



2026 NEWSLETTER

Making headlines and making a difference



Ayr's Care & Share team organises fantastic Burns lunch



By Neil Smith
Chief Reporter



Over the past year, RCT has quietly built a strong and consistent presence across local, regional and national media – telling a story that goes far beyond individual headlines.

From coverage in the Ayr Advertiser highlighting Care & Share's Burns celebrations, volunteer events and Christmas support, to wider features on community partnerships in Wallacetown, RCT's work has been regularly recognised for its impact on the ground. That visibility has extended beyond Ayrshire, too, with national coverage in the Daily Record and regional press following The Junkie Miracles tour, alongside a full feature in Ayrshire Magazine and two separate local TV interviews with RCT Strategic Manager Bruce Bunten and RCT Trustee and volunteer Colin Smith.

This coverage reflects a consistent narrative of compassion, partnership and community leadership. Across every piece, the same themes emerge – volunteers at the heart of the work; practical support delivered with dignity; and a strong emphasis on connection and inclusion.

Importantly, it's not just the major features that matter. Even smaller mentions can have a real impact – raising awareness, strengthening relationships and recognising the people behind the work. That was clear when long-time supporter and Asda Community Champion Karen

Fulton was featured on her retirement, highlighting the difference one committed individual can make.

That message has been reinforced by public support from elected representatives including MSP Siobhan Brown, Councillor George Weir and Depute Provost Mary Kilpatrick. Their recognition speaks to the growing trust in RCT's work and its alignment with wider local priorities, positioning RCT as a valued community partner.

The coverage also highlights the breadth of what RCT does – from seasonal community events that bring warmth and belonging, to partnership-led initiatives and cultural projects that challenge stigma and open up conversations around recovery and support.

As this momentum continues, it plays a key role in raising awareness, strengthening partnerships and attracting new volunteers and supporters. More than that, it reinforces a simple but powerful truth: the story of RCT is being told by the communities, partners and voices who see its impact every day.

Message from the Chairman



“Since the beginning of the year, RCT staff and volunteers have been busy working with and supporting our local community. We face increasing financial pressures to continue this good work. The funding landscape has changed drastically in the past 10 years and the likelihood of securing grant funding to support the work of RCT has reduced considerably. We’re working on diversifying our income streams and will need to investigate all options to grow and evolve. Individuals, businesses and fundraising will become more important in our financial planning. If you think this is something that you can support, please get in touch.” – Kieran Wardrop

Getting to know you

Colin Smith may be a relatively new RCT Trustee and Care & Share volunteer, but his commitment to supporting others is anything but new. He’s spent more than 20 years as a Trustee with charities supporting people facing poverty, homelessness and hardship, including driving weekly for Glasgow Sick Kids. After “retiring to the seaside” four years ago, he found a natural fit at Riverside Church and RCT. “I was looking to get involved in something similar – it just felt like the right place,” he says.

Colin’s latest challenge saw him walk the demanding 96-mile West Highland Way over seven days, continuing a tradition he has maintained since retiring. “The training gives me a focus through the winter and a real sense of achievement at the end.” Now 71, he completed the walk despite his brother having to drop out due to injury – finishing the final stretch solo before being reunited at the finish line in Fort William.

“The work RCT does fits with my Christian faith – it’s a way of serving others,” says Colin. “If the walk helps raise funds at a time when they’re needed, it’s been worthwhile.” Colin has raised over £1,900 – a fantastic achievement. Well done!



Quarterly update

It’s been another busy and impactful period for the team, with strong attendance and a significant level of support delivered across the community. Between April 2025 and March 2026, 2,169 people attended Care & Share and received a hot meal. Alongside this, 1,076 people attended the Tuesday Breakfast Club, continuing to provide a warm and welcoming start to the week. Since returning to their roles as Support Workers in October, Mark Maxwell and Alex Wilson have supported approximately 1,500 people, including 65 individuals receiving regular intensive one-to-one support. Their work spans a wide



range of settings and partnerships. This includes around 100 referrals following Wallacetown ‘Day of Action’ meetings, where Mark and Alex work alongside local services to respond directly to community concerns. They’ve also made 250 referrals through hostel visits at Viewfield Gate and Elba Gardens; 200 via Foodbank engagement; and 210 through Lochside Community Centre. Practical support remains a key part of their work, with 750 fuel vouchers and 330 food vouchers issued to those in need. These figures reflect just six months of activity since October and highlight the scale, reach and importance of RCT’s frontline support across Ayr.



New roles, same heart

There's been some exciting movement behind the scenes, with a few well-deserved role updates for our team.

Bruce Bunten has been made Strategic Manager, moving on from his previous position as Coordinator. He'll oversee the strategic direction of RCT, the delivery of the Strategic Plan and lead on financial sustainability, governance and organisational resilience.

Lizzie Adrain has been appointed Operations Manager, taking responsibility for planning, coordinating and overseeing RCT activities, supporting staff and volunteers, and strengthening partnerships across the community.

