

# Support in the Right Direction 2018 to 2024: Fund Report



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INSPIRING SCOTLAND

## Foreword



**Social care is vital in supporting the independence, dignity, health and happiness of people in Scotland. It helps remove barriers and enables people and families to participate in society while maintaining quality of life when faced with health, age, or disability-related challenges.** Self-directed Support, as the method for delivering social care in Scotland, has the potential to be transformational for individuals, carers, and the system as a whole. The right to choose and control how care is arranged, managed and delivered is essential for ensuring people have autonomy and personalised care arrangements that meet their unique needs.

We are delighted to present this **'Support in the Right Direction'** impact report covering 5 ½ years of funding for independent support from October 2018 to March 2024. The report emphasises the critical role of “independent support organisations” in facilitating social care and highlights the contributions they make in delivering these transformational life outcomes for people and carers in Scotland.

Our rights under social care and self-directed support legislation are meaningless without adequate support to access them effectively. The social care system can be complex for anyone to navigate, and to qualify for social care, it is likely an individual's needs will be assessed as 'substantial' or 'critical'. With the self directed support options available, it is crucial that people are informed about those options, taken through personalised care planning, local service availability, and the management and employment responsibilities they may assume if they choose to employ staff directly. Independent support organisations that are embedded in local communities provide this essential guidance and representation. They accompany individuals and families throughout their social care journey, effectively removing barriers to organising care in a way that fits their lives.

Through our role as fund managers for Support in the Right Direction over the past nine years, we have gained insights not only into the outcomes achieved but also into the critical nature of independent support for implementing and improving self-directed support. Independent support organisations have remained steadfast throughout the past 5½ years of change and challenge in social care delivery. The staff and volunteers within these organisations have developed expertise in social care delivery. They are creative problem solvers who genuinely prioritize individuals in their social care planning and delivery.

We have gathered a wealth of data and insights, which we have attempted to reflect on in the following pages. We welcome the continued commitment of the Scottish Government to independent support and look forward to our ongoing partnership contributing to improving self-directed support.



Kaylie Allen,  
Director of Funds  
**Inspiring Scotland**

## SiRD Context

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## Introduction: about 'Support in the Right Direction'

**Support in the Right Direction (commonly known as SiRD) is a Scottish Government programme, that supports social care delivery and implementation of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013.**

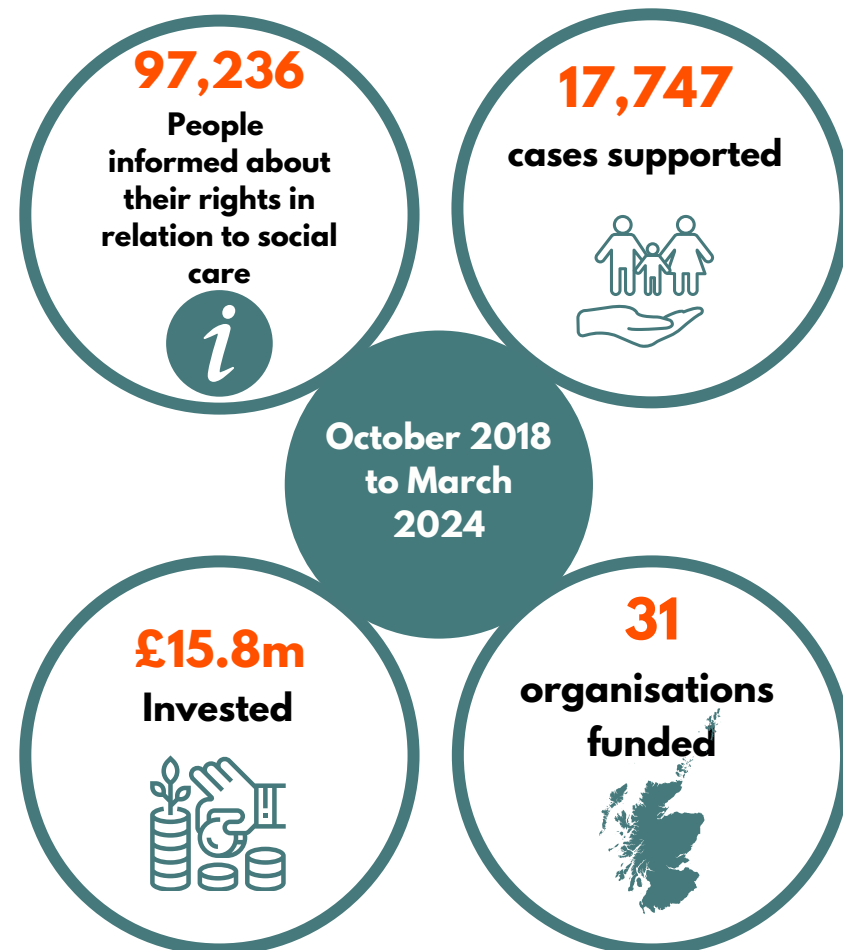
SiRD empowers individuals and families accessing social care, and funds organisations that are independent of statutory services, across Scotland. These organisations help people to make informed decisions about their social care support, thereby enabling them to exercise choice and control over their care, as intended through the self-directed support legislation.

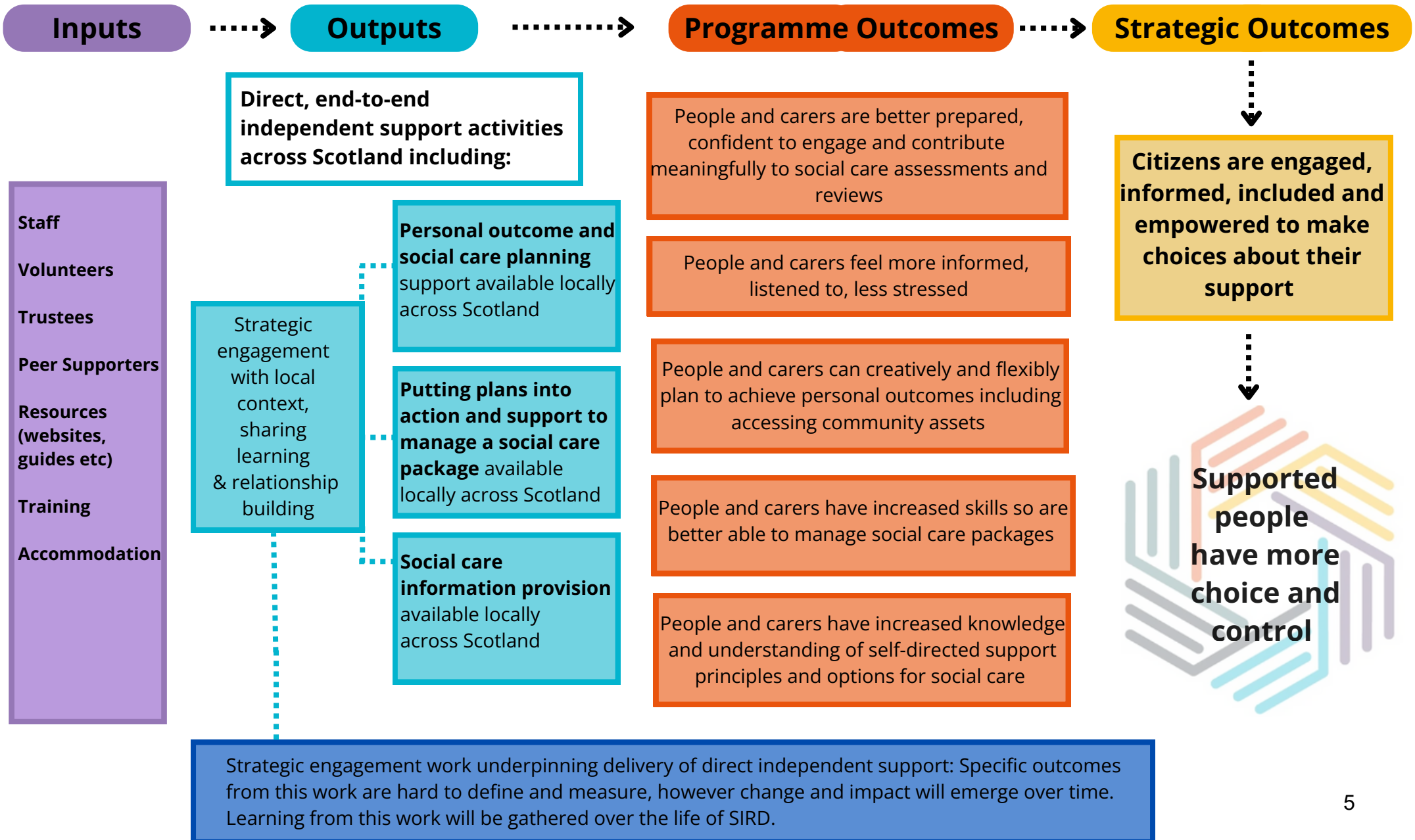
A portfolio of 31 independent support organisations were funded through SiRD for 5.5 years from **1 October 2018 to 31 March 2024**. This report shares what they did during this time, the difference this made for people and the carers they supported, and learning about effective independent support delivery. It is based on activity data and evaluation information provided every six months by funded organisations.

