



BEING A YOUNG CARER IS NOT A CHOICE

IT'S JUST WHAT WE DO

**SUMMARY: THE VOICES AND EXPERIENCES OF
YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS FROM
ACROSS WALES.**

March 2023

**CARERS
TRUST**
WALES

INTRODUCTION

In early 2023, Carers Trust surveyed more than 1,100 young carers and young adult carers across the UK. Supplementing the UK voices from the survey, Carers Trust Wales worked with its Youth Council to gain insight into their experiences as young carers and young adult carers in Wales to shape our recommendations, particularly in relation to their mental health and wellbeing and the support they receive in schools.



FOREWORD



My name is Ollie. I'm 17 and a member of the Welsh Youth Parliament who represents Carers Trust Wales, but more importantly, I am a young carer.

I care for my younger brother, who has many complex additional needs. I've cared for him since I was five. I wouldn't say that my caring role impacts my life; I would say that it is my life.

However, caring does put a strain on other parts of my life. School has always been hard for me, teachers haven't always understood my experience and my caring role has made it very hard for me to stay up-to-date with coursework or to focus in lessons.

But there is a lot to be positive about in the upcoming year. I'm hopeful this will be the year young carers can have better access to mental health support and services. Over the years I have represented Carers Trust, we have implemented many positive changes for all of us, and I only see that continuing. So bring on 2023 because Carers Trust is ready!

Ollie Mallin

Welsh Youth Parliament Member and young carer

“I wouldn't say that my caring role impacts my life; I would say that it is my life.”

SURVEY FINDINGS

Young carers and young adult carers told us their top priorities for support are:

1. MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT.
2. SUPPORT WITH THEIR MONEY AND FINANCES.
3. MORE SUPPORT WITH THEIR EDUCATION.
4. SUPPORT TO HAVE A BREAK FROM CARING.

INTENSITY OF CARING



56%

OF YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS SAID THE TIME THEY SPEND CARING HAS INCREASED IN THE LAST YEAR



47%

NOW CARE FOR MORE PEOPLE THAN THEY USED TO

COST-OF-LIVING



56%

SAID THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS IS EITHER 'ALWAYS' OR 'USUALLY' AFFECTING THEM AND THEIR FAMILY



32%

'ALWAYS' OR 'USUALLY' FACE ADDITIONAL COSTS BECAUSE THEY ARE AN UNPAID CARER

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



44%

'ALWAYS' OR 'USUALLY' FEEL STRESSED BECAUSE OF BEING A YOUNG CARER OR YOUNG ADULT CARER



40%

OF YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS SAID CARING 'ALWAYS' OR 'USUALLY' AFFECTS HOW MUCH TIME THEY CAN SPEND WITH THEIR FRIENDS

SUPPORT IN SCHOOL, COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY



40%

EITHER 'NEVER' OR 'NOT OFTEN' GET HELP IN EDUCATION TO HELP BALANCE CARING AND SCHOOL, COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY WORK



33%

DID NOT FEEL THAT THEIR NEEDS WERE UNDERSTOOD EITHER 'AT ALL' OR 'VERY WELL' BY THEIR SCHOOL, COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY



RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the survey findings, informed by our Youth Council in Wales, Carers Trust calls on Welsh Government to:

1. Refresh the Welsh Government Strategy for Unpaid Carers Delivery Plan with updated actions coproduced with young carers and young adult carers.

- While the current Delivery Plan outlines specific actions relating to young carers and young adult carers under priorities on identification and education, there is no direct reference to how priorities on accessing assistance or taking a break will be delivered in the specific context of young and young adult carers, who will have different needs from adult carers.
- Working in partnership with young carers and young adult carers to develop delivery actions will ensure the Delivery Plan is fit to meet the needs of young carers and young adult carers in Wales.

2. Ensure every local authority in Wales has both a dedicated young carer and young adult carer offer that enables young carers and young adult carers to realise their statutory rights under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014.

- Nationally monitor the statutory Carers Needs Assessments undertaken with young carers and young adult carers as well as the number of young carers receiving a Support Plan.
- Ensure preventative, universal support is available in all local authority areas and tailored to meet the needs of young carers and young adult carers.

3. Put young carers' and young adult carers' mental health and wellbeing at the fore of planning locally and nationally by ensuring timely referrals to wellbeing services, such as CAMHS, from all statutory services including schools and the NHS.

