



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Children and Young People Services Scrutiny Committee

31 January 2022

Report Title:	Support for Young Carers Update
Cabinet Portfolio	Children and Young People
Cabinet Member	Councillor Nova Charlton
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
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Borough priorities	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	X
	Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities	
	Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all	
	Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy	
	Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture	
	Be a responsible Council	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Children and Young Peoples Services Scrutiny Committee with an overview and update on the support available for young carers within the borough, particularly in respect of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its impact. This report has been compiled in conjunction with the St Helens Carers Centre.
- 1.2 The report covers the support for young carers available; the reasons for young people becoming Carers; the role of partners, such as schools, in identifying and supporting young carers; young carer outcomes; how the voice of young carers is captured; and the finding of a national 'Carers Trust' Survey.

2. Recommendations for Decision

The Children and Young People Services Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- i) Note the contents of the report;**
- ii) Submit any comments and recommendations relating to support for young carers to officers for consideration; and**
- iii) Consider whether any further action is required in relation to support for young carers as part of the Committee's future work programme.**

3. Purpose of this Report

- 3.1 This report provides the Children and Young Peoples Services Scrutiny Committee with an overview and update on the support available for young carers within the borough, particularly in respect of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its impact.
- 3.2 Members of this Committee are requested to submit any comments or recommendations to officers for consideration, and also to consider whether any further action is required in relation to support for young carers as a part of the Committee's future work programme.

4. Background /Reasons for the recommendations

- 4.1 As of 1st November 2021, St Helens Carers Centre actively supported 576 young carers. The Council commissions an all-age Carers Services, which includes Young Carers. The current service providers is St Helens Carers Centre / St Helens Young Carers Centre. The service identifies, assesses, and supports young carers including the provision of respite breaks and individual breaks when appropriate. They also organise training and awareness raising within all secondary and several primary schools within the borough.
- 4.2 Although the Young Carers Advisory Board is no longer active, a representative from the Young Carers Centre does attend the Level 2 panel, which meets every fortnight. This is a multi-agency panel; cases that require support from a number of agencies are discussed and reviewed at this meeting. New referrals are identified, and partnership working has resulted in a member of the Carers Centre attending this panel.
- 4.3 A member of the commissioned service also sits on the Early Help Assessment Tool (EHAT) user group. This enables the Carers Centre to work more effectively with other agencies and the partnership coordinators who work for the Council. The commissioned Young Carers manager attends the Families First Operational Board on a quarterly basis and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board on a quarterly basis.

Reasons for Young People becoming Carers

- 4.4 The main current theme in respect to why Young Carers find themselves in a position where they have to provide care to a family member is around poor mental health. A high majority of our Young Carers are looking after a family member who is experiencing medical conditions such as, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), severe depression, bi-polar and anxiety. We have also found that with poor mental health this often results in medical conditions that are of a physical nature and vice versa with many of our cases having a dual diagnosis (both physical and mental). Due to the severity of some of the illnesses being diagnosed, the cared for person may not be in a position to leave their home. As such, they are not participating in healthy lifestyle choices e.g. regular exercise, a healthy diet or socialising. This is becoming more of a concern with more and more Young Carers living in environments where there is little stimulation with parents becoming increasingly self-absorbed in their own medical conditions.
- 4.5 The Carers Centre has a high number of Young Carers who are registered who look after a sibling who has a diagnosis of Autism (ASD) / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or they are awaiting a diagnosis and are on the neurological pathway. Many of these Young Carers can struggle with their own mental health because a lot of their parent's attention is placed on the sibling with the disability. The Carers Centre has found that for many of these families, family life can be chaotic and dysfunctional with the Young Carer having little to no opportunity in experiencing family day's out, holidays etc. The Carers Centre has also seen a slight increase in alcohol and/or drug-misuse as the medical condition for the cared for person.

Role of Partners, such as schools, in identifying and supporting young carers

- 4.6 The Carers Centre has established excellent working relationships with many of the secondary schools. With many schools having a member of staff dedicated to being their 'Young Carers Champion'. Some schools are better than others in respect to reaching out to the Carers Centre when they are worried about a Young Carer registered with our service eg.

poor school attendance. In these cases, the Carers Centre work closely with schools to put the right support in place. They have built up strong relationships with many primary schools; however, they recognise there is more work needed in this particular area. The Carers Centre have recently sent out an E-Bulletin to both primary and secondary schools so that they are fully aware of our service delivery, detailing our contact details and referral process should they need to make contact with them.

- 4.7 The Carers Centre Young Carers Outreach Support Officer will be focusing more on providing support to both primary and secondary schools in helping them to achieve the Young Carers in School Award (YCIS). This is a national programme, recognised by Ofsted, it enables schools to put into place basic measures to support Young Carers and they can achieve an award from Bronze to Gold. This officer also delivers assemblies and staff training; clear objectives and targets have now been set in respect to the number of schools we would like to approach, on a quarterly basis, to help them sign up to the YCIS award programme.
- 4.8 As a service, the Carers Centre also send regular reports to schools informing them of the Young Carers in their school who are registered with our service (providing we have parental consent). This enables schools to see if their Young Carers are accessing our activities programme and makes them fully aware of their role so that they can provide extra support (if needed). Some schools have now started to return information such as school attendance for the Young Carers they have in their school which helps them in prioritising their support, they receive referrals into the service from schools on a regular basis.

