

**Report of:** Director of Children's Services

**Report to:** Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> April 2016

**Subject:** Young Carers - Update on Progress

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who helps look after a relative who has a condition, such as a disability, illness, mental health condition, or a drug or alcohol problem. Some children start caring at a very young age and don't really realise they are carers, others may not want to talk about their caring responsibilities because they are embarrassed or worried about what actions agencies may take.

However, with so many adult responsibilities, young carers often miss out on opportunities that other children have to play and learn. Many struggle educationally and become isolated, with no relief from the pressures at home, and no chance to enjoy a normal childhood.

In June 2012 a Scrutiny Working Group was established to review how the local authority and partners:

1. Identified and engaged with young people who are carers;
2. Ensured that young people who may not have identified themselves as a young carers were aware of the support available; and
3. Supported young carers to ensure that they could attain and achieve at school.

The working group identified a number of desired outcomes which subsequently present to and agreed by Scrutiny Board. This report provides an update following the Scrutiny Board report of January 2013.

## **Recommendations**

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) is requested to note the progress made since January 2013 and to make any further recommendations as deemed appropriate.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress in relation to the desired outcomes for young carers identified through the working group in 2012 and detailed in the Scrutiny Board paper January 2013.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 It is estimated that there are approximately 4000 young carers in Leeds.
- 2.2 The service was re-commissioned in 2012 to improve the support available to young carers. The remit of the new service specification was widened to include young carers who have caring responsibilities due to parental drug or alcohol use. A key focus of the new arrangements was to work more closely with schools to help them to more effectively identify and support pupils who were young carers.
- 2.3 The service provided to young carers links closely with the Children's Services three 'obsessions':
- To support children to live in safe and supportive families so that the need for children and young people to become looked after is reduced;
  - to improve school and college attendance and behaviour in school so that more children can benefit from the opportunities provided and
  - to enable more young people to be able to take up opportunities for education, training and employment by the age of 19.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The Service Provider, Willow Young Carers, experienced a significant increase in the number of referrals during their first year of the new contract. The increased level and demand for the service was due to better links with schools and clusters and overall improvements in identification of young carers.
- 3.2 Willow Young Carers requested a re-negotiation of the contract targets to take into account the increased demand for the targeted service. The numbers for universal support were reduced and targeted support increased. The variation was agreed in December 2014 and targets have been exceeded each year.
- 3.3 Willow Young Carers invested a considerable amount of staffing resources into increasing the universal support of young carers in schools settings. As a result of this work some schools have developed their own young carers support groups
- 3.4 There has been a substantial increase in referrals and awareness of Willow Young Carers as a result of promotion of the service in clusters. Whilst this is a positive position, it meant that at times there has been a waiting list for the service.
- 3.5 Update on desired outcomes agreed by Scrutiny Board in January 2013

Desired Outcome 1: That the Director of Children's Services brings the All Age Carers Strategy before the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) for consideration and input before the strategy is formally agreed.

*The new Carers Strategy was launched in 2015. The consultation group included representation from Children's Services and from Barnardo's, the current service provider. Young people contributed to the strategy and their top twelve messages are included in the strategy.*

Desired Outcome 2: That the Director of Children's Services ensures stronger communication and operational links are established between service areas both internal and external to the Council and efforts are made to understand where necessary the service entitlements for those in receipt of care.

*Early Help processes, Think Family Work Family protocols and cluster working have supported better integration and increased referrals/awareness of the support available to young carers. There is still further work to be done to respond to the new legislation and guidance which is designed to ensure that young carers are identified appropriately and referred for assessment.*

Desired Outcome 3:- That the Director of Children's Services tracks and records educational outcomes for known Young Carers to ensure support can be targeted and that a proactive approach can be adopted to prevent young carers from becoming NEET.

*Barnardo's proposed the use of a screening tool at Year 7 entry and promoted this along with a comprehensive schools resource. However, it has not been widely used.*

Desired Outcome 4: That the Director of Children's Services ensures that the Governors and Head Teachers of all state maintained schools are aware of the contracted service provided by Barnardo's and that the school is engaging with Barnardo's to utilise the resources available to them in order to support Young Carers.

*Barnardo's deployed a 'hub and spoke' communications strategy, providing named linked workers with each of the city's clusters over an 18 month period. Updates, bulletins, comprehensive resource packs, leaflets and posters were disseminated to all schools through cluster networks. The purpose of this was to build capacity to support young carers within schools and raise awareness about young carers' needs. Two clusters developed whole cluster approaches to young carer support and another couple of schools developed their own young carers support groups. Another positive outcome was, and continues to be, greater number of referrals from the clusters' guidance and support panels.*

Desired Outcome 5: That the Chief Executive introduces an assessment process where the impact of decision making on Children is a consideration in all formal decision making processes.

