



**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

8 MARCH 2022

YOUNG CARERS

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee the work taking place to identify, assess and support young carers across Leicestershire.

Background

2. As a Local Authority, the Council has statutory responsibilities for young carers that are placed on it across various statutes:
 - i. The Children and Families Act 2014 - Assess whether a young carer needs support and what identify opportunities to navigate support, this includes reviews if circumstances change. This is in all circumstances where it appears that a child is providing caring support.
 - ii. Section 96 (12) Children Act 1989- Take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are young carers in its communities.
 - iii. Sections 63-64 of the Care Act 2014 introduced duties to young carers who are transitioning to adulthood. This is in the form of an assessment around their own needs as a young carer and whether they are able or willing to carry the care on after their eighteenth birthday. The young carer should continue to be at the centre of the assessment, and it should focus on their dreams and aspirations.

Definition of a Young Carer

3. When working with children, the following definition is used to help them to identify whether they may be a young carer.
4. "You're a young carer if you're under 18 and help to look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem. If you're a young carer, you probably look after one of your parents or care for a brother or sister. You may do extra jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning, or helping someone get dressed and move around. You may also give a lot of physical help to a brother or sister who's disabled or ill.

Along with doing things to help your brother or sister, you may be giving them and your parents emotional support, too.” (NHS Website, 2021)

Context

5. ‘Still Hidden, Still Ignored’ is a Barnardo’s Report on Young Carers which was published in 2017. The report found that many young carers are providing in excess of 15 hours per week caring for a family member. The Office of National Statistics (ONS), again in 2017, estimated that unpaid adult carers save the economy £60 billion per year and that this far outweighed the amount spent on formal social care. These ONS figures relate to *adult* carers alone and young carers do not feature in the survey in any format. Research and statistical information on young carers are not available and therefore the extent of young caring and the impact that this has on the general population of children is still unknown. Moreover, a large proportion of children do not want to be identified as young carers or may not realise that they would be seen as such and therefore are unaware of their rights. Identification of young carers has always been problematic and is likely to continue to be. For many children they will have been providing care for a significant time and normalise this or accept that this is simply their responsibility within the family.
6. The 2011 Census identified 177,918 young carers in England and Wales. One in eight of those were aged under eight. This is widely believed to be the tip of the iceberg, with some estimates suggesting that as many as one in five schoolchildren are young carers (University of Nottingham 2018), with this number increasing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Publication of the most recent census data will give a greater understanding as to the extent of young carers.
7. Barnardo’s findings in 2017 concluded that young carers were most likely to be girls, and they were most likely to be caring for their mother. Young carers from the black, Asian and Multi - Ethnic (BAME) communities are most likely to be hidden from Service altogether and young carers are most likely to have a disability, long-term illness or SEND-related issues themselves (Census 2011) – mental health and physical disability were the highest reported within this category.

Challenges

8. The pandemic has had a considerable impact on young carers. The Carer’s Trust has undertaken a survey with both young carers and young adult carers with the main headline result being that the pandemic increased caring hours and pressures on young people. The findings from 961 young carers and young adult carers details that:
 - 40% of young carers and 59% of young adults say that their mental health is worse since the pandemic,
 - 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are more worried about their future,
 - 66% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are feeling more stressed since the pandemic,

- 69% of both sets of carers are feeling less connected with others and more isolated,
 - 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%,
 - 8% of young carers and 15% 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.
9. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the identification of young carers. This was exacerbated by school closures as schools are the primary referrer for young carers. In terms of the service offered to children, the need to engage virtually has been a necessity but not all children enjoyed this or were able to engage as they remained at home undertaking caring responsibilities, which for many were increased. Caring can have a dramatic detrimental effect on the education and aspirations of young and young adult carers. Young carers are most likely to require support around their mental health and emotional wellbeing due to their responsibilities and the impact that this has on them.
10. As a response to the pandemic, the Service took the opportunity to work with the Communications team to release messages about young carers in safeguarding campaigns. The Youth and Justice Service moved to social media, namely Instagram, to celebrate young carers and to share messages to increase identification. The focus now is on working with schools to better identify and then engage children and parents in providing consent for support. As detailed in paragraphs 5-7 above, the identification of young carers will always remain a considerable challenge that the Service will work hard to overcome.

County Council Delivery Model

11. The County Council entered a formal commissioning arrangement with a third party provider in 2015 up until 31st March 2021 to provide a service for young carers in line with the statutory responsibilities detailed in paragraph 2 of this report. Over several years, the project was match-funded by the provider and in 2021 this funding was no longer available due to internal changes within the organisation and how projects applied for additional funding which had now become more limited. Following extensive scoping work with Leicester City Council and the provider to try to continue the project, there were no financially viable options. The provider was de-commissioned the delivery of the statutory responsibilities reverted to the County Council.
12. On 1 July 2021, the Children and Families Service Young Carers Project commenced. This is managed within the Youth and Justice Service. The Project has two full-time workers (who transferred from the previously commissioned service) who focus solely on the provision of support for young carers. The Project is overseen by a Senior Youth Worker and referrals are taken through the Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) and through an

internal referral form for those children already open to the department. (The MARF enables referrals to be made by the local authorities in the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland areas via one standard form).

