
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

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To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Mid-Year Update on Young Carers

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a mid-year update on the Carers Strategy in relation to Young Carers.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Scrutiny Committee is asked to receive this report and to raise questions and challenge leading to improvement.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Young carers are children and young people under 18 who provide regular and on-going care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses substances. The provision for Merthyr Young Carers is located within Children's Services Early Intervention and Prevention component of its service strategy.
- 3.2 Local Authority Duties to Young Carers
The Local Authority's duties to young carers are set out in the part 3 Code of Practice issued under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 3.3 A local authority must assess whether the carer has needs for support (or is likely to do so in the future) and if they do, what those needs are or are likely to be. A carer is defined in the Act as a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or a disabled child.

- 3.4 The duty is triggered if it appears to the Local Authority that a carer may have needs for support; and we would always assume this to be the case with young carers.
- 3.5 The assessment must include an assessment of the extent to which the carer is able and willing to provide the care and to continue to provide the care, the outcomes the carer wishes to achieve both in terms of themselves and, if a child is the carer, the outcomes the person(s) with parental responsibility for that child wish(es) to achieve for them and the extent to which support, preventative services, or the provision of information, advice or assistance could assist in achieving the identified outcomes. The local authority must involve the carer and where feasible the person for whom the carer provides or intends to provide care in the assessment.
- 3.6 The assessment also must have regard to whether the young carer works or wishes to work and whether they are participating or wish to participate in education, training or leisure activities. If the carer is a child, the assessment must have regard to his or her developmental needs and the extent to which it is appropriate for the child to provide the care. This should lead to consideration by the local authority of whether a child carer is actually a child with care and support needs in his or her own right and who therefore should be assessed under section 21 of the Act.
- 3.7 If the carer is a young adult carer aged between 16 and 25 the assessment must include an assessment of any current or future transitions the carer is likely to make into further or higher education, employment or training and have due regard to what the young adult carer wishes to participate in.
- 3.8 There is no typical young carer. The care they provide can be physical, emotional or social. Young Carers are individuals who may not see themselves as Carers, but consider themselves above all a son, daughter, family member friend or neighbour. Caring often impacts on the whole family, not just one person. Young Carers' circumstances vary enormously, as can the type and amount of support they give. Caring can be a gradual process as over time someone becomes more frail and needs more support or it can happen suddenly, for example if someone has an accident or a health problem like a stroke. Young Carers often have adult caring responsibilities while having the legal status of children. Whilst it is also rewarding, caring can be both physically tiring and emotionally stressful. Young carers often feel isolated, unsupported and alone, having to face the challenges of education and growing up alongside their caring responsibilities.
- 3.9 Regional Partnership Board
The Cwm Taf Social Services and Wellbeing Partnership Board have committed to a range of strategic intentions across the region in line with the Social Services and Well-being Act. This has included the development of a Cwm Taf Carers Strategy and the establishment of a Cwm Taf Carers Partnership Group.
- 3.10 The following principles have been used by the Cwm Taf Carers Partnership Group to inform its work:
- We will promote and support effective communication across the partnership;
 - We will make sure that users of our services, particularly Carers, are able to influence the work of the partnership;

- We will focus on what matters to the people and communities of Cwm Taf;
- We will promote and develop solutions towards preventing problems occurring or getting worse for people in Cwm Taf;
- We will promote and support collaboration and integration;
- We will make sure that we strike a balance between short term needs and longer term goals;
- We will listen to, understand and respect individual organisational views and the views of other parties;
- We will conduct business with transparency and openness and;
- We will fully utilise the wide range of skills, knowledge and experience which are available to the Group.

3.11 Services for Young Carers in Merthyr Tydfil

The Young Carers Service within Merthyr Tydfil has been provided by Barnardos since 1997. The service operates an open referral system, accepting referrals from young carers themselves, their families and professionals. The service is currently facilitated by a full time project worker and a sessional worker. The service offers:

- Young carers assessments and care planning
- There are three after-school groups in community venues which provide a mix of leisure time and issue based topics.
- One to one sessions are provided for young carers who need intensive support. This can include emotional support, support to access health service, confidence building or relationship issues. During 2018/2019 184 one to one sessions were conducted.
- Since 2nd September 2019 Young Carers have had a presence within the Early Help Hub to support wider identification of preventative support needs within a carer's family unit.

3.12 Estyn Thematic Report - Young Carers

Scrutiny Committee members will be aware that during 2018/2019 Estyn published its thematic report on provision for young carers in secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units across Wales and found:

- Lack of reliable data to identify how many young carers there are in schools, PRUs and colleges
- Many providers do not know which of their pupils and learners have a caring role
- Provision for young carers at secondary schools, colleges and PRUs varies widely
- Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that are most effective in meeting the needs of young carers have robust systems to identify these learners, track their wellbeing needs regularly and adapt their provision carefully to meet the individual needs of each young carer. However, only a minority of the schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed use an information management system to track and report on the progress young carers make compared with their peers.
- Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that have a named lead member of staff for young carers generally provide a high level of care, support and guidance for this group of learners

- Young carers benefit considerably where local authorities have a clear strategic plan for carers and a named person to drive forward the strategy in educational settings.
- Specialist agencies provide high quality resources and support to raise awareness and meet the needs of young carers. But many secondary schools, colleges and PRUs do not engage well enough with these agencies and have not accessed this valuable support.

3.13 The following recommendations are made for schools:

1. Ensure that they have sound procedures to identify which of their pupils/learners have a caring role
2. Have a named member of staff with lead responsibility for young carers who acts as a point of contact for young carers and champions their needs
3. Raise staff awareness of young carers' needs
4. Engage with specialist services to review and improve their provision to meet the needs of young carers
5. Track and monitor the progress and outcomes for young carers as they currently do for other groups of vulnerable learners
6. Evaluate their provision for young carers with reference to the checklist in Appendix 1 or available toolkits.

