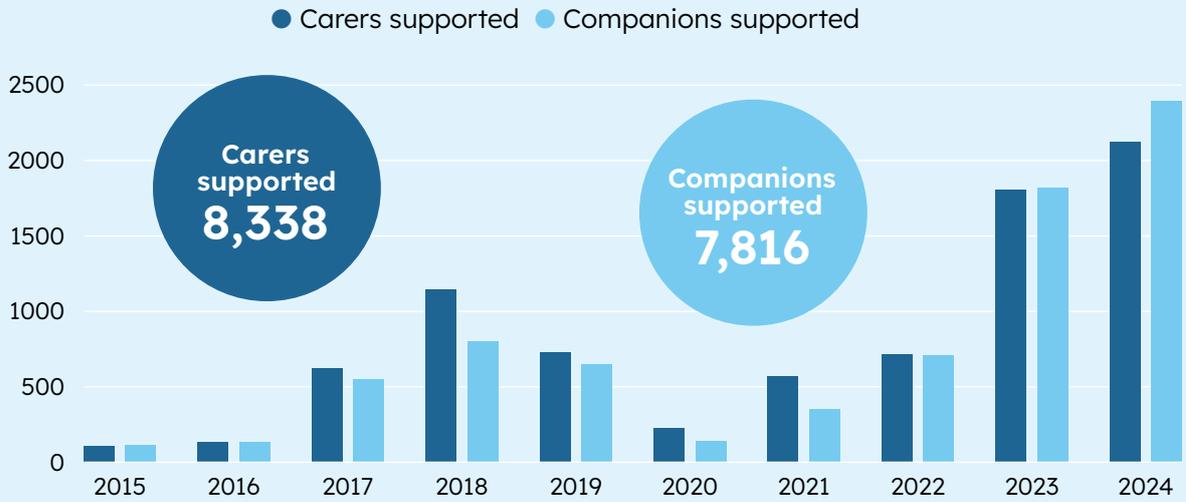


**"Congratulations on a decade of excellent work, and here's to the next chapter."**

David Cochrane MBE,  
HIT Scotland



## 10 years of Respitality: an overview



# 2015- 2016

Now it's time to join us on our Respitality journey as we look back on the last 10 years, as well as our aspirations and hopes going forward.

The first year of Respitality generated considerable results, observations, thoughts and opinions. A growing number of carer organisations joined our Delivery Partner Network. Building on the success of the initial

## Laying the foundations of Respitality

pilot in Fife, 4 additional organisations came on board during the first year:

- ▶ Lanarkshire Carers
- ▶ Dumfries and Galloway Carers Centre
- ▶ Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre
- ▶ VOCAL (Voice of Carers Across Lothian)

These early partners played a vital role in shaping the model locally, forging strong relationships with hospitality providers and adapting the approach to best suit their communities. This laid the foundations for the nationwide movement Respitality would soon become.

## 2015 highlights



- ◆ Part-time Respitality Manager post was established in 2015, employed by Shared Care Scotland.
- ◆ 69 Respitality donors were recruited across Scotland, including hotels, guest houses, and other tourism donors - more than doubling the initial recruitment target of 32.

By the end of 2016, Respitality programmes were successfully established in 8 Scottish local authority areas, exceeding initial targets. As a result, Respitality provided short breaks for unpaid carers through partnerships with the hospitality sector. During this time, 311 carers and 317 companions benefitted from breaks. During its early years, Respitality received positive feedback from both carers and tourism donors, highlighting its significant impact and potential for expansion. It gave carers' organisations a new service to offer that was innovative, proactive, and fun! The results of the first year indicate the importance of Respitality's continued development.



## Care for Carers (Edinburgh)

Care for Carers are currently a team of 12 providing support. This includes one part-time member of staff with Respitality.

- Q.** How did you first get involved with the Respitality program?
- A.** “Care for Carers were approached by the first Respitality Co-ordinator from Shared Care Scotland in 2014/2015 and signed up straight away to get on board.”
- Q.** How has the program supported your work?
- A.** “It was an obvious fit within our service provision and clearly beneficial for carers. Care for Carers has been working on creating Short Breaks for Carers since 2000, developing bespoke services. Respitality just made sense. It brought along the option of offers for carers who wanted to do something with the cared-for person. This was a positive addition to the services we were designing for carers on their own, at the time. It gave us a range of flexible options for carers, from short events to 7-night breaks, which was great. It has supported us to approach other providers for donations.”
- Q.** What benefits does Respitality offer to carers?
- A.** “Respitality offers carers access to some accommodation and break venues that would be out of their normal budget range. It enables them to go away together as a family with the cared for person or to just take a break with a friend. It is flexible and there is an interesting range of offers, there is something for everyone over the year. It is a great follow-on offer for carers who have maybe come away with us for the first time and then feel motivated to take up another new option for a break.”

Nancy Bryson, Short Breaks Coordinator  
(Care for Carers)



“I have a very full-on caring role, and I find it very hard to take a break for more than a couple of hours so to receive a Respitality break that was local and could be booked by me with very short notice was perfect. I received a voucher code from Care for Carers for the Johnnie Walker Journey flavour tour in Edinburgh.

It was brilliant! It was wonderful to have a couple of hours to myself and free my mind from any stress and worry. I went home feeling absolutely refreshed. Thank you very much for this.”

“On behalf of the whole team at Care for Carers, we want to wish Respitality a happy 10th birthday. You help take care of some of the most vulnerable people in society and help our team achieve great heights.”

