

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

20 July 2026

Children Services - Young Carers Services and Support

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:

Cllr C Sutton, Children, Families & Education

Local Councillor(s):

All

Senior Leadership Team:

P Dempsey - Executive Director, Children's Services

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Statutory Authority:

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

1. Executive summary (maximum of 500 words)

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Committee on the young carers support services that are available following the implementation of the All-Age Carers Support Service provided by Help & Care in November 2025.
- 1.2 The All-Age Carers Support Service provided by Help & Care/MYTIME Young Carers contract began on 22nd November 2025 and supports carers aged 5 years and over. Help & Care is responsible for providing information, advice and guidance, identification, registration, training and enhancement of carer wellbeing on behalf of Dorset Council. MYTIME Young Carers are a specialist young carers charity based in Dorset and they actively support young carers whatever the level of need, providing activities and, education and employability support between the ages of 5 and 25. The service seeks to assist the Council in completing duties of carer registration and providing advice, information and support. It is providing preventative support to reduce the need for carers needing a statutory assessment where appropriate.

1.3 Help & Care and MYTIME Young Carers work in a coordinated way with the young carers team and adult carers service for those young carers who need a statutory assessment from Dorset Council. There were 511 young carers registered with the service as of 30/4/2026 and it is expected that the number of young carers registered with the service will increase over 2026/27. There are 78 young carers being supported by the young carers team in Dorset Council as of 10/06/2026.

1.4 The identification and support for young carers is monitored by OFTSED. The transition arrangements for young carers to be supported by Adult Social Care are monitored by CQC.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

2.1 This report on young carers is provided for the awareness and oversight of committee members and does not include any formal recommendations.

3. **The report**

3.1 In the UK, a young carer is defined in law (primarily under the Children and Families Act 2014 and related guidance) as: 'a person under the age of 18 that provides, or intends to provide, care for another person'. The care provided is usually for a family member such as a parent or sibling. The cared for person may have a disability, a chronic or physical illness, a mental health condition, a neurodivergent condition or a substance misuse issue. Meeting the person's care needs may involve practical assistance with tasks such as cooking, cleaning and shopping; personal care, emotional support, managing medication or accessing health appointments. A child is regarded as a young carer if the caring responsibilities are significant and regular, or impact on their wellbeing, education or development.

3.2 On 17/11/2025 a report was provided to the People and Health Overview Committee to provide information about the new 'All-Age Carers Support Service' commissioned by Dorset Council. The contract was awarded to Help & Care who work in association with MYTIME Young Carers who take a lead in specific support for young carers and links with schools. These support services work closely with the young carers team within the Birth to Settled Adulthood Service (B2SA) within Childrens Services and adult carers team within Adult Social Care within Dorset Council.

3.3 The service supports young carers aged 5 -25. Key service delivery requirements:

- Identify carers, including seldom heard and young carers.
- Registration of carers on behalf of Dorset Council.
- Information, advice and guidance which empowers carers.

- Training to help carers to understand what support is available and care safely.
- A focus on wellbeing which includes supporting carers to have a life outside their caring role. Young carers can access activities for social and emotional wellbeing through MYTIME and the young carers service following a young carers assessment.
- Help & Care shall support carers with information and advice for periods of transition in their life including but not limited to when a young carer or parent carer is likely to have needs for support when they, or the person they care for transitions to the adult care system.

3.4 The service delivery for young carers also includes these specification requirements for young carers:

- involve carers in service development and have regular opportunities to have their voices heard.
- provide signposting and referrals to relevant services on their behalf.
- work directly with individuals to build relationships, providing practical support with applications when required.
- support young carers who are not sure about their next steps to adulthood and independence, or who are in transition stages of their life to support them to plan.
- signpost/make referrals for young carers who struggle with their mental health to have someone appropriate to talk to.
- identify opportunities, and provide local activities to meet peers, learn life skills, take time out from their caring role online and in person, including transport where required.
- provide carer awareness sessions to professionals and organisations.
- support schools to identify Young Carers and raise awareness amongst peers.
- inform carers of their rights.
- share information and work collaboratively with existing services for young people aged 16 – 18 who are NEET (not in education, employment or training).

- have a clear method to understand when a young carer has a significant caring role to advise and support them to access a carer assessment from Dorset Council.
 - have a whole family approach with support where financial hardship, or other needs within household are identified.
 - encourage the adult receiving support to access the right support to alleviate caring responsibilities on the child.
 - advocate for the young person to ensure their wishes are understood by other professionals. (young carers aged 16+ can access a commissioned advocacy service).
 - recognise that young adult carers may wish to live independently and support them to do so, whilst recognising their changed caring role.
- 3.5 It is recognised that awareness of young carers needs to be increased in Schools and with GP practices. MYTIME deliver a whole school education programme raising awareness across teaching staff and pupils helping young carers to identify and access support. A meeting has been held with Dorset Council's communications team about an awareness campaign and resources that can be developed for professionals and for families help identify young carer and explain the support services available. The largest number of referrals to the young carers team within B2SA for young carers assessments are made by other professionals within Childrens Services.
- 3.6 Since the All-Age Carers Support Service began with Help & Care on 22/11/2025, 30 new young carers have been registered with Help & Care since the new service up until 31/03/2026. There were a total of 482 young carers registered with the service until 31/03/2026. As of 30/04/2026 this total had increased to 511. This is reported to Dorset Council on a monthly basis. It is expected that young carers will continue to be identified and the number registered with the All-Age Carers Support Service will increase. The registration of a young carer is voluntary and generally needs the consent of parents unless the young carer is over 16. There are some young carers supported by the young carers team in the B2SA that are not registered with Help & Care due to the lack of parental consent.
- 3.7 Referrals for young carers assessment are received through the Family Support and Advice Line. The purpose of the assessment is to understand the nature of the young carer's caring role and to ensure that it is appropriate given the age of the young carer. The team works closely with adult social care teams to ensure the adult being cared for has had advice and information and a social care needs assessment under Care Act 2014. This

will help to increase the support available to adults and reduce the reliance on young carers. The young carers team will also consider any safeguarding concerns and ensure that the young carer is being cared for appropriately. Young carers can also access support for social and emotional wellbeing, one to one support, and small group work following a young carers assessment from the young carers team.