*Outcome resolved in 2013 when guidance on the equality impact assessment was adapted to provide further clarity for decision makers.*

Desired Outcome 6: That the Director of Children's Services ensures practitioners providing advice to young carers understand the criteria for adult

respite care and can assist in facilitating this provision on behalf of young carers and their families.

*A section of the young person's assessment includes screening and assessment of the whole family needs. Appropriate referrals are made to Adult Social Care as required.*

Desired Outcome 7: That the Director of Children's Services explores how current facilities could be utilised to provide an environment where young carers can 'drop in', have a break or access help and advice.

*Barnardo's is working in partnership with First Floor, Leeds who are a voluntary organisation who specialise in arts /performance work. The partnership holds regular drop-ins at a city centre venue. Young carers who attend these sessions can also benefit from residential experiences and other opportunities dependant on grant funding being available. Barnardo's has also developed extremely productive partnerships with Leeds Children's Charity, Skelton Grange environment centre, Yorkshire Dales Millenium Trust amongst others to provide high quality activities and residential experiences for young carers. Barnardo's also runs a monthly siblings' group for sibling carers.*

Desired Outcome 8: The Director of Children's Services considers the myths, assumptions and preconceptions that young people and their parent may have which presents barriers to accessing social services and implements a plan for *positive promotion of this service.*

*The publication of the recent Children's Services Ofsted report has received significant media attention and has provided an opportunity for Children's Services to demonstrate a wide range of success stories including and beyond Childrens Social Work services. In addition Leeds Children's Services was awarded the Local Government Chronicle Children's Services award of the year 2016. This has provided a further opportunity to demonstrate the integrated successful work that is taking place.*

Desired Outcome 9: That the Director of Children's Services facilitates promotional activities and literature via schools and places where young people meet, which raises awareness about the support available for young carers. In addition, ensures practitioners who come into contact with young carers are adequately trained to provide the support and information they may require.

*A comprehensive initial package was marketed to all schools to promote the new modernised service. A number of school assemblies were attended to raise awareness of support available. There are good links with some schools but this is not consistent. The much strengthened links with clusters has greatly increased awareness of the service available which has had a resultant impact on the number of referrals coming through guidance and support meetings.*

Desired Outcome 10 –The Director of Children's Services investigates access to the provision of ICT equipment which will facilitate flexible learning and home working.

*Most young carers do not identify access to ICT equipment as a barrier to learning. Should this arise this would be noted in action planning and appropriate steps taken to ensure that needs are addressed,*

Desired Outcome 11: That the Director of Children's Services establishes a mechanism for ongoing consultation with young carers, building on the event undertaken when devising the contract, which will enable the identification of further areas of improvement and facilitate feedback to those who have participated.

*The provider has a strategy in place to ensure that consultation with young carers takes place when appropriate. This includes young carers being involved in staff interview panels, literature reviews and publicity. Young Carers involvement is integral to their personal plans. Their views are sought at every possible opportunity to enhance the offer to young carers.*

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

The current provider is working to a specification which has been shaped with detailed feedback from staff, clients and key stakeholders.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

The procurement equality assurance questions were considered when compiling the specification for this service and an equality impact assessment undertaken

### **4.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

4.3.1 The three priority areas for improvement in Leeds are:

- to support children to live in safe and supportive families so that the need for children and young people to become looked after is reduced
- to improve school and college attendance and behaviour in school so that more children can benefit from the opportunities provided, and
- to enable more young people to be able to take up opportunities for education, training and employment by the age of 19

4.3.2 The Young Carers Service is an essential component of the Leeds Carers Strategy 2013/18 which makes reference to 'young carers' in terms of recognising and raising awareness of their particular needs. The strategy also contains commitments from both NHS Leeds and Adult Social Care to provide appropriate support to 'young carers'.

### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 The current provider estimates that there is in the region of £30k additional value to the contract as a result of partnership work and access to other funding streams. In addition the organisation provides staffing resource over and above their contract value as a result of their extensive and successful volunteering programme.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.5.1 Not applicable.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 Willow Young Carers has seen a steady but consistent increase in referrals over the course of the contract with average quarterly referrals shifting from approximately 30 per quarter to 63 in the last quarter. This has resulted in the need to close the waiting list from time to time, in negotiation with the contract manager. This decision has been made to ensure that children are not left unsupported on waiting lists. Contact is made with the referrers of any declined referrals with suggestions about where to access alternative support. The team does not have the capacity to meet this increased level of need.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 There is a great range of high quality support available in Leeds for young carers, as described in this report. It is recognised, however, that the successful promotion of the services on offer through cluster networks has resulted in demand occasionally exceeding capacity of current provider. Embedding the young carers' agenda in future proposals for multi-disciplinary locality working will relieve this pressure.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) is requested to note the progress made since January 2013 and to make any further recommendations as deemed appropriate.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup> - None**

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.