Care for Carers

## 2016 highlights



- ◆ We provided a family their first holiday in 8 years, thanks to **Craigtoun Meadows Holiday Park** in St. Andrews.
- ◆ In March 2016, we hosted our first Respitality festival in St Andrews. 9 local establishments generously hosted unpaid carers and their companions for the duration of the festival, providing them with much-needed breaks. Supported by the hospitality industry and The Scottish Government, the festival aimed to offer carers an opportunity to recharge and enjoy Scottish hospitality. The event included a reception at **Rusacks Hotel** and received positive feedback from both carers and tourism donors, highlighting the significant social and economic benefits of inclusive tourism.

“We are delighted to have the opportunity to provide carers with a break and are happy to work with Respitality to help make this happen.”

Jim Gordon, owner of Craigtoun Meadows Holiday Park



“Thank you for the opportunity you gave us to have a Respitality break at the beautiful Rufflets House Hotel at St. Andrews. The hotel and grounds are truly amazing. The staff could not do enough for us and really went out of their way to make us feel special. We both felt we were treated like royalty. I don’t think we realised how much we needed the break.”

- ◆ Our Chief Executive, Don Williamson, served as President of the International Short Breaks Association between 2014-2016 and as an organisation, we were delighted to have the opportunity to host the 10th ISBA conference in Edinburgh in 2016. Around 300 delegates from 18 different countries were in attendance. The event, ‘Unlocking the Potential of Short Breaks’ focused on unlocking the barriers to short breaks and respite care.



**“Unlocking potential involves identifying and collaborating with new partners and stakeholders who can contribute to our efforts. By engaging with our wider communities, we aim to encourage them to take on some of the responsibility for supporting individuals with care needs and their caregivers. Additionally, we seek to explore the role businesses can play in supporting the communities in which they operate. Each day of the conference will focus on this overarching theme, ensuring that our discussions and activities consistently align with the goal of unlocking potential.”**

**Don Williamson, former CEO  
of Shared Care Scotland**

- ◆ Working in partnership with local tourism and hospitality businesses to offer short breaks through Respitality is mutually beneficial. Carers’ organisations gain access to Respitality breaks that enhance their support services, while businesses benefit from community engagement, positive publicity, and opportunities to give back in meaningful ways. An example of collaboration and partnership working is seen by Lanarkshire Carers, who successfully secured funding for a one-year Respitality and Volunteer Developer post. This role, funded by the local authority’s Carers Strategy Implementation Group, highlights how partnership working can unlock new resources and help embed Respitality into local support structures.

## Carer case study: Fiona

Fiona is a carer for her elderly parents and her husband. Along with a friend, Fiona enjoyed a leisurely boat trip along the Union Canal, courtesy of Seagull Trust Cruises. The break was an ideal opportunity for her to get some much-needed time away from her very demanding and stressful caring role. In a typical day, Fiona can be providing care from 7am – 9pm and finds this very exhausting.

**“The slow, leisurely pace of the boat really set the mood for the day. Glorious sunshine; listening to the birds in the trees; no traffic; seeing the ducks and their babies; surrounded by trees and nature; the river; crossing the viaduct; going under the bridges; the shades of green in neighbouring fields; watching the clouds go by as I lay out on the bow of the boat; I’m so glad I done that. I made a wee friend called Poppy who came out and joined me. It was too hot for snow angels, so we did canal angels on the bow of the boat instead! We also protected our treasure from pirates – ahoy me hearties! I felt so relaxed when I got off the boat. The pace was so peaceful. I chatted, mingled and had fun, but I took full advantage of the opportunity to take quiet moments just for me. I’ve learnt to grab moments like that when I can – they’re pretty special.”**



# 2017

In 2017, Respitality saw significant growth and impact, with 625 carers and 551 companions benefitting from breaks – more than double the previous year’s figures. The project expanded to 14 local authority areas, with 3 new carer organisations supporting Respitality.

## Taking shape nationally

The value of donated breaks increased to £50,173, with 116 businesses contributing, including national chains and independent businesses. The initiative provided a diverse range of breaks, from overnight stays to unique experiences, such as Segway tours and cake decorating classes. 2017 also highlighted the importance of partnerships and the positive impact on carers’ wellbeing and relationships.

Respitality not only provided much-needed breaks for unpaid carers but initiated important discussions about the role of carers in our communities.

### 2017 highlights



- ◆ Respitality was now operating at an estimated 44% coverage of Scotland, coordinated by 13 carer organisations.
- ◆ On average, most carers’ organisations were dedicating up to 6 hours a week to Respitality, with exception to Lanarkshire Carers who estimated 31 hours per week! These hours were dedicated by carers’ organisations from their own resources, demonstrating the value of Respitality.
- ◆ The BEN Pitlochry Estate, operated by **The Ben**, donated a one-bedroom bungalow. In our first year, this allowed 45 carers and 19 companions to have a break. To date, 176 carers and 150 companions have benefitted from a break.

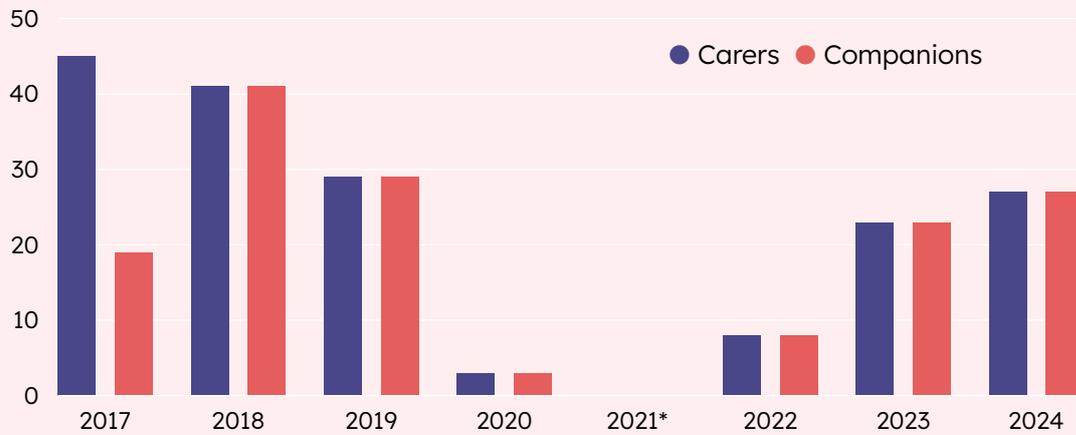
“We originally donated the property as our patron attended a seminar and Respitality were there. He received information and thought it would be a good thing for BEN to get involved, as we had houses in Pitlochry, which seemed an ideal location for short breaks. We were inspired by the work Respitality does to help carers, who seem to be a forgotten part of society despite their great efforts and support they give. The BEN benefits from knowledge that we are helping many more people in a slightly different way from our usual grants or annual pensions, making a small difference to people’s lives.”



