

# **YOUNG CARERS IN PLYMOUTH**

Children and Young People's Overview and  
Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group report



**PLYMOUTH**  
CITY COUNCIL

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## **I. Introduction**

The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel scrutinises matters relating to the health and wellbeing of children and young people living and learning in the City. The panel scrutinises the impact of services provided by agencies ranging from the Council, Health, Police, schools and colleges and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The Scrutiny Panel also considers the impact of partnerships such as the Children and Young People's Trust, Plymouth Safeguarding Children Board and Plymouth 2020 Wise Theme Group.

One of the priority issues considered by the Panel is the wellbeing of young carers in the City. The Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel convened a task and finish group in September to hear evidence on the number of children in the City who take on caring duties, the impact that has on their development and the support provided by organisations. This report summarises the findings of that review and makes recommendations for improvements to key services.

Young carers' issues cut across a number of Council and Plymouth2020 partnership priorities, especially Aspiration and Inequalities. The Council and its partners are required to take account of the recommendations contained within this report when making decisions with regard to the future delivery and development of services affecting young carers.

The panel would like to thank the Democratic Support Officer – Amelia Boulter for support in organising the sessions. The panel would also like to thank officers and partner organisations for their contributions in the preparation for the sessions and in their cooperation in evidence gathering.

## **2. Scrutiny Approach**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board approved in principle, on 22 September 2010, the establishment of a Task and Finish group to review Young Carers in Plymouth with membership to be drawn from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

### Task and Finish Objectives

The group was asked to –

- Review the relevant part of the Carers Strategy.
- Ascertain how effective current strategies are in identifying young carers.
- Review the provision of support and services provided.
- Review the effectiveness of multi-agency working in identifying support for young carers in the city.
- To consider what can be done to improve identification and support for young carers.

## Membership

The Task and Finish group had a cross party membership comprising the following Councillors -

- Councillor Mrs Stephens (Chair)
- Councillor Wildy (Vice Chair)
- Councillor Mrs Nicholson

For the purposes of the review, the Task and Finish Group was supported by –

- Claire Oatway, Head of Service- Performance and Quality, Dept of Services for Children and Young People
- Mark Collings, Children’s Fund Programme Manger, Dept of Services for Children and Young People
- Amelia Boulter, Democratic Support Officer

## Methodology

The Task and Finish Group convened on two separate occasions to consider evidence and hear from witnesses -

- 15 October 2010
- 28 October 2010

Members of the Task and Finish Group aimed to examine and make recommendations on:

- Feedback on the experiences of young carers in the City
- The numbers of young carers in the City
- Processes for the identification of young carers
- Levels of support provided to young carers, to support them in their caring duties and in childhood development
- Role of services targeted at adults in identifying and supporting young carers

The Work Programme Request (PID) is attached as Appendix I.

## Background information

The Task and Finish Group heard representations from –

- Dave Schwartz, Strategic Commissioning Officer, Lead Reducing Harm and Risk Taking Behaviour, Plymouth City Council
- Helen Yeo, Team Leader for Young Carers, The Zone
- Caroline Storer, Plymouth Young Carers, Plymouth City Council
- Mark Bignell, Chief Executive, Hamoaze House
- Debbie Butcher, Commissioning Manager, Plymouth City Council
- Ruth Marriott, Chief Executive, The Zone
- Fiona Hutchings, Headteacher, Notre Dame

- Jane Taylor, Practice Manager, Parent Partnership
- Joy Howick, Head of Service Children in the Community, Plymouth City Council
- Craig McArdle, Commissioning Manager/Supporting People Manager
- Gary Walbridge, Service Manager Intermediate Care
- Kath Parker, Team Leader Adult Social Care, Plymouth City Council

Background material provided to the group included:

- Plymouth Carers Strategy
- Additional information about young carers

The panel reviewed two DVDs created by children and young people in Plymouth: 'There 2 Care', and 'Hidden Harm: Lonely'.

