

---

## **Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee**

**1 March 2023**

### **Support for Young Carers**

#### **Report by Assistant Director of Education & Skills**

---

#### **Summary**

Young Carers is a small and distinct service, previously managed through Early Help but located in Education and Skills, within the Children, Young People and Learning Directorate since the summer 2022. It is a service whose importance is becoming increasingly recognised, and this is a welcome opportunity to present Young Carers formally to the Committee for the first time. The local authority has statutory responsibilities for Young Carers as laid out in the Children and Families Act 2014. It is thought that there are around 6,000 young carers in West Sussex, less than half of whom are currently known to the service. There is currently no formal mechanism for identifying young carers other than through direct referrals. Young carers fulfil a crucial function within their family and community and, in many cases provide essential care that might otherwise have to be delivered through professionals. It is right therefore that they are supported within this role and assisted in their own journey to adulthood. There is now a growing multi-agency understanding and shared awareness between the County Council, schools and other agencies in support of young carers and their needs.

The report covers the following areas:

- The County Council's statutory responsibility for young carers.
- The arrangements for identification, assessment and support for young carers, including transition to young adult carers.
- The plans in place for an increasing number of identified carers.
- The impact on educational outcomes for young carers and how these are addressed.
- Areas of future development.

#### **Focus for Scrutiny**

The Committee is asked to assess the support provided to Young Carers in West Sussex to ensure Young Carers are reaching their potential.

Key lines of enquiry include:

- 1) To consider whether the arrangements outlined in this report for the identification, assessment and support for young carers are sufficient to meet the needs of young carers currently known to the service.

- 2) The plans in place to manage the increasing number of identified carers.
- 3) The impact of caring responsibilities on educational outcomes for young carers and how these are addressed.
- 4) The efficacy of arrangements within the service and with other agencies to identify and work with other young carers currently outside of the service.

The Chairman will summarise the output of the debate for consideration by the Committee.

---

## **1. Background and context: understanding the County Council's statutory responsibility for young carers**

- 1.1 A young carer is a young person under the age of 18 whose life is affected by the care needs of another person, who may have any disability or long-term illness. This could be anybody with a physical or learning disability, debilitating chronic physical illness, mental health problem, someone who misuses drugs or alcohol, or is elderly and frail.
- 1.2 Young carers provide or help to provide a level of care and support to that person and take on a level of responsibility that is usually associated with an adult. The person they care for is usually someone they live with and could be a parent, sibling, grandparent or other relative. The statutory role of local authorities is prescribed by the Children Act 2004 and the Children and Families Act 2014. Section 17 Children Act (1989) places a duty on local authorities to assess whether a young carer in their area needs support and what those needs are if:
  - it appears to the local authority that a young carer may need additional help;
  - the local authority receive a request from a young carer or a parent of a young carer to assess the young carer's need for support; or
  - an assessment has been carried out, but the circumstances of the young person or person being cared for has changed.

The local authority can refuse to carry out an assessment if:

- the young carer does not appear to have any support needs;
  - an assessment has already been conducted and the circumstances have not changed.
- 1.3 In 2014, an amended Children Act 2014 Section 17 and Care Act of the same year clarified the duties linked to assessment of young carers and adults of young carers. Their combined direction indicates a duty to:
    - assess on the first appearance of need;
    - to identify Young Carers and decide if they are "Children in Need";
    - ensure that the assessment of the young carer and the person they look after addresses any questions of "inappropriate care";

- take a whole-family approach to assessment and casework;
  - proactively identify young carers in the community (e.g.in school);
  - ensure that Young Carers are not left with inappropriate levels of care themselves, with this being reflected in the support given to the adult;
  - consider eligibility criteria for adult social care with respect to any parenting responsibilities;
  - ensure that Young Carers and are supported in their transition into adulthood.
- 1.4 Whilst Councils are under a legal duty to identify young carers and carry out assessments on the impact on the child and whole family, finding young carers is challenging as they are often isolated and hidden from view. The last census puts the official figure for young carers at nearly 170,000, however, research by the BBC and Nottingham University in 2018 suggested the true figure may be four times higher than official estimates claim.
- 1.5 The Young Carers (Family) Team within the Children, Young People and Learning Directorate is a specialist service and has 3 fundamental aims:
- To undertake assessments of young carers and to reduce caring levels where this is a concern.
  - To build resilience in Young Carers and their families.
  - To raise awareness of Young Carers.