Chris Gardner, Chief Executive of The BEN



## The Ben occupancy rate 2017 – 2024



\*Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there was no carer occupancy at The BEN



### Carer case study: Mr. M

Mr. M is a carer for his adult son, who has a mental health condition and type 1 diabetes. He has been caring for his son since his diagnosis 12 years ago. Mr. M also cared for his wife, who had cancer and passed away in 2016. He was struggling with the loss of his wife while trying to keep his family together, which includes his son and adult children from previous relationships. Mr. M had been receiving support from Lanarkshire Carers Centre, he signed up for a Respitality break and was offered a short notice opportunity to stay at Pitlochry Bungalow for a week in November, which he attended with his son.

“It was fantastic, just what I needed after the death of my wife. What a wonderful part of Scotland, the sights were nothing like any place I’ve visited, and I’ve travelled the world over. The people of Pitlochry can’t do enough to help you.”

### Carer case study: Ms. E

Ms. E cares alone for her son who has Asperger’s and depression. Ms. E often feels isolated and has some financial difficulties, which makes take a break and enjoying hobbies very difficult.

“I had a fantastic time and found Pitlochry beautiful. It was very quiet and relaxing, and I was able to do some reading and walking in the surrounding area. I didn’t cook at all and enjoyed the local takeaway! I am feeling incredibly positive about all that is going on now and feel able to manage things better. The break came at exactly the right time, and I was really able to enjoy my time away.”

- ◆ Shetland became the first Scottish island to join the Respality Delivery Partner Network and facilitate breaks for unpaid carers through Voluntary Action Shetland (VAS). This formed relationships with 10 local hospitality businesses, of which 7 offered multiple breaks. VAS estimated they could support around 52 carers over the following year.



“It’s really great that local businesses are supporting this initiative – carers are often overlooked and undervalued – this little bit of support reminds us we are not alone, and we also need a little pampering in our lives too!”

“I would like to take this opportunity to say how amazing the Respality scheme is and what huge odds it makes to carers. Getting that chance to have a bit of time to relax and recharge means you feel more able to dive into the day-to-day challenges of being a carer so, a massive thank you to all involved.”



“Happy Birthday to Respality! What a fantastic milestone to reach and congratulations to all!”

Shetland Carers

2018

Respitality provided 1,149 carers and 805 companions with breaks in 2018, with most breaks taken within a 19-mile radius of the carers' homes. Despite a slight decrease in new business donations, we saw an increase in re-donations from supporting businesses. Unique breaks included tours, driving lessons,

## Depth and diversity

and plane flying experiences. Respitality continued to benefit carers by improving their health and wellbeing, renewing relationships, and boosting self-esteem, while also providing hospitality providers with opportunities to support their communities and fulfil corporate social responsibility.

Notably, 2018 also marked the implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016. The Act formally recognised the vital role of unpaid carers and aimed to ensure they receive the support they need in their caring role.

## 2018 highlights

◆ We hosted a learning and networking event, celebrating the achievements of Respitality since its launch in 2014. The event highlighted Respitality's successes and future plans, with 74 attendees including current and potential tourism donors; delivery partners; public sector employees; carers; and those they care for. Keynote speeches were delivered by Fiona Hyslop, then Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs; and Aileen Campbell, then Minister for Public Health and Sport. The day featured a learning session where attendees discussed various themes around Respitality.

A standout moment was the 'Carers Conversation' section, during which two unpaid carers and their support workers shared their positive experiences of accessing a Respitality break. Additionally, Jim Leishman, Fife Provost, presented 'Shining Star' awards to businesses that had supported Respitality. This event was a significant milestone, showcasing the impact and growth of Respitality.



- ◆ Respality was chosen to present at the International Short Breaks Association (ISBA) event held in Reykjavik, Iceland. The event brought together professionals, carers and organisations from around the world to discuss and share best practice in short breaks. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about Respality's impact and explore ways to implement similar programs in their own regions.
- ◆ Scottish Borders and North Argyll joined the Respality Delivery Partner Network.



“The break gave us a needed bonding time and just to get back to being ourselves. Running away from daily routines and from being a carer is vital.”

“During the break, I felt my carer's battery recharge. One morning, I got 3 hours to sit and read a book on the beach which was magical.”



## Glasgow Carers Partnership

**Q.** Can you tell us about how the Respality initiative is facilitated in Glasgow?

**A.** “In Glasgow, the Respality initiative is facilitated by a dedicated Respality Development Worker. Breaks are promoted to approximately 30 Carer Support Workers across three different carer services within the city. These workers then share the available opportunities with the carers they support, ensuring that as many carers as possible can benefit from the initiative.”

**Q.** What has your experience been like delivering Respality across Glasgow?

**A.** “Delivering Respality across Glasgow has been an eye-opening journey. It has reinforced the importance of supporting carers to step away from their caring responsibilities.

