

Early Help Young Carers Service

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr S. Elson - Children's Services

1. Aim

To provide an updated overview of

- Walsall Young Carers
- Activities undertaken in support of Walsall Young Carers within the Early Help service over the past 12 months.
- The ongoing co-production and collaboration commitment to improving the identification and support for young carers.

2. Recommendations

1. For the direction of travel for the Early Help Young Carers Service to be supported.
2. For progress and planned improvements to be supported.
3. For members to support the on-going awareness raising of young carers and the important role they play as part of the wider health and social care sector.

3. Report detail – know

3.1 Young Carers National Context

Who are young carers? definition: "Young Carers are children and young people under the age 18 who provide **regular** and **ongoing** care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally disabled or misuses substances".

The Children's and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 both significantly strengthened the rights for young carers and outlines the requirements of local authorities, along with the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995, there has been a clear and gradual shift in the focus for local authorities to deliver support to young carers and their families including carrying out a young carers needs assessment, taking a whole family approach and the need to improve the support for young carers transition to adulthood.

What do young carers do: Young carers carry out a range of practical home tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, overseeing medication, personal care such as helping with bathing, dressing and often look after younger siblings.

How many young carers are there: There are a number of varied estimates of how many young carers there are, the 2021 ONS census reported that there are around 120,000 young carers aged between 5 – 18 in England, however, The Children’s Society, Carers Trust alongside other charities campaigned to get young carers added to the school census, they were successful and for the first time in January 2023 schools were asked to record if a pupil was a young carer, and if so, who they were identified by i.e. school or parent. The results were released in June 2023 on the [Department for Education website](#), the data however shows that there was a significant under-reporting of the number of young carers in schools. Nationally 38,983 pupils were recorded, representing 0.5% of the pupil population¹ which equates to an average of 260 young carers per local authority. However according to the Carers Trust research by the University of Nottingham and the BBC suggest that around 10% of all pupils are providing high or very high levels of care.

What is the impact of being a young carer? : Being a young carer can have a big impact on the things that are important to growing up. It can, according to research

- Have an impact on their ability to attain and achieve with education or training, many young carers struggle to juggle their education and caring which can cause pressure and stress
- 27% of young carers aged 11-15 miss or have difficulties at school due to their caring responsibilities. (*Childrens society 2021*)
- The COVID-19 pandemic risks exacerbating the situation, stopping young carers from reaching their full potential.
- With the added complications of COVID-19, young carers are missing even more school than before and urgent support is needed if they are not to be left behind their peers.

Young carers overall development can be significantly and negatively impaired, irrespective of the type of care or frequency of care provided. Many young carers report feelings of isolation and are rarely ‘stress free’ from the pressures of home tasks, taking on adult ‘responsibilities’ both practically and emotionally and miss out on opportunities that other children have and take for granted such as seeing friends, playing, having hobbies, having opportunities to learn, caring can have a dramatic detrimental effect on the education and aspirations of young and young adult carers, which makes support services essential.

However, that said there is also some good things about being a young carer, again according to the Carers Trust survey findings said that young carers:

- Had a sense of accomplishment.
- Are more independent - a quote from a young carer “As I was a Young Carer, I had to grow up fast. I was left to do everything by myself, but as a result, I am more mature for it. I knew how to pay bills and run the house by the time I was 8 years old. I was doing the weekly shopping and cooking everyone’s meals (every night) by the age of 10, (I had been doing much of it since I was about 5 but full blown, just me on my own from about 10 years old).
- Can handle different situations, having the confidence to cope and take ‘charge’.