## **2. The arrangements for identification, assessment, and support for young carers**

- 2.1 The identification of children who may be young carers is the responsibility of all who have contact with them. The service receives referrals for assessment from schools, Early Help, Children's Social Care, through the Integrated Front Door, and directly from families. The current system of identifying Young Carers is through direct referrals as the School Census returns have not, until now, asked for the identification of Young Carers. However, the current Census return does seek information on Young Carers and, moving forward, this is likely to significantly increase local knowledge and the number of Young Carers known to the service.
- 2.2 Currently, the Young Carers team have 410 Young Carers registered and allocated to a case worker. At the beginning of January there were a further 177 awaiting allocation and 47 currently undergoing assessment. This figure has reduced by over 30 in February with the support of additional temporary capacity until permanent appointments are in place. A process is being put together with timelines to ensure that all those unallocated or awaiting assessment are triaged and assessed over the coming weeks. All referrals are triaged within 7 days of receipt to assess the level of risk and allow any immediate action to be identified where required. Additional temporary capacity has helped allow the team to maintain telephone contact with all families awaiting assessment and to progress any emerging actions. Once an assessment is undertaken, the level of engagement will depend on the level

of need. In 2022, the County Council's data indicated the number of Young Carers under the age of 18 was 2258. Not all these Young Carers were subject to formal engagement with the Young Carers team, but several local groups are providing support for those who wish to engage.

- 2.3 The number of referrals is increasing and in January 2023, the team received 29 new referrals from a range of partners, analysed as follows:

<b>Source of referral</b>	<b>No. of referrals</b>
Children's Social Care	5
Schools	11
MASH/Integrated Front Door	1
Self-referral	4
Community Nurse	1
CAMHS	1
Early Help	5
Carers' support	1

- 2.3 The referrals are triaged by the team to establish the appropriateness for assessment and to identify any urgent action that may be required. Once allocated, the family assessment is undertaken by a member of the dedicated team. This assessment looks at all aspects of the family to determine the level of care being undertaken by the young person, the impact of their caring responsibilities on their life, and the roles of all others in the family and wider support network.
- 2.4 There is a wider package of support offered to young carers in West Sussex through a network of clubs, activities, and bespoke packages including access to counselling and the Breaks fund. Through the Breaks fund we have provided access to gyms, driving lessons and make financial contributions to school trips where appropriate. The clubs and activities are delivered in partnership with Carers Support West Sussex and Sussex Clubs for Young People. Further details of the clubs can be found in Annex A.
- 2.5 To support transition to young adult carers, the service offers all young carers aged 15- 18 a transition assessment which is designed to re-evaluate their caring role and to identify the support they will need as they move into being a young adult carer.
- 2.6 To further support our young carers' transition into adulthood, the service offers access to 'My Futures'. This is a monthly group run in conjunction with Carers Support West Sussex and provides an introduction and link to adult carer services.
- 2.7 The Young Carers team work closely with children's and adult's social care to ensure that appropriate assessment and support is in place. This can include

providing consultation support to allocated workers, making direct referrals to the integrated front door, and supporting families to access any appropriate interventions available.

### **3. Assurance that the service understands and has plans in place for an increasing number of identified carers**

3.1 The Children's Society estimates that there are 800,000 young carers in the UK and many of these are not identified or receiving support. We anticipate that there are 6,000 young carers in West Sussex and currently only 2,400 are known to the Young Carers team.

3.2 The Children's Commissioner's survey '[The Big Ask](#)' (2021) shone a light on young carers and, for the first time, schools have been asked to identify those children shown as young carers within the annual school census. This has created an increased awareness of, and interest in young carers within schools and has led to a rise in referrals being made for assessment and support. The team have seen a 44% increase in referrals made by education settings and partners in the Autumn term of 2022/23:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Autumn term 2021/22</b>	<b>Autumn term 2022/23</b>
Primary	28	41
Secondary	10	13
Sixth form/college	1	4
School nurse	2	1

3.3 The Young Carers' team comprises of:

- 1 FTE – team manager
- 1 FTE – Partnership lead
- 7 FTE – key workers
- 0.5 FTE – Duty and referrals support

In response to this increase in demand, additional funding has been secured to further increase capacity within the team. This expansion will include the recruitment of a Referrals Lead who will be responsible for triage, case allocation and monitoring workflow. Additional caseworkers will provide capacity an increased number of assessments and provide a wider group offer to Young Carers. However, capacity will need to be kept under review in light of potential growth in demand following changes in Census capture.

3.4 The team have developed links with the University of Chichester and are providing placements within the team for two additional social work students. The students will support direct work with families and initial assessments of need.

3.5 A complete review is currently underway of working practices by the newly appointed team manager, giving specific focus to the criteria and thresholds

for assessment, timescales for assessment, and the team's interface with other frontline services.

