



2025



**TOGETHER WE  
NOURISH**

**LISTENING • UPDATING • GROWING**

Autumn Carers Survey

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# INTRODUCTION

2025 Autumn, Together We Nourish updating and listening survey brought forward a powerful, honest, and deeply human set of insights from families across Fife. Parents, carers, and service users took the time to share not just information, but their lived reality: the barriers they face, the hopes they hold, and what truly helps them thrive.

As one parent reflected: *“We’ve had hard times, but Nourish has helped us feel part of something. It’s made a real difference to our family.”* — Carer, Dunfermline

This report brings those voices forward so we can better understand what matters most.



## WHO TOOK PART

A total of 129 households shared their experiences, representing:

- Carer/Parent/Guardian
- Service users (the person with an additional need)
- Siblings (including young carers)
- Extended family supporters
- Members and community participants

Families taking part in our survey came from across Fife, including Kirkcaldy, Glenrothes, Dunfermline, Methil, Buckhaven, Cardenden, Rosyth, Dalgety Bay, Leven and more.

Many had engaged recently, but others had been unable to attend due to health, anxiety, school refusal, caring responsibilities, or due to unclear information.

*“I haven’t been able to come because my mum had an operation, then I broke my heel.. but we’ve always benefited from Nourish.”* — Parent Carer, Dunfermline

# WHAT CARERS NEED MOST

Families were clear and consistent about the types of support that would make the biggest difference to their wellbeing and daily lives. Across the survey, carers and service users shared similar priorities, highlighting the kinds of environments, services and connections that help them feel safe, understood and supported.

## Top Needs Identified

- Sensory-friendly or neurodivergent-inclusive activities
- Emotional support or simply having someone to talk to
- Practical help, including food support, transport assistance, or essential equipment
- Peer connection or family-focused events where people can meet others with shared experiences
- Advocacy or guidance to help navigate complex services
- Support for siblings, especially young carers or children affected by their sibling's needs

Families repeatedly expressed the importance of calm, predictable environments, reassurance around sensory needs, and support that acknowledges the pressures of caring roles, household responsibilities and the emotional load that many carry.

Real stories from carers illustrate these needs powerfully:

*“James is non-verbal.. he communicates through body language. He enjoys going to Nourish but we need help knowing what might benefit him.”— Parent Carer, Glenrothes*

*“My husband has dementia and my children are autistic. Driving them everywhere makes it hard to fit anything in.”— Carer, Kirkcaldy*

## How We Have Responded and Our Commitment to Keep Listening

We have listened closely to what families told us, and many of these needs are now woven directly into our 2026 programme, including sensory-aware sessions, social connection groups, practical support routes, sibling-specific opportunities, and clearer pathways to one-to-one help or advocacy. Our new timetable, events calendar and structured Caring Together Programme have all been shaped by your voices.

Every comment, suggestion and insight we receive contributes to our learning, our planning, and our ability to support families in a meaningful, compassionate and effective way.

# BARRIERS TO ENGAGEMENT

While families are keen to attend and stay connected, many described very real obstacles that can make joining groups or accessing support difficult. These barriers often overlap, meaning that several conditions must be in place before a family feels able to come along. Understanding these challenges has been essential in shaping our 2026 programme and the changes we have already made.

Common barriers include:

- Confidence and anxiety
- Sensory needs, including noise, lighting and unpredictability
- Timing and scheduling conflicts
- Transport difficulties or travel costs
- Caring responsibilities, especially for families with multiple needs
- Not knowing what's available or when sessions are running
- Physical accessibility considerations
- Overly busy or noisy environments

Families told us that even simple environmental changes like quieter spaces, smaller groups or stable routines can make all the difference in feeling comfortable and welcome.

## HOW WE'VE RESPONDED

We took this feedback seriously, and many of the improvements families asked for have already been built into our 2026 planning.

To reduce noise and sensory overload, we made the decision to move away from running activities across two venues (the Support Centre and the Community Hub at the Mercat Shopping Centre).

By delivering all core support within the Support Centre, we can better manage:

- sensory levels
- group sizes
- environmental consistency
- predictability and calm

This creates a more controlled, welcoming atmosphere for those who may feel anxious, overwhelmed or uncertain in busy public spaces.

## **A Quiet Space**

Families asked for a space to decompress, we delivered it. Our new quiet space can be used to:

- ground after sensory overwhelm
- take a break during group sessions
- receive one-to-one emotional support
- enjoy a calm environment away from noise or crowds

## **Clearer, more consistent communication**

Many families told us that not knowing what was on, or finding out too late, added unnecessary stress. To address this, we have introduced:

- a detailed 2026 programme and a clear events calendar
- information available 24/7 on our website including an online booking system
- visual guides to support understanding
- advance communication wherever possible, including Newsletters

This aims to remove confusion and help families plan comfortably.

## **More time-friendly options**

To support those with work, school or caring schedules, the 2026 programme now includes:

- evening sessions
- after-school clubs
- weekend opportunities
- school holiday activities

## **Thoughtful programme design for sensory needs**

Sessions have been built around:

- predictable routines
- familiar staff
- clearer expectations
- smaller or quieter groups where appropriate

## **Support for anxiety and confidence**

We understand that walking into a group can feel overwhelming.