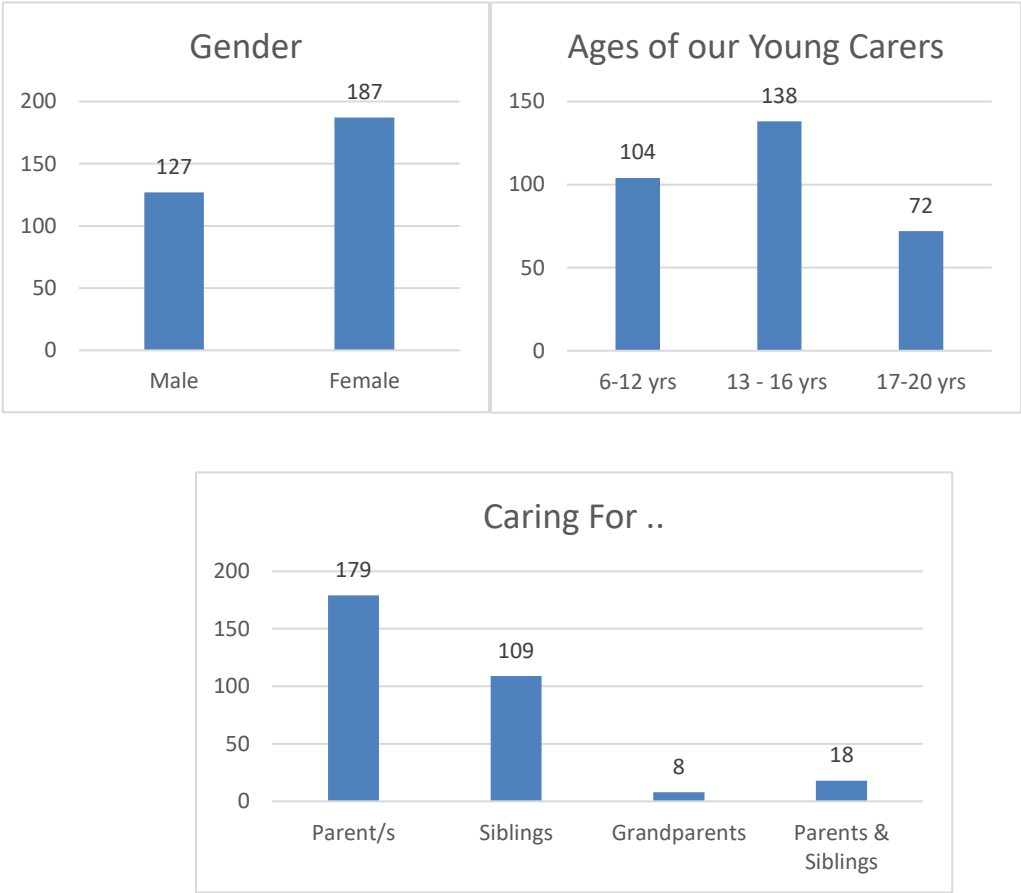
¹ [Young carers and the school census - Carers Trust](#)

3.2 Local Context

Walsall Young Carers: what do we know? It was disappointing that in the school census 2023 for Walsall, schools only reported 52 young carers which is 0.1 % of the pupil population (53,051 pupil population), significant work over the past 2 years has been completed to raise the knowledge, profile, and identification of young carers and as of 31st December 2023 there are 314 young carers on record. The identification of young carers continues to increase each year, it has significantly increased from 2019 when we were supporting only 62 young carers, this increase is due to the awareness campaigns and specific focus on young carers.

All 314 young carers have been assessed as being a young carer and work continues to complete regular reviews of the roles and responsibilities each young carer has. Reviews will be held at a minimum once a year, the reviews have commenced with our older carers.

The demographics of our 314 your carers are:



Following on from the review of Walsall young carers which commenced in 2021/22 and the refocus on young carers support service, in collaboration with young carers, their family and other key stakeholders the service has continued to develop and strengthen.

In December 2022 as part of the scrutiny overview a commitment was given to:

1. Look at delivering the Young Carers Group across various localities within the borough, acknowledging transport and accessibility of My Place can be a barrier for young people to attend the group.