Often, carers do not even realise how much they need a break as generally, they prioritise the needs of the person they care for before their own and regularly lack the time and energy to search for opportunities.”

**Q.** How does Respality help address these challenges?

**A.** “By providing carers with fully arranged short breaks, we remove these barriers and offer carers a much-needed moment of respite.”

**Q.** What impact have you seen from these breaks?

**A.** “Seeing the positive impact these breaks have on carers' wellbeing and for many, being able to have quality family time and create memories has been incredible rewarding.”

Lucy Richardson, Respality Development Worker (Glasgow Carers Partnership)

“It was a real boost. I felt valued both by Respitality and by my family. We enjoyed real quality time together in a beautiful place. I feel better able to continue with my caring role and more settled with circumstances as they are now.”

Family break at Killean Farmhouse

“I was nervous about going firstly, but when we went, we all had an amazing time. It was nice to get away in the fresh air, the lodge house was lovely, I could make my own meals, so my son doesn't play up. There was an amazing leisure centre at Duchally. Most mornings we would go there to swim and use other facilities. We went for long afternoon walks too. It was a great experience.”

Family break at Wyndham Duchally



“What an incredible milestone – happy 10th birthday, Respitality! It is truly an honour to be part of such an inspiring and vital project. The impact of Respitality over the past decade has been remarkable, and I look forward to seeing how it continues to grow and evolve in the years ahead. Here's to another 10 years of making a difference in the lives of unpaid carers. Keep up the fantastic work!”

Glasgow Carers Partnership





2019

## Steady expansion

Despite challenges for delivery partners in funding and resources, we welcomed new delivery partners in Aberdeenshire and West Lothian and saw renewed support from Dumfries and Galloway. Respite provided breaks for 730 carers and 675 companions, with significant contributions from various hospitality businesses. The year also marked the launch of a refreshed Respite brand and communications toolkit, enhancing the project's visibility and impact.

Respite focused on consolidating and expanding reach in 2019, forming new partnerships with organisations, such as Carer Positive and Visit Scotland, to increase awareness and engagement.



### 2019 highlights

- ◆ As the Respite movement continued to grow, the decision was taken to refresh branding. Our new logo launched in the summer of 2019. The Respite communications toolkit was also launched at this time. This was a comprehensive guide designed to help organisations effectively promote the Respite initiative. The toolkit emphasised the importance of strategic planning; building relationships with local businesses, groups, politicians and media; and using various communication channels such as direct mail, social media and events. The toolkit also included tips for creating engaging content, leveraging real-life stories, and maintaining consistent branding to enhance the initiative's impact and reach.
- ◆ Respite strengthened its partnership with the **British Holiday & Home Parks Association (BHHPA)**, who have supported the movement since its launch in 2015. This collaboration led to increased donations of stays in self-catering caravans and lodges from caravan park owners. The partnership was highlighted at the BHHPA Annual Conference, where Respite generated accommodation offers totalling an estimated £12,000. The association's support continues to be crucial in providing affordable and accessible breaks for unpaid carers, helping them recharge and enjoy quality time away from their caring responsibilities.
- ◆ Respite created working partnerships with key third sector organisations, helping to cross-promote services and increase national awareness of the Respite movement. One of these new and valuable partnerships included **Hostelling Scotland**, who played an instrumental role in providing enjoyable and restorative breaks for unpaid carers. Their contributions offered carers the chance to relax and recharge, both in rural areas and city locations.





## Hostelling Scotland

Margo Paterson, Chief Executive of Hostelling Scotland, has shared positive experiences regarding their partnership with Respitality. This collaboration has allowed Hostelling Scotland to offer short bed-and-breakfast breaks to carers. Margo recognises the importance of such partnerships in making travel accessible and affordable, especially for those who dedicate their time to caring for others.

“Like Shared Care Scotland, Hostelling Scotland is a not-for-profit charity, with people and communities at our heart. For over 94 years, it has been a core part of our mission to give back and provide young people and families, who otherwise wouldn’t have the opportunity, the chance to experience and enjoy all that Scotland has to offer. Whilst being an unpaid carer can have its rewards; it also comes with its difficulties. Since 2018, we have been able to provide over 45 much needed short breaks for over 100 young and adult carers and have been delighted to see our association with Respitality strengthen into a mutually supportive partnership, especially in the wake of a pandemic that made us all aware of the challenges of feeling isolated.”

Margo Paterson, Chief Executive of Hostelling Scotland

“The overnight hostel stay allowed us to take a group of 7 young adult carers on a short break to Glasgow. We used the stay in conjunction with other funding to cover activity costs. From this we were able to go for a group meal and play mini golf. Without the stay donated from Respitality, this wouldn’t have been possible. The group that we took on the break were very appreciative of the opportunity. They expressed how at times they’d like to spend a night away from home but often don’t have the resources or finances to do so. This is an experience that both us and our young adult carers are keen to do again. While we had staff members there for support should it be required, the stay enhanced leadership skills and confidence. Our group were also able to have a well-deserved break to just be young and have fun again. This also allowed them to develop their independence further. As workers, it was really positive to see the genuine joy and laughter coming from our group as a result of the stay. The group couldn’t fault the hostel in any way.”

Young adult carer worker who stayed at Glasgow Youth Hostel

“We would like to congratulate Respitality on the fantastic contribution they have made to the lives of so many carers over the last 10 years. A very happy birthday from all at Hostelling Scotland!”

Hostelling Scotland



# 2020

## Adapting during a global pandemic

On 23 March 2020, the UK entered a national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, restricting access to breaks for carers, and leading to a 27% decrease in break donations. Despite these obstacles, 229 carers were supported with short breaks, including virtual and socially-distanced options. Strong relationships with existing

partners and new ambassadors helped maintain our visibility. Efforts to raise the profile of Respitality included increased social media engagement, press releases and virtual events. We continued to highlight the importance of supporting unpaid carers and adapting to new circumstances to provide much-needed respite.