### **3. Key issues arising from evidence**

- The need to improve the collaboration between Adult and Children Social Services with the pooling of resources and training;
- The need for a strategy to be developed for schools to help identify young carers and to give the appropriate support;
- To ensure a consistent approach is taken on how we target universal services to young people;
- To ensure the quality of assessments undertaken at the clients' home to identify a potential young carer;
- That each school to have a named individual of senior standing to ensure that all young carers have a plan for educational and other necessary support;
- To look at the training provided on this subject and to widen this training to include practitioners, teachers, school governors/inclusion governor etc;
- Young Carers Strategy to be owned in the Carers Strategy;
- That the Parent Support Advisors play a significant part in identifying young carers and are an independent person at the schools;
- Looking at Hidden Harm and this vulnerable group and how we highlight this;
- That sensitivity is needed around the administration of EMAs;
- To recognise the work undertaken by the Zone and thanks to be extended Plymouth Young Carers Group and Hamaoze House for their excellent work;
- The DVDs to be shown to a wider audience, e.g. all members prior to a Full Council meeting and to panel members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

## The Carers Strategy

The Carers Strategy is led by Pam Marsden, Assistant Director for Adults' Social Care. It covers a full range of services provided to carers in the City and contains a section on young carers. Panel members noted the early steps taken to include young carers as a vulnerable group. However, young carers' issues are not integrated into the whole agenda.

Within Adults Social Care there is a carers' office and carers team that carry out assessments when adult carers are identified. Alongside GPs, they have developed an adult carers register. It was not clear from the discussion who's responsibility it is to fund support to young carers – whether packages of support should be funded as part of an adults overall package.

The group heard criticism that the consultation exercises that fed into the carers strategy were not child-focussed, often general events therefore young carers issues were not properly captured.

Finally there were concerns about transition between adults' and children's services, specifically that adults' services were often too general and did not cater for younger adults' needs.

### **Recommendations:**

1. PCC must ensure improved collaboration and commissioning between Adult and Children Social Services. This includes clarification of funding responsibility and possibly pooling of resources;
2. Young Carers should be given more prominence within the Carers Strategy and supporting activities;
3. Adequate funding should be identified for appropriate respite for young carers.

The group heard from services for young carers that very few referrals are made from adult social care. Often, professionals working with young carers, including young carers' services or schools were not updated of changes in condition of the adult by adults' workers. This meant they were not able to fully support children. Equally, adults' workers stated that they did not always know what services were available in the community for young carers.

Workers with adults, especially Adult Social Care, were not likely to know about services available for young carers and there were concerns that assessments of adults' needs did not always identify children in a caring role. Young carers reported that they wanted to be treated as responsible carers, that sometimes adults workers withheld information.

Young carer advocates explained that in many cases if services properly supported adults in the household, there would be little demand for help for young carers. It was felt that it was felt that if the right services are provided for the adult then the need for young carers would lessen; and that there needs to be greater collaboration between Adult and Children Social Services.

## **Recommendations**

4. When a young carer is identified by Adult Social Services, that worker must trigger a referral to complete a full young carers assessment;
5. The level of joint training around young carers and Hidden Harm among Adults and Children's workers should be addressed urgently;
6. A protocol must be developed to ensure closer working between adults' workers and children's workers.

## **Identification and Support for Young Carers**

Young carers support families with a range of conditions, including parental or sibling physical disability, mental health, substance misuse or domestic abuse. Children as young as 8 are known to be carrying out duties including:

- Personal care – washing and bathing;
- Household chores, including grocery shopping;
- Financial management, including paying bills, budgeting;
- Making sure siblings get to school.

Currently there are around 170 known young carers in Plymouth. Benchmarks from national evidence forecast there are approximately 850. However, when the definition is extended to include substance misuse or domestic abuse this could be as high as 4,000. Geographically, young carers are spread citywide and this is an issue that can affect any family.

Many people, including members of the Panel were unaware of the high number of young carers and the range of reasons children are in a caring role. The panel were shocked at the numbers of young people and the tasks they are asked to undertake on a regular basis.

Many young carers are hidden from view because of fear or because they are not noticed by visiting professionals, particularly if there are other adults in the house. Young carers often want privacy and not interference and so do not raise concerns.

Training on Hidden harm issues (where parental substance misuse or mental health are reasons for young people taking a caring role) has been rolled out across the City. More services are becoming sensitized to young carers' issues, but there is still a lack of understanding.