We have met with the young carers, visited the Family Hubs within the localities to scope out the possibility of their use, agreed a trial in the North locality which is due

to start March 2024. However young carers have fed back that they like My Place and enjoy meeting together as a whole group. In response to this we have increased the number of children and young people we pick up to attend the young carers groups, held once a month for those aged 8-13 yrs and once a month for those aged 13 to 18 yrs. On average we have between 20 and 30 young carers attend each group with approximately 12 being collected by the Early Help team who are qualified to drive the youth minibus, whilst approximately 8 others are collected by staff on their way to group.

2. Connect to the wider Adult Carer strategy and include a section around young carers with agreed longer term action plans and themes to support young carers.

The membership of the Young Carers Multi-agency Action Group has expanded and more recently linked with Walsall Together to support further the development of services available; this has allowed an 'All Age Carers Steering Group' to be formed, including membership from Early Help, Adult Social Care, The Manor Hospital, WHG, Walsall Together, Alzheimer's Society, School Nurses. The group have developed, in collaboration an 'All Age Carers Strategy', this is in draft form with a meeting to finalise the strategy and agree governance sign off routes being held on the 19th January 2024. Once the strategy has been launched, planned April 2024, the associated action plan will be aligned.

3. Continue being part of and delivering the annual National Young Carers Action Day.

We have continued our involvement in the national campaign, in March 2023 the theme was 'Making Time for Young Carers', we had a week of activities including webinar events further raising the profile of young carers, held a celebration event recognising the valued role of our young carers, launched the Young Carers Training package for professionals and incorporated it into the core induction programme available on One Source as an eLearning course for internal staff and made it available on-line for external partners.



4. Strengthen the support available, linking further to the Carers Centre to enable wider range of support to be available, including support with homework, emotional health and wellbeing, exam revision and transition support.

We met with the Carers Centre, however due to funding pressures their service ceased last year. We therefore transitioned the young carers into the Early Help Young Carers Group and employed for a period their lead to support the transition, the lead did secure permanent employment within the Early Help Young Carers service however has since left due to family commitments.

5. Actively recruit young carers' volunteers as part of the wider Early Help volunteering service.

We have continued as an Early Help service to recruit volunteers who do support the delivery of the group and 121 interventions when required, a new recruitment

campaign is planned between now and the end of March 2024 where specific volunteers will be advertised.

In addition to the activity above the service has also over the past 12 months completed several improvements, including:

Raising the profile - continued to raise the profile and awareness of young carers, co-delivering further training with the Carers Society where a further 32 partners including police and health have been trained in identifying and understanding the referral process for potential young people who maybe caring for a family member. A separate bespoke schools training offer was also developed in partnership with The Children's Society and Joseph Leckie Academy, 37 schools attended the training. Both training programmes has resulted in continued increase in referrals being received, between April 2023 and December 2023, a total of 55 young carers assessment requests were received from external partners and 25 from internal staff.

Raised vulnerability concerns – in partnership with Access & Inclusion the vulnerability of young carers who are at risk of being placed on a reduced timetable or at risk of being suspended from education has been recognised which has led to the development of an associated risk assessment form that now includes a question around young carers, the Inclusion Manager advises the Young Carers team of any potential change to education which allows the team to support, at the earliest opportunity, and acts as a safety net should the school have failed to inform the team in the first instance.

Young Cares Champion – the team have continued to develop the champion role in schools, over the past 12 months 29 additional schools have joined the scheme, there are school champions now within each of the localities:

- 34 schools having a champion role in the East.
(8 secondary & 25 primary schools)
- 24 schools having a champion role in the North.
(2 secondary, 1 out of borough secondary & 21 primary)
- 2 schools having a champion role in the West.
(1 secondary & 1 primary)
- 16 schools having a champion role in Central/South.
(5 secondary & 11 Primary)

The school champion role has also been reviewed and together with The Children's Society and Joseph Leckie Academy the training has been refreshed.

