

Meeting:	Children and young people scrutiny committee
Meeting date:	Tuesday 14 January 2020
Title of report:	Young Carers Support Service
Report by:	Director for Children and Families

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To review the Young Carers Support Service (YCSS) for Herefordshire against the specification for the service following its implementation in April 2018.

The council has a statutory duty regarding young carers written in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Young Carers (Needs Assessment) Regulations 2015. This includes identifying, assessing the needs of the young carer and their family and providing the required support.

The council's corporate plan includes a commitment to enabling people to live safe, healthy and independent lives. Many vulnerable people are dependent upon carers in order to do so. The young carers' service seeks to support that contribution and help to ensure that young carers themselves are safe, healthy and enabled to fulfil their aspirations. It promotes identification of young carers by universal services and focuses on connecting young carers to their community and other sources of support.

To allow scrutiny to review the performance and progress of the new service and make any recommendations to the executive to drive any improvements forward.

The specification for the YCSS has derived from the Joint Carers Strategy 2017- 2021 which was produced jointly by Herefordshire Council and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group in consultation with carers and young carers.

The YCSS has 4 objectives:

1. Offer and carry out early help assessments which satisfy statutory requirements.
Meeting this objective. All young carers who have requested a statutory assessment have had one.
2. Offer and carry out transitions assessments which satisfy statutory requirements.
Meeting this objective. All young carers who are transitioning and requested a transition assessment have had one.
3. Enable young carers to access a range of community and universal services.
Meeting this objective for those young carers who are being or have been supported.
4. Enable young carers to access a range of digital resources.

Meeting this objective.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) **The children and young people's scrutiny committee review the information within the report and make any recommendations to the executive and the Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group as necessary to improve the service.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternative options as this report is to provide an overview of the Young Carers Service following its implementation.

Key considerations

2. The 2011 census reported that there were c1,270 young people aged up to 24 providing unpaid care in Herefordshire. Of that group, just over 400 were aged under 15. No estimate is available of how these numbers may have changed since 2011, but it is reasonable to expect that there may be around 400-700 young carers aged 18 currently in Herefordshire. Of the 2011 census cohort, the amount of care provided could vary as follows:

2011 Census – Unpaid Carers	Age 0 to 15		Age 16 to 24	
Provides unpaid care: Total	406		863	
Provides 1 to 19 hours unpaid care a week	337	83%	650	75%
Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	45	11%	118	14%
Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week	24	6%	95	11%

3. The Joint Carers Strategy 2017 – 2021 and associated commissioning intentions were approved by Cabinet in 20 July 2017. That decision noted that a panel or focus group of carers, including young carers, would contribute to the final design of new services to be commissioned and participate in the procurement process. That work concluded that a service for Young Carers should be commissioned separately from the wider carers provision. There were numerous challenges to commissioning a service delivered by an independent provider for Young Carers and it was proposed and agreed that the council's Early Help Family Support team would provide this service. The specification for the service is appendix A.

4. There had been an intention to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on the decision before it went to Cabinet in March 2018. Unfortunately due to the pressing timescales it was agreed that the committee would not undertake pre-decision scrutiny on the decision and instead review progress with the implementation of the new service a year after its introduction. This was confirmed at the cabinet meeting on 15th March 2018 that approved the provision of a young carers service. Due to visit by Ofsted at the beginning of 2019 and the local elections in May 2019 it has not been possible to schedule a report to the committee until now.
5. The children and young people scrutiny committee have responsibility for the scrutiny of services in Herefordshire for children and young people. The committee seeks to scrutinise the implementation of the young carers service, following its introduction in March 2018, to ensure that the service is meeting its objectives and providing effective support, care and guidance for young carers in Herefordshire.
6. On 1st April 2018 the in house Early Help Family Support took on the statutory obligations under the Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015 to assess the needs of young carers and their family holistically to enable young carers to lead fulfilled lives and to access opportunities available to other children by overcoming any barriers. The service is named Young Carers Support Service (YCSS) and consists of two full time family support workers managed within the Early Help Family Support Team, the holistic family assessment used is the Early Help Assessment (EHA). The service is countywide and young people are seen in locations and environments where they feel most comfortable.
7. The services focuses on four main objectives:
 - Young carer assessments following a whole family approach resulting in a tailor made multiagency package of support with an outcome focused action plan.
 - Transition assessments for young carers
 - Wide ranging networking and signposting to offer diverse opportunities
 - Increasing the availability of online/digital opportunities and support
8. The YCSS started by promoting the new service through the council website and WISH (Wellbeing, Information & Signposting for Herefordshire) explaining what a young carer is, how the service can provide support and how to make a referral. It developed three different presentations to target different audiences: primary school children, secondary school children and professionals. The service is also being promoted through the council communications 'Spotlight on children' and the Children Wellbeing bulletin. Posters have been produced for schools, doctor's surgeries and other community buildings - appendix B. It also attends Carer Forums and the Carer & Networking Events 2019 run by 2gether and Cares4trust in June 2019.
9. Objective 1: To offer and carry out early help assessments (EHA) which satisfy statutory requirements. 83 statutory family assessments have been requested and completed using the EHA. This assessment takes a whole family approach by identifying all the family's needs and putting together a tailor made package of support with an outcome focused support plan for all the family. Of the 36 closed cases 26 achieved positive outcomes, 4 were referred to statutory social care services (families received the right support at the right time) and the 6 other cases closed for various reasons e.g. moved out of county, did not want the support and on assessment there was not a young carer in the

