

## Young Carers Action Day: Taking Action on Isolation

### Policy Briefing

#### Recommendations

Scottish Government and local authorities should commit to ensuring young carers and young adult carers can access the breaks they need to support positive wellbeing, reduce social isolation, and live a fulfilled life alongside caring.

Increased investment in short breaks for young carers and young adult carers is required.

A proposed “right to a break” for unpaid carers was consulted on during the National Care Service consultation in 2021. It is vital that if introduced that this right extends to young carers, and they do not become forgotten or an afterthought in the planning and implementation.

There needs to be the development of a range of options for short break services to meet the varied and individual needs of young carers and young adult carers.

Alongside this, implementation of social prescribing for young carers and young adult carers in all areas including, for example, free access to leisure and “out of school” care which could help to break down financial barriers and help to tackle social isolation.

#### Background and details

A young carer is someone aged 18 and under who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem 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 Carer Action Day (YCAD) is on 16 March 2022.**

YCAD is an annual campaign day organised by Carers Trust. It has taken place over the last seven years to raise awareness of young carers and young adult carers and the immense contribution they make to their families and local communities.

	<p><b>This year's theme: Taking Action on Isolation.</b> Young carers and young adult carers have told us how important it is for them to get regular breaks from caring to reduce isolation.</p> <p>As a result of the pandemic, where many statutory services were reduced or not available, many young carers and young adult carers spent more time caring at home while also juggling home-study and were unable to get a break. Young carers and young adult carers have told us they have felt increasingly isolated and disconnected from friends and peers as a result of the pandemic and lockdowns.</p> <p>We know that breaks can be very beneficial for young carers and young adult carers, giving them time to recharge and do things they enjoy. Young carers and young adult carers are, and must be seen as, children and young people first and foremost and their rights must be upheld.</p> <p>This YCAD they are calling for meaningful change to take place to ensure all young carers and young adult carers now, and in the future, have a right to the breaks from caring that they need. Young carers and young adult carers being able to access the breaks they need would be a progressive step forward to Taking Action on Young Carer Isolation.</p>
<p><b>Research and facts</b></p>	<p>Short breaks provide a much-needed release from the physical and emotional demands of the caring situation and help promote positive health and wellbeing.</p> <p>In Scotland, short breaks are primarily delivered through the Young Carer Statement and Adult Carer Support Plan - under Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 - and a review of need. If young people meet local eligibility criteria, they may be offered a short break. Young people may also be able to access short break provision from other services, such as Time To Live delivery partners in Scotland. Scottish Government has undertaken a consultation about introducing a National Care Service and as part of this asked for views on a "right to a break" for unpaid carers.</p>

Young and young adult carers and their families are more likely to live in deprived circumstances than the average young population, and those in the most deprived areas are more likely to have substantial caring roles. This adds additional barriers for these children and young people with caring responsibilities to be able to get breaks from caring.

A recent Carers Trust survey found that:

- 1 in 5 young carers and young adult carers were unable to take any break from their caring role.
- Over half of young carers and young adult carers were feeling less connected to others.
- 1 in 3 young carers and young adult carers don't feel included with their friends.
- 31% of young carers and young adult carers feel they don't get enough rest or time for themselves.
- A third of young carers and young adult carers feel lonely.

The voices of young carers and young adult carers:

*"I now provide round the clock care for the person I care for and unable to get a break. Found it more isolating than usual and it's having an effect on my mental and physical health with having to lift more"*

*"Feels never ending, I'm getting angry all the time with the person I care for although they haven't done anything because I feel so on edge unable to have a break or get away"*

*"Coronavirus has made it harder to get a break from my caring role and has made me feel more unsafe at home"*

*"I'm more stressed and anxious and I just feel like I need a break"*

*"My mental health is awful and I really struggle to take time for myself at home. The only time I have away from my family is at school but I don't even like going to school because I get so nervous for everything and I'm always so exhausted"*

	<p><i>"It affected my friendships as they didn't understand why they couldn't come inside the house"</i></p> <p><i>"It's quite lonely and I don't feel like anyone understands or is there for me. I got really upset the other night cos of my mum, it was really intense and school was really hard the next day"</i></p> <p><i>"I suffer with really bad sleeping patterns and ... not feeling like I'm allowed any time to myself"</i></p> <p><i>"I never got a break in almost two years, I worked hard to keep mum out of hospital as I was scared what would happen if she went in. I never get any thanks or praise for what I do..."</i></p>
<p><b>About Carers Trust Scotland</b></p>	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Support YCAD on social media</b></p>	<p>Help us get our hashtag #YoungCarersActionDay trending on social media on 16 March 2022. Here is a suggested social media post, which would be great if you could share on the day:</p> <p><i>I am supporting #YoungCarersActionDay 2022 and Taking Action on Isolation. For young carers having the right support – such as regular breaks from caring – can be really beneficial, giving them a better chance of succeeding in all parts of their lives 🙌 <a href="https://carers.org/ycad-2022">carers.org/ycad-2022</a></i></p> <p>NB: There is a graphic for social media attached to the e-mail, which you are welcome to use.</p> <p>You can also tag @CarersTrustScot to your post.</p>