It is important that we recognise the support of many businesses who continued to donate during this time. This was deeply appreciated, considering the impact on the tourism and hospitality sectors.



### 2020 highlights

◆ In 2020, we used £600 – previously donated by the Scottish Tourism Board – to purchase vouchers from food industry businesses to distribute to carers. This initiative allowed us to provide additional breaks for unpaid carers through Respitality, while also supporting local businesses during their time of need.



◆ We supported our delivery partners virtually, maintaining regular contact via weekly online meetings. Additionally, we held monthly group and one-to-one sessions to offer support and training, which boosted delivery partners' confidence

◆ Through direct promotion and networking opportunities, Respitality was supported by national organisations during the pandemic. Contributions include those from **The Association of Scottish Visitor Attractions (ASVA)**; **Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA)**; **Association of Scotland's Self Caterers (ASSC)**; British Holiday and Home Park Association (BHHPA); and Hospitality Industry Trust Scotland (HIT Scotland).



“Congratulations on a decade of excellent work, and here’s to the next chapter.”

HIT Scotland

in promoting the movement to carers and businesses locally. Despite the challenges, we received positive feedback from our delivery partners. Our online meetings were instrumental in keeping Respitality connected during this difficult period.

◆ **Dewars Aberfeldy Distillery** hosted one of our first online breaks in the form of a whisky tasting and cocktail making class. 20 carers from across Scotland took part, and were gifted with whiskey and glasses so they could fully join in and connect.

“This has been an absolutely brilliant distillery tour – and I’m in my bed! How is this possible? I finally understand the process of making whisky and what the different types of whisky are.”

“It was something positive to look forward to, and I certainly did, in these troubled times where everything has been so negative. This activity certainly provided a bright spot and a shard of light through an otherwise cloudy horizon.”

“Fantastic evening. Really enjoyed it and didn’t need to leave the house!”

## Carer case study: Mr. A

Mr. A cares for his wife, who lives with advanced stages of Multiple Sclerosis and cannot be left alone for more than a couple of hours. This has impacted Mr A’s physical and mental health and wellbeing. Recognising this, a carer support worker arranged a suitable break through their Short Breaks Bureau, which sourced accessible accommodation at **Homelands Trust**. Mr A, his wife, and their 17-year-old daughter were able to spend 4 nights together in a peaceful and fully accessible environment. The break allowed Mr A to relax and recharge while spending quality time with his family.

“The break was fantastic, we were made to feel so welcome, the facilities are second to none in relation to needs of people with disabilities. The whole family had a wonderful time in a beautiful setting.”

◆ Respitality is 5 years old! Since 2015, the Respitality movement in Scotland had grown significantly, providing short breaks for 3,169 unpaid carers. Despite challenges along the way, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, we maintained strong relationships with the hospitality, tourism and leisure sectors. Key achievements included:

- expanding to 17 local authority areas
- securing support from 350 businesses
- adapting to offer virtual and socially distanced breaks



# 2021

## Innovation in adversity

2021 marked a significant year of growth and innovation for Respite, despite ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We supported 574 unpaid carers – a significant increase of 151% from the previous year – to access a wide variety of breaks, including creative, virtual experiences and tailored, in-person activities. We also

successfully launched the ‘Respite at Home’ pilot, demonstrating the accessibility and value of virtual breaks. Donations from 87 businesses valued at over £70,000 contributed to the initiative, reflecting growing support despite challenges within the hospitality sector. Increased business engagement, innovative approaches and strong partnerships underscored Respite’s continued impact, while carers shared powerful reflections on how these opportunities supported their wellbeing and helped maintain their ability to provide care.

### 2021 highlights



◆ With the launch of ‘Respite at Home’, we worked in partnership with VOCAL Carers Hub, **VisitScotland** and business members of the Hospitality Tourism and Leisure Collaboration. The pilot provided the opportunity for visitor attractions to run carer exclusive, virtual sessions. The pilot ran from April to July 2021 and supported 136 carers to access a virtual break via Respite. There were 20 sessions to choose from thanks to the support of 15 visitor attractions, with donations worth an estimated £11,000. We actively canvassed for virtual or socially

distanced break opportunities, and thanks to the support of visitor attractions, we were able to offer more creative breaks, including virtual tours of museums; cocktail making classes with DIY kits sent directly to carers; and motorbike tours around Shetland. Unpaid carers told us that virtual breaks were suitable for them because they fitted around their caring role. They also didn’t have to accommodate travelling time and childcare costs. As many carers were required to shield due to the Covid-19 outbreak, accessing a break from home proved to be a favourable alternative.





“Claudia bent over backwards to make our day so much fun and adapted everything to our needs. Even the packed lunch was a joy, as I didn’t have to think about preparing food to bring along as it was all in hand. I really enjoyed taking all the views in, and I felt totally relaxed in not having to drive. I wish I could spend more days like it, as I felt more tolerable towards my husband.”

Carer reflecting on break arranged by More in Moray Tours and Transport

“Respitality is a brilliant and great initiative... Carer organisations have invaluable experience in knowing what package will suit each carer, and in supporting the business and carer to connect. We have seen such a positive impact on the Respitality guests who take a break with us and get away from it all for a short while – knowing we are helping to make a difference in the lives of unpaid carers by providing something small but valuable is so worthwhile.”

