

## **All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers**

### **Response to the APPG for Carers consultation on developing a future cross-Government National Carers Strategy.**

As an APPG, we fully support the APPG for Carers call for a new cross-Government National Carers Strategy. Last November, we published the report from our [landmark inquiry into the life opportunities for young carers and young adult carers](#). Our inquiry highlighted the urgent need for cross-government action to improve the lives of young carers and young adult carers. Our primary recommendation from that report was for a cross-government National Carers Strategy with a dedicated section and resourced action plan relating to young and young adult carers.

### **Principles underpinning any future cross-Government National Carers Strategy**

In developing any future national Carers Strategy, we as an APPG:

- **Strongly agree** that any future cross-Government National Carers Strategy should be led by the Prime Minister at the heart of Government.
- **Strongly agree** that any future cross-Government National Carers Strategy be co-designed with unpaid carers and organisations who advocate on their behalf. In relation to carer involvement, we would want the process to capture the views and experiences of a diverse range of carers, and we would particularly want to ensure that there are a range of ways for young carers and young adult carers to feed into the process. The process for their involvement should take into account their commitments such as education and should also ensure that there is support for them to participate in a meaningful way.
- **Strongly agree** that a future cross-Government National Carers Strategy should be supported by dedicated and ring-fenced Government investment to deliver any agreed outcomes for unpaid carers. There should be a clear action plan with measurable time-bound deliverables.
- Believe that a **longer term (5 to 10 years)** strategy is required if we are to address some of the system-wide challenges being faced in relation to identification and support for carers. We would however want any action plan to contain short and medium-term deliverables contained within it and would want regular reviews against progress.
- Would want a mechanism for progress relating to the national Carers Strategy and its impact to be reviewed on a cross-party basis.

## **Key themes**

We believe that the key themes outlined in the consultation document are all important ones for consideration, but in addition we believe that:

- There needs to be a clear focus not just on identification, but on early identification. Our inquiry heard how on average, young carers are caring for three years before they are identified for support, and some were caring for over 10 years without any help. Young carers are most commonly identified by schools and children's social care. We believe that much more needs to be done to improve identification of young carers within health settings such as hospitals, primary care and adult mental health services, and also adult social care.
- Any work relating to carers and employment should not just focus on supporting them whilst in employment, but also supporting carers into employment. This is a particular challenge for young adult carers. Evidence to our inquiry found that young carers providing over 35 hours a week of care were 46% less likely to be in work than their peers.
- There should also be a focus on access to support. This would include access to assessments, but also areas such access to local carer support or support from other services such as mental health services. Our inquiry heard how in some parts of the country, young carers under the age of eight and sibling young carers are not classed by their local authority as young carers and so cannot access any support. In other areas, young adult carers were not able to access transitions assessments or any suitable support for young adult carers. There were also young carers waiting over six months on a waiting list for Young Carers Needs Assessments.

## **Outcomes**

We believe that the outcomes outlined in the consultation document are appropriate but would like to add the following points for consideration:

- In relation to outcomes for young carers and young adult carers, we strongly believe that the Strategy should focus on the outcomes outlined in the [Young Carers Covenant](#) published on Young Carers Action Day (13<sup>th</sup> March 2024). This Covenant sets out a series of outcomes which young carers and young adult carers have identified as being key to improve their lives. The Young Carers Covenant provides a framework for any future activity relating to young carers and young adult carers and ensuring they have the same life opportunities as their peers.

- We would also want there to be a focus on reducing the number of young carers who are providing inappropriate care or excessive levels of care. As an APPG, we are extremely concerned by the fact that there are almost 15,000 children caring for over 50 hours a week, including over 3000 children aged just 5 to 9. The number of children aged 5 to 9 who care for over 50 hours a week has gone up from 2011 to 2021.
- In relation to identification of young carers and young adult carers, it is important that there is an emphasis placed on the role that professionals play in identifying potential young carers, particularly those who are the youngest. It should not be left to children to identify themselves as young carers.
- Young carers regularly tell us as an APPG that one of their top priorities is improved recognition and support within education. We would therefore want one of the outcomes of the strategy to be improved identification and support for young carers in education, with a designated young carers lead in every school and college.
- We would also like there to be a focus on improved joined-up working to improve identification and support, and improved use of whole-family approaches, particularly for young carers and young adult carers. There needs to be improved working between children's and adult services, as well as with health, education and the voluntary sector.

### **For further information**

If you would like further information relating to anything in this submission, or have any questions, please contact our secretariat, Carers Trust, via their Policy and Practice Manager, Andy McGowan – [amcgowan@carers.org](mailto:amcgowan@carers.org).