Alex Wilson and Mark Maxwell have moved from Community Navigators into roles as Support Workers, continuing their frontline work supporting individuals and helping ensure services run effectively.

Festive support recognised by MSP Siobhian Brown

Care & Share's festive efforts were highlighted in the Ayr Advertiser, with MSP Siobhian Brown recognising the important role the service plays in supporting people across Ayr and the wider community.

During what can be a particularly difficult time of year, Care & Share opened its doors on multiple days over Christmas, providing hot meals, practical help and a safe, welcoming space for those experiencing loneliness or hardship.

With many families continuing to feel the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, the demand for this kind of support remains high. Brown highlighted the importance of local charities, volunteers and community groups working together to ensure no one is left behind.

"While Christmas is traditionally a time for joy, it can also be a reminder of the challenges many face," she said. "I am deeply proud of the generosity and compassion shown across our communities."

Recognition like this plays an important role in shining a light on the work happening at grassroots level. Support from high-profile figures helps raise awareness, encourage wider community involvement and reinforce just how essential these services are. That support – combined with the dedication of volunteers and partners – continues to help Care & Share make a real difference.



In loving memory



Bobby Robertson passed away peacefully in the early hours of 25 April 2026. Bobby was one of the founding members of Care & Share, helping to shape a project that continues to make a real difference across Ayr. From the outset, he played a quiet but steady role in creating the warm, welcoming environment that defines the drop-in today.

After retiring, he became a regular and much-valued part of the team, serving week after week behind the scenes. He was never one to seek recognition, but his contribution was deeply felt by all – staff, volunteers and those who came through the doors. Compassionate, calm and kind, Bobby had a natural way with people. He could put others at ease and gently defuse difficult situations, always treating everyone with dignity and respect. His faith was evident in the way he lived and served. He also encouraged others to get involved, with Ann and Jean Keenan joining him to form a much-valued team in the kitchen.

Bobby's legacy lives on in Care & Share – in the welcome it offers, the care it shows and the lives it continues to touch. He will be greatly missed by his family – Ann, Joanne and Neil, and their wider family – and by all who knew him.

A taste of kindness from Ocean View

We'd like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Sue and Raymond Chan from Ocean View Chinese Takeaway in Ayr for their continued generosity. Once a month, they kindly donate a delicious Chinese meal for those attending Care & Share - a gesture that's always eagerly anticipated and voraciously devoured. These meals offer something a little different, bringing both variety and a real sense of occasion to the drop-in. More than just food, it's a reminder of the kindness and support that exists within our local community. Sue and Raymond's ongoing commitment makes a genuine difference to those we serve and their generosity doesn't go unnoticed. Thank you for helping make Care & Share such a welcoming and supportive place.



Wallacetown work moves into Craigie



In April, the Working for Wallacetown partnership extended its focus to residents in Campbell Court, Craigie – delivering practical, on-the-ground support where it's needed most. As part of this work, Mark Maxwell has been carrying out doorstep visits alongside Shaun McGhee from South Ayrshire Council, engaging with residents to identify key issues. Support has included assistance with food and fuel poverty, as well as signposting to services for housing repairs and smart meter installation. This proactive, partnership-led approach ensures support reaches people where they are – removing barriers and connecting residents to the help they need quickly and effectively.

A day out at Riverside Museum

On 27 February, a group from RCT enjoyed a fantastic day trip to the Riverside Museum in Glasgow. Set on the banks of the Clyde, the museum offers a journey through the history of transport, with everything from historic locomotives to vintage cars on display. It's a free, interactive space, making it both accessible and engaging for all. There was something for everyone. For the sci-fi fans in the group, a highlight was seeing memorabilia from much-loved films and TV shows, including Doctor Who, Back to the Future and Star Wars. More than anything, the trip was about getting out together, sharing an experience and enjoying something different – a relaxed day filled with conversation, laughter and new memories. "It was a brilliant, engaging day out that was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended," says Bruce Bunten.





Depute Provost backs Care & Share at braw Burns bash

There were smiles all round on 28 January, as guests came together for a Burns Lunch with a difference – leaving with full bellies and even fuller hearts.

Around 50 attendees enjoyed a hearty two-course meal of cock-a-leekie soup followed by haggis, neeps and tatties – lovingly prepared by the dedicated team of volunteers. In true Burns fashion, the haggis was piped in by Peter Bryson and enthusiastically addressed by Mervyn Stuart, bringing both laughter and reflection to the room.

Ayr Depute Provost Mary Kilpatrick attended the event, recognising the important role Care & Share plays in supporting people across the community. At the heart of it all are 28 dedicated volunteers, whose commitment ensures the service runs week after week. As Lizzie Adrain said: “The volunteers don’t just prepare meals – they create a space where people feel welcomed and valued.”

For those who attended, the Burns Lunch was more than a celebration – it was a reminder that even in difficult times, community, compassion and connection remain at the heart of Care & Share.

Calling for your most prized recipe

Some meals stay with us not because of what was on the plate but because of the people around the table. **A Place at the Table: Sharing Food, Community & Care** is a new cookbook from RCT, bringing together recipes and stories from across Ayrshire. Inspired by the work of Care & Share, it will reflect the everyday moments where food becomes comfort, connection and care - especially in challenging times.