Joseph Leckie Academy has embraced the school champion role and is now a peer mentor for other schools to share good practice, to ensure schools are inclusive and have a support mechanism in place. The work of Joseph Leckie has been recognised as good practice and The Childrens Society are looking at taking elements of the practice to share nationally. The practice includes:

- Access to a telephone during school break times; allowing young carers to call home to reduce unnecessary concern or anxiety and increase their concentration in class.
- Awareness of attendance and punctuality being affected by caring responsibilities e.g., taking younger siblings to and from school or when caring tasks during the night cause lateness.
- Someone to talk to who understands, who will listen and not judge (nominated staff member)

- Negotiated deadlines for homework (when needed)
- Access to homework club
- Arrangements for schoolwork to be sent home (when there is a genuine crisis).
- Ensure parents can access school for open evenings, etc. and if this is not possible, consider how links can be made with home.
- The school will encourage effective use of the PSHE curriculum, to explore the rights of children, the roles and responsibilities of young carers, and the challenges they face. This includes using PSHE lessons to promote positive images of disability, challenging stereotypes, and discrimination. We will promote discussion regarding caring and issues surrounding illness and disability, to promote a fuller understanding, acceptance, and respect.

Health partnership – this continues to strengthen with Walsall Manor specifically where the Patient Experience Manager has incorporated young carers awareness training as mandatory training for the wider workforce, the hospital now displays the young carers pull up banners and holds a monthly pop-up stand for young carers awareness.

Young Carers Team - Early Help have secured a small team who have:

- In collaboration with young carers, rewritten the young carers assessment, this is currently waiting to be uploaded onto the mosaic system.
- Started to review each young person's caring roles and responsibilities, refreshing the individual families support plans or working with adults social care supporting transition into adult carers as appropriate.
- Trained 3 young carers in the ASDAN Peer Mentoring course which is an accredited course providing recognition for those who have successfully evidenced their skills in the ability to mentor younger children (young carers).
- Trained 3 Young Carers with children's society to be 'mental health champions' within group sessions whereby they organise activities and create safe spaces for young people in the group. This focusing on the promotion of healthy wellbeing.
- Introduced informal 'coffee morning' for parents of our young carers to share concerns, seek advice, guidance, and additional support.

Young Carers Support Group – the team continues to develop the support offer at the Young Carers Group where again in collaboration with the young carers themed support, advice, guidance, and training is delivered. The National Youth Agency Youth work themes have been used within the group to deliver informal education and recreational activities, the delivery of the group is now underpinned by the 4 corner stones of youth work young person's empowerment, participation, equality & education.



Over the past 12 months the following activities have been delivered as part of the group work:

Youth work theme: Health and wellbeing

- Mindfulness colouring activity.
- Community sexual health nurse talked about safe sexual health and how to access services.
- Healthy eating and food preparation in all youth club sessions.
- Outdoor activities including mountain bikes, team games etc.
- Mental health activities and discussions.
- Oral hygiene awareness.
- Gardening club.

Youth work theme: Economic and financial activities

- Future careers Food hygiene training
- How to open a bank account
- CV writing
- Homework and revision support

Youth work theme: Arts culture and heritage

- Weekly arts and crafts.
- Black History Month awareness and celebration.
- International Women's Day celebration.
- Diwali celebration.

Young Carers Festival 2023 - for the first time the team were able to take 10 of our older cares to the Young Carers Festival in August, an opportunity for them to have fun away from their caring roles and responsibilities, enjoy new activities and experience a 'festival environment'.

Our young carers

- Went camping for the first time.
- Stayed away from their family for the first time.
- Took part in new activities including rock climbing.
- Made new friends from across the country.