Nicole Gildea, Co-owner, Howe of Torbeg

- ◆ The Respitality Delivery Partner Network met virtually every two months to learn about Respitality’s national progress, and to share their own news and learning. 23 individual support sessions were also carried out with staff members to offer training on the admin portal and general support around local promotion of Respitality.
- ◆ In consultation with our stakeholders, we commissioned a short Respitality animation, summarising our aims and our target audiences.
- ◆ We introduced our quarterly newsletter, ‘Respitality Round-Up’, in July which we sent to our mailing list and shared across our platforms to connect with new stakeholders.

“Everyone at VOCAL would like to wish Shared Care Scotland’s Respitality programme a very happy 10th birthday! The programme is a vital part of our ‘Wee Breaks’ service, supporting VOCAL to establish lasting partnerships and create hundreds of short break opportunities for unpaid carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian.”

VOCAL



2022

## Back to the community

Respitality was now supporting more unpaid carers than ever before. In 2022, 718 carers benefitted from short breaks – a 26% increase from the previous year. This progress was supported by a record level of

business engagement, with a donation of breaks worth over £104,000, which was the highest value since the initiative began. Breaks included football match tickets (31%), visitor attractions (19%) and other leisure activities (16%), signalling a strong return to in-person experiences as COVID-19 restrictions eased. The number of carers taking a Respitality break almost returned to pre-pandemic levels, and we received many testimonials from both carers and donors highlighting positive experiences.

### Busta House Hotel

Grant O’Neil is the co-owner and manager of **Busta House Hotel**, a historic 22-room country house hotel located in Shetland, Scotland.

“As soon as I was made aware of what the scheme was set up for, I was keen to be involved. Having had paid carers taking care of my parents had already alerted me to how much effort is involved in caring for someone, and for someone to do this unpaid must be extremely difficult. Not only are our small team of staff aware of what we offer to the Respitality Scheme and the importance of it, we are also vocal on our social media sites. I think, we as a business in Shetland, have a particularly good relationship with locals and the involvement in the Respitality scheme has further bolstered us in a position of being a favourite amongst Shetlanders.”



## 2022 highlights

- ◆ The year marked a strategic expansion, with the addition of three new regions – Eilean Siar (Western Isles), Glasgow City, and Moray – bringing total coverage to 21 local authority areas.
- ◆ The appointment of a Respite Coordinator helped strengthen support to 20 carer organisation delivery partners through training, resources and communications.
- ◆ Respite shared knowledge and gained valuable insights through its global connections. A key highlight was hosting a learning exchange with members of the Respite Global Network, which was founded in 2021. This event brought together organisations from Wales, England and Canada to explore and strengthen the Respite model internationally. The network played a pivotal role in supporting the launch of a new Respite programme with Empower Simcoe in Canada. These global connections reinforce the strength and adaptability of the Respite model and position the movement as a leading example of social tourism and unpaid carer support.



## More in Moray Tours

More in Moray – Tours and Transport donated a bus tour of Aberdeenshire to Respite, creating memorable experiences for unpaid carers across Scotland.



**“Being an unpaid carer myself, I understand the importance of having a break.”**

**Claudia Vasto, founder of More in Moray**

Claudia particularly enjoyed engaging with the recipients of her donation, commenting;

**“It is an opportunity to engage with them, to make sure that they feel acknowledged and mentally/emotionally safe.”**

**“Everyone at the BEN wishes Respite a wonderful 10th birthday and here’s to the next 10, carrying on vital work.”**

**The Ben**

## Carer case study: Muriel

Muriel cares for her husband who has dementia. Before the break, she reported feeling anxious, tired, and unable to relax. On the bus tour around Aberdeenshire, Muriel and her husband visited places they had never been before, particularly enjoying a stop for an ice cream in picturesque Portsoy.

Muriel was delighted not to have “the hassle of organising” and afterwards, she felt relaxed, adding that her husband had remembered the day and spoken about where they had been and what they had done. She was also grateful for the goodie bag gifted as an extra special touch from Claudia. This break also illustrates the important value of carers being able to share breaks together – especially in the context of progressive health conditions.

**“Thank you for a great day out, all organised with no fuss.”**



# 2023

## Impact and recognition

Respite reached even higher achievements in 2023, supporting 1,807 unpaid carers. This was an increase of 152% from the previous year, providing unpaid

carers with a diverse range of short breaks tailored to individual needs. The initiative saw record-breaking engagement from 236 businesses, donating £186,266 worth of breaks. Meanwhile, unallocated offers dropped to an all-time low of 16%. Now active in 22 local authority areas, Respite's delivery partners played a crucial role in sourcing 69% of the breaks, reflecting the strength of the social franchise model.

### 2023 highlights



- ◆ Represented by Connecting Carers, Highlands joined our Respite Delivery Partner Network in 2023. They sourced an impressive 17 local donors in their first year of delivery, showing the great potential for Respite to flourish.

**“There are some hotel guests who quietly touch our hearts and inspire us. Not least among them are the lovely couples where one is quietly looking after the other, perhaps at the start of a long good-bye or making a final trip together to revisit a place with special memories. Realising that you have been entrusted to be part of that experience is such an honour.”**

Eddrachilles Hotel, Badcall Bay  
by Scourie

**“I relaxed and enjoyed myself, staff were lovely, met some lovely people visiting from different places 10/10.”**

Natasha, unpaid carer who stayed at the Royal Marine Hotel, Brora





◆ After connecting **Falkirk Foundation** with their local delivery partner – Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre – and the donation of tickets in 2022; this initiative evolved into a robust partnership. Season ticket holders were given the opportunity to purchase an additional season ticket for an unpaid carer through Respitality, with Gift Aid included. **Falkirk Football Club** matched these purchases, resulting in 50 tickets per home match for the entire season. Additionally, Falkirk Foundation generously provided food and drink vouchers to allow attendees to enjoy refreshments during the games. The 2023 season marked a full year of home match tickets donated to Respitality, representing our largest local donation to date. This initiative garnered significant media coverage from BBC News across television, radio and online platforms. Inspired by this success, other football clubs across Scotland have increased their ticket donations.



