

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

8 September 2011



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

Young Carers' Scrutiny Task and Finish Group Recommendations Update

Following publication of the young carers' scrutiny report, letters were sent to young carers' services acknowledging and praising the valuable contributions they are making to improving outcomes and opportunities for young carers in Plymouth.

During Carers' Week, Plymouth City Council led a media campaign in partnership with the Zone, Friends and Families of Special Children and the Young Carers youth club at Efford. A range of press releases and stories were circulated to the local media. A number of carer's issues were covered that week including young carers' stories, helping to raise the profile.

The Plymouth Children and Young People's Trust Children and Young People's plan 2011-14 highlights young carers as a vulnerable group that may need extra help to achieve positive outcomes. This will help ensure all partners in the Trust recognise and prioritise young carers' issues.

Strong representation on the Carers' Strategic Partnership is highlighting the profile of young carers within adult care services and encouraging them to consider the role of young carers in their strategic planning. Meetings with Adult Social Care operational managers have focussed on the identification and referral of young carers when undertaking home visits and care planning. Adult social workers will be instigating Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessments for young carers identified and will be further supported by developments within the CAF service.

During Carers' Week a workshop was undertaken with school representatives and young carers. They met to debate issues raised by both parties, such as flexible days, bullying and stigma, access to phones, inappropriate punishments, and flexibility in how the school interacts with parents such as home visits for parents' evenings.

School representatives are now attending the Young Carers' Steering Group to support improvements in the identification and support of young carers in school. Presentations have been made to groups of head teachers, particularly the Plymouth Association of Secondary Heads Inclusion Group on ways to improve support and help for young carers. Schools were clear that better awareness-raising, reducing stigma and personalised support plans were the key to supporting young carers in school. The role of the Virtual Head for Looked After Children will be explored to consider how they can support developments for young carers in school.

Information packs were developed as part of Carers' Week activities and distributed widely to schools and other universal agencies such as libraries and GP surgeries. The aim was to raise awareness with universal services and help them to better support young carers and families.

Multi-Agency Hidden Harm training is delivered through Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Board. There are two levels of training targeted for a multi-agency audience: Understanding Hidden Harm, and Hidden Harm: Working Together to Safeguard Children. This training has been promoted through the Carers' Strategic Partnership to improve take-up within adult services. A protocol has been written to improve the working between adult and children's services. This Memorandum of Understanding improves working relationships, outlines the responsibilities of partners and provides a foundation for future joint commissioning.

OFSTED highlighted (CAF) in Plymouth as an effective preventative tool; to capitalise on this best practice the CAF will be used to coordinate support for all young carers. Additional resource in the CAF team will support the maintenance of a Young Carers' Register and ensure all young carers are offered coordinated multi-agency responses. This process will improve the referral and tracking of young carers. Enhancing the CAF support for young carers will ensure better single and multi-agency support without the highlighting of individual young carers for special support and potentially stigmatising them with their peers.

The Young Carers' Service is now being re-tendered with resources to provide a more targeted support for the most vulnerable young carers impacted by parental substance misuse, parental mental health and learning disabilities. The service design was created following the events in carers' week, stakeholder workshops (including education welfare, third sector, health, and adult social care), a needs analysis undertaken with young carers, and co-design workshops with potential providers. The CAF process will provide the support to the less vulnerable young carers by coordinating multi-agency responses and improving single agency support through improved support planning.

Resource has also been identified to commission an awareness-raising programme which will target services, young people, and families. Awareness-raising with professionals will improve the immediate and practical response to young carers needs.

Family Support Workers are being placed in Drug and Alcohol Treatment services. This function will help to identify and support young carers supporting families impacted by parental substance misuse. Other recent developments include the commissioning of a parental alcohol treatment programme (currently out to tender) and a domestic abuse perpetrator treatment programme to provide earlier intervention preventing/reducing impact on young people.

Transition from primary to secondary school has embedded good practice; however the transition to adulthood and adult care services is harder. The lack of a coordinated register of young carers has meant we have not been able to target young carers approaching transition; as the register is implemented young carers approaching transition to adult services will be targeted for support. Contracts with Careers South West to provide the Connexions Information, Advice and Guidance for children and young people have been clarified to ensure they better identify young carers accessing their service and capture their support activities.

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