For anyone facing anxiety, nervousness or confidence barriers:

Carers are encouraged to contact us in advance so we can:

- meet them at the door
- offer a pre-visit to the space
- explain what to expect
- arrange a quieter time
- provide one-to-one reassurance

- *“We ideally need a quiet, supportive environment with good parking.. and I need photos or a social story to help my daughter understand where she’s going.”* — Parent Carer, Dunfermline
- *“Sometimes my health makes it impossible to come even though I really want to.”* — Parent Carer, Kirkcaldy
- *“Transport costs and timing stop us from attending a lot of things.”* — Carer, Glenrothes

# WHAT HELPS FAMILIES FEEL INCLUDED

Families shared what makes them feel welcome, safe, and connected:



**WARM FRIENDLY  
STAFF**



**CLEAR AND  
CONSISTENT  
COMMUNICATION**



**A NON-  
JUDGEMENTAL  
ATMOSPHERE**



**PRIVACY AND  
CONFIDENTIALITY**



**PREDICTABILITY  
(KNOWING WHAT TO  
EXPECT)**



**FLEXIBLE, ACCESSIBLE  
SESSIONS**

## Some heartfelt reflections included:

*"I feel included when I'm there. It's private, I can talk about anything." — Member, Kirkcaldy*

*"Just not being judged. Sometimes that's all it takes to feel safe." — Parent Carer, Kirkcaldy*

*"We love the emails. They make us feel connected even when we can't come in." — Parent Carer, Kirkcaldy*

# WHAT CARERS SAY WE DO WELL

Carers consistently told us that Nourish feels like a safe, welcoming place where they are met with kindness, understanding, and genuine care. Many shared that staff make them feel seen and listened to, offering emotional support during difficult moments and celebrating achievements, no matter how small. Carers appreciated the practical help available, from food and toiletries to specialist advice and signposting, describing it as a vital lifeline during times of pressure. Parents also spoke positively about how inclusive and accessible Nourish is, highlighting calm sensory-aware spaces, friendly reassurance on arrival, and the way staff create an environment where both children and adults can relax without judgement. For many, attending Nourish helps reduce isolation, strengthens family confidence, and provides opportunities to connect with others who truly understand their experiences. Carers described Nourish as “supportive”, “welcoming”, “a place we can talk about anything”, and “somewhere that makes us feel less alone” clear signs of the trust and warmth at the heart of the service.

*“Take and Donate has been a godsend.. nappies, wipes, pads – we couldn’t manage without it.” – Parent Carer, Dunfermline*

*“The staff are so welcoming.. we always feel safe when we walk in.” – Carer, Methil*

## OPEN TO LEARNING

At the same time, we are open to learning. A small number of families shared that there have been moments when they felt unsure or unwelcome for example, arriving to find staff standing together talking, or not receiving an immediate greeting. We are grateful for this honesty.

*“I would feel more included if you don’t get judged when you walk in the door and if groups of staff are not standing and talking to each other.” –Parent Carer, Kirkcaldy*

Feedback like this helps us grow, strengthen our culture, and rethink how we show up for carers and their families the moment they walk through the door.

## To make sure everyone feels welcomed and valued from the outset, we are taking clear steps:

**A new “warm welcome” approach** — Staff and volunteers will prioritise greeting families immediately, offering reassurance and support as soon as they arrive.

**Active presence over passive presence** — Staff will be positioned intentionally to support families, not grouped together.

**Reinforced training** — We are investing in professional development around trauma-informed practice, empathy, body language, and how to create an inclusive atmosphere for all coping with stress, overwhelm, or uncertainty.

**Clear roles and visibility** — Our new Caring Together Programme will include visible staff/volunteer boards so families know who is available and who to approach. All staff and volunteers will wear photographic ID badges making it easier to identify roles and responsibilities.



By embracing both the positive feedback and the areas for improvement, we are continuing to ensure that Nourish remains a place where every carer, service user and wider family feels welcome, respected, and supported from the very first moment they step inside.

# AREAS CARERS HOPE TO SEE IMPROVE

Alongside the positive feedback shared by families, carers were open about where improvements would make the biggest difference to their confidence, comfort, and ability to attend. Families told us they would value

- More quiet, sensory-safe options
- Sessions at weekends, evenings, and after school
- Better clarity on what's running and when
- More free-play, drop-in, and teen/young adult options
- Clearer visual communication, including photos and social stories
- Greater transparency about staffing, volunteers, and roles

We are incredibly grateful for this feedback. It has directly shaped many of the changes Nourish has already made and continues to guide our future planning.

## WHAT WE HAVE ALREADY DONE TO STRENGTHEN THESE AREAS

To respond to these needs, the team has invested time, energy, and resources into creating a more inclusive, predictable and supportive environment for Carers and their families.

