

People and Health Overview Committee

27 June 2023

Young Carers

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr B Quayle, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Local Councillor(s): Cllr

Executive Director: T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

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Report Status: Public

Brief Summary: This paper provides an overview of the needs of young carers, the role of the council in meeting these needs and the support available for young carers in Dorset. It sets out some of the challenges in identifying and supporting young carers and the work that is underway to address this.

Recommendation:

Members of People and Health Overview Committee are invited to comment on the support available for Young Carers and to support the developments approach to improving our support offer.

Reason for Recommendation: Young carers are a vulnerable and often unseen group of children and young people. Councils have a responsibility for identification and support to meet their needs.

1. **Context**

- 1.1 This paper provides an overview of the needs of young carers, the role of the council in meeting these needs and the support available for young

- carers in Dorset. It sets out some of the challenges in identifying and supporting young carers and the work that is underway to address this.
- 1.2 A young carer is a child or young person aged 18 or under who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, mental health problems or an addiction, cannot cope without their support.
 - 1.3 National research by the Carers Trust ([*Being a young carer is not a Choice, it's just what we do*](#)) has indicated that whilst some progress is being made in supporting the lives of young carers, many young carers 'can feel very alone, overlooked or underappreciated'. They reported being particularly impacted by increases in the cost of living, their emotional wellbeing could be impacted and balancing caring responsibilities with education or work can be difficult and caring impacted on their ability to spend time with friends. The specific difficulties in balancing education and caring responsibilities are also identified as a specific issue affecting school attendance by the Children's Commissioner (*Attendance is everybody's business*).
 - 1.4 Young carers can be more likely to suffer poor health outcomes, with many young carers putting their own health needs on hold to prioritise the cared for person and those caring for an adult with mental health concerns can be more likely to suffer poor mental health themselves. Being a young carer can also place limitations on young people's aspirations and impact of life choices such as living independently, going to university and career paths.
 - 1.5 Councils are required to identify young carers and carry out assessments of the impact of caring on the child and whole family, but it can be challenging as they can often be isolated and hidden from view. It is common for young carers not to recognise that they are young carers until they are older, so it is important that the adults around them are able to identify and support them.
 - 1.6 Young Carers have the right to a 'carers assessment' to assess the effect on the young carers' wellbeing, health, education or friendships and to consider if they should be carrying out that level of care. Councils are required to provide information and advice and support lessening of the impact of caring responsibilities on wellbeing through providing access to activities including respite if appropriate.

2. **Supporting Young Carers in Dorset**

- 2.1 Carer Support Dorset is an externally commissioned organisation that supports carers of all ages from aged 5 years. Young carers can self-refer. They offer information and support to carers and maintain a register of those with caring responsibilities. Carer Support Dorset will also support young carers to co-produce services with Dorset Council and other agencies; raise awareness of young carers needs and provide training to other professionals; and support young carers to make the transition into adulthood. There are 285 young carers on the register.
- 2.2 Professionals who identify a child or young person who may be a young carer contact the Early Help Hub, who will triage the extent of the caring duties that the young person undertakes to determine whether a formal assessment is required by the Young Carers team. If this is not required, they will refer to carer Support Dorset who will place them on the register of carers. This enables us to identify any safeguarding concerns as early as possible and put the right support in place if that is required.
- 2.3 The Young Carers Team in Children's Services provides support to young carers that have been assessed as having a 'significant caring role' using nationally recognised tools that assess both the amount of care and the impact the care has on the wellbeing of the child or young person. They provide a range of support including breaks from the role; signposting to extra support for the young carer or cared for person; advocating for the young person; and offering 1:1 and group support. There are 109 young carers being supported by the team.
- 2.4 Rethink support young carers aged 16+ who have recently recruited a Young Adult Carer Lead to support them with this.
- 2.5 Dorset Council works closely with the charity MYTIME, who work across Dorset and BCP council areas. This charity offers direct support to children and young people who undertake a caring role which includes: opportunities to take part in positive activities and a break from caring during school holidays with other young carers; access to weekly virtual youth groups for different age groups; an Employability Programme providing support with access to further education and work including training for employers who support young carers. In addition, the charity offers a range of training for educational settings to support them to understand and respond to the needs of young carers including training for school leadership teams, governors and pastoral teams. They also deliver

assemblies to children and young people to support them to self-identify as young carers and to build empathy and understanding from their peers.

