

Wednesday 15 March 2023

Dear First Minister,

We, the under-signed are writing to you on Young Carers Action Day to urge you to ensure that the needs of children and young people who are caring unpaid for friends and family members are being considered and responded to across Scottish Government.

We applauded the passing of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, which brought historic new legal rights for young carers. These rights were designed to ensure that caring responsibilities were not negatively impacting the health, wellbeing and life opportunities of children across the country.

Yet, research by Carers Trust released to mark Young Carers Action Day 2023 (*'Being a Young Carer is not a choice; it's just what we do'*) based on the voices and experiences of over 1,000 young carers and young adult carers across the UK, including 181 living in Scotland – highlights the urgent need for greater identification, recognition and support. Shockingly in Scotland:

- More than half (54%) of young carers and young adult carers said the time they spend caring has increased in the past year.
- 66% said the cost-of-living crisis is affecting them and their family.
- 49% either 'never' or 'not often' get help in education to help balance caring and school, college or university work.
- 50% of young adult carers at the start of their careers said they 'always' or 'usually' struggle to balance caring with paid work.

Children and young people also tell us they urgently need more help with their mental health, with 52% 'always' or 'usually' feel stressed because of being a young carer or young adult carer, and over half (51%) 'always' or 'usually' feel worried about their future. More than anything, young carers and young adult carers tell us they need a break from their caring role.

These children and young people need urgent action now. Specifically, we ask Scottish Government to:

1. Extend eligibility of Carer Support Payment (currently Carer's Allowance) to unpaid carers in full-time education.
2. Amend Young Carer Grant regulations to allow for multiple young people being eligible for the grant for providing care for the same cared-for person.
3. Extend eligibility of Job Start Payment to include Carer Support Payment (currently Carer's Allowance) as a qualifying benefit.
4. Increase the level of funding for young carer and young adult carer support and ring-fence it.

5. Urgently introduce a Right to a Break from Caring, with age appropriate option for young carers and young adult carers to ensure this right is implemented and upheld.
6. Commit to fund the development and roll out of a National Schools Award to help primary and secondary schools develop proactive policies, practice and undertake training to support young carers and young adult carers better.
7. Provide funding to re-establish the Going Further/Going Higher for Student Carers Recognition Award to help colleges and universities to develop their policies, practices and training to support student carers.
8. Develop specific employability and apprenticeship programmes to support young adult carers who experience additional disadvantage in accessing employment.

66% of young carers and young adult carer respondents in Scotland feel that politicians do not understand their needs; so, this Young Carers Action Day, we ask you to show young carers and young adult carers that you are listening.

We would love you to meet with a group of young carers and young adult carers, so you can hear from them directly. This can be arranged through Carers Trust Scotland by e-mailing scotland@carers.org

Yours faithfully,