**Inspiring Scotland** manages the SiRD programme on behalf of the Scottish Government. A subsequent round of SiRD funding started in April 2024 and is in place until March 2027.

More information on the current programme can be found at <https://inspiringscotland.org.uk/fund/support-in-the-right-direction-2024-2027/>

The next two pages show the outputs and outcomes funded through SiRD from 2018 to 2024 (the Theory of Change) and a list of the 31 organisations in the SiRD portfolio.





# SIRD portfolio: October 2018 to March 2024

Organisation	Areas of operation	Amount
<b>Advocacy Orkney</b>	Orkney Islands	<b>£169,404</b>
<b>Advocacy Service Aberdeen</b>	Aberdeen City	<b>£336,672</b>
<b>Advocacy Western Isles</b>	Eilean Siar	<b>£535,513</b>
<b>Ayrshire Independent Living Network</b>	Ayrshire	<b>£463,683</b>
<b>Braemar Care</b>	Aberdeenshire	<b>£75,000</b>
<b>Carr Gomm</b>	Argyll & Bute and Highland	<b>£1,399,724</b>
<b>Circles Network Advocacy</b>	Inverclyde	<b>£594,729</b>
<b>Clyde Shopmobility</b> (from 1 Oct 2018 to 31 March 2023)	West Dunbartonshire	<b>£352,352</b>
<b>Community Brokerage Network</b>	Ayrshire	<b>£871,507</b>
<b>Capability Scotland</b>	Dumfries & Galloway	<b>£285,100</b>
<b>Cornerstone Community Care</b>	Aberdeen City and Moray	<b>£536,351</b>
<b>Disabled Person's Housing Service</b>	Fife	<b>£350,611</b>
<b>Dundee Carers Centre</b>	Dundee and Angus	<b>£803,096</b>
<b>East Ayrshire Carers Centre</b>	East Ayrshire	<b>£390,015</b>
<b>ENABLE Scotland</b>	Fife	<b>£537,982</b>
<b>Encompass (BDPA)</b>	Scottish Borders	<b>£323,991</b>
<b>Equal Say</b>	North Lanarkshire	<b>£428,353</b>

Organisation	Areas of operation	Amount
<b>Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living</b>	Glasgow, East Dunbartonshire, South Lanarkshire	<b>£1,254,017</b>
<b>Independent Living Association Forth Valley</b>	Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling	<b>£266,036</b>
<b>Improving Lives</b> (from 1 Oct 2023)	West Dunbartonshire	<b>£30,583</b>
<b>Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living</b>	Edinburgh and Lothians	<b>£852,392</b>
<b>MECOPP</b>	Edinburgh and Lothians	<b>£408,871</b>
<b>Support Choices</b> (previously Outside the Box)	Perth & Kinross	<b>£386,579</b>
<b>PKAVS</b>	Perth & Kinross	<b>£219,541</b>
<b>SDS Forum East Renfrewshire</b>	East Renfrewshire	<b>£725,266</b>
<b>Shetland Community Connections</b>	Shetland	<b>£550,159</b>
<b>The Advisory Group</b>	Clackmannanshire, Stirling and East Renfrewshire	<b>£345,003</b>
<b>The Advocacy Project</b>	Glasgow, East Renfrewshire, South Lanarkshire	<b>£447,576</b>
<b>Thistle Health &amp; Wellbeing</b>	Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian	<b>£543,438</b>
<b>VOCAL</b>	Edinburgh and Midlothian	<b>£546,344</b>
<b>VANL and partners North Lanarkshire Disability Forum and Equals Advocacy</b>	North Lanarkshire	<b>£548,823</b>

## SiRD: helping to make self-directed support a reality



**Self-directed support is a set of principles and options for how social care is delivered in Scotland. Self-directed support is for everyone in Scotland needing social care including children, adults and unpaid carers.**

The governing legislation is the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013. Statutory guidance for the legislation\* describes self-directed support as **“the way that care and support is delivered, making the principles of choice and control central to care and support, and giving individuals full opportunity to take control of their support and their lives.”**

Essentially, with self-directed support, all people who use social care and unpaid carers make informed choices about their social care and have control over how that support is arranged, managed and delivered. People have a range of options for how involved they want to be from employing their own staff to working with care providers and statutory services to agree their social care delivery.

To confidently, fully, and effectively take part in a process to plan and manage the care and support received, and to realise self-directed support principles, independent support is available. SiRD funds independent support to help people to participate, be involved, make informed choices and collaborate in their care planning.

\*The statutory guidance on self-directed support can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/statutory-guidance-accompany-social-care-self-directed-support-scotland-act-2013-2/pages/3/>

### Self-directed support principles:

Participation and dignity

Involvement

Informed choice

Collaboration

## Policy context for SiRD

**Self-directed support (SDS) has not been consistently implemented across Scotland, increasing the need for independent support for people making their social care plans.**

Self-directed support legislation came into force in Scotland more than ten years ago, in 2014. However, the Scottish Parliament Health, Social Care and Sport Committee has recently undertaken scrutiny of the Act and concluded that “it is clear that SDS has not so far fulfilled its potential and there has been a failure to implement the legislation in a fair and equitable way across the country.” The Committee’s scrutiny also found “a lack of clarity and knowledge for individuals and the general public around what SDS is, as well as a lack of available support and guidance to help navigate the process.”\*

Self-directed support improvement work is ongoing and SiRD has been funded through successive versions of the Scottish Government and COSLA’s self-directed support implementation and improvement plans, the most recent of which is the [Self-directed Support Improvement Plan 2023-27](#).

Self-directed support research and reviews conducted since 2014 have **consistently emphasised the importance of independent support** and having access to the right information at the right time. This access is crucial for people to understand their rights to self-direct their support in a context of inconsistent implementation. Some of the research findings are shared on the next two pages.

[\\*Post-legislative scrutiny of the Social Care \(Self-directed Support\) \(Scotland\) Act 2013: Phase 2 report](#)

“We couldn’t have done this without you, we wouldn’t have known where to start.”

“Your time and hard work has been a blessing to us, I now feel I have a boost of strength to get through the next stage”

Feedback from people supported by **Dundee Carers Centre’s** self-directed support team.

**Advocacy Orkney’s** client stated on numerous occasions that without the support of advocacy, they would not have had the strength to keep fighting and they would not have found the diagnosis and support they needed in time to receive treatment *[for a life threatening illness]*.



