



All-Party
Parliamentary
Group for
Young Carers &
Young Adult
Carers

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

Wednesday 19th April 2023, 4:30pm to 5:30pm, Zoom

Parliamentarians present:

Barbara Keeley MP
Baroness Lister of Burtsett
Duncan Baker MP
Fleur Anderson MP
Liz Twist MP
Lord Young of Cookham
Nickie Aiken MP
Paul Blomfield MP - Chair

Apologies from parliamentarians:

Baroness Pitkeathley
Ed Davey MP
Gill Furniss MP
Marion Fellows MP

Other speakers:

Andy McGowan - Policy and Practice Manager (Young Carers and Young Adult Carers), Carers Trust
Axel – Young Adult Carer with Caring Together
Belinda Jones – Carer Awareness and Voice Manager, Caring Together
Luella Goad – Service Manager, Include Project, The Children's Society
Nicola Aylward – Head of Learning for Young People, Learning and Work Institute

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Baroness Pitkeathley, Ed Davey MP, Gill Furniss MP and Marion Fellows MP

2. Chair's update

- 2.1** Paul Blomfield provided an update. Our last meeting welcomed Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza to hear about issues
- 2.2** There has been positive follow up with the Children's Commissioner after the meeting.
- 2.3** Carers Trust published their latest report, based on the experiences of over 1100 young carers and young adult carers. Highlighted impact on education, wellbeing and life opportunities.
- 2.4** The 2021 England and Wales Census results have been published which showed a decrease, but an increase in the numbers of children caring for more than 20 hours a week. Carers Trust analysis has highlighted how there are over 15,000 children caring for over 50 hours a week.

- 2.5** For Young Carers Action Day we had a parliamentary event attended by ministers and shadow ministers. The chair and vice-chair (Duncan Baker) joined young carers to present an open letter to 10 Downing Street.
- 2.6** In Carers Week in June, the APPG will be launching its first inquiry – looking into the impact on life opportunities. This will be led by APPG vice-chair, Duncan Baker. The APPG will also be chasing colleagues to sign the Young Carers pledge if they haven't already.

3. Carers Action Plan

- 3.1** The APPG for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers has been asked by the APPG for Carers to feed into their review of the Carers Action Plan, specifically in relation to young carers and young adult carers
- 3.2** Andy McGowan (Carers Trust) provided an introduction to the Carers Action Plan and summarised updates received by Government departments, NHS England and other organisations.
- 3.3** There was a survey to gather feedback from other stakeholders in relation to what the Carers Action Plan did/did not achieve and what might be needed by way of any future national Carers Strategy.
- 3.4** Luella Goad (The Children's Society) provided an overview of their research around transitions assessments which they were commissioned to do by Department of Health and Social Care.
- 3.5** Only 13% of young adult carers confirmed that they had received a Transitions Assessment, 51% said they had not, and the remaining 36% were not sure.
- 3.6** The feedback from local authorities and young carers services was that there was more of a focus on Young Carers Needs Assessments, but less on Transitions Assessments and in some areas, Transitions Assessments are not commissioned and local authorities were not aware of their duties to provide them.
- 3.7** Paul Blomfield highlighted the striking responses from young adult carers, but also those responsible for delivering transitions assessments.
- 3.8** Nicola Aylward (Learning and Work Institute (LWI)) presented about work they completed with the Department of Work and Pensions around young adult carers' eligibility to claim Carers Allowance.
- 3.9** Between 2015 and 2018, LWI convened a National Policy Forum for young adult carers and stakeholders (including DfE, DHSC) as a platform to hear from young adult carers, particularly in relation to education and training. This was where the issue of young adult carers and carers allowance came up.
- 3.10** Many young adult carers and their support workers reported they found the benefits system difficult to understand and so young adult carers were dropping out of education because of the rules around studying (the 21 hour rule which prevents carers claiming carers allowance if studying for more than 21 hours).
- 3.11** In a number of cases, young adult carers through they were not eligible, when in fact they were.

- 3.12** Learning and Work Institute worked with DWP to create a set of materials (leaflets and posters) aimed at young adult carers, colleges and carer services to help them understand around the eligibility rules.
- 3.13** Nicola explained that feedback was that the work did help to demystify the rules around Carers Allowance and reduced the number of queries around eligibility. However, whilst the materials did help clarify the position, the materials didn't help young adult carers studying for more than 21 hours a week because they are still ineligible. This is an increasing issue, particularly with the introduction of T-Levels, the vocational alternative to A Levels, which involve more than 21 hours of study a week. So Young Adult Carers completing T Levels are not able to claim Carers Allowance
- 3.14** Learning and Work Institute and Carers Trust are currently doing work on this to try and get the 21 hour rule removed. They strongly believe that young adult carers should be exempt from the 21 hour rule, and shouldn't be forced to choose between studying or claiming Carers Allowance. A paper will be published in the coming weeks.
- 3.15** Paul Blomfield thanked Nicola for the update and highlighted that the line between 'part-time' and 'full-time' study is increasingly blurred in terms of how people juggle their various commitments, and so the recommendation is a sensible one.
- 3.16** Paul Blomfield then introduced Belinda Jones, Awareness and Voice Team Manager from Caring Together and Axel Medcalf, a Young Adult Carer to talk about their work on identifying young carers in health settings and being involved with the NHS England Health Champions programme.
- 3.17** Norfolk Young Carers Forum is a project Caring Together runs to support young carers to have their voices heard locally and nationally. Members of the Forum have been part of the NHS England Health Champions programme every year. Young carers from Norfolk were able to help produce the Top Tips for GPs which was useful – the young people were able to produce top tips leaflets which could be sent out to all GPs locally and has helped to raise awareness.
- 3.18** Caring Together do a lot of work with health settings and so have been able to use the "Out of the Woods" animation which was put together by the Health Champions. They have been able to use this a lot with health professionals and in assemblies in schools – it has helped young carers to self-identify. Young carers have also been able to take part in roundtables with decision-makers.
- 3.19** Axel (young adult carer involved in the NHS Health Champions programme) shared their experience of being involved. It has given them and other young carers the chance to meet other young carers and share experiences about health – it was one of the most incredible experiences they have been part of. Being part of the programme gave me the motivation to go on to university and do well and I would recommend it to anyone.
- 3.20** Paul Blomfield thanked Axel for their really helpful contribution and opened the floor for questions and comments. He invited Barbara Keeley into the conversation because he felt the work her office did looking at the Carers Action Plan and the previous strategy was really helpful.