3.14 There is one recommendation within the report for local authorities:

1. The local authority should focus carer strategies on increasing the capacity of schools, colleges and PRUs to identify and meet the needs of young carers.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 During 2018/2019 24 new young carers assessments were undertaken, all of which led to a support plan. A further 156 young carers support plans were reviewed within the set timescales.
- 4.2 For the first time Merthyr Tydfil Young Carers in May 2018 had the opportunity to engage in a residential stay. This was delivered via PGL Travel Ltd which is the UK's leading outdoor education provider, delivering inspirational learning through adventure. This was significant for those that attended as many young carers do not have the same opportunities as their peers to have a 'holiday'. They engaged in a number of activities including archery, raft racing and abseiling; all of which are designed to build young people's resilience and confidence. Twenty seven young carers participated in the residential.
- 4.3 Merthyr Tydfil's Young Carers Choir was established in January 2019. During its first three months there were a number of highlights including having the opportunity to perform in the Barnardo's Young Supporters Concert at St David's Hall, Cardiff. The benefits of the choir are, providing young carers with opportunities that help build their self-esteem, confidence and the sense of belonging to a group.

- 4.4 The financial year of 2018/2019 saw a reduction in funding to the Young Carers Service from Families First. In 2019/2020 the provision is entirely core funded; this has meant an overall reduction in the young carers' budget.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 During the first two quarters of 2019/2020 the service engaged with 96 young carers, across 80 family units. Twenty new young carers were provided with an assessment in their own right and were provided with a service. This is an increase in the number of new young carer assessments undertaken in the first two quarters of 2018/2019, with the overall figure for that year being 24. Within the first two quarters 86 carers have received review in their own right.
- 5.2 Carer well-being is central to the measures of the Young Carers service, overall within the first two quarters of the year 70% of young carers who have attended the programme have reported an improvement in their wellbeing. 75% of families engaged with the service report an improvement in their families' resilience.
- 5.3 In 2018/2019 young carers were offered the opportunity to attend residential/ short break activities which young carers spoke highly of. Through working with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Partnership Group we had secured funding of £4,100 for this provision to take place during 2019/2020, to date one residential activity has been undertaken. The Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Partnership Group have also supported the provision establishing cooking sessions.
- 5.4 The Young Carer's Choir continues to meet on a weekly basis. Recent performances include the Welsh festival at Pontypridd, the Child Looked After Celebration Event and the 20th Celebration of the Taith Partnership hosted by Mark Drakeford. During the six week school holiday period Glam Choir provided an excellent opportunity for 11 young carers to attend a two week summer camp.
- 5.5 Children's Services have worked alongside Barnardos to secure funding for music activities for young carers and young mothers. The new Alaw project has been attended by 12 female young carers aged between 14 and 18 years old. Sessions to date have offered opportunities for participants to song write and learning have to play musical instruments.
- 5.6 Young carers are represented at the Merthyr Borough Youth Forum. One young carer is now a cabinet member. Young carers also attended the Youth Parliament Event at the Liberty Stadium in Swansea where they were involved in a focus group looking at developing life skills in the curriculum. Seven young carers are part of the community ambassador programme and attended a visit to the Children's Commissioners' Office in Swansea.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 In November 2019 Caring for our future: An inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers was released. Young carers shared that, in their opinion, there are four clear things that most young carers think need to improve:

- Awareness of young carers at school;
- Opportunities to socialise with other young carers both at school and outside of school;
- Chances to be active and to go on holiday with and without the people they care for
- Guaranteed funding for young carers services so that they don't have to worry about losing the support they rely on.

Children's Services objective is to meet the four clear things that young carers tell us they need most.

- 6.2 The Early Help Hub went live on 2nd September 2019 our vision was for young carers to have a presence within the Early help Hub. This has commenced, however given the previous years reduction in funding the capacity of the Young Carers provision has been impacted. Children's Services have worked closely with Barnardos who secured an £49,975 ICF bid for there is be a worker based within the Early help Hub on a full time basis for young carers for a twelve month period. This will allow us opportunity to consider how we can financially support new ways of working that are more effective for our young carers. The funding will support us in achieving the following outcomes:
- Early identification of young people who are young carers and proactively signpost them to the service.
 - Ensure that assessments consider the wider preventative support needs of the young carers' family unit.
 - Utilise wider third sector services to support the young carer and their family.
 - Develop strong working links with education to identify young carers and support planning for their educational attainment.
- 6.3 We continue to work closely with Education staff to support the recommendations of the published Estyn thematic report are implemented locally.
- 6.4 Merthyr Tydfil Young Carers' Service want to ensure that young carers' are provide with the right support at the right time to maximise the likelihood of young carers meeting their potential.

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

- 7.1 Relevant Council Officers and Barnardos staff will continue to work closely to maximise the opportunities for our young carers and support them to access wider services.
- 7.2 We will continue to advocate for our young carers to retain visibility of their needs and access to any additional resources as part of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Carers Strategy.
- 7.3 We will continue to work alongside education to support the awareness of young cares within education settings.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

- 8.1 This area of business and the Council's offer under Children's Services Strategy Early Intervention and Prevention – Children and their families received the right help at the right time to prevent escalation of need. In line with our overall vision:

Children and young people are safe and healthy; have the right help at the right time; are supported to live with their family or close to home; and, have stable and successful lives.

LISA CURTIS JONES
CHIEF OFFICER (SOCIAL SERVICES)

COUNCILLOR CHRIS DAVIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR
SOCIAL SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Barnardo's Cymru – Merthyr Young Carers March 2018 – April 2019		
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No