- 3.8 As of 10/06/2026 there were 78 young carers receiving support from the young carers team at Dorset Council. This has reduced from 103 in September 2025. Some young carers have been closed due to no contact, no longer needing the service or transferring to the adult carers team. The numbers have reduced but the contacts per young carer have increased. The young carers team see young carers at least once every 3 months. The visits focus on 1:1 support for the young carer for their emotional, social and mental health. The support also focuses on supporting them to access the range of support and social activities that are on offer. Once young carers are able to access these independently, if appropriate they can be closed to the young carers team at Dorset Council. Young carers are still able to access the support from Help & Care/MYTIME Young Carers and the range of support that is offered if they are closed to young carers team.
- 3.9 The young carers team also have use of the beach hut in Swanage in partnership with Swanage Town Council and the Commissioner to provide social opportunities for young carers. National Trust have also given an annual pass to be used for young carers. The young carers team support young carers to attend the annual Young Carers Festival. The Young carers Festival is an annual event arranged by YMCA in partnership with the Children's Society which takes place in Botley, Southampton. It is a space for young carers to connect and have their voices heard, influence policymakers and drive change for young carers. 10 young carers were supported to attend this year. The team can facilitate information at higher education open day events.
- 3.10 Independent advocacy is available for young carers aged 16 and over and a Dorset Council Carer Friendly ID Card Scheme offering discounts and special offers are offered to young carers aged 10 and over through contracts commissioned by Adult Social Care.
- 3.11 Out of 78 young carers currently open to the young carers Team, 7 young carers have an EHCP and 6 are recorded as having their own disability. The age range of children referred to the team for assessment is between 6 and 17. An assessment was undertaken for a child who was 6 however it was found that the child did not have a significant and regular caring role and so did not need ongoing support. The largest group of young carers young carers team are aged 12, with 13 young carers in this age category. 4 young carers

that have additional support through a child in need plan which is reviewed regularly, with a further young carer having a child in need plan developed. The young carers team is managed by a Social Work Team Manager who will ensure that any safeguarding concerns are addressed for young carers. The team will also ensure that children are safe and their needs are met, by their parents within their family network. Since the young carers team work with all of the Children's Services locality teams to ensure that parents undertake their parental responsibility for these children and they are not undertaking inappropriate caring tasks. A whole family approach is used to consider the needs and offer support to the whole family. This has been strengthened further by the joint working between young carers team, disabled children social workers and the adult social care teams who can provide support to reduce the impact of the caring role on young carers.

- 3.12 There is improved joint working between Help & Care, MYTIME, the young carers team and adult carers service. There are regular meetings about identification routes, referral pathways and the resources needed for external professionals and families. Internally there are regular meetings between young carers team and the adult carers service to ensure that young carers who are turning 18 are well supported if they continue to have a caring role as an adult. A carers assessment under the Care Act 2014 is offered and warm handovers to introduce the new team members who will be supporting them. In the next phase the plan is to align adult and young carer assessments. Regular meetings are greatly improving the joint working, reducing the silos between services and improving shared knowledge.
- 3.13 The Bridgit tool is an online AI tool that is used for adult carers across Dorset I area. The young carers component is not in use currently. Children's and Adult Services and commissioning would need to work together to understand the benefits of this for young carers and the AI tool could complement the young carers service. Young carers would need to be involved in the shaping of the offer and learning from other local authorities who have used this for young carers would also assist in this process. Children and adult services can take this forward over the coming year. The contract for the Bridgit tool is due to come to an end on 31/3/2027 and there will need to be a new procurement process.
- 3.14 Further work to strengthen the service over the coming year would be to work on the Bridgit Tool with adult social care and commissioners to understand how it can benefit young carers. As well as the work with Dorset Council's communications team to deliver an awareness campaign and resources that can be developed for professionals and for families help identify young carer and explain the support services available.

4. Alternative options considered

4.1 None

5. Legal considerations

5.1 None

6. Financial implications

6.1 The all age carers contract is delivered by Help and Care, who sub contract My Time to deliver services to young carers. My Time have accessed additional funding through Local Alliance Groups and the Youth Fund to deliver additional support to young carers.

7. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

7.1 None

8. Well-being and health implications

8.1 The service is provided to young carers to improve the health and wellbeing of young carers.

9. Other implications

9.1 None

10. Risk implications

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

Current Risk:

Residual Risk:

11. Equalities

11.1 The service provided by Dorset Council seeks to reduce the inequalities faced by young carers and to ensure that they have access to the support to reduce any negative impact on their wellbeing, education or development.

12. Appendices

12.1 None

13. Background papers

13.1 None

14. Report sign-off

- 14.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)