Young carers

Introduction
Young carers is the term used to describe a young person aged 18 years or younger who helps look after a relative who has a disability, physical illness, mental health condition or a drug or alcohol problem. They provide care often in the form of cooking, cleaning, or helping someone to get washed, dressed and move around. Young carers often provide emotional support to their parents, siblings and extended family members. It is estimated all carers save the economy £87 billion per year.¹

A national survey of 700 young carers aged 6-18 year identified:

- 39% of young carers’ schools were unaware of their caring role.
- 60% of young carers said their teachers had no understanding of what life is like for them.
- over 50% did not feel supported even when teachers were aware of their caring role.
- 38% were worried about the person they care for while they are at school.²

There is growing evidence that being a young carer has an adverse impact on the health, academic attainment and future employment opportunities and social and leisure activities of these young people. For example, young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, the equivalent to nine grades lower compared with their peers and are less likely to be in employment, education or training between the ages of 16-19³. Despite growing awareness of the needs of young carers and increasing services available to support them, young carers remain less likely than other children to be in contact with social services and educational welfare services, services mandated to offer them support.⁴

Young carers are more likely to:

- Come from a BME community: young carers are one and a half times more likely than their peers to be from black, Asian or minority ethnic communities, and are twice as likely to not speak English as their first language.
- Have a disability: young carers are one and a half times more likely than their peers to have a special educational need or a disability.
- Live within a family in poverty: the average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer.⁵

What is the evidence base?
The Young Carer (Need Assessment) Regulations 2015⁶ states that from April 2015 all local authorities must carry out a young carer needs assessment in a manner appropriate and proportionate to the needs and circumstances of the young carer to whom it relates. This will identify what help the carer and/or family might need. The local authority must ensure those undertaking the assessments are appropriately trained.

If the young person is 16 or over, and not in full-time education they may be eligible for help finding work as well as help with family finances, for instance through benefits such as Carer’s Allowance⁷.
The Carers Trust 2012 guidance, Commissioning Services for Young Carers and their Families, outlines good practice in supporting young carers and their families requiring:

- A whole family approach.
- Targeted support for young carers and families.
- Early intervention and prevention.
- Support accessing to education, employment and training.
- Improved access to transport for young carers.
- Improving and maintaining the health and wellbeing of young carers.
- Transition support: seamless support from young to adult carer.
- Personalisation: individual budgets and direct payments.
- Workforce development and raising public awareness.
- Giving young carers a voice.

In 2009, the Association of Directors of Children’s Services and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services published a model for Council’s to use to create a joint memorandum of understanding between directors of children’s and safeguarding services and adult social care. The guidance gives local authorities the tools to clarify thresholds and responsibilities in a document that can be used by all agencies working with young carers.

There are five NICE Quality Standards with specific quality statements relevant to carers, including:

1. QS2 stroke.
2. QS1 dementia.
3. QS13 end of life.
4. QS11 alcohol dependency and harmful alcohol use.
5. QS3 venous thromboembolism prevention.

Young carers may be caring for adults with substance misuse (Sections 9.5 and 9.6), mental health problems (Section 9.2) or disability (Section 12).

Local picture
There were 2,018 young people known to be providing care in Luton in 2011, representing an increase of nearly 7% since 2001. There are an estimated 496 persons aged under 15 years who provide unpaid care in the borough, a 42% increase compared with 2001. The proportion of children providing care is shown in Table 26. Young carers also tend to be younger in Luton compared with young carers nationally with:

- 2.7% (2.1% in 2001) of carers were aged under 15 years old, compared with 2.1% in England.
- 11.1% of carers in Luton were aged under 25 years compared with 7.6% in England.
Table 26: Children providing care in Luton, 2011.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Luton</th>
<th>Birmingham</th>
<th>Sandwell</th>
<th>Slough</th>
<th>Bradford</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children providing considerable care: % children aged &lt;15 who provide 20+ hours of unpaid care per week</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
<td>0.25%</td>
<td>0.29%</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
<td>0.21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children providing care: % children aged &lt;15 who provide unpaid care</td>
<td>1.06%</td>
<td>1.10%</td>
<td>1.21%</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
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**What is being done locally?**

In 2014 there were 135 young people on the local Family Action (previous local provider) database, of these only a quarter were in receipt of mandated support services as of March/April 2014. Many of the families had not been in receipt of services for three years or more.

In April 2014, the charity ‘Chums’ (Child Bereavement and Trauma Service) was appointed the new provider for young carer’s service. Referrals for young carer’s service come from a range of services including education, social care, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as well as self-referrals. They currently support 65 young carers and 39 families (September 2014) and provide:

- Support for young carers and their families including sports/activity days, workshops, one-to-one and group support and activities for whole family.
- Engagement with schools - 10 schools participate in the young carer’s project and seven further schools are interested in participating in the scheme.
- Developing links with health services - an agreed referral process having been set up, and general information/literature to be made available and displayed within each surgery.
- Partnership working with VCS including Stepping Stones and Changing Lives, and parent groups to expand their reach to young carers.

**Perspective of public/service users**

As part of the national Children’s Commissioner Takeover Day, young people in Luton are able to talk about the issues that really matter to them. The Takeover Day is organised and hosted by young people, with professionals from a variety of fields in Luton invited to gain a unique insight into the concerns and opinions of the town’s youth. In 2014 a workshop on young carers provided an opportunity to raise awareness and increase understanding of the issues they face. Key feedback was that young carers didn’t want to keep explaining their situation and they wanted their teachers and school to understand their carer responsibilities and be more supportive. Young people also perceived there was no strategic buy in and investment and there needed to be better information sharing, training of staff to identify and support young carers and offer carer respite.
Priorities

1. Reduce barriers to accessing services by raising awareness of the needs of young carers by providing training to schools, colleges, drug and alcohol services, primary care, domestic violence services and promote services on a range of different media.

2. Establish links and partnership working between services to identify young people in need of services and establish regular young carer forums especially within schools.

3. Improve data recording and sharing between services to better understand the needs and assets of young carers.
References

i Buckner L and Yeandle S. Valuing Carers - calculating the value of unpaid care, Carers UK 2007. Available from: https://www.basw.co.uk/resource/?id=730


viii Carers Trust Commissioning Services for Young Carers and their Families Carers Trust 2012Available from: http://www.waterloofoundation.org.uk/Files/commissioning_services_for_young_carers_and_their_families_final_copy_for_web.pdf


x Office for National Statistics. 2011 Census: Health and provision of unpaid care, local authorities in England and Wales ONS 2011