



# Brokering Support for Carers

maximising positive outcomes



## Brokerage in Carer Support

Brokering support is the process by which carers use their voice to identify, negotiate and access better help and support. Brokering support is about the confidence and skills to self-advocate.

VOCAL carer support staff support carers in this process and may sometimes advocate on their behalf. Brokering support usually includes several conversations in which staff assist the carer to

- identify strengths and challenges
- consider helpful changes and plan solutions
- agree a plan of action (Carer Support Plan), and
- negotiate and secure the right support

Good brokerage skills are a key element of self-directed support and will lead to better outcomes – so that carers can care with confidence and in good health while having a life of their own.

This Practitioners' Guide outlines how VOCAL staff support carers to broker the right supports for themselves and the people they care for.

## Defining the Practitioner's Role in Brokerage

This list outlines the practitioner's role in brokering support with carers, it has been drawn from various sources:

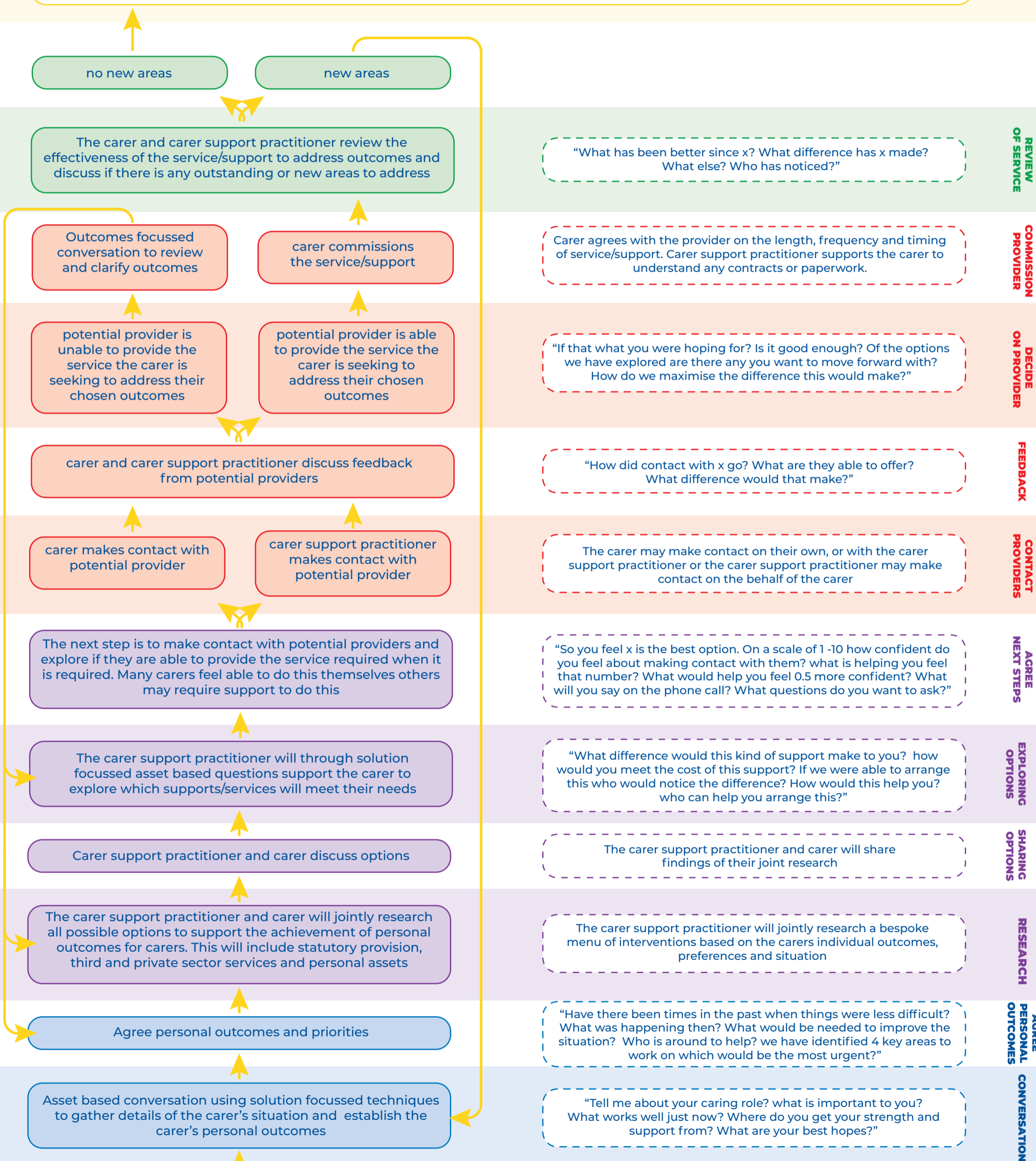
- Listening and involving the carer in conversation
- Jointly identifying strengths, challenges and personal outcomes
- Helping carers to express what they want to achieve in their life
- Planning and considering all options of self-directed support for informed choices
- Supporting carers to implement the choices they make
- Identifying diverse sources of income to fund agreed supports
- Guidance on managing budgets and arranging how payments are made
- Helping carers to decide and manage changes in their lives
- Helping carers to organise services
- Reviewing personal outcomes with carers, evaluating progress
- Jointly identifying additional changes as circumstances change