“Although caring for someone can be tough, stressful, and mentally and physically tiring, it can be rewarding too, often involving a great deal of pride and commitment. For many carers, however, the opportunity to have a break from their routine is vital to enable them to keep themselves well and have time out from their caring role. Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre recognises the benefits of having a short vital break to carers and is incredibly grateful to the Falkirk FC Foundation and Falkirk FC for their donation of match-day tickets to our Respitality programme. Not only will carers be able to support their local team and do something they may not normally be able to afford, we will also be able to offer the carers the gift of making memories.”

Ami McKnight, Carer Support Options Lead at Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre

## Falkirk Football Foundation



**Q.** Can you tell us about the Respitality partnership between the Falkirk Foundation and Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre?

**A.** “The Falkirk Foundation’s partnership with Falkirk and Clackmannanshire Carers Centre has flourished into a remarkable initiative, now in its third season, offering a unique opportunity for carers and the people they care for to attend Falkirk Football Club’s home matches for free. This collaboration has grown into a powerful and supportive community programme, fostering inclusivity and giving those who may otherwise be excluded the chance to enjoy live football.”

**Q.** What additional support does the Foundation offer as part of the Respitality partnership?

**A.** “As part of the partnership, the Falkirk Foundation goes above and beyond by providing vouchers for food and drink, ensuring carers and cared-for individuals can fully immerse themselves in the match day experience. The programme has become a symbol of community engagement, with both organisations working together to enhance the lives of carers and those they support.”

**Q.** What is the wider impact of this initiative on the community?

**A.** “The community benefit of this initiative is immense. It not only offers a much-needed break for carers but also creates a space for social connection, promoting mental wellbeing and inclusion. The partnership reflects Falkirk Football Club’s commitment to giving back to the local area, ensuring that individuals who give so much of themselves are recognised and supported. It has evolved into a truly impactful project that strengthens both the local football community and the wider region.”

Derek Allison, CEO of Falkirk Foundation

“This has been a Godsend. Getting my husband out to see a game is his social life – he can only get when I’m able and can afford to go. The pie and Bovril are a very welcome added bonus.”

“These tickets mean me and my kids can spend time together away from the daily stresses of being a carer. Bonus that it’s watching a team I’ve grown up supporting. Thank you!!”

“My wife finds it difficult to get out of the house; she also feels the cold terribly. BUT ... she LOVES going to the football! These complementary tickets enable her to participate in and enjoy what is, for her, a very special experience.”

◆ In June, the **‘Connected by Care’** research report was published by Professor Lynn Minnaert of Edinburgh Napier University, which explored the Respitality model in depth. The research celebrated Respitality’s unique strengths, including its personal, community-driven approach and its ability to provide carers with meaningful breaks that offer relaxation, connection and renewed energy for their caring roles.



The study also identified key benefits for carers, such as a break from routine, the chance to feel appreciated and opportunities to foster relationships. In addition, the report offered valuable recommendations for enhancing delivery, such as keeping processes simple; providing more donor engagement training; and developing risk mitigation procedures. This independent research reinforced Respitality’s positive impact and will help shape future developments both nationally and internationally.

◆ Respitality participated in the International Short Breaks Association (ISBA) Conference held in Wroclaw, Poland. The conference brought together organisations from around the world to share insights on short break provision and support for unpaid carers. Respitality hosted a dedicated workshop, showcasing how it engages the tourism industry to support unpaid carers

and builds strong, sustainable partnerships with tourism donors. Respitality was joined by other Scottish organisations, including PAMIS, Glasgow Carers Partnership and Interest Link Borders, helping to strengthen collective efforts to support unpaid carers through innovative and inclusive break opportunities.

**“Another highlight was attending the ISBA Conference in 2023, held in Wroclaw, Poland. It was incredibly inspiring to connect with representatives from various countries and gain insights into how different nations approach and offer short breaks for unpaid carers. The opportunity to engage in discussions, share lived experiences and learn from diverse perspectives was truly enlightening. Additionally, meeting fellow Respitality Delivery Partners was a fantastic bonus, strengthening our collective knowledge and commitment to supporting carers.”**

Lucy Richardson, Respitality Development Worker (Glasgow Carers Partnership)



**“A heartfelt congratulations to the amazing Respitality, on celebrating their 10th birthday. Their incredible work in supporting carers and the cared for across the country is truly inspiring, and the Falkirk Foundation is proud to be part of such a vital network. Here’s to many more years of positive impact!”**

Falkirk Football Foundation

# 2024

## A milestone year

reached a record £207,220, contributed by 377 businesses and 66% of which were first-time donors.

With 87% of breaks locally sourced by delivery partners, the movement continued to demonstrate its strength, flexibility and ability to provide personalised breaks. This was further evidenced as only 11% of all breaks – generated by both Respitality and the Delivery Partner Network – went unallocated. These achievements made 2024 a milestone year for Respitality as it approached its 10th anniversary. It has exceeded the original vision as a pilot in 2014 and grown far beyond our initial expectations.