- 3.21** Barbara Keeley reflected that it's really important to consider that the Carers Action Plan was supposed to build on the National Carers Strategy, but she feels there wasn't any building. There was a period of time when the strategy wasn't updated and the action plan came along in its place. The level of commitment in the action plan is much lower junior ministerial level. A member of her office did a comparison of the two documents and we have to bear that in mind. It's really difficult because there is a big gap between a national strategy and an action plan. The big thing missing in the action plan is financial commitment to enable work to be done. Some of the aspects around information and helplines, and the aspects for young carers around support and identification – without national commitments, it's really difficult. Some of what has been achieved has been useful, but the feedback around transitions assessments is what you get into when you don't have a national strategy – there has not been follow-through on the duty. But it is useful doing these comparisons. The difficulty is because the Carers Strategy has not been kept up to date, it is a question of how we get back to a national strategy with higher level commitment from Government. Some of the low-level pieces of work are good to do, but they are leaving big gaps for young carers, and we should have more ambition for them.
- 3.22** Paul Blomfield thanked Barbara for her helpful comments and invited colleagues to review Barbara's piece of work.
- 3.23** Sophie Parker (Family Action – Leeds Young Carer Support Service) asked in relation to the school census – they are doing a lot of work with schools in Leeds. They attended a meeting with headteachers yesterday and not one headteacher was aware that young carers were included, even though they have submitted their return. When will data be available nationally about the figures – both locally and nationally?
- 3.24** Andy McGowan (Carers Trust) explained that the data will be available by August – we have also had a commitment from DfE and Children's Commissioner to hold a roundtable in September to bring together representatives from multi-academy trusts and headteacher's associations. There are concerns about some schools not being aware, or knowing too late about the change.
- 3.25** Helen Leadbitter (Young Carers Initiative) asked about how to ensure about needs assessments and transitions assessments in the Carers Strategy – what we are seeing nationally is that it's very piecemeal as to how assessments are being undertaken. Locally have also been seeing that assessments have been around eligibility to access the commissioned service, rather than the needs assessment. I feel there needs to be more guidance around assessments – there was some after the passing of the legislation around Needs Assessments, but not transitions assessments.
- 3.26** Paul Blomfield MP – the absence of guidance does appear to be a significant factor in the failure of assessments to be completed as they should.

- 3.27** Mandy Massey (Spurgeons) – Spurgeons manage a number of services. What we found about the school census is that schools are calling us to ask who are identified in their school, which is the wrong way around – they are putting the emphasis onto us, rather than them having that knowledge and awareness. We always inform the school once a young carer is identified – it’s back to front and needs addressing. A lot of emphasis is put on young carer services to keep raising awareness in schools – it is very time-consuming and can take away from delivery with young carer services. Recently in the last few years, local authorities have asked for young carer services to use early help assessments as part of young carer needs assessments – but some are not fit for purpose for young carers. So we are finding we are having to use MACA/PANOC around caring role/impact and Outcomes Star to identify an action plan.
- 3.28** Barbara Keeley suggested it would be good to look at data from areas where schools have been identifying young carers, to see what number to expect. It would be good to have case studies to give an indication. I know previously, I had school headteachers trying to claim they
- 3.29** Paul Blomfield felt that would be a really good idea to find schools who are exemplars and work out the numbers we might be expecting.
- 3.30** Andy McGowan – Through the Young Carers in Schools programme, Carers Trust and The Children’s Society could find out the numbers in some of those schools. Caring Together also did some work with local schools in their area who were engaging in their local award, and on average amongst the primary schools, there was 25 young carers per school. There are also schools in the Bournemouth area – across 2 academies, they had 92 young carers between them – when they started work to raise awareness around young carers they had 17.
- 3.31** Paul Blomfield thanked the speakers and everyone for their contributions – commenting that it has been a really helpful part of the process – if people have further reflections, please e-mail appg@carers.org over the next week so we can pull together a set of recommendations to take to the APPG for Carers.
- 3.32** The next APPG event will be Wednesday 7th June, and will be led by Duncan Baker MP as it will be a virtual launch of the inquiry into life opportunities for young carers and young adult carers.

Meeting closed at 17:32