Referrals to support services for young carers tended to come from GPs and schools. Parent Support Advisers were recognised as important link because of the relationship they develop with parents. One school had identified a senior lead for young carers who was responsible for tracking their educational progress and providing support. This did not appear to be a universal offer. Many speakers confirmed that there is a need to look at the training provided on this subject and to widen this training to include practitioners, teachers, school governors/inclusion governor etc

## Recommendations

7. DVDs on Young Carers and Hidden Harm to be shown to a wider audience, e.g. to members prior to Full Council, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Health and Adult Social Care Panel;
8. Plymouth City Council should lead a media campaign to raise awareness of young carers in Plymouth.

There was strong evidence that young carers often have a very different experience of childhood:

- Education attainment is poor at school and beyond as they put the needs of their family before their own future; one promising young student refused a place at university in order to care for her sister,
- Young carers face extremely stressful situations at home, they are lonely and isolated, sometimes worrying about whether they will be taken away by social care, whether their parent might overdose, or whether benefits will be stopped;
- Young carers often miss out on social skills, they don't go out and play with other children;
- Young carers have a lot of love and loyalty to their family but this can often give way to hurt, anger and confusion as well as distrust of adults;
- There is a worrying generational cycle among young carers, 40-60% of young people in drug treatment services have parents who abused substances;
- bullying is a major issue for young carers both in the community and at school;
- young people are sometimes financially penalised if they have to take time off education to care;
- the young carers tend to become 'mini adults' and take on additional duties which go beyond that which is usually acceptable e.g. responsibility for paying household bills, food shopping, collection of medicines, lifting and carrying heavy loads etc;
- one female young carer had been caring for a male member of her extended family throughout her teenage life and was responsible for bathing him, but had not been identified as a young carer;
- Young carers are not treated as disadvantaged and therefore cannot access additional help that other vulnerable groups receive e.g. children in care receive laptops;
- Parents often feel ashamed or trapped and do not declare the support their children offer.



Plymouth Young Carers at Efford, run by Plymouth City Council, provides part-time support to young people. It currently supports 50 children with 20 children on a waiting list. The service provides opportunities for those children to meet other young carers, to relax and to re-learn to play. The young carers' project provides advice on health, including sexual health as well as benefits advice.

The Zone runs a variety of services to raise awareness of young carers' issues and to assess and support young carers. They suggested that young carers want practical support, for example:

- A card system to flag up "I'm a young carer", so that professionals take into account their role and share appropriate information with them;
- being able to leave school early to collect siblings if needed.

Some schools consider young carers needs as part of their inclusion duties, for example with a designated teacher that tracks the welfare and educational needs of young carers in a similar way to other vulnerable groups. This enables a relationship of trust to be built up and opportunities for young people to be given the space they need to study.

### **Recommendations**

9. Plymouth Young Carers at Efford, The Zone and Hamoaze House should be praised for the good work they do with young carers;
10. Young carers should be identified as a vulnerable group by all agencies working with children and be provided with additional support where appropriate;
11. PCC should work with schools to develop a strategy to help identify young carers and to ensure appropriate support is given. This includes an identified Governor/Inclusion Governor, to be trained in identifying young carers , and a named senior staff member to ensure young carers have a plan of educational support;
12. Headteacher representatives should come forward with proposals to audit and identify young carers in schools;
13. PCC should evaluate existing services to ensure the universal offer is appropriate;
14. PCC to review, resource and plan for adequate support for young carers, especially if additional young carers are identified;
15. PCC should provide young carers with assistance for carers duties, including lifting;
16. Schools should ensure sensitivity and priority is given to young carers on the administration of school support or welfare funds.