Young Carers Outcomes

- 4.9 As a service the Carers Centre are finding more and more Young Carers struggling with their own mental health and suffering from social anxiety. This has become more apparent since the Pandemic. With respect to the outcomes, the ability to have a positive start for some Young Carers can be extremely difficult due to their caring role and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) they often experience. For example, for many Young Carers they do come from low-income households, the additional pressure and strain that is placed on families can result in domestic violence and relationship breakdown, with many adults finding themselves in a vulnerable situation.
- 4.10 For those Young Carers living in these types of environments, they may have little to no encouragement from their parents to work hard in school, as such they can fall behind in their subjects which leads them to disengage entirely and come away from education, which can result in them becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Carers Centre are finding more cases where Young Carers have poor school attendance, the difficulty they have is that this alone does not meet the threshold for social care intervention, they therefore, need to evidence over a period of time, the lack of progress being made and this can result in Young Carers missing out on a large part of their education before any action is taken.
- 4.11 The outcomes for some Young Carers can be very different in comparison to other children with no caring responsibilities. They do not have the same opportunities, for example, the Carers Centre apply for funding to enable some Young Carers to have access to a laptop so they can do their homework.

Capturing the voice of young carers

- 4.12 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, for primary school aged children, the Carers Centre have completed a lot of the assessments over the telephone with their parents, however, if they feel

from the information obtained they need to meet with the Young Carer, they will arrange a zoom session or a face to face meeting in school so that they can speak to them directly and ask them about their own wishes and feelings and the impact caring has on them. For secondary school aged, children they will always attempt to speak to them over the telephone or if it is more appropriate, they will be invited into the Young Carers Centre or they will go into school to see them. The questions within the assessment focus on their education, social opportunities, mental and physical wellbeing.

- 4.13 All the information that is obtained during the assessment with the child/Young Person is documented and uploaded onto their internal database, this enables them to review their cases and check for progress and measure to see if they are meeting the intended outcomes, they have aimed for following the assessment. E.g. apply for funding so that that the Young Carer can access counselling support to improve their mental health.
- 4.14 The Young Carers “Chattin 4 Action” meet on a regular basis and have a huge impact on their service delivery. The Carers Centre will ask for their views and opinions so that they can shape their service based on direct feedback, as opposed to relying on perceived views.

National ‘Carers Trust’ Survey

- 4.15 The Carers Trust organisation published the results from a survey into the impact of Covid-19 on young carers aged 12 to 17 and young adult carers aged 18 to 25 in July 2020. This pointed to to a steep decline in the mental health and wellbeing of the hundreds of thousands of young people across the UK who provide unpaid care at home for family members or friends. The survey is available here: <https://carers.org/what-we-do/our-survey-on-the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-young-carers-and-young-adult-carers->
- 4.16 With 961 responses from across the UK, the survey provided a base of evidence. It showed how worries relating to Coronavirus and increased isolation caused by the lockdown have affected the mental health and wellbeing of the UK’s young people with caring responsibilities. Even before the outbreak of Coronavirus, young carers and young adult carers were all too often spending significant amounts of time caring for a relative in addition to the time they needed to spend on education, work, and time for themselves. Coronavirus has significantly increased those pressures.
- 4.17 Key findings from the survey included:
- 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers say their mental health is worse since Coronavirus.
 - 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are more worried about the future since Coronavirus.
 - 66% of young carers and 74% of young adult carers are feeling more stressed since Coronavirus.
 - 69% of both young carers and young adult carers are feeling less connected to others since Coronavirus.
 - 11% of young carers and 19.7% of young adult carers report an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week
 - 58% of young carers who are caring for longer since Coronavirus are spending on average ten hours a week more on their caring responsibilities. Among young adult carers the proportion is even higher at 63.6%.
 - 7.74% of young carers and 14.94% of young adult carers who responded to the survey, said that they are now spending over 90 hours a week caring for a family member or friend

5. Community Impact Assessment

5.1 No community impact assessment was carried out for the purposes of this report.

6. Consideration of Alternatives

6.1 N/A

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This report provides the Children and Young Peoples Services Scrutiny Committee with an overview and update on the support available for young carers within the borough, particularly in respect of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its impact.
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- 7.3 Members of this Committee are requested to submit any comments or recommendations to officers for consideration, and also to consider whether any further action is required in relation to support for young carers as a part of the Committee's future work programme.

8. Implications

8.1 Legal Implications

8.1.1 No legal implications were identified

8.2 Community Impact Assessment (CIA) Implications

8.2.1 Social Value

8.2.1.1 No social value implications were identified.

8.2.2 Sustainability and Environment

8.2.2.1 No sustainability and environment implications were identified.

8.2.3 Health and Wellbeing

8.2.3.1 No health and wellbeing implications were identified.

8.2.4 Equality and Human Rights

8.2.4.1 No equality or human rights implications were identified.

8.3 Customers and Resident

8.3.1 No customer and resident implications were identified.

8.4 Asset and Property

8.4.1 No asset and property implications were identified.

8.5 Staffing and Human Resource

8.5.1 No staffing and human resource implications were identified.

8.6 Risks

8.6.1 No risks were identified.

8.7 Finance

8.7.1 No financial implications were identified.

8.8 Policy Framework Implications

8.8.1 The report contributes to the achievement of Borough Priority 1 – Ensuring children and young people have a positive start in life.

8.9 Impact and Opportunities on Localities

8.9.1 No locality implications were identified.

9. Background papers

9.1 None

10. Appendices

10.1 None