



# Employment Conference 2025

“Barriers to Employment  
and Employability”

14 May 2025

09:30 - 16:00

COSLA Conference Centre, Edinburgh



## WELCOME

Richard Meade  
Director, Carers Scotland

Thank you for joining us at our second Carers Scotland Employment Conference. Last year's success highlighted the need for continued focus on supporting unpaid carers in employment and we are delighted to continue this conversation.

The 2022 Census revealed that 303,928 unpaid carers were in paid work in Scotland, with nearly 41,000 providing over 50 hours of care weekly alongside their employment. However, many carers struggle to balance employment and care, often reducing hours or leaving work entirely as a result. Our State of Caring survey showed that a third of carers had left paid work due to care responsibilities, while one in five had never entered employment.

An unsupportive workplace is a significant factor driving carers out of employment. Carers need employers to recognise their caring roles, provide understanding managers, and offer flexible and remote working options. Positive change is happening. Flexible and hybrid work models are now more accessible, and the Carers Leave Act has improved carers' rights at work. However, much more still needs to be done, by governments, employers and support agencies.

As the leading voice on caring and employment in Scotland, Carers Scotland's Carer Positive awards now include over 290 member organisations, supporting over half a million employees. This initiative promotes workplace cultures that value and support carers.

We also focus on those who wish to enter or re-enter employment. Our recent research explores how to enhance employability support for carers, and we are actively working with others to see changes and improvements in this area.

Supporting carers who are in employment alongside their caring roles, or after their caring role has ended, can benefit carers by maintaining their careers, reducing poverty risks, and improving well-being. Employers and governments also gain through reduced social security costs, greater tax receipts and improved workforce retention.

I hope today helps us to continue the discussion around these hugely important issues, and explore ways to further support carers in employment, as well as guiding Carers Scotland's ongoing work as we seek to make life better for carers.

# AGENDA

If you are sharing your experience of the event today on social media, please tag our accounts using the handles below and use the conference hashtag **#CSEC25**.

Linkedin: @Carers Scotland  
Facebook: @Carers Scotland  
BlueSky: @carersscotland.bsky.social  
X: @CarersScotland

9.30 AM **REGISTRATION**  
with tea and coffee

10.00 AM **OPENING WELCOME**  
from our chair, **Kate Guthrie**.

10.10 AM **PLENARY SESSION 1**  
*BENEFITS OF SUPPORTING CARERS IN EMPLOYMENT*

## Speakers

**Hayley Burton**, Carers Scotland  
**Louise Guy**, Student Loans Company  
**Jo Dixon**, Student Loans Company  
**Ashley McPartlin**, Brodies LLP Solicitors

11.00 AM Plenary Session 1 Q&A

11.30 AM **BREAK**

# AGENDA

11.45 AM **PLENARY SESSION 2**

*THE CARERS LEAVE ACT: 1 YEAR ON – BEST PRACTICE AND LEARNING*

## Speakers

**Kathryn von Stegmann**, Carers UK  
**Louise MacDonald**, The Edrington Group  
**Fiona Sinclair**, Renfrewshire Council  
**Ian Whyte**, Renfrewshire Council

12.45 PM Plenary Session 2 Q&A

1.15 PM **LUNCH**

2.15 PM **PLENARY SESSION 3**

*BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY*

## Speakers

**Tom Arthur MSP**, Minister for Employment and Investment  
**Richard Meade**, Carers Scotland  
**Jodi Codona**, a carer's experience

3.15 PM Plenary Session 3 Q&A

3.45 PM **SUMMARY AND CLOSING REMARKS**

from our chair, **Kate Guthrie**.

4.00 PM **CLOSE**

# SPEAKERS



**Tom Arthur MSP**  
Minister for Employment and Investment

Born in Paisley in 1985, he was first elected to the Scottish Parliament for the seat of Renfrewshire South at the 2016 election, holding the seat in 2021. Mr Arthur was raised in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, where he was educated at Cross Arthurlie Primary and Barrhead High School. He graduated with a Bachelor of Music then later Master of Music from the University of Glasgow. Before entering politics, he worked as a company director, freelance piano teacher and keyboardist.