## 7 Recommendations

The following recommendations are commended to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for approval:

<b>PCC General</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. DVDs on Young Carers and Hidden Harm to be shown to a wider audience, e.g. to members prior to Full Council, Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Health and Adult Social Care Panel;</li><li>2. Plymouth City Council should lead a media campaign to raise awareness of young carers in Plymouth;</li><li>3. Plymouth Young Carers at Efford, The Zone and Hamoaze House should be praised for the good work they do with young carers;</li><li>4. PCC should review, resource and plan for adequate support for all young carers; especially if more young carers are identified;</li><li>5. The level of joint training around young carers and Hidden Harm among Adults' and Children's workers should be addressed urgently;</li><li>6. A protocol to ensure closer working between adults' workers and children's workers must be developed;</li><li>7. PCC should provide young carers with assistance for carers duties, including safe lifting;</li><li>8. PCC must ensure improved collaboration and commissioning between Adult and Children Social Services. This includes clarification of funding responsibility and possibly pooling of resources;</li><li>9. Young Carers should be given more prominence within the Carers Strategy and supporting activities;</li><li>10. Adequate funding should be identified for appropriate respite for young carers;</li><li>11. Progress is reviewed after six months by the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel.</li><li>12. PCC uses its links through the Local Strategic Partnership to seek comments on the report from other agencies, such as the family court, probation, Children's Trust, etc.</li></ol>
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<p><b>PCC Community Services</b></p>	<p>13. When a young carer is identified by Adult Social Services, that worker must trigger a referral to complete a full young carers assessment as part of the adult care plan;</p> <p>14. PCC should provide young carers with assistance for carers duties, including safe lifting.</p>
<p><b>PCC Services for Children and Young People</b></p>	<p>15. Young carers should be identified as a vulnerable group by all agencies working with children and be provided with additional support where appropriate;</p> <p>16. PCC should work with schools to develop a strategy to help identify young carers and to ensure appropriate support is given. This includes an identified Governor/Inclusion Governor, to be trained in identifying young carers , and a named senior staff member to ensure young carers have a plan of educational support;</p> <p>17. PCC should evaluate existing services to ensure the universal offer is appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Schools and partner organisations</b></p>	<p>18. PCC should work with schools to develop a strategy to help identify young carers and to ensure appropriate support is given. This includes an identified Governor/Inclusion Governor, to be trained in identifying young carers , and a named senior staff member to ensure young carers have a plan of educational support;</p> <p>19. Schools should ensure sensitivity and priority is given to young carers on the administration of school support or welfare funds;</p> <p>20. Headteacher representatives should come forward with proposals to audit and identify young carers in schools.</p>



### Request for Scrutiny Work Programme Item

<b>1</b>	<b>Title of Work Programme Item</b>	Young Carers in Plymouth
<b>2</b>	<b>Responsible Director (s)</b>	Bronwen Lacey, Director of Services for Children and Young People
<b>3</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>  <b>Tel No.</b>	Mairead McNeil, Assistant Director
<b>4</b>	<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Councillor Mrs Watkins, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
<b>5</b>	<b>Aim</b>	To examine the way young carers in Plymouth are identified and how the need to provide support and services are met.
<b>6</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To review the relevant part of the Carers Strategy.</p> <p>To ascertain how effective current strategies are in identifying young carers.</p> <p>Review the provision of support and services provided.</p> <p>How effective is multi-agency working in identifying support for young carers in the city.</p> <p>To consider what can be done to improve identification and support for young carers.</p>
<b>7</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	To raise awareness of the existence of young carers and their needs. To help to foster multi-agency working.
<b>8</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<p>Young carers in the city of Plymouth.</p> <p>Families of young carers.</p> <p>Plymouth City Council and its partners.</p>

9	<b>Criteria for Choosing Topics</b>	Item on the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny work programme.		
10	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Definition –</b> A young carer or young caregiver is a child or young person (up to the age of 18 or in some programs 25) whose life is affected by looking after someone with a disability or a long-term illness		
11	<b>Exclusions</b>			
12	<b>Programme Dates</b>	Task and finish to take place over 2 days in October 2010.		
	<b>Timescales and Interdependences</b>	<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Target Date for Achievement</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
13	<b>Links to other projects or initiatives / plans</b>	Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group on Modernisation of Adult Social Care – TBC		
14	<b>Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel / Membership if Task and Finish Group</b>	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel		
15	<b>Lead Officer for Panel</b>	Claire Cordory-Oatway		
16	<b>Reporting arrangements</b>	Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Cabinet		
13	<b>Resources</b>	Staff time and witnesses		
14	<b>Budget implications</b>	Minimal		
15	<b>Risk analysis</b>	Young carers not receiving support and services.		
16	<b>Project Plan / Actions</b>	Project plan to be prepared by the panel in consultation with relevant partner agencies.		