# Evidence of the need for independent support since 2014

**2014 Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013**  
Act comes into force

**2018 Review of Independent Information and Support Services (Craigforth)**  
80% of people asked said that the independent support they received from a SiRD project had made an enormous or big difference to them.

**Scottish Government's 2019 Programme for local reform of adult social care** included as part of its programme vision that "People have access to appropriate information, advice and practical support to make decisions about their support. This includes creative support options. They are directed to this information, advice and support."

**2020 Covid pandemic** has a significant impact on care services and people's choice and control

**2014** **2020**

**2017 Audit Scotland SDS Progress report**  
"People using social care services and their carers need better information and help to understand SDS and make their choices....People need the information in the right format and at the right time and place"

**2019 Care Inspectorate thematic review of self-directed support in Scotland: Transforming Lives**  
"Empowering people with enough information is critical in allowing them to know their rights....To meet the self-directed support legislation, it is also vital that people can access independent support and advice when they need to."  
"Independent advocacy has a critical role in helping maximise the participation of those with limited capacity."

**2020 My Support My Choice: People's Experiences of Self-directed Support and Social Care in Scotland (Self Directed Support Scotland and the Alliance research)**  
71% of people surveyed either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "access to independent information and support makes self-directed support easier for me."

← **Scottish Government: Self-directed Support Strategy 2010-2020 and Implementation Plans (2016-2018 and 2019-2021)** →

# Evidence of the need for independent support since 2014

## 2021 Independent Review of Adult Social Care (Feely report) - included in its recommendations:

“People must be able to access support at the point they feel they need it, including for advice and signposting to local community-based resources and help...”

“People should understand better what their rights are to social care and supports....”

“More independent advocacy and brokerage services, including peer services, must be made available to people to ensure that their voices are heard, and to help prepare for participation in planning and organising their support.”

## 2022 National Care Service Bill published

Whilst subsequently amended, the Bill is expected to allow for the provision of independent advocacy services in connection with an individual’s entitlement to social care services.

2021 ..... 2024

**2021 Self-directed Support Framework of Standards**  
**Standard 1:** “People are offered independent support, community brokerage and advocacy to have choice and control over their own or their child’s social care and support, and to exercise their human rights.”

**2024 Post legislative scrutiny of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013**

Scottish Government: Self-directed Support Improvement Plan 2023 - 2027

10

# SiRD delivery: October 2018-March 2024

Between October 2018 and March 2024 organisations funded through SiRD delivered a range of independent support activities, to support social care delivery through SDS including:

- information and advice on self-directed support principles and social care options
- personal outcome planning and support with social work assessments
- putting care plans in place and support to manage a social care package.

This was delivered through self-directed support information, advice, enquiry lines, 1:1 and group support, individual and collective advocacy, community brokerage, peer support, workshops, training, support to clarify or challenge decisions and option 1 specific support, including how to be a good employer. SiRD support is provided throughout a person's social care journey (end-to-end), from pre-assessment to ongoing management of a social care package.

**7449**

people were supported with personal outcome planning

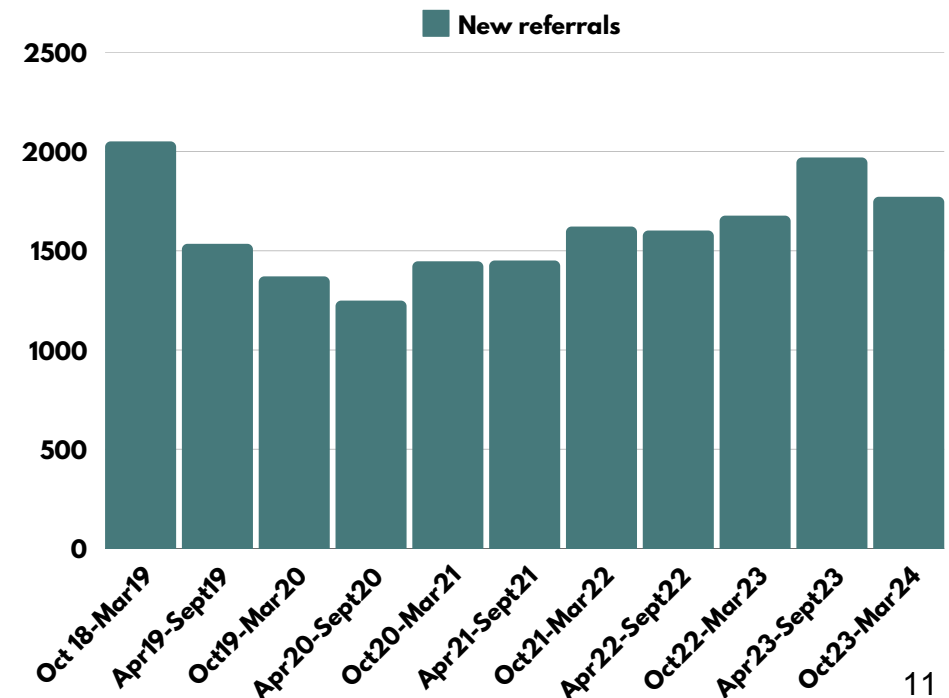
**7533**

people participated in self-directed support specific training

## Scale of support provided

Over the 5.5 years, 17,747 cases were supported by SiRD organisations. A case will often include support for the person needing social care support and their family or carers. On average, 1600 **new** cases were referred to SiRD projects every six months.

However cases often take longer than six months to be resolved and people could be supported over a number of months or years and at any point in their social care journey, for example before a social care assessment, through to a review.



## SiRD delivery: Geographical location

People living across Scotland were supported through SiRD funding. There was at least one SiRD funded organisation based in each local authority area for at least part of the funding period. The chart to the right shows the local authority areas of people receiving support.

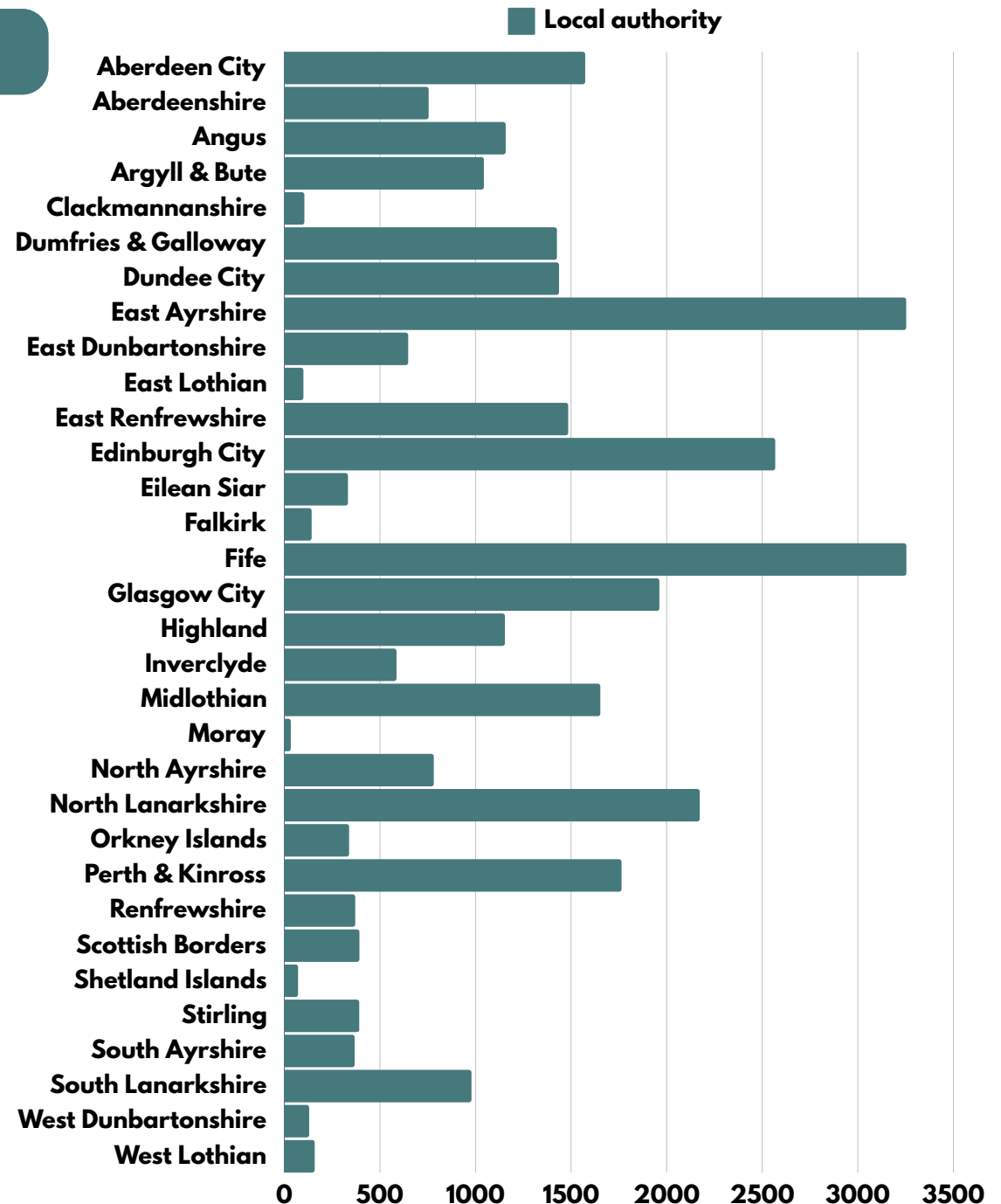
Funded organisations delivered different types of services, with some delivering more intensive support to less people, which partly accounts for higher number of people being supported in some areas.