A great time was had by all, each found the experience a positive and energising the feedback from them included:

*"Thank you so much. We all appreciate you giving us this opportunity. It's been the best time I've had in ages & I am happy I got to make new friends. You & the young carers staff really inspire me for what I want to do in my future so Thank You so much".
Ellie*

*"Thank you to each & every one of you behind the scenes a YCT. I had a lot of fun & really needed the break. I didn't actually realise how much I needed it until I was at the festival. Not only did I get to enjoy lots of new things & meet new people which was great, but I also felt understood. I am in such a better headspace so thank you".
Dan*

"I really enjoyed the festival. It made me think a lot about my caring role, even though I was chilled out. Speaking to others made me realise what I do is important but that I matter too. I got to speak about how I feel, especially at school & got to talk about ways

to get teachers to understand our lives at home which I don't always think they do. It has made me hopeful that one day schools will get it" Lily.

Family Winter Fate 2023 – In partnership with Turning Point, the Young Carers team held a family winter fete and outdoor Christmas market. Our young carers asked for an activity where they could spend time with their family, to have somewhere inclusive for all their family members to take part in activities and be together. A total of 138 individuals attended the fete, having the opportunity to visit Santa, meet internal and external partners including school nursing & DWP, try delicious food including a Christmas dinner, take part in arts and crafts, meet the animal man and his friends.

Plans for 2024/25 – In consultation with young carers and partners we have so far agreed to:

- Continue the Young Carers Champion Roles and start to widen the partnership to include CAMHS, Youth Justice, GP's.
- Further strengthen links with Adult Social Care to consider the transition support for our older cohort of carers, specifically connected to the reviews that have commenced.
- Deliver courses that support the older carers with employment skills.
- Scoping out the potential of 'play therapy' – in partnership with the Disabled Young Persons Team we are looking to introduce play therapy to our younger carers, this will help to provide positive mental health, express their feelings and concerns and to develop strategies to cope with everyday life.
- Be part of the on-going National Carers Day, the focus this is 'fair futures for young carers'.
- Link further into the national support group who meet a several times a year to share good practice, provide peer support and support practice development.
- Complete all carers reviews and support plans.
- Include in the Supporting Families model and payment by result claims, further evidencing intervention and impact.
- Understand and work with schools to ensure the school census figures reflect young carers identified in Walsall Council.
- Look to have at least 30% of schools achieving the 'School Young Carers Aware Award'.
- Identify KPI's for this financial year.
- Refresh the young carers website.

4. Financial information

There is a budget of £50k within the Early Help Young Carers service, this includes a 1 FTE permanent Early Help Practitioner and a budget of £10,000 per year to deliver a programme of support and consultation for your carers. An investment has been agreed to secure an additional 1FTE Support Worker from April 2024 and the Early Help service are looking to reprofile the staffing structure to include a Senior Practitioner to oversee Young Carers, along with providing specialist support around SEND to the Holiday Activity Food project (HAF) and the School Transition pilot.

Transport costs remain a concern, the service is looking at possible minibus driver training for staff to ensure attendance continues to increase at the group work provision.

5. Reducing Inequalities

Effective and timely support to young carers is essential to not just avoid poor outcomes but to have ambition and thrive, work continues to support schools and health services in identifying, as early as possible a child or young person who maybe carrying our caring roles and responsibilities, to reduce a range of issues including poor educational attainment, isolation and bullying, further work is planned with adult social care to consider the wider impact on child and young people when an adult carers assessment is made along with a focus on transition support from being a young care into becoming an adult carer.

6. Decide

The All-Age Carers Steering Group has set out key priorities for 2024/25, as detailed in the report based on the needs of and feedback from our young carers. Whilst there is no decision for scrutiny to be made around the priorities, scrutiny is asked to support the direction of travel and endorse the achievements made so far.

7. Respond

The Early Help Young Carers Service and key partners are responding to the needs of young carers, the Early Help Steering group oversees the delivery of the action plan and will oversee the young carers specific actions within the carers strategy due to be launched April 2024. The Early Help Steering Group will have a standard agenda item for update reports to be taken twice a year with an annual review planned September of each year. Achieving and evidencing the outcomes secured for young carers continues to be a priority along with further identifying children and young people who carry out caring roles and responsibilities and who should be supported as a young carer.

8. Review

A review report to scrutiny could be scheduled if further assurances are required.

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