13. Strategically, this work forms part of the Joint Carers Strategy, which is co-ordinated through Leicestershire County Council Adult Social Care and encompasses a shared strategy for carers across Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland. The County Council is collaborating with Leicester City Council and Rutland Council to develop shared initiatives to help and support young carers.

Young Carers Assessments

14. Young Carers Assessments are primarily undertaken by the two workers above following the identification of suitable referrals through central triage processes. The assessment process, whilst focused on the young carer, adopts the principals of “Whole Family” working and will help obtain positive outcomes for wider family members where needs have not been met or missed, such as engaging with mental health support, addressing housing issues or applying for benefits. An illustration of this is provided in the case study appended to this report.
15. To date, the Project has had a total of 28 referrals; nine children have received a targeted intervention of four sessions around their caring responsibilities, five have had onward referrals to youth work or family interventions, one has been signposted to community services, one has been referred to Special Educational Needs services and five are currently being assessed. Seven children declined any support at after attempts to engage with them. This is for reasons such as they already have a support network or do not feel that their caring responsibilities impact upon their life. The Project remains committed to raising the profile of young carers and increasing the numbers identified and worked with.
16. Following the completion of assessments, young carers can be offered up to four focussed sessions to address immediate needs which are identified through the assessment process (young carers offer). This could be work around benefits, adaptations in properties, ensuring schools are supporting young carers for example. Where there are high needs which cannot be addressed within four sessions, an onward referral to other areas within Children and Family Services will be made. The project also offers referrals into groupwork activity and signposting to other services.
17. Where children who are identified as young carers but are already receiving support within the Department and have plans in place, practitioners are encouraged to build specific outcomes for the young carer. The purpose of this is to reduce the need for the child and family to have multiple plans and to keep re-telling their story each time they need to seek help. This work is on-going and forms part of the Council’s plan for young carers.
18. It is not possible to map performance of the new provision against that previously provided as there are significant differences and young carers are

included in other types of plans (such as Child Protection Plans and Early Help Assessments) and the data cannot be correlated with accuracy.

Staff Consultation Clinics

19. Young Carers Youth Workers are offering weekly clinics to staff within Children and Family Services after trialling this approach successfully across the Children and Family Wellbeing Service. This supports staff to identify young carers needs within their assessments and develop intervention to meet these needs within their plans.

Locality Groups – In Person

20. The Youth and Justice Service runs specialist groupwork provision for young carers across Charnwood, North West Leicestershire, Blaby, Oadby and Wigston, and Melton Districts. There are currently 44 young carers who are pro-actively engaged with this provision. Provision in Harborough is run by the Voluntary and Community Sector, and the Council has recently commenced a group in Hinckley and Bosworth to fill a gap in provision where the VCS were no longer able to provide this.
21. The pandemic has been a challenge in relation to groupwork with provision moving from face-to-face to virtual, especially when young carers are often living in households with clinically vulnerable adults. All groups have now returned to in-person delivery and the children are enjoying this opportunity to build friendships, have fun (respite) and partake in informal learning sessions. One of the other challenges in delivering group work is supporting young carers to be able to attend, this often means funding taxis or other transport which is extremely challenging with a small budget and the heightened costs of private hire taxis. There were previously opportunities for young carers and their families to apply for grant funding to support transport costs, but this is no longer available.

County Virtual Group Offer

22. Young Adult Carers – the Council's County young adult carers group for ages 15+ delivers fortnightly sessions online. This group was launched in September 2021. The focus of this group is around transition and preparing for next steps in life; supporting children to balance achieving their own dreams and ambitions and managing the responsibility of being a carer.
23. Young Carers CYCLe - The service is developing the Council's voice, influence and participation offer within CFWS, and all its voice groups are under the name CYCLe. Young Carers CYCLe is a new group in line with this. Not only will this group engage with young carer voice opportunities, but they will also feed into the wider work of CYCLe. The service will be working with this group of children to develop the young carers offer, including re-naming the project.

Young Carers Passport/ ID Card

24. Part of the commissioned contract with the previous provider across the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area was the administration of a young carers ID card. Working in collaboration with Leicester City Council and Rutland Council, the service is currently re-designing this to align this closer to the adult carer passport as this is more widely recognised across communities and health providers. This will be co-produced with children across the area, and this work commenced on 9 February 2022, and it is intended to launch this in May 2022.

'Unseen Events'

25. School holiday events are delivered by the Young Carers Youth Workers during all the main school holidays (summer, Christmas and Easter). Barnardo's published an article in July 2021 about the problem of young carers being unseen during the summer holidays as their caring responsibilities may in fact increase and they do not benefit from the 'break' that school holidays give. Two events have been delivered so far; a summer virtual magic show which was attended by 12 young people and a virtual Christmas Party attended by 18 young people. Planning is underway for an Easter event.