Although not the largest local authority area by population size, there were three SiRD projects working in East Ayrshire as two of these worked pan Ayrshire. This led to high numbers being supported. Fife also had two SiRD projects based there during this time.

There was no SiRD project working in Moray until 2023 which accounts for the low number of people supported there.

"I have been experiencing more frequent health problems recently and don't have another source of personal support, so the ease of access makes a big difference and lowers the biggest hurdle by having the information in the one place".

**LCIL one to one support recipient**



# SiRD delivery: Who was supported

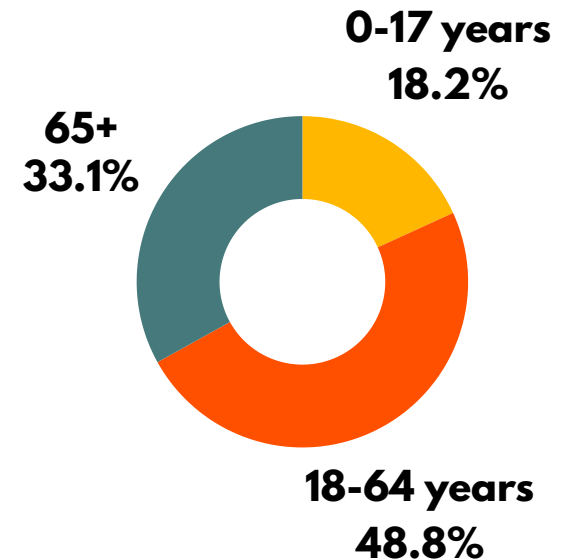
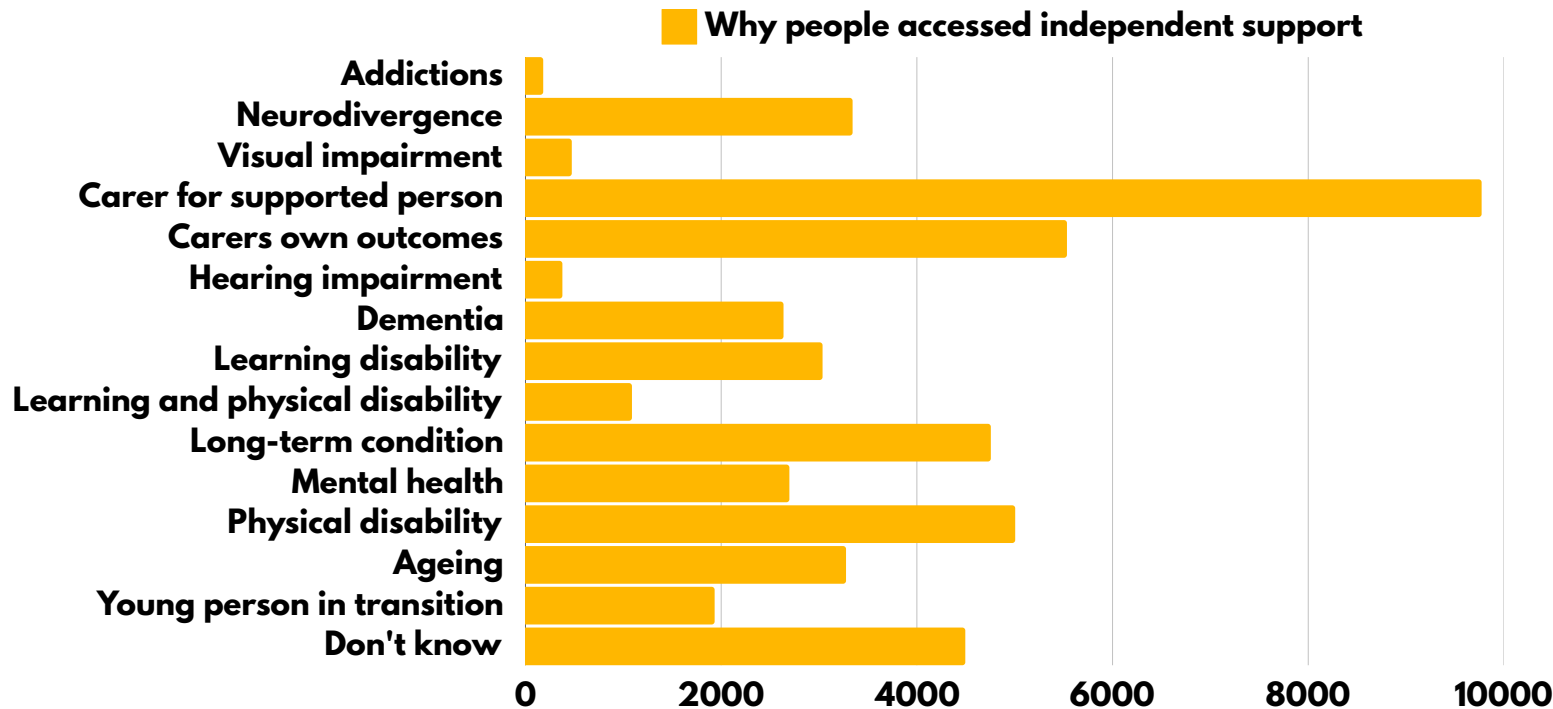


SiRD funded organisations are embedded in their local communities and supported social care users and their carers, regardless of their age or social care needs

Unpaid Carers most frequently accessed independent support, in relation to the care arrangements for the person they cared for, as well as for their own personal outcomes. People with a physical disability or long-term condition were also frequent users of independent support.

People with addictions were the least likely to access support through SiRD, which supports findings from the 2020 'My Support My Choice' report (*Self-directed Support Scotland/Health and Social Care Alliance*), that people with addictions are less likely to self-direct their support.

**Age:** Support sought from SiRD organisations was most often for adult social care needs



"Since getting in contact and meeting with Carol it has felt like I have had a team member being proactive on my behalf!"

