

**CARERS
TRUST**

SCOTLAND



**ENGAGING WITH YOUNG
CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT
CARERS DURING THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC IN SCOTLAND**

INTRODUCTION

From the outset in 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on people of all ages across Scotland. However, young people and young and young adult carers in particular have faced unique challenges. Carers Trust Scotland has been working with them to understand their barriers and challenges throughout the pandemic.

This report shares that work, and how Carers Trust Scotland has engaged with the young and young adult carers we have worked with. It will be of particular use to young carer and young adult carer services and other organisations across the UK seeking a greater understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this specific group of young people and how to adapt services to meet their needs.

In July 2020, Carers Trust Scotland's 2020 Vision report detailed the impact of the pandemic on young and young adult carers. Young people shared that their caring responsibilities had intensified (Carers Trust Scotland, 2020):



59% of young carers and 67% of young adult carers were caring for more hours a week than before the pandemic.



Young and young adult carers' mental health has suffered, as they feel under increased stress and pressure.



58% of young carers felt that their education is suffering however, the return to school was difficult for some young carers.

“ I feel unsafe at school. I don't want to get it from someone and put my dad at risk. ”
Young carer (Scottish Youth Parliament, 2020)

“ Anxiety has dramatically increased and find myself crying at night and don't know why. ”
Young carer (Carers Trust Scotland, 2020)

The pandemic has created unique and specific challenges for young people with caring responsibilities, often interacting with the pre-existing barriers that young carers were already facing. Responding to these challenges, Carers Trust Scotland's Youth Engagement Officer worked with young and young adult carers on a number of projects, collecting and sharing young people's experience of the pandemic and providing creative outlets and opportunities for fun.

About Carers Trust Scotland

Carers Trust Scotland is part of Carers Trust, a major charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

With locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

OUR WORK WITH YOUNG AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS

BEST OF THE FEST

The Scottish Young Carers Festival is an outdoor event which takes place every year. It provides an opportunity for young carers to have fun as well as the chance to meet decision makers and tell them about their experiences of being a young carer. Young carers have the opportunity to apply to become Media Ambassadors during the Festival, learning the skills needed to interview and film their peers.

In 2020, the Scottish Young Carers Festival moved online as Best of the Fest! offering a range of activities for young carers via Zoom. Mirroring the fun and buzz of the annual Festival, yoga, magic shows, cool creatures, circus tutorials and live music were on offer for young carers to enjoy.

Our **Best of the Fest webpage** includes videos, tutorials, activities and information from providers for anyone unable to attend the live workshops.

Young carers took part from Angus, Dundee, East Lothian, East Renfrewshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk and Clackmannanshire, Fife, Highland, North Argyll, North Ayrshire, Perth and Kinross and South Ayrshire. Some young carers were not already involved with a young carer service so this was a great opportunity for these young people to access young carer support.

Despite restrictions on social contact, the online Festival allowed young carers to enjoy themselves at their own pace.

“The animals were a favourite with my daughter and she has talked about nothing else since. My son loved the magician. I could hear him roar with laughter and wondered what on earth was going on.”

Parent of two young carers

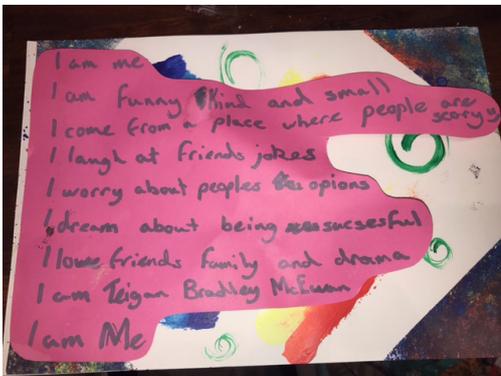


SMALL GRANT SCHEME

The Scottish Government provided funding for Carers Trust Scotland to administer a small grant scheme to young carer services that would usually have attended the Scottish Young Carers Festival. 46 services were eligible to apply for funding to adopt a local, tailor-made approach in supporting their young people and providing fun and meaningful respite in a safe way.