He joined the Scottish Government in May 2021, when he was appointed Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth in the Scottish Government. In March 2023, He was re-appointed to his ministerial role as Minister for Community Wealth and Public Finance. Most recently, he was appointed Minister for Employment and Investment in February 2024.



**Hayley Burton**  
Senior Employment Manager,  
Carers Scotland

Hayley joined the Carers Scotland team in March 2025 and leads on our employer's engagement projects whilst also managing the Carer Positive scheme supporting employers to raise awareness, recognise and put supports in place for working carers.

She brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise having previously worked directly with carers, employers, and partners in her roles with local carers centres, third sector interface and national public body.



**Jodi Codona**  
CEO and Founder,  
Empowering People

Jodi Codona is the CEO and founder of Empowering People, an organisation dedicated to supporting individuals with extra support needs and hidden disabilities into paid employment and more independent, fulfilling lives. With over 20 years' experience building and running businesses in the leisure and entertainment sector, Jodi brings a wealth of entrepreneurial insight to her work.

Following a significant career break, she made a purposeful shift into the inclusion and employability space—driven by her own experiences as a neurodivergent person and as a parent to a daughter with a disability. Her personal journey fuels her deep commitment to breaking down barriers and creating truly inclusive workplaces that recognise and value every individual's potential.

Jodi participated in The Challenges Group Making Work Work programme and joins us to provide a carer's experience.



**Jo Dixon**  
Senior Business Change Lead,  
Student Loans Company

Senior Business Change Lead at Student Loans Company (SLC) and member of the SLC Carers Network, CARE, which was established last year.

Jo is a carer for her 14 year old daughter who has profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) Autism and hypermobility. She is deeply passionate about creating and continuing to grow an inclusive environment for carers in the workplace.

Jo is also committed advocate for policies and practices that recognize and accommodate the unique challenges faced by carers, ensuring they feel valued and supported.

**Louise Guy**

Technology Partner Manager,  
Student Loans Company

Technology Partner Manager at Student Loans Company (SLC) and Co-chair of the SLC Carers Network, CARE, which was established last year.

Louise has extensive experience of caring whilst working and of developing carers networks and leading on many initiatives to support carers in previous employment.

She is passionate about growing the carers network within SLC, and having led the campaign to become a Carer Positive organisation, she continues to drive opportunities to improve the company's commitment to and support for carers across the organisation.

**Louise MacDonald**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Manager, The Edrington Group

For over ten years Louise has successfully lead diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) strategies and initiatives in global organisations. In April 2021 she joined international spirits company Edrington in a newly created DE&I Manager role and is now responsible for developing and implementing all aspects of their DE&I strategy. Working with colleagues every day to create a culture that fosters engagement, diversity of thought and a sense of belonging across Edrington.

Prior to Edrington, Louise worked in the oil and gas industry for Wood based in Aberdeen. In addition to her DE&I remit, Louise has held a number of generalist and specialist human resource roles. She is a Chartered Member of the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and has a postgraduate diploma in Human Resource Management from Robert Gordon University.

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**Ashley McPartlin**

Head of Inclusion, Diversity and  
Wellbeing, Brodies LLP Solicitors

Ashley is the Head of Inclusion, Diversity and Wellbeing at UK top 50 and leading Scottish law firm, Brodies LLP. With over 850 colleagues, and offices in Aberdeen, Abu Dhabi, Brussels, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and London, it is the largest law firm headquartered in Scotland measured by income, directory rankings, and lawyer numbers.

Ashley is responsible for the design and delivery of Brodies' inclusion and diversity strategy and works closely with the firm's leadership team and key stakeholders to achieve this.

Throughout her career Ashley has held senior HR positions in both the legal and financial services sectors, where she has partnered with business leaders to achieve strategic people-related outcomes. She has experience of leading large global teams and has overseen the successful implementation of numerous HR change projects.

**Richard Meade**

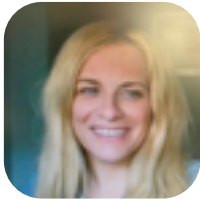
Director,  
Carers Scotland

Richard has worked on policy issues and research relating to unpaid carers throughout his career. He has extensive experience working in the third sector in senior leadership roles.

He has worked for a range of organisations including Marie Curie, Barnardo's Scotland, Fleishman-Hillard, NHS Quality Improvement Scotland and the Home Office. Richard has a degree in History and Politics, a MSc in Policy Studies, and a Master of Public Health from the University of Edinburgh. Richard is a member of the Institute of Leadership.