**Community Brokerage Network**

# The difference independent support makes (SiRD fund outcomes)

We know independent support activities are important as they help people and carers to:



understand the self-directed support principles and their social care choices



feel informed and listened to and so less stressed

develop their skills to manage their social care package.



develop creative plans to achieve their outcomes and find support services



feel better prepared and more confident to take part in social work assessments and share their views

## The difference independent support makes



**People understand the self-directed support principles and their social care choices**

**The social care system is complex and people need information about how it works**, how to navigate the system, as well as information about self-directed support principles and local social work processes and care options.

Many people who would benefit from social care support are not aware of it, or how to access it. Even among those accessing or trying to access social care, many lack full knowledge and understanding of their rights under self-directed support legislation. People are therefore not always making informed choices in relation to their care.

Professionals are also not always knowledgeable about all self-directed support options, which can lead to people choosing care packages (in particular SDS option 1) without a full understanding of the related responsibilities.

SiRD organisations provide localised information, advice, training and advocacy for people using social care to help them navigate the system and make them aware of their rights and the choices they have in relation to their care.

They also support social care and social work students, newly qualified staff and other professionals and third sector organisations with their understanding of self-directed support legislation, principles, standards and practice.

Portfolio reporting over the period tells us that as a result of the independent information and advice provided with SiRD funding, people had a better understanding of self-directed support and how to access social care after working with a SiRD organisation.

**15,845**

people fed back that they knew (had a better understanding of) what self-directed support is and what the principles and options mean for them

**9386**

people fed back that they knew how to access a social care assessment

## The power of independent light touch advice and information sharing: Community Contacts, Carr Gomm

Community Contacts met Susan at the local Carers Centre. Susan was providing extensive support for her parents but had previously had what she considered to be bad experiences with social workers as the parent of a disabled child, and was reluctant to explore the potential of self-directed support for her parents and in her role as a carer. Community Contacts spent time with Susan having an outcome focused conversation and she agreed to take some information on self-directed support and how Community Contacts could help.

Two weeks later, Susan called Community Contacts back; she had been reflecting on their conversation and the information she had taken away. She concluded that there would be 'no harm' in requesting an assessment for the family and asked Community Contacts for help to arrange this. The local Social Work team promptly visited the family and conducted an assessment, which resulted in them being offered a social care budget they could direct to help meet everyone's needs.

Susan reported back that she was appreciative of the Community Contacts worker's gentle approach; her respect, the initial time she gave to Susan and the space to reach her own decision. The worker reflected on the power of sharing information and kindness at the right time; how this approach and the information shared enabled Susan to determine her next steps thus upholding her rights. The duration of this support was only over three weeks and was highly effective for Susan.

**9852**

people fed back that they were more informed, or had a clearer understanding of the (social care) assessment and review process

**6261**

people fed back that they felt they could contribute as an equal partner and participate or influence their assessment



## The difference independent support makes



**People feel informed and listened to and so less stressed**



**People feel better prepared and more confident to take part in social work assessments and share their views**

**Independent support works best when people access it early in their social care journey.**

With independent support people know their rights and options from the outset, they can prepare for a social work assessment and think through what they need to live well and independently. It helps people go into assessments fully informed, with an idea of the outcomes they want to achieve, supporting social workers to have a good conversation during the assessment.

Independent support can be preventative. Community brokerage activities provided as part of end-to-end independent support, can divert people from, or reduce the need for, formal care by fully exploring supports available to them in the community that do not require a social care budget. This can meet lower-level needs and delay people accessing formal social care, helping to manage demand on stretched local authority budgets.

Independent support organisations often report that if they had been involved with an individual sooner, they could have prevented a problem with their care arrangements arising or a complaint from being raised. This is particularly the case in formal advocacy cases.

**8800**

people fed back that they knew their rights

**9695**

people fed back that they were able to express what matters to them

**8409**

people fed back that they had the opportunity to share their views, ask questions

**11,068**

people were signposted to other relevant community-based services, support or resources

## Being informed early: VOCAL Edinburgh

Jane reached out to VOCAL for support while her husband was waiting on a social work assessment as she couldn't wait any longer to get a break from caring. VOCAL spoke to Jane about what mattered most to her and she knew a break to see her grandchildren would help recharge her batteries. VOCAL helped establish the level of support Jane's husband would need while she was away and discussed what Jane could expect from the upcoming assessment. VOCAL also advised Jane that she could request an assessment for herself in the form of an Adult Carer Support Plan, which would assess her need for respite.

VOCAL explained the principles of self-directed support and took Jane through the four options she could choose from to receive support. This was all new and welcome news for Jane, and she felt more than prepared for the assessment. Afterwards, Jane reported back that it had gone well and her husband was to receive a direct payment. Armed with information, Jane requested that this be provided via option 2 of self-directed support. Jane would identify the service and request the local authority arrange the payments. Jane and VOCAL began sourcing agencies that would be able to provide the support needed to allow Jane her break.

Jane felt more confident about requesting the right kind of support as she was informed and equipped to do so. VOCAL also encouraged Jane to apply for a short breaks grant to allow her a break before the direct payments started. Jane's sense of herself and her own well-being has greatly improved since contact with VOCAL. She has her break arranged and support in place for her husband. Jane now feels the future is not as bleak as it once looked.

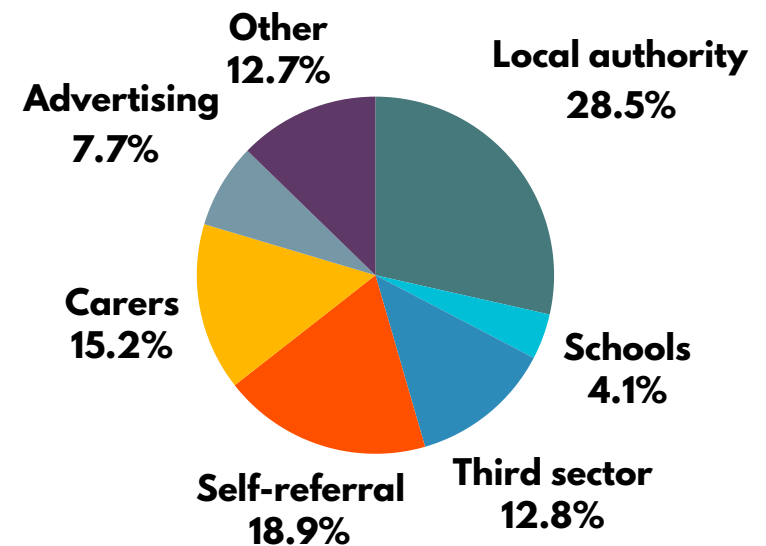
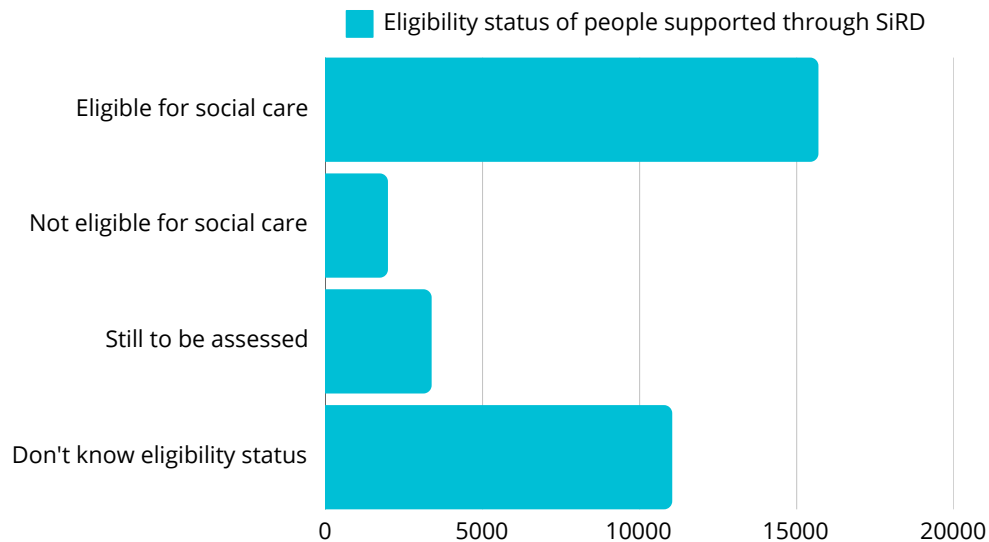
**The majority of people SiRD projects supported had been assessed and were eligible for funded social care.** This may mean they did not receive independent support early in their social care journey and many learned about their care rights and options through SiRD.