For carers using a personal assistant brokerage may also include support to access:

- Recruitment, training and managing staff
- Managing payments and payroll
- Guidance on employment law and good practice

- Maintaining my health and wellbeing
- A life of my own
- Changing relationships
- Feeling financially secure
- My choices in caring, including the limits of caring
- Feeling informed/equipped and safe in my caring role

- Feeling confident and able to continue in my caring role
- Feeling actively involved in shaping support
- Quality of life for the person I care for
- Plans for the future care of the person I care for



REVIEW OF SERVICE

“What has been better since x? What difference has x made? What else? Who has noticed?”

COMMISSION PROVIDER

Carer agrees with the provider on the length, frequency and timing of service/support. Carer support practitioner supports the carer to understand any contracts or paperwork.

DECIDE ON PROVIDER

“If that what you were hoping for? Is it good enough? Of the options we have explored are there any you want to move forward with? How do we maximise the difference this would make?”

FEEDBACK

“How did contact with x go? What are they able to offer? What difference would that make?”

CONTACT PROVIDERS

The carer may make contact on their own, or with the carer support practitioner or the carer support practitioner may make contact on the behalf of the carer

AGREE NEXT STEPS

“So you feel x is the best option. On a scale of 1 -10 how confident do you feel about making contact with them? what is helping you feel that number? What would help you feel 0.5 more confident? What will you say on the phone call? What questions do you want to ask?”

EXPLORING OPTIONS

“What difference would this kind of support make to you? how would you meet the cost of this support? If we were able to arrange this who would notice the difference? How would this help you? who can help you arrange this?”

SHARING OPTIONS

The carer support practitioner and carer will share findings of their joint research

RESEARCH

The carer support practitioner will jointly research a bespoke menu of interventions based on the carers individual outcomes, preferences and situation

AGREE PERSONAL OUTCOMES

“Have there been times in the past when things were less difficult? What was happening then? What would be needed to improve the situation? Who is around to help? we have identified 4 key areas to work on which would be the most urgent?”

CONVERSATION

“Tell me about your caring role? what is important to you? What works well just now? Where do you get your strength and support from? What are your best hopes?”

**Referral or self referral to VOCAL**  
 VOCAL supports carers aged 16 or over regardless of caring situation. Carers or professionals can make initial contact through 0131 663 6869 midlothian@vocal.org.uk, vocal.org.uk/referrals

SUPPORT REQUEST



## Patrick & Claire Friedli: A brokerage case study

Patrick is 78 and cares for his wife Claire. Claire lives with Multiple Sclerosis and has significant mobility issues and personal care needs, including incontinence.

Patrick first recognised himself as a carer around 15 years ago. Years later, feeling that he was “burning a candle at both ends”, he reached out to VOCAL for support. Following some personal support and several training courses later, life settled into a new rhythm.

Patrick had gained more time and energy to balance his caring role with his own hobbies and interests again, such as cycling.

VOCAL had not heard from Patrick for a few years when he got in touch again recently. He had read an article in VOCAL’s newsletter about Self Directed Support (SDS). Claire had been reassessed by Health and Social Care staff, suggesting that she should spend a few weeks each year in a care home to give Patrick a break. Together they looked at a home, but it wasn’t the right fit. Claire found it a restrictive place with “no laughter”. On reflection, they preferred someone looking after Claire in their own home.

Patrick had heard about Direct Payments in a previous training courses, but had felt bewildered by the next step. With renewed support from VOCAL he and Claire navigated the various options, liaising with Social Work and service providers. They now enjoy support tailored to their personal choice: occasional short breaks of 4-7 days at a time, with support for Claire to stay at home.

For his first break Patrick visited Normandy. He is confident these short breathers will help keep his caring role sustainable for the future. Claire is happier now that she knows her husband is getting much needed time for himself. Staying home made it easier for friends to come and visit, and the support she had while Patrick was away was great and made her feel good.

This document is part of VOCAL’s *Practitioners Standards Framework for Carer Support*. It has been published primarily for VOCAL staff but may also be of interest to partner agencies. This publication may not be reproduced without VOCAL permission.



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