- In the development of the successor strategy to *Together for Mental Health*, the referral pathway between schools, health and other statutory services in contact with children and young people should be outlined clearly.
- In line with the Welsh Youth Parliament's 'Young minds matter', places of learning should be resourced to provide the mental health support for all children and young people and create more safe spaces for young people to talk to each other and professionals.
- In line with the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee's 'Connecting the dots', the Welsh Government's new mental health strategy should consider young carers and young adult carers as among one of the demographic groups affected by the widening inequalities leading to poorer mental health.



4. Ensure that all schools, colleges and universities appoint a Young Carers Lead with strategic responsibility and oversight for identifying and implementing appropriate support for young carers and student carers.

- Young carers tell us they need a dedicated teacher available for them to speak to about their caring and how it affects them.
- The Young Carers Lead should be responsible for ensuring that all teachers and lecturers are young carer aware through training and support. Young carers tell us that greater awareness of young carers and the YCID card scheme would enable the YCID card to have greater impact and uptake.



5. Introduce a fully resourced right to short breaks for unpaid carers, expanding on the foundations laid by the new Short Breaks Fund, with dedicated funding to ensure age-appropriate choices of breaks for young carers and young adult carers.

- The new Short Breaks Scheme in Wales has the potential to be truly transformative if it can reach all unpaid carers, including young carers and young adult carers, with preventative, flexible support that sustains them in their caring relationship.
- Introducing a 'right' to a break is a precedent outlined in the Scottish Government's National Care Service Bill. Building on this precedent, in line with the vision of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, would help embed the vision of the Short Breaks Scheme as a universal service with well-being, prevention and early intervention at its heart. This could be an example of the transformation needed towards future sustainability within our health and care system.



6. Develop specific employability programmes and apprenticeship pathways to support young adult carers as part of the Young Persons Guarantee, designed in partnership with specialist local carer organisations.

- The Young Person's Guarantee must offer the support and flexibility young adult carers need to take the first steps in their careers.
- Where appropriate, schemes under the Young Person's Guarantee should make reference to young carers as a group that would benefit from additional support to overcome barriers to access.

7. Improve access to financial support for young carers and young adult carers, including those in education.

- Make representations to UK Government regarding the reform of Carer's Allowance, by increasing the rate and extending access to unpaid carers in full-time education.
- Act on calls to increase the rate of Education Maintenance Allowance, with flexibility to account for the absences many young carers may need to accommodate their caring responsibilities.



WHO ARE YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS?

A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, mental health problems or an addiction, cannot cope without their support. Older young carers, aged 16-25, are also known as young adult carers and they may have different support needs to younger carers.

Young carers and young adult carers undertake a range of tasks to support family members or friends. This might include shopping, cooking, cleaning, managing medicines or money, providing personal care, helping people get out the house, keeping an eye on someone or providing emotional support.

YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS IN WALES

Census 2021 identified 22,550 young carers and young adult carers under 25 in Wales. While the number of young carers and young adult carers in Wales has decreased since the 2011 Census, the intensity of the care provided by children and young people has increased, with 31% of young carers and 49% of young adult carers providing more than 20 hours per week of care.

Following the trend seen in previous years, Wales continues to have a higher proportion of the population who identify as young carers or young adult carers than in England. Again, as in previous years, young carers and young adult carers are more likely to live in more deprived areas than their non-caring counterparts and young carers and young adult carers in Wales experience greater levels of deprivation than their peers in England.

ABOUT CARERS TRUST

Carers Trust works to transform the lives of unpaid carers. It partners with its UK-wide network of local carer organisations to provide funding and support, deliver innovative and evidence-based programmes, raise awareness, and influence policy. Carers Trust's vision is that unpaid carers are heard and valued, with access to support, advice and resources to enable them to live fulfilled lives.

Carers Trust hosts the Young Carers Alliance, a network of over 150 organisations and 250 individuals committed to improving identification and support for young carers and young adult carers.

In Wales, our Network Partners delivering support to young carers and young adult carers are:

- Bridgend Carers Centre
- Carers Trust Crossroads North Wales
- Carers Trust Crossroads West Wales
- Credu
- NEWCIS
- Swansea Carers Centre
- The Honeypot
- WCD – young carers in Wrexham, Conwy and Denbighshire



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