For those people who had been assessed and were not eligible for a formal support package, independent support helped them to access alternative community supports, or in some cases challenge the assessment decision.

The eligibility status of a large proportion of people was unknown and future SiRD reporting will look more closely at the stage people are at in their social care journey when accessing independent support.

### Referral route

People were most often referred to SiRD projects by local authority staff, although self-referrals and carer referrals combined accounted for more. Getting referred to independent support early in the process of accessing social care is vital, however not all local authorities have clear and consistent referral pathways into independent support organisations.



## The difference independent support makes

People develop creative plans to achieve their outcomes and find support services



**Independent support organisations are skilled at sourcing creative approaches to care**, whether that's supporting people with personal outcome planning, or looking at different ways to use a budget to meet those outcomes and putting together a care package. Traditional approaches to care delivery, for example building based group services, work well for many people. However, independent support helps people to consider options beyond this and if it's not the best way to meet their outcomes, to explore what is.

Independent support can also help to scale up creative approaches identified for individuals and develop new models of care delivery. Micro-enterprises is one area which has benefited from the involvement of independent support to find care solutions where there is a lack of choice for people.

**Ayrshire Independent Living Network** supported the development of a micro enterprises pilot in South Ayrshire and self-employed PAs test of change on Arran, to help meet the demand for carers.

**Braemar Care** supported elderly and vulnerable people living in a very rural area with limited service provision, by linking them with local volunteers and carers to enable them to live independently for longer.

**The Advisory Group (TAG)** organised community connecting events to support communications and joint working between local organisations supporting people with learning disabilities, as this was lacking and people did not know what was on offer. Taster activity sessions were organised which led to new groups being established by people with common interests to achieve their outcomes.

**7930**

people fed back that they knew of a range of options they had to support them

## Planning for change: Shetland Community Connections

Marie had a direct payment package for a number of years and employed PAs. When Marie first got her direct payment package she was in a flare up of her long term condition but as the years have gone on she is better able to manage it. Marie's social worker suggested a person centered plan as Marie wasn't really sure what she wanted to do in the future. Shetland Community Connections supported Marie to develop a plan and she thought of a few ideas of what she wanted to do. As Marie had PA's it seemed appropriate that they would support her to do some of the things on her plan, however, nothing really changed. Marie agreed with her social worker that she would reduce her direct payment package so that she was just keeping her cleaning support.

They also agreed there would be a transition period where she worked with someone 4 hours a week to have an intensive focus on her plan. Shetland Community Connections supported Lisa to find someone to help with this and she worked with them over 8 weeks to put into action some of the things she had listed on her plan, many months ago.

Within this short space of time Marie got her provisional driving license, looked at whether she could get a Motability car, got her passport sorted, secured a place at college and got a leisure pass so she could use the leisure centre to get more healthy.

Marie said about these few weeks: "It was brilliant, had the best time ever. It really helped, I got into college and got my provisional too."

This worked out as Marie had reached a time in her life where she wished to do something different. This was now her opportunity to see how she could move on without PAs. Marie is aware that if she has another flare up of her condition she can come straight back to Shetland Community Connections or social work to look at what support she needs then.

# The difference independent support makes

People develop their  
skills to manage their  
social care package



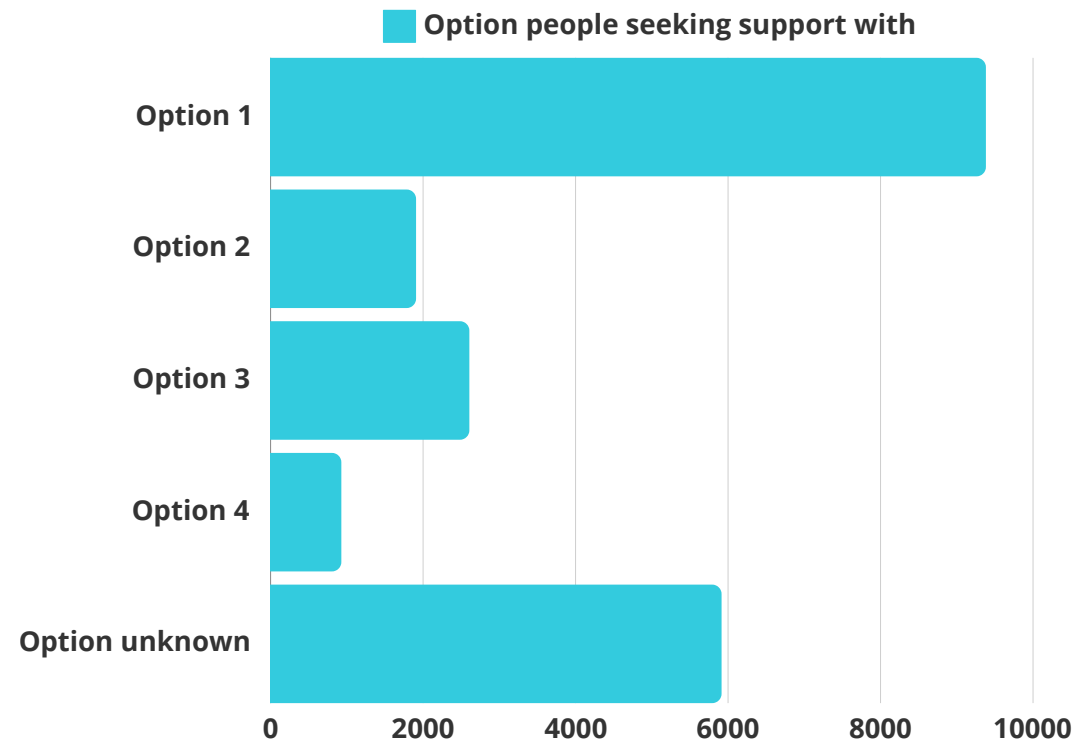
**3264**  
people were involved in  
developing their own  
care plans

## Self-directed support options

Self-directed support gives people 4 options over their care arrangements, depending on how much choice, control and responsibility they want to have:

- Option 1 - a direct payment by the local authority to the supported person for them to arrange and manage their care.
- Option 2 - the supported person selects their care which is managed by a third party on their behalf.
- Option 3 - the local authority selects the care for the supported person and manages this.
- Option 4 - a combination of options 1, 2 and 3.