### **A newly refurbished sensory-safe quiet space**

We have redesigned an area within our Support Centre into a calm, flexible environment that can be used as:

- a chill-out space during busy sessions
- a quiet room for one-to-one emotional support
- a grounding area if group sessions become overwhelming

This dedicated space reflects what families told us they needed a retreat that supports regulation, safety and calm.

### **A programme with evening, after-school and weekend sessions**

To address the need for more accessible scheduling, we have planned a diverse timetable across 2026 that includes:

- After-school club
- Evening sessions
- Weekend availability

This means families juggling school routines, work or caring responsibilities have more opportunities to join activities at times that fit their lives.

## **Regular family events introduced and expanding**

In 2025 we piloted monthly family events such as:

- Halloween Family Day
- The Great Nourish Bake Off
- Strictly Sparkle with Dance Classes

These were extremely well received, and dependent on funding we aim to continue offering exciting, inclusive, family-centred events throughout 2026.

## **Clear advance schedules, online booking & a full events calendar**

Carers told us they sometimes felt confused about what was running and when. To fix this, we have:

- Designed a detailed 2026 programme
- Introduced online booking for key activities
- Created a clear events calendar for families

This aims to reduce uncertainty, improve predictability, and support families to plan ahead.

## **A strengthened teen & young adult offer**

Your feedback highlighted a real need for age-appropriate, socially meaningful opportunities for teens and young adults. In response, the 2026 programme includes:

- Happy Mondays
- After-school club
- Project U, focused on developing life skills and independence

These programmes were built directly from carers' requests for belonging, social connection and skill-building for older young people.

## **Visual communication now standard across activities**

To ensure inclusivity for families who rely on visual cues, we have begun using:

- Storyboard invites
- Photo-based instructions
- Visual social stories

This has already been implemented for events like our Christmas Card Competition and Fife Zoo trip and will now become standard for all family and youth activities.

## **Transparency and clarity in our staffing structure**

Families asked for clearer understanding of who is staff, who is volunteering, and who they can approach for help.

In response, Nourish has committed to:

- A knowledgeable, trained and lived-experience-informed team of four paid staff, including a male staff member
- Volunteers who are used intentionally and supported through supervision, training, mentoring and clear role definitions
- A more structured staffing presence within sessions

This ensures families feel safe, supported, and confident about who to speak to and what support is available.



# WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Over the past several months, the Nourish team has taken time to carefully analyse every part of the Together We Nourish survey, listening closely to the voices, experiences and hopes shared by carers across Fife. These insights have shaped a clear and ambitious action plan for 2026 one that puts lived experience at the heart of every decision.

A key part of this plan is the launch of our new Caring Together Programme 2026, running Monday to Thursday, designed directly in response to the needs, barriers and aspirations families told us about. This programme will introduce more predictable routines, clearer communication, and activities that can be booked well in advance addressing one of the biggest concerns families expressed around uncertainty and last-minute information. Through Caring Together, we aim to create a steady weekly rhythm that offers families choice, flexibility, and confidence about what's on and when.

To strengthen the support we provide, we are also reinforcing our Family Support Team with experienced professionals who have a genuine passion for creating meaningful social opportunities, offering emotional support, and helping carers and those they look after be the very best they can be. Their expertise will support a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment where families feel seen, understood, and connected.

Building on what carers told us, our action plan will deliver:

## **More sensory-inclusive and neurodivergent-friendly support**

We will shape spaces, groups and activities that reduce sensory barriers, support regulation, and create calm, predictable environments for both children and adults. We have made available a quiet grounding space within our centre as a direct action from feedback we have received.

## **Strengthened emotional and listening support**

Our team will offer more opportunities for one-to-one conversations, safe spaces to talk, and supportive check-ins for carers who need someone to listen without judgement.

## **Reduced barriers through transport and practical help**

Recognising the real challenges families face from food and travel costs to equipment needs we will expand practical supports wherever possible and signpost families clearly to additional services.

### **Clear, consistent communication**

Families told us they need updates earlier, more often, and in accessible formats. We are committed to providing simple, reliable communication through email and text, clear weekly schedules, newsletters and advance booking for events.

### **Time-friendly options (evenings, weekends & school holidays)**

We will offer more sessions outside typical daytime hours so working families, those with caring responsibilities, and those managing school routines can join in more easily.

### **More sibling-specific and teen/young-adult groups**

Many families asked for age-appropriate, peer-based support. We will increase dedicated spaces for siblings, teens and young adults to connect, socialise and feel understood.

### **Drop-in and free-play social spaces**

Not every family can attend structured groups, and not every child can engage in formal activities. We will create more relaxed, flexible open sessions designed for connection, rest, and unstructured play.

# CONCLUSION

The Together We Nourish survey has shown, once again, the strength, honesty and resilience at the heart of our community. The voices shared throughout this report remind us why our work matters because every insight, every experience, and every hope offered by carers helps shape a future that is more inclusive, compassionate and responsive. As we move forward, we do so with gratitude and optimism, committed to growing with our carers and their families and hope to continue to create spaces where everyone feels supported, valued and connected. Together, we're not just nourishing today we're building a brighter tomorrow.