The scheme was a success, with 45 young carers services receiving their small grant. Over £100,000 has been awarded to young carer services, helping them to deliver activity packs and boredom boxes at home, 'back to normal' celebration events, online group sessions such as bake-alongs and pizza/movie nights, a photography skills project and outdoor activities such as 'Mini Festivals. Across Scotland, **3,009** young carers under 18 have benefited from the small grants scheme.

“ ”



“I have missed the groups so much and this was really fun, I can't wait till we can do this again.”



“I can't wait until we're meeting as normal again, this was great.”



“Every week I look forward to having a laugh and being creative.”

YOUNG ADULT CARER ADVISORY GROUP SURVEY

In the absence of the usual consultation spaces at the Scottish Young Carers Festival in 2020, our Young Adult Carer Advisory Group was created to devise alternative consultation activities.

The group took part in a consultation training session and learnt how to create an online survey for young carers. The survey included a range of topics, including experiences of the pandemic. In addition, the group ran Instagram Quick Fire Polls every Friday from 9 October to 4 December 2020 and created a short video for social media to encourage participation in the survey. 54 young people took part in the survey. Of the young carer respondents:

-  78% of young carers are comfortable taking part in online activities.
-  80% of young carers do not know how to get a **Young Carer Statement**.
-  43% of 16–18-year-old young carers have not received the **Young Carer Grant**.
-  78% of young carers say their mental health has been affected by the October lockdown.
-  59% of young carers say that COVID-19 has impacted their caring role.
-  The majority of young carers have had little or no break at all from their caring role during lockdown.

The Young Adult Carer Advisory Group are sharing these findings with key decision makers and have worked with animators to create a social media awareness raising campaign. This campaign raises awareness of young carers and seeks to break down the stigma and stereotypes that can stop young people seeking out support.

 **Watch the animation.**

“ We need to break down the stereotype of a ‘young carer’ because it is important to recognise that all caring roles are different so that people in all types of caring roles are able to recognise the situation they are in and get the help and support they need and deserve. ”

Rebecca, Young Adult Carer Advisory Group member

MEDIA AMBASSADORS

In 2020, the Media Ambassadors opportunity usually offered as part of the Scottish Young Carers Festival, moved online. Online recruitment resulted in ten young and young adult carers aged 16–22, taking part in training workshops via Zoom, including learning how to create an awareness raising film.

Carers Trust Scotland worked with Media Education to deliver the workshops, which helped the group identify the key themes that they wanted to cover in the film and how they would do this remotely. Over four meetings the group chose to focus on:

- Raising awareness of who young carers are.
- Young carers' experiences of lockdown.
- The support young carers need for the future.

They interviewed six young adult carers for the final film, who shared their own experiences of lockdown and what support they need.

“There are days where you feel very frustrated and you just want to get out of the house ... but you know, you were unable to do that.”

“I really struggled to find respite, especially at the beginning ... I wanted somebody outside my family to be able to talk to.”

“If I was really really really stressed I would get my water colours out and I would like paint something ... that was a positive, like I got a new skill.”

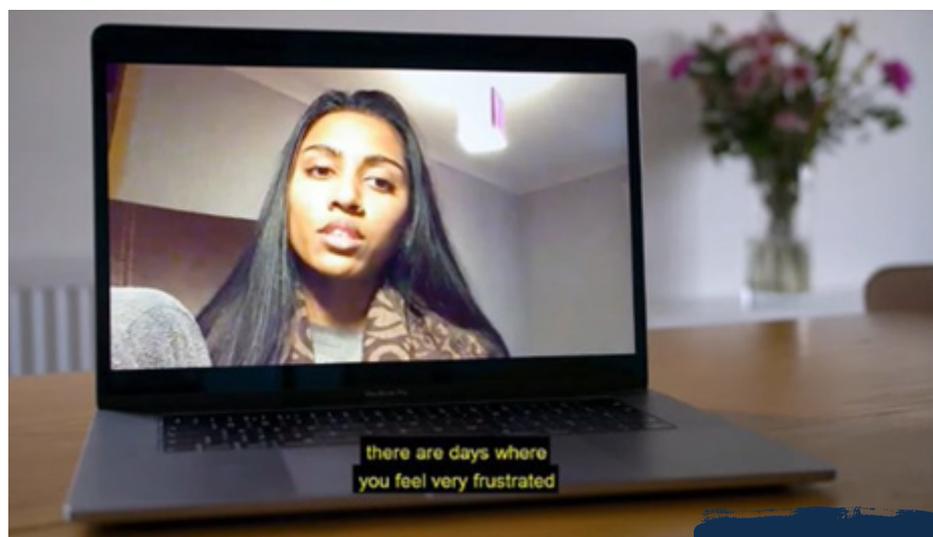
Looking ahead to the future:

“For young carers we need to have more mental health support, we need to have policies in place so if something does go down, then they are in place straight away. And there isn't time faffing about trying to make them.”

“If you can get the support, it's worth it ...”

▶ Watch Scottish Young Carers Festival: Carers Parliament Presentation

The film was presented at the Carers Parliament main event on 25 November 2020. Since then, it has been shared with partners at Scottish Government, Education Scotland and throughout our social media channels.



SUPERMARKETS4CHANGE

In March 2020, supermarkets set up protected in-store hours and priority delivery slots for vulnerable shoppers including unpaid carers. Member of the **Scottish Youth Parliament** (MSYP) for Carers Trust Scotland, Ilse Cuthbertson, and MSYP for Cunninghame South, Aaran McDonald, became aware that young carers were facing challenges in accessing these provisions for vulnerable groups. Young carers reported that they had to explain their caring role before being allowed access to the store; did not meet the eligible criteria for accessing the priority delivery slots; and even when they presented an identification card, found difficulties in accessing protected hours.

As a result, Ilse and Aaran set up #Supermarkets4Change, campaigning to raise awareness of unpaid carers with local supermarkets and to include these young and young adult carers in the protected hours set aside for vulnerable groups. MSYPs wrote to local supermarket stores on behalf of their constituents, raising awareness of the issues faced by young carers and young adult carers, and why it is important to include these young people in dedicated shopping times. A campaign video was created for social media; a template letter was shared to empower other young people to take action in their local community; and the issue was raised with COSLA and Ministers of the Cross Party Group on Children and Young People.

“ We wanted to start #Supermarkets4Change as young carers and young adult carers have been approaching us due to the lack of understanding within supermarkets.”

Ilse

The MSYPs received thanks from COSLA and Scottish Government for their proactive work on these issues, as well as updates on progress made with supermarket access as lockdown continued. This included many supermarkets providing greater clarity on unpaid carers being included in set hours and introducing supermarket priority delivery slots to those shielding. In March 2021, Ilse and Aaran were awarded the Donald Macleod Award for Exceptional Team Work at the SYP Awards for their work in this youth-led campaign.

YOUNG CARERS QUESTION TIME EVENT

In March 2021, young carers and young adult carers engaged with decision makers through an online Young Carers Question Time Event. Young people were encouraged to sign up and submit an anonymous question to our panel which included a cross party group of MSPs, MPs and MSYPs.

This event was a great opportunity to raise awareness of the issues impacting young people's lives and find out what decision makers are doing to support young carers' futures. Questions from young people covered various topics including education, mental health, young carers' rights and support for young adult carers. The event also provided a platform for decision makers to engage with our Media Ambassadors and Young Adult Carer Advisory Group as members shared their work with all attendees.

This event was recorded and shared on Carers Trust YouTube channel for those that could not attend the live event.

 **Watch the Young Carers Question Time Event**

REFERENCES

Carers Trust Scotland (2020), *2020 Vision* (Carers Trust Scotland).

Scottish Youth Parliament (2020), *Lockdown Lowdown – What Young People in Scotland are Thinking About COVID-19* (Scottish Youth Parliament).

Further information

To find out more about our work with young carers in Scotland, visit [Carers.org/Scotland](https://www.carers.org/Scotland).

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