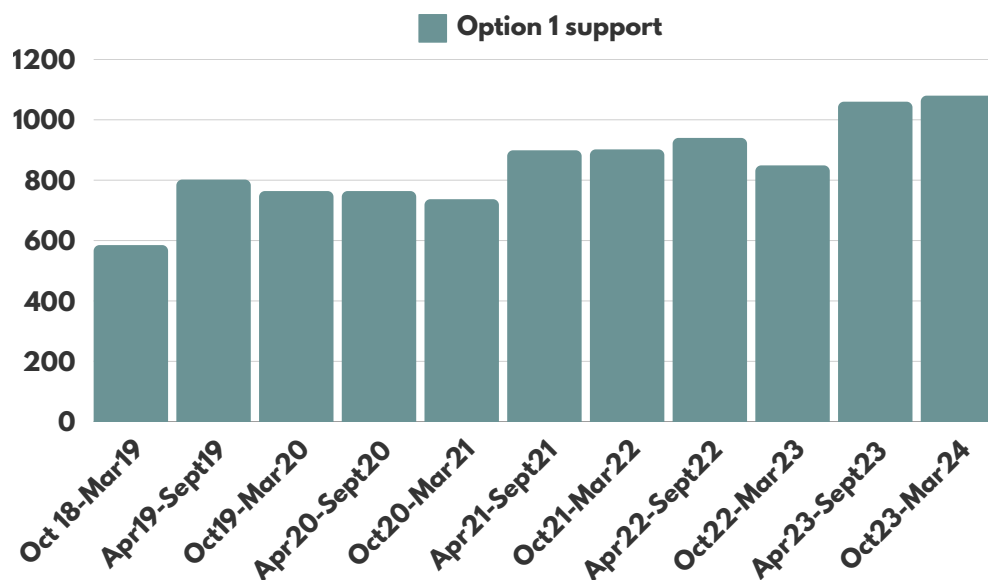
Of the people supported by SiRD who were eligible for funded social care, most received help with option 1, which has the most responsibility for the supported person or their carer to manage.



The number of people seeking help with option 1 through SiRD increased steadily every six months from 585 in 2018, to 1080 by March 2024. This supports feedback from SiRD organisations that demand for option 1 support is increasing and that more people need help with managing the responsibilities of being an employer. For example, with: job descriptions, contracts, PVGs, payroll, pensions, employer’s liability insurance, financial management, staff management, leave entitlements, disciplinaries, redundancies.

Given current challenges in finding care, more people are also seeking SiRD support to recruit PAs. This can absorb a significant amount of staff resource and SiRD organisations are faced with the difficulty of trying to avoid becoming simply a recruitment service.

**SDS Forum East Renfrewshire** provide a PA recruitment template and an Option 1 budget management service through their SiRD project, to help people who might otherwise struggle to successfully manage their budget.



**5997**  
people fed back that they knew where to get support with managing their package when required

## Challenges recruiting PAs: Dundee Carers Centre, Self-directed Support Service for Dundee and Angus

A carer employer living in a village in Angus contacted Dundee Carers Centre's Self-directed Support Service for Dundee and Angus for support with recruitment, as they needed another Personal Assistant to complete their team. Recruitment has proved difficult previously due to the rural location and the short shifts required and the employer has had to stand in on many occasions to assist with moving and handling as well as cover for days off. Dundee Carer's Centre's Advisor assisted by placing the PA advert online in a few different locations, communicating with interested applicants and forwarding applications to the employer to shortlist.

Once shortlisted, the Advisor invited the applicants to interview and communicated with them if they needed the time or date of the interview changed. All applicants confirmed their attendance at interview and the Advisor agreed to support the employer at interview as a note taker on the day at a venue in Angus.

Unfortunately, 3 out of the 4 applicants didn't turn up for interview despite the Advisor phoning them on the day. The successful candidate was offered the post, subject to references and PVG, and accepted.

The Advisor supported the employer by contacting the candidate for referees and sending for references. Unfortunately, the employer has tried to contact the potential PA on several occasions since and while they agreed to phone back haven't done so. This means the recruitment drive will need to continue. It was very disappointing for the employer as all 4 applicants shortlisted looked promising, had experience and qualifications, but didn't take the time to let the employer know they either wouldn't be attending for interview or no longer wanted to take up the post.



## Added benefits of independent support: Co-production and supporting system change

SiRD does not have an “influencing policy” outcome that funded organisations are expected to deliver, but **contributing learning to process and policy development and ongoing SDS improvement is a often an important by-product of their work.**

SiRD funded organisations are local experts in how self-directed support is being experienced by people. Over the 5.5 years of funding (and through previous SiRD funding) they have built long term relationships with people and have knowledge and learning from this to feed into social care development and self-directed support improvement.

Involving independent support organisations in local and national self-directed support policy and process development allows them to share the common issues people come to them for help and advice on and ensures lived experience is heard. SiRD groups have been active in identifying solutions to support local and national system improvement.

**Equal Say** are involved in strategic work being carried out by North Lanarkshire’s Health and Social Care Partnership to review their self-directed support strategy and information, as well as their Coming Home group looking at how support services can be designed to ensure people with the most complex needs are supported in their own communities.

**PKAVS** have started facilitating a local self-directed support and PA forum for all organisations connected to this work in Perth and Kinross. The practice focused forum will help those attending to work in closer partnership, avoid duplication and share insights with colleagues in the Local Authority.

**Dundee Carers Centre** was recruited to be part of Angus Health & Social Care Partnership’s Support and Care Steering Group and gave recommendations on the delivery of self-directed support and Option 1 processes in Angus. They’re also supporting the development of Option 2 with the HSCP and In Control Scotland.

**Carr Gomm** co-chaired the review of the Self-directed Support Framework of Standards, offering input regarding the implications of rurality on self-directed support, and also worked with NHS Highland on the implementation of their self-directed support strategy.

## Encompass: Co-production with the local authority

Encompass are just one example of where mutual trust and respect has been developed between an independent support organisation and the local Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), which brings in the voice of lived experience in a meaningful way.

The **SDS Forum** in the Scottish Borders, supported by **Encompass**, meets monthly and is a source of voices, lived experiences and peer support on matters relating to social care and self-directed support. Over many years, the SDS Forum has developed a productive working relationship with the HSCP and Forum members are active participants in the local SDS Improvement Group. Through raising issues members have experienced and sharing their insights, this leads to a co-productive approach to the improvement of local policies and processes.

"I feel very privileged to be working so closely with the SDS Forum, which is a SiRD funded organisation based in the Scottish Borders. The Forum represents the voices of people who use services and advocates for improved access to services in the community. As SDS lead for the Health and Social Care Partnership, I believe we have developed an honest and constructive working relationship, which promotes co-production and the spirit of self-directed support within the Borders. In working together alongside services, I believe we have fostered a mutual trust and respect and I'm proud of the work that we do together."

**SDS Lead, Scottish Borders HSCP**

SDS Forum members also made a film to promote self-directed support. Watch it by clicking on their logo or visiting:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tB2rO4ND7xk>

### Henry's Poem (SDS Forum member)

Who are we?

We are the Scottish Borders SDS Forum

And we all act with a certain decorum

We help to make the community aware

Of the four choices they have in care

We are a group who do our best

To share people's views and put to the test

What the community want and need

To make SDS the very best indeed

For those in the community, who need information about care

The SDS Forum will always be there.



## Added benefits of independent support: Peer support

While some independent support organisations specifically set out to develop and facilitate opportunities for peer support between people using or accessing social care to share experiences, advice, support and solutions around self-directed support and raise issues collectively, for other this occurs as an added benefit of their work. For example, through delivering training sessions peer connections between participants can be formed.

**5270**  
people were supported through  
peer group sessions

Peer support is a key SiRD activity for **Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living** who have found their peer support network to be a beneficial space where people can explore, share and support each other with issues and challenges they face with self-directed support. "It gives me a lot of confidence to take part and join in discussions".

The **SDS Forum East Renfrewshire** hosted Breaking Down Barriers sessions which gave supported people and carers a space to discuss their positive and negative experiences of accessing self-directed support assessments and share these with East Renfrewshire HSCP management who also attended.

**Advocacy Service Aberdeen** found a high level of demand for carer-related support in mainstream schools which is placing a lot of pressure on families. They are working to run a collective advocacy group to support families and carers that are struggling with this issue.

## The power of peer support: VOCAL Midlothian

Two separate carers were being supported by VOCAL and decided to attend their peer support group for parent carers of adult children. One is parent to a 21-year-old son with Autism and a learning disability. He left school during the COVID lockdown period and lost touch with friends. As a result, he has been living quite a solitary life and has had some social and emotional struggles, however, he is determined to rebuild this part of his life. To support him in living an active life and participating in society, he has access to a small budget. The other parent has a 20-year-old son who has Autism and some other conditions. He is attending university and has an allocated budget to support him to attend and to meet his personal care needs. Both parents had reached out to VOCAL when their children were transitioning from children's to adult services and they were feeling anxious and uncertain about how to navigate this.