family. The appendices C & D are examples of young carer cases. The majority of families do not view the children as young carers and the children have grown up in a caring role and do not know any different. There are a range of needs identified in young carer's family assessments however the most frequent areas include the health needs of the parent/guardian and the emotional needs of the child.

10. Objective 2: 9 young carer transitional assessments have been requested and completed. All young carers who have been transitioning to an adult carer role have been supported to make this as smooth as possible.
11. Objective 3: Enable young carers to access a range of community and universal services. Part of the work with young carers and their families is to support them to access activities and services of interest to them including young carer groups. Families are supported to complete application forms, transport is discussed and the workers often accompany a young carer to a group to start with.
12. Objective 4: Enable young carers to access a range of digital resources. Digital technology is regularly used in working with young carers e.g. the NSPCC website for keep safe work, the 'Think you Know' website about keeping children safe online and the 'Bullying UK' website. The 'Wellbeing Information Signposting Hub' (WISH) is also used to access information and activities for the family. Digital technology is being used to promote the service through the council website using different adverts in rotation and young carers are also involved in an innovative way of promoting the service by making animation clips from photographs and audio clips of young carers.
13. The council communication team advised on social media options. It was agreed that the safest form of social media contact was via a closed Facebook page with YCSS having administrative rights and membership being private. This was set up but then it was realised that as Facebook is only legally available for children of 13 or over, this method did not cover all of the young carer age group. The site was removed. After discussion with young carers, their preferred method of contact is through text messaging. This has proved to be very successful but will be reviewed on an annual basis. The team are currently exploring the use of WhatsApp as an additional way of communicating with young carers. Contact with young carers continues once all the actions have been carried out on the family plan and changes have been made. The case is closed but 'light' contact remains and further support is available if required
14. All 96 schools have been contacted via email explaining the new service and offering an age appropriate presentation. Primary schools have been very receptive to accepting the offer of a presentation to their pupils. These have been well received and children have identified themselves as young carers. Secondary schools have also engaged. There has been good engagement from Hereford Sixth Form College and a presentation was given there on Young Carers awareness day..
15. The average age of a young carer in Herefordshire is 14 which is in line with the national average age of a young carer. The youngest young carer registered is aged 5 years, this is an exception.

Community impact

16. In accordance with the adopted code of governance, Herefordshire Council achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions. Determining, the right mix of these is an important strategic choice to make sure

outcomes are achieved. The council needs robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure our outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best use of resources whilst still enabling efficient and effective operations and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review.

17. The council's corporate plan includes a commitment to enabling people to live safe, healthy and independent lives. Many vulnerable people are dependent upon carers in order to do so. The young carers' service seeks to support that contribution and help to ensure that young carers themselves are safe, healthy and enabled to fulfil their aspirations. It promotes identification of young carers by universal services and focuses on connecting young carers to their community and other sources of support.
18. Enabling young carers to sustain their caring role while balancing their own needs was a key theme during engagement with young carers. Many young carers stated that they felt constrained by their caring role and unable to access the same educational or social opportunities as their peers, demonstrating inequity. Measuring the impact of such early constraints is difficult but there is recognition that this impacts young carers in many ways, including emotionally and mentally. Herefordshire's health and wellbeing strategy identifies mental health and children as key priorities. Therefore, early identification of young carers and connecting them to sources of support are essential to promoting good physical, emotional and mental health. The majority of young carers have been identified with emotional needs and supported with this or to access specialist services.
19. The Carers strategy is aligned to both Herefordshire Council's Corporate Plan and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's Five Year Strategic Plan. Both plans emphasise the importance of active prevention by changing the way services are delivered and keeping people well within their communities. Seamless and innovative ways of working, and the use of improved technology and resources within Herefordshire, will help us continue our collaborative work to support young carers and keep them and their family's well.
20. The vision has been developed with carers as a means of articulating that carers are unique but with similar aspirations, although some are more specific to certain groups of carers. For example, young carers are likely to have different aspirations to older carers. The vision has informed six priorities:
 - Information, advice and signposting
 - Identifying carers
 - Carers' knowledge, skills and employment
 - Access to universal services
 - Networking and mutual support
 - Assessment and support – this also fits with the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Adults Wellbeing Plan