3. **Strengthening our offer**

- 3.1 **Identification of young carers** continues to be a priority area for action. It is likely that there are more young carers in Dorset than those that are currently on the carers register or receiving support from the young carers service. The 2021 census identified that 1.2% of the 5–17-year-old population are unpaid carer – representing around 590 children and young people. It is essential, therefore that we continue to work with colleagues working in education to identify young carers but also for those working in adult social care and health to ‘think young carer’ and ask the right questions as to who is providing care and ensuring that they are not providing inappropriate care.
- 3.2 **Involvement of young carers in decision making** for the people they care for is an area for continued focus. Both nationally and locally young carers have provided feedback that they often feel excluded from discussions about changes to medication and care plans, including at hospital discharge, even though they are often the person responsible to implementing those changes. Dorset young carers made a [short film](#) about this.
- 3.3 **Supporting health and wellbeing:** As young carers may be more likely to suffer poorer health outcomes, work is underway to promote information sharing with health colleagues, including updating consent processes so that this information can be held on a child’s health record.
- 3.4 **Supporting attendance:** We recognise the importance of supporting young carers to be able to participate fully in their education and historically it has been difficult to monitor this effectively. The Department of Education recently amended the school return to include any identified young carers, but this is voluntary on the part of schools. We will promote the importance of this data return as part of our ongoing work with schools and will continue to work with schools on the identification of and support to young carers alongside MYTIME.
- 3.5 **Entering adulthood:** Ensuring that we support young carers into adulthood is essential. The Young Carers Service stays alongside Young Carers beyond their 18th birthday to the end of the school year to support warm handovers but further joint work between children’s and adult services as part of our Birth to Settled Adulthood programme is underway

to ensure effective careers, advice and guidance; develop an effective transition pathway; and creating a specific offer of support from Carer Support Dorset to 18–25-year-olds.

4. **Financial Implications**

Support for young carers is provided through children’s services revenue budget and through the Better Care Fund. It is likely that as we continue to improve identification of Young Carers in Dorset, we will see increased need for support from our commissioned and in-house services. This may require us to review the current investment available to provide this support.

Unpaid carers make a vital contribution to the health and social care economy and there is evidence that the investing in support to young carers provides a return on the investment. A study into Sheffield Young Carers demonstrated the positive impact of their support to young carers in one year equated to between £1.42 and £1.90. This means that, for every £1 invested into the service, £1.42-£1.90 of economic benefit is estimated to be generated.

5. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

None identified through this report.

6. **Well-being and Health Implications**

Being a young carer can often have a significant impact on a young person’s health and well-being. Young carers may be investing a lot of time and energy into looking after a family member or friend and therefore not finding enough time for themselves. According to a report by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) being an unpaid young carer is associated with worse self-reported health – and the more hours of unpaid work per week, the more likely young carers were to report poor health. Young carers are up to 7 times as likely to report not being in good health compared to those who do no unpaid caring.

7. **Other Implications**

None

8. **Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

9. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Not undertaken for this report

10. **Appendices**

None

11. **Background Papers**

- [Being a young carer is not a choice; it's just what we do. Carers Trust, March 2023](#)
- [Attendance is everyone's business. Children's Commissioner's submission to the persistent absence enquiry, February 2023](#)
- [Hospital discharge and community support guidance, Department of Health and Social Care. July 2023](#)
- <https://www.ecorys.com/global/latest-news/ecorys-cost-benefit-analysis-shows-value-supporting-young-carers>
- [Young carers – RCPCH – State of Child Health](#)