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**Fiona Sinclair**

Organisational Development Adviser,  
Renfrewshire Council

Fiona Sinclair (MCIPD) has dedicated over two decades to the public sector, with a significant portion of her career spent at Renfrewshire Council since 2006. In her capacity as an Organisational Development Adviser, Fiona has consistently prioritised the wellbeing of the council's employees.

Fiona is committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace to raise awareness about unpaid caring responsibilities, helping employees identify as unpaid working carers and ensuring they receive the recognition and support they deserve.

**Kathryn von Stegmann**

Senior Content and Development  
Officer, Carers UK

Kathryn von Stegmann is the Senior Content and Development Officer at Carers UK, where she has spent nearly six years creating and curating content for the Employers for Carers membership platform.

She manages the Carer Confident benchmarking scheme, working closely with organisations to help them become more inclusive of carers in the workplace. Kathryn also delivers research in collaboration with employers, exploring how best to support working carers.

**Ian Whyte**

People & Organisational  
Development Workforce Analyst,  
Renfrewshire Council

Ian Whyte (MCIPD) having spent 25 years in the private sector he joined Renfrewshire Council as a Job Analyst within the People and Organisational Development Team. Over the past five years, his role has evolved to include overseeing the employee benefits and wellbeing offerings.

One of the key areas Ian takes great pride in his involvement with the council's unpaid working carers program. He has been instrumental in increasing the number of employees who identify as unpaid working carers within the organization. Ian's dedication to this cause has helped create a supportive environment that recognizes and supports these employees, ensuring they have access to the necessary resources and assistance.



CONFERENCE CHAIR

**Kate Guthrie**

Kate Guthrie is an independent non-executive director with a portfolio of roles across organisations in the financial services, public and charity sectors. She is a member of the UK Defence Board and Chair of the Defence People Committee. She is the senior independent director (SID) and Chair of the Remuneration and Nomination Committee at Border to Coast Pensions Partnership, an independent non-executive director of Finova, and trustee and Chair of the Remuneration Committee at Scottish Ballet. She was previously the Chair of Lloyds Banking Group Foundation, Scotland, a member of the Virgin Money Foundation Board, and a trustee of Action for Children (including Chair of Scotland and SID).

Kate's executive career spanned financial services, pharmaceuticals, fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), and retail. She was formerly Chief People Officer for Virgin Money. Kate also held executive roles at Lloyds Banking Group, Novartis, Diageo and Marks and Spencer.

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# The benefits of being Carer Positive



Recognising working carers and the challenges they face is a vital issue for employers in Scotland. With an estimated quarter of a million people currently combining employment with unpaid caring responsibilities, this could equate to 1 in 7 of your workforce.

Caring can impact people across the working age spectrum, but it tends to hit a peak when employees have gained valuable skills and experience. When the pressures of combining work with caring become too much, carers often feel forced to reduce their working hours or give up their jobs entirely – even if this means ending their career or losing their main source of income.

Research undertaken in 2019 showed that 600 carers across the UK leave employment every day to care. This has huge implications for staff retention and a loss of skills and experience across the labour market, with the number only set to rise as our population ages and we work for longer.

Landmark new employment legislation came into force in April 2024, giving employees who have caring responsibilities in their home lives a right to 5 days unpaid leave. The Carers Leave Act brings vitally needed support to carers in employment across Scotland, helping them to balance paid work with their caring responsibilities at home.

However, there is more that employers can do to support unpaid carers in the workplace. The Carer Positive scheme



has been supporting employers across Scotland for the last 11 years to develop policies and workplace practice which benefit the recruitment, retention, and wellbeing of staff who are carers. The initiative is free to participate in, with advice, support and resources available to help organisations develop their own supportive working environment.

Over 290 organisations across Scotland have already been recognised as Carer Positive Employers, sending a strong supportive message to staff and setting the standard as an employer of choice in Scotland. Why not join them today?

Visit our website - [carerpositive.org](https://carerpositive.org) - for more information on how to participate and access the range of free support and resources available, or contact the Carer Positive team at [info@carerpositive.org](mailto:info@carerpositive.org).