Services provided to the cared for person need to be focused on maintaining the independence of both themselves and their carer, whilst bolstering their strengths by:

- Facilitating access to the community

- Meeting any unmet needs to ensure the cared for person and the carer can have fulfilled lives within their communities where possible
- Enabling young carers to lead lives of their own and access opportunities available to other children

Equality duty

21. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
22. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
23. Age and disability are protected characteristics under the Equality Act, although being a carer is not. National research shows that young carers are 1.5 times more likely than their peers to have a special educational need or a disability, yet there is no strong evidence that young carers are more likely than their peers to come into contact with support agencies, despite government recognition that this needs to happen. Additionally, young carers are less likely than their peers to achieve their full potential in education. The new service for young carers will work with strategic partners to address this.
24. The Equality Impact Assessment has been reviewed and updated with the current service data. There is no new national data since the Census in 2011 see above.

Resource implications

25. The service has a budget of £65k per annum. This money pays for two full time Young Carer Support workers, management oversight and additional costs which include travel and subsistence, transporting young people to appointments and refreshments for young carers.
26. A Young Carers Grant scheme was developed this year to provide opportunities for young carers in Herefordshire to take part in groups and activities that provide a break from their caring responsibilities. £20,000 was made available and, with assistance of two young carers in evaluating the bids, grants were awarded to Carerstrust4all on 1 May 2019. The service has been working alongside the inhouse service to identify young carers across the county, particularly in more rural parts of the county to ensure support developed meets local need.

Legal implications

27. There are no specific legal implications with regard to the recommendations of the report. The statutory duties are outlined in the report.

Risk management

28. The council has a statutory duty regarding young carers written in the Children Act 1989, the Children Act 2004, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Young Carers (Needs Assessment) Regulations 2015 therefore not delivering the service will mean the council is noncompliant with its duty.
29. In summary, the council is obliged to do what it can to identify young carers and complete an assessment of their needs using a whole family approach. The assessment and subsequent support package is voluntary and would include supporting and enabling carers to balance their caring role with their own aspirations which is aligned to the council's wider strategic approach to prevention, promoting health and wellbeing and enabling those with health or social care needs to stay within their community for as long as possible.
30. There is a risk that referrals to the service will be higher than capacity this is being mitigated by other Early Help Family Support Workers carrying out this work as part of their role and responsibilities.

Consultee

Service users complete a service evaluation form at the end of the intervention and this helps support the development of the service.

Young carers are asked if their support worker explained to them why they were working with their family.

Response: 100% of young carers said their support worker explained to them why they were working with them and their family.

Young carers are asked how they would like us to get in touch in the future, the responses are below:

75% of young carers said they would like us to get in touch in the future by text.

25% of young carers said they would like us to get in touch in the future by email.

50% of young carers said they would like us to get in touch in the future by phone.

0% of young carers said they would like us to get in touch in the future by other (e.g. social media), letter or not at all.

Young carers are asked if their support worker understood their situation and are asked to rate this between 'good', 'okay' and 'not good'.

Response:

75% of young carers said that they felt the support worker did understand their situation and rated the support as 'good'.

25% of young carers rated the support as 'okay'.

Young carers are asked who else has helped them since YCSS has been working with their family.

Response: 75% of young carers ticked 'clubs'.

Young Carers are asked 'Is there anything else that YCSS could do better to help your family?'

The only comment received is 'No because you have been amazing'.

Appendices

Appendix A – Young Carers Service Specification

Appendix B – Poster offering Support to Young Carers

Appendix C – Young Carer case study

Appendix D – Young Carer case study

Background papers

None identified.

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

EHA = Early Help Assessment

YCSS = Young Carers Support Service

NSPCC = National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

WISH = Wellbeing Information Signposting Hub