Loughborough Students Union (LSU) Kids Camp

26. The service is working in partnership with LSU to offer ten young carers the opportunity to attend a five day activity based camp in the Peak District, with student volunteers from Loughborough University in April 2022. Ten young carers are currently signed up to this and a reserve list is currently being held should any of the ten not be able to make the trip. Young carers will meet the LSU student volunteers to start forming relationships during February 2022. Taking a significant period of time away from families and caring responsibilities requires significant planning for some children.
27. The Young Carers Project has carried out safeguarding training with the LSU volunteers and the Council continues to support with the logistics of this project including the bridging of the gap between the University and the families, including ensuring that there is a network of support for when the children go on the trip; an issue that often holds them back from engaging on their own purposeful activities. This will be an ongoing annual event.

Young Carers Action Day – March 16th, 2022

28. Youth and Justice support this national event each year. Staff teams are currently meeting to plan group activities for this week. The plan will then be presented to CYCLE for the views, comments, and final adjustments by children.

Voice of Young Carers

29. The following feedback has been received from young carers regarding support that they receive from the project:

- a. "I feel that everything is going okay especially because the problems with school have been sorted out" (young carer aged 12),
- b. "I am feeling happier, now school know the teachers are being more kind and asking me if I need help" (young carer aged 12),
- c. "We have been supported in the best ways; it has taken weight and pressure off both me and my daughter and we have really benefitted from the support" (parent of young carer),
- d. "I'm really enjoying being back at group, I feel this is like a family where I can come and relax away from all our family problems." (Young carer aged 17).

Next Steps

30. The priority areas over the next year are:

- Strategic alignment of young carers within the Joint Carers Strategy with partners across Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland.
- Positive communications with partners and through campaigns to promote the identification of young carers and promotion of support,
- Capturing the voice of young carers to shape, influence, and co-produce across partnerships,
- Focus on ensuring that plans across the Department to identify young carers and provide a response within Departmental plans that identifies specific outcomes for the child,
- Ensuring the young carers offer meets the needs of the children engaged with the interventions,
- Overcoming transport issues to enable young carers to engage in face-to-face groupwork,
- Understanding whether the countywide virtual element of the groupwork offer can be delivered differently. Young adult carers have indicated that this offer does not work for them. The impact regarding this is the financial implications of staffing groups, transporting children and premises to run the sessions. These groups in particular are delivered virtually due to the geographical spread of the children across localities.
- Understanding the ability to innovate within the project and engage with wider partners with the limited capacity in relation to staffing.

31. Progress against the next steps will be monitored through Lead Members and Departmental meetings.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

32. None.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

33. The re-integration of the Young Carers Project to Leicestershire County Council offers great opportunities around equalities and equal rights as it enables us the flexibility to target our communications and offer to distinct cohorts of young carers across Leicestershire. Currently the Project are

considering research and insight into how best to engage with black, Asian and multi-ethnic communities and this work will be undertaken with young carers with protected characteristics or where the Project are seeing themes and trends.

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Appendix

Case Study – completed by Myah, Young Carers Project Worker in February 2022.

Background Papers

Young Carers Report for Overview and Scrutiny 2017
<https://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s129028/Young%20Carers.pdf>

Joint Carers Strategy 2018 – 2021 (currently being updated)

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2018/2/27/LLR-Carers-Strategy-2018-21-v13.pdf>

Appendix: Case Study

Completed by Young Carers Project Worker – Myah

Why were they referred? (Worries and Desired Targets)

- Child (17) was referred to the Project due to parent having life changing injuries and child undertaking high level caring responsibilities. They were living in accommodation which was now unsuitable.
- Child's caring responsibilities started with general and domestic tasks and support with mobility. However, over time the child started to stay at home for longer to assist, also providing emotional support. The child missed out on the opportunity to create and maintain friendships because of his caring responsibilities and the parent was worried about this.

What did we do? (outcomes)

- Carry out the young carer's assessment with child and parent to capture both of their voices.
- Offer up to 4 sessions of one to one support focused on child and his physical health, social networks, explore community groups available to improve friendships, consider referrals to Young Adult Carers Group/ Young Carers CYCLe & CYCLe. Explore potentially unmet SEND needs.
- Work was undertaken on improving the housing situation which the local Council were already aware of, but no progress was being made. Additional support was provided around claiming appropriate benefits.
- Support to contact a local disability charity for family for support around an SEND diagnosis.
- Referral to mental health support for parent.

J's Voice during the intervention

- "Discussing the housing application was very helpful as we have been able to meet in the middle and discuss how both parties have been within the process. I also feel that it went well because we have understood how important getting my [parent] sorted is and what Myah has done to help our situation and fast track it for the benefits of both my [parent] and I by allowing [parent] more freedom and removing some of the pressure off my back".
- "The support from Myah has been very helpful, each session helped as we tackled a different issue each time."

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