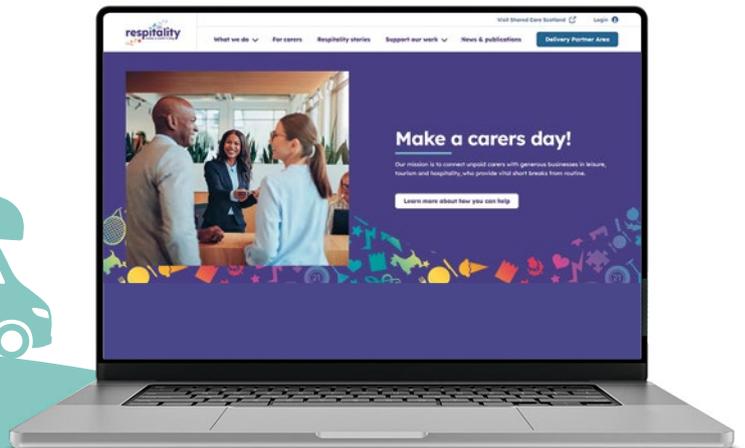
In 2024, Respitality achieved record-breaking success, supporting 2,124 unpaid carers with 2,178 short breaks – a 12% increase from the previous year and the highest number recorded since the initiative began. A further 2,217 companions also benefitted from these breaks, including family members, friends, those receiving care and support workers. The total value of donated breaks

## 2024 highlights



◆ Respitality underwent a subtle but impactful brand refresh to better reflect its evolving identity and position within both the social care and tourism sectors. This included updates to the colour palette, logo, and the design of marketing materials, with personalised branding also created for each local delivery partner to strengthen regional visibility. Alongside

this, a dedicated Respitality website was launched on its own platform, providing a more focused and accessible space for tourism partners, donors and carers. This digital upgrade, combined with the rebuild of the ‘breaks’ portal, enhanced user experience and streamlined internal processes, positioning Respitality for continued growth and engagement.



- ◆ Respitality welcomed several new organisations, such as Renfrewshire and East Lothian, to the Delivery Partner Network, further expanding national reach. Fife rejoined the network, returning after a pause in delivery in 2018. Stirling also joined as a 6-month pilot, following interest from a local football club to support carers with match tickets. This brought the total coverage to over 27 regions.

Looking ahead, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire are confirmed to launch Respitality in 2025, bringing us even closer to achieving national coverage across all 32 Scottish local authority areas.

- ◆ We delivered training sessions focused on building and maintaining relationships with the tourism industry. This was in response to delivery partners' expressed need for more guidance and confidence in donor engagement. Attended by representatives from 16 regions, the sessions combined expert input from Shared Care Scotland with peer-led discussions, creating a collaborative environment for learning and empowerment.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. 93% said the training was "excellent" or "good" value for time, and most attendees reported an increase in confidence when engaging with donors.

**"It was fab meeting other delivery partners face to face, and a lot of learning was shared. Looking forward to the next one!"**

**"I really enjoyed meeting everyone face-to-face and sharing ideas. We discussed lots of things that I hadn't thought about before which has sparked some ideas that I have taken back to my team. I felt that making the pitch would be really daunting but after all the discussions, information and advice that we were given it came very naturally and working with a partner helped with this!"**

**"I felt that making the pitch would be really daunting but after all the discussions, information and advice...it came very naturally."**

The success of the sessions has led to plans to repeat the programme in 2025, open to both new and existing delivery partners. Additional learning opportunities, such as social media, are also in place to further strengthen capacity and confidence across the Respitality network.

**"It was one of the best training sessions I have been to in recent years."**





## Carers case study: Mrs. L

Mrs. L looks after her elderly mother, who has multiple health conditions – including dementia. She reached out to her local carers’ centre for support while experiencing significant stress. In response, they were able to offer immediate respite through a Respitivity massage voucher, providing much-needed relief to help reduce her stress and anxiety. As a result, Mrs. L reported feeling less stressed and more able to cope with the demands of her caring role. Importantly, the experience marked a turning point, as she began to prioritise self-care in her daily life through positive conversation with her local carers’ centre. This in turn has laid the foundations for Mrs. L’s ongoing good wellbeing and resilience.

**“I’ve just been for my complimentary treatment with Karin. It was absolutely amazing. I feel a huge benefit from having a gorgeous facial and wonderfully relaxing massage – she really is excellent. Thank you and the whole team for making things like this possible. It is hugely appreciated by me.”**



**“From everyone at the North Argyll Carers Centre – wishing you many more fruitful years to come. Respitivity connects not only unpaid carers, but also carer centres and communities together.”**

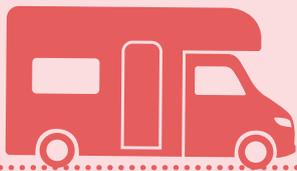
North Argyll Carers Centre



2025

## Looking to the future

Respitality has exceeded the original vision from its inception in 2014 and grown beyond what we first imagined it could achieve. With continued support from tourism donors, local communities, carer organisations and The Scottish Government; the future holds promise, continuing to make carers' days with complementary short breaks within the hospitality, leisure & tourism sector.



### Our future aspirations

As we look to the next 10 years of Respitality, the focus remains on expanding reach, strengthening partnerships, and innovation to meet the needs of unpaid carers in Scotland.

- ◆ To gain full coverage of Scotland by 2028, allowing all unpaid carers to access a Respitality break
- ◆ To have supported 10,000 carers and generated £1 million in donations by 2026
- ◆ To offer break 'swaps' with international organisations delivering similar projects, such as Leeds, Wales and Canada
- ◆ To expand and develop our digital footprint through our website and socials
- ◆ To focus on young carer engagement and how we make our Respitality offerings inclusive to them
- ◆ To develop corporate national partnerships, creating more funding opportunities and collaboration on richer break experiences
- ◆ To advocate for local Respitality funding, ensuring local offering is sustainable
- ◆ To establish a training programme for our Delivery Partner Network
- ◆ To have a dedicated 'Respitality champion' from the tourism sector for each region we work with
- ◆ To champion carer awareness within local communities, and to be one of the leading social tourism movements that works alongside various sectors by creating break opportunities, and providing support and information, including carers rights





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**#MakeACarersDay**

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