Meeting at the peer support group, both parents expressed their frustrations at the lack of resources for young adult men and how they were struggling to find social opportunities or groups for their sons to attend. Since connecting, the parents have met up in their own community, and their sons have also met and get along well as they share similar interests such as attending music concerts. They have gone together to some events and really enjoyed going as a small group. They are keen to explore this interest further and are exploring future ideas to pool their budgets together and perhaps set up a new opportunity such as hiring a room and a music teacher to teach them guitar, something they are both keen to do but that their individual budgets wouldn't stretch too.

By bringing together carers, VOCAL have helped to create an informal peer support network, assisting two families to find their own creative solutions to support their children.

# Limitations and barriers for independent support delivery

**The social care system is experiencing multiple challenges at present and there are no easy solutions.**

Over the last five and a half years, SiRD organisations have consistently reported how the people they work with experience these challenges. While the challenges aren't new, nor universal, and have complex causes, they are common. Over the last 5.5 years the common limitations and barriers that have been reported are:

## Local authority capacity

- Local authorities are working in a challenging financial context and capacity is stretched.
- SiRD organisations report people facing delays in the assessment process, whether that's waiting to be assessed, to have budgets approved, or for budgets to be processed once approved.
- People don't always have an allocated social worker, compounding these issues and presenting challenges for SiRD organisations trying to support people through the process.
- One SiRD organisation reported that some clients have given up on the assessment process part way through and others decided not to have one based on their perception of how bad it is.

This all causes stress and frustration for people and independent support organisations try to alleviate some of this stress by taking on practical tasks, for example communicating with social work on their behalf.

## Eligibility criteria

- More local authority areas are moving to substantial or critical eligibility thresholds or introducing charging policies.
- What people can spend their care budgets on is becoming more restricted and less preventative.
- People's budgets are also being reduced and support removed, sometimes with little notice or explanation.
- Conversely, financial hardship is driving many people who would have previously remain self-sufficient to seek social care support as their income reduces.
- More people are now seeking community-based support services at a time when these are reducing in number.

This results in increased demand for SiRD organisations as people's packages are reduced or removed and more people seek support with this.

### Lack of available care support and Option 1 challenges

- Once people have been offered a budget for care, they can face difficulties securing support.
- The shortage of option 2 or 3 provision means there is often little or no flexibility in services offered.
- People are being directed towards option 1 due to a lack of other available options.
- People can therefore feel pressurised into choosing option 1 as the quickest route to accessing support, or are offered option 1 or nothing, limiting their choice.
- This leads to more people who would not have actively chosen option 1 being required to take on the responsibility of managing a direct payment and becoming an employer, when this may not be suitable for them.
- This also puts the onus on the supported person to secure staff.
- However, as a consequence of increasing option 1 usage and the general shortage of care staff, it is increasingly difficult to find carers/PAs.
- If people are not able to represent their views they can be left with no support.

People need a greater level of support from SiRD organisations to manage option 1 care packages. This need increases further when people have not made an active choice and option 1 is not the best option for them. Financial monitoring returns can be difficult for some with others asked to repay money that has been flagged as spent inappropriately. SiRD organisations help people with these issues and in advocating for their rights.

Referrals are also increasingly to recruit PA posts which feel “impossible” to fill, requiring more SiRD resources to promote vacancies.

Some local authority areas have appointed option 1 support providers, but this is not consistent across Scotland and so there are gaps in this support.

### Waiting lists for independent support

- More people are now seeking independent support after an assessment to either challenge the assessment or find care services due to a lack of availability.
- An increase in complex cases has been reported by some independent support organisations which has resulted in people requiring more intensive support.

SiRD organisations are finding they are involved for longer and to a greater degree, with more people, to help them secure support. This in turn has led to more SiRD organisations having to introduce waiting lists and prioritise access to their support.

### Referral pathway

- Not everyone that could benefit from it knows about independent support.
- Although the largest group of referrers, local authorities make just over a quarter of all referrals to SiRD organisations.
- Given they are the key organisation people seeking social care will be in contact with at some point, it's likely local authorities could refer more people.

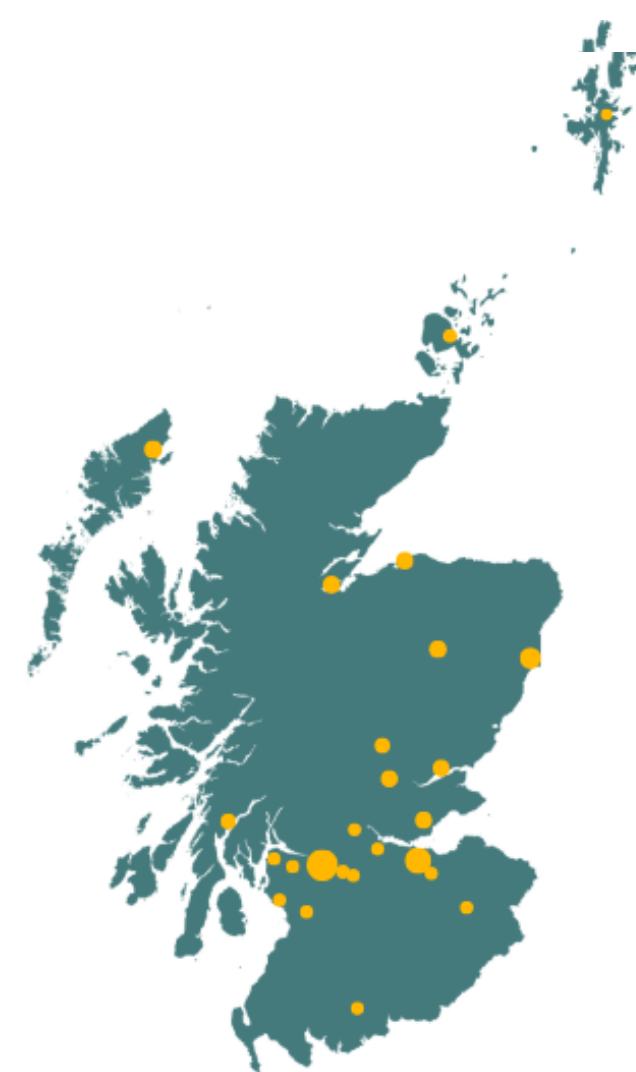
Referral pathways to SiRD organisations would benefit from being consistent. Not all local authorities refer people who are waiting on assessments to independent support organisations for support while they wait, despite their ability to link people into community supports straight away, with GDPR sometimes being cited as a barrier to information sharing.

## Conclusion

**Support in the Right Direction (SiRD) is a successful funding programme that has made a significant impact over the last 5.5 years.** SiRD organisations, along with the staff delivering independent support activities, provide practical support daily and in doing so, have developed a wealth of knowledge and experience, making them essential partners in local social care delivery. Funded groups have assisted more than 97,000 people in understanding their rights related to social care in Scotland, providing targeted support in over 17,000 social care cases.

This report outlines the facts and figures of SiRD funding from 2018 to March 2024. It also includes case studies that illustrate the positive difference independent support makes for individuals and their carers, as well as the ongoing implementation and enhancement of self-directed support in Scotland. It shows how sustained funding can support systems change and improvement, the limitations experienced by funded groups, and the importance of enabling people to share with each other and seek solutions from those who have lived the challenges they face.

The importance of long-term funding and the importance of people being informed and supported to claim their rights remains, and we are pleased that SiRD funding continues with a new portfolio of organisations across Scotland funded to deliver independent support for three years from April 2024.



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