#### **4. The impact on educational outcomes for young carers, and how these are addressed.**

- 4.1 As there has never been a nationwide count or identification of young carers, there is limited pupil-level data available relating to their educational outcomes. However, from 'The Big Ask' and other research projects we are aware that 27% of 11-15 years olds identified as young carers regularly miss school, and that 30% of young carers were not known as such to their school. The data collected from the school census will, over time, allow a better understanding of young carers' attendance and attainment, and drive change in policy and practice.
- 4.2 In the government's statutory guidance for schools and colleges on safeguarding children, ['Keeping children safe in education'](#), there is a responsibility for safeguarding leads to be aware of and to be alert to the needs of young carers. However, support, training and awareness raising to all of our schools and teachers is required to ensure all young carers are encouraged and supported to attend school regularly and to achieve their potential. The current development of an Attendance Strategy will include a specific focus on Young Carers and any patterns of absence will be picked up by then Early Help Dedicated Schools Teams in their termly conversations with schools.
- 4.3 The Education and Learning Strategy 2023–2025 outlines the County Council's commitment to improving the educational experience and outcomes for all children and also specifically for those deemed to be vulnerable. This includes recognition of those children and young people who face additional challenges and barriers to accessing school and learning. The service will work alongside all partners to influence change and improvements to secure better outcomes for specific groups, including young carers; (Theme 2, Workstream 2). This will include raising awareness with schools, along with specific actions and professional development for schools on improving outcomes for Young Carers.
- 4.4 The Young Carers Action Day (15 March 2023) has a theme of 'Make time for young carers' and is asking schools to consider how they provide time and support for their young carers as they proceed with their education. The Young Carers team will be providing a resource pack for schools, support in identifying children with caring responsibilities and access to additional training where required.
- 4.5 It is recognised that current data capture and the integration of data systems to ensure that Young Carer details are captured and linked with assessments are an area in need of development. IT development of integrated systems within the Department is part of a transformation project. To establish a West Sussex database, the team are working with colleagues from the Data and Performance team to move all data onto a single system. This will allow the team to cross-reference identified children with existing education data, and to track the attendance and outcomes for this group more closely.

## 5. Areas for future development

5.1 The team have identified the following areas for development in the next year.

- Further develop links with adult social care to ensure wider family concerns are addressed in a timely manner.
- To develop a robust data system to track identified young carers through education and into adulthood and to assess the impact of caring on educational outcomes.
- Work closely with schools across West Sussex to develop an understanding of young carers, the impact of caring on educational outcomes and to encourage the development of best practice within schools for identification and support.
- Maintain current capacity in the team under review to ensure that the team capacity is sufficient to meet any significant increase in referrals arising from changes in the School Census.

## 6. Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
As noted at para 3.1 of this report, it is highly likely that the true number of young carers in the county considerably exceeds those currently known to the service and its partner agencies; therefore some young carers will inevitably be missing out on the support available to improve their personal and family circumstances.	As explained in this report, awareness-raising throughout the caring sector is being conducted, and there is now much greater evidence of inter-agency co-operation and information-sharing towards identifying young carers and meeting their needs; alongside, the management of data is becoming more efficient. In Social Care, the Council's adoption of the Family Safeguarding model offers more and better opportunities to gain insights into the whole family, the interaction of its members and their needs. The greater emphasis on mental health in settings such as schools also gives encouragement that more young carers needing support will be identified.
As more young carers and their needs are progressively identified, there will be a corresponding pressure on the service to expand its capacity, with attendant resource requirements.	As explained in this report at para 3.2, resources have been secured to respond to the recent growth in identified need. This situation will need to be kept under review. It should be noted that young carers fulfil a need that in some cases might otherwise escalate to require higher-level support from Early Help, Social Care or Health; therefore there is an economic as well as a social case to continue to address the need arising.

## **Policy alignment and compliance**

### **7. Social Value**

- 7.1 The service provision for Young Carers discussed in this report directly supports delivery of the West Sussex Plan priority to give every child the Best Start in Life. Enhancing the protection of young lives and support for family life will continue to build resilience and social capital and contribute towards stronger and more effective communities. The service will also respect sustainability principles in accordance with the County Council's strategic policies.

### **8. Equality Duty**

- 8.1 The service recognises the primary importance of the role of young carers, child safeguarding, sound family relationships, good parenting, and the nurture of children to fulfil their potential. The provision of the service is based on need, as determined through formal assessment protocols. This need is not explicitly related to formally protected characteristics, but any such characteristic is and will continue (as now) to be respected in compliance with equality principles and taken into account in the way in which the service is delivered.
- 8.2 In terms of those with a protected characteristic, the service will ensure enablement and support across all relevant categories, and this will both continue and be enhanced through the Council's Children First agenda.

### **9. Crime and Disorder Implications**

- 9.1 There are positive implications for Sections 17, 37 and 39 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in the prevention and reduction of crime and anti-social behaviour, and in reducing offending and re-offending by young people, all of which are affected by the activity discussed in this report.

### **10. Human Rights Implications**

- 10.1 The County Council has an overriding duty to safeguard the Human Rights of children and young persons in its area, and this has been recognised in the design of services. The Council is mindful of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – The Right to Respect for Family and Private Life - and has taken relevant factors into consideration in preparing this report. The processing of personal and special category data is subject to the Council's Data Protection Act policies and procedures in relation to discharging the Council's and its partners' legal responsibilities.
- 10.2 The County Council is also mindful of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - which states that all children have the right to be consulted and to have their opinions heard on any decision that affects them. Hearing, understanding, and acting upon the voice and experiences of the child is a key service design principle. The Council will continue to ensure it fulfils all its statutory duties regarding meeting the needs of children and young persons in its area.

Paul Wagstaff

**Assistant Director Education and Skills**



**Contact:** Sarah Clark, Head of Service, Young Carers, 07864 801421  
[sarah.clark@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.clark@westsussex.gov.uk)

## **Annex A: Overview of Support available for Young Carers**