This isn’t about perfect cooking. It’s about real life - meals made on a budget, dishes passed down through generations, food shared in difficult moments and the small things that help people get through. Alongside recipes, the book will include practical tips on stretching ingredients, reducing waste and making meals go further, offering something both meaningful and useful.

We’re inviting contributions from volunteers, supporters, local organisations and the wider community. All we’re looking for is a simple recipe - something you make at home - and a short story (around 100-200 words) about what it means to you. It could be a memory, a tradition, something you cook for others, or even a tip that helps make food go further. If writing feels difficult, a few notes are absolutely fine - we’ll help shape your story.

The book will be organised into themes such as Welcome (simple, no-fuss meals like soups, pasta dishes or one-pot recipes), Comfort (hearty, filling dishes such as stews, casseroles or curries), Home (family favourites, traditional meals or recipes tied to culture and identity), Giving (meals made to share, from big pots to traybakes and batch cooking), and Little Joys (baking, desserts and treats that bring a bit of light).

As well as celebrating these stories, the book will raise vital funds for RCT and shine a light on the people and partnerships behind Care & Share.

Submissions are open until 31 May 2026. Recipes and stories can be emailed to gillhyslop@gmail.com or handed in to Gill, Betty, Lizzie, Bruce or Jim at Riverside Church.

Because in the end, this is more than a cookbook - it’s a reminder that everyone deserves a place at the table.





Young volunteers get stuck in

In March, we were delighted to welcome a group of young people from the Thriving Communities Volunteering Group for a day of hands-on experience. Building skills and confidence as part of their development programme, the group spent the afternoon shadowing volunteers and getting stuck in. From helping in the kitchen and serving meals, to organising storage spaces, they played a real part in the day-to-day running of the drop-in. It was fantastic to see their enthusiasm to learn, and a big thank you to our volunteers for making them feel so welcome. The experience clearly meant a lot and we're already looking forward to welcoming the next group.



A cut above

Through our Healthy Hair, Healthy You initiative, we're proud to be working in partnership with Ayrshire College's Hair and Beauty department. Students visit Care & Share regularly to offer free haircuts, providing a simple but powerful boost to confidence and wellbeing. All are fully qualified, with many already working in salons, and their time at Care & Share gives them valuable additional experience while serving the community. More than just a haircut, it's about dignity,

Vaccination support on site

NHS Ayrshire and Arran's Vaccination Team visited Care & Share twice over the winter period, helping protect some of our most vulnerable attendees. A total of 14 vaccinations were administered, offering protection against both flu and COVID-19. Bringing healthcare directly into the drop-in makes it easier to access vital services: removing barriers and ensuring support is available in a familiar, trusted environment.



Life-saving training for volunteers

In April, around 15 Care & Share volunteers took part in training on how and when to use a life-saving medication used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Naloxone can be administered to someone experiencing an overdose from drugs such as heroin, morphine or fentanyl, working quickly to block their effects. It's available as a nasal spray or injection and is widely carried by professionals including drug service workers and Police Scotland.

The session gave our volunteers a better understanding of commonly mis-used drugs and their impact, as well as the confidence to respond in an emergency.

It was an informative and practical session, helping ensure volunteers feel equipped, supported and ready to act if needed.





"The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."
 – Coretta Scott King, civil rights leader, author and wife of Martin Luther King Jr.



Have your say

We're committed to growing, improving and working better together – and your feedback plays a vital role. If you're a partner or stakeholder, we'd love to hear from you. Please take a few minutes to

RCT Stakeholder Feedback Survey



complete our short survey – just scan the QR code to get started. Your feedback will help us understand what's working well, where we can improve and how we can build even stronger partnerships.

Thank you for taking the time to share your experience – we truly value your input.



Care & Share

Join us for good food and essential advice. Open for lunch on Wednesdays from 2:00-3:30pm; and for the Breakfast Club on Tuesdays from 9:30-10:30am. If you'd like to come along or find out more, just chat to one of the team below. Find out more about the work we're doing in the community - including the incredible impact of our Support Workers - by watching our short film on www.facebook.com/riversidecommunitytrust and <https://riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk>.

We need you!

We're on the lookout for friendly, reliable volunteers to support our Wednesday lunch service. If you'd like to get involved, please speak to Bruce or Lizzie - we'd be delighted to have you on board.

Got news to share?

If you have a story, update or event you'd like featured in the next newsletter, please speak to Bruce or email Gill at gillhyslop@gmail.com.

Important numbers

Strategic Manager: Bruce Buntin (07888 664351), brucebuntin@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

Operations Manager: Lizzie Adrain (07803 843851), lizzieadrain@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

Support Workers:

Mark Maxwell (07803 843903), markmaxwell@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

Alex Wilson (07803 843933), alexwilson@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

Secretary, Riverside Church: Jim Cobb (01292 262686), help@riversidecommunitytrust.org.uk

