

Scottish Young Carers Festival 2023

The Scottish Young Carers Festival is an annual event that brings young carers across Scotland together. The event provides an opportunity for young carers to meet other young people in similar situations, share new experiences and of course, have fun!



An important part of the Scottish Young Carers Festival is providing an opportunity for young carers to have their voices heard by key decision makers. In 2023, our consultation theme was 'Support for the Future.'

Key Festival Facts

506

young carers attended,
from 35 young carer
services across Scotland.

30

invited guests attended,
including the Minister for
Social Care, Mental
Wellbeing and Sport.

26

organisations attended
our marketplace.

90%

felt they had opportunity
to have their say on being
a young carer.

94%

said they had a break
from their caring
responsibilities.

99%

felt they had opportunity
to have fun at the
Scottish Young Carers
Festival.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended the event to listen to young carers' views. Below you will find a summary of the issues raised by young carers and how you can support young carers in your role.

Young Carer Consultation Zone

Looking to the Future

Young carers were clear about what support they need for the future. They want a happy and stress free life for their family.

Majority of respondents noted that their social life is impacted the most due to their caring role, this was followed by their mental health. The majority felt that their caring role has an impact on how they feel about their future. This includes worry about leaving their cared-for person and how their family will cope, difficulty focussing on work and studies due to stress and always having a caring role, particularly sibling carers.

When asked what is one thing you would change for young carers, the majority called for greater support in schools, including greater understanding from teachers. Young carers also called for greater access to breaks, including activities like the Scottish Young Carers Festival.

The best support that young carers receive which helps work towards future goals are family, local carers service and school.

'I am really unsure about my future as my mental health isn't great due to stress of being a carer.'



'My caring role impacts my future as it feels like I'm always gonna be stuck doing the same thing and never succeeding'

Financial Support

56% of respondents find themselves worrying about money due to being a young carer. Reasons include cost of living rising, struggling to balance work and studies with caring roles and missing out on opportunities to cover household costs.

The majority of respondents feel very or fairly confident managing money, however 27% reported not feeling confident at all.

Financial support would help young carers achieve their future goals as it would allow them to be financially independent, positively impact their mental health and support further or higher education. The majority of respondents did not feel that money impacted their ability to take part in clubs, sport and hobbies. For those that did, they called for grants to help access hobbies and cover travel costs to clubs.

The majority felt money has an impact on their family taking a short break or holiday. Respondents identified the Young Carer Grant and Time to Live Fund as examples of financial support they were aware of. Young people also noted their local young carers group as a source of support.



'Money has a huge impact on me and my family taking short breaks or holidays together.'

'I voluntarily miss out on getting things or opportunities because I know money would have to go to the house.'

Education and Transitions

At school, it is important that young carers are supported. Good support looks like regular visits from local carer service workers, young carer groups, greater understanding and support from teachers. Being listened to by staff is important to young carers.

Young carers need to be supported during important transitions, from school to college, university or work. Good support includes help with applications, finances and personal statements. Having a safe space and extra time would also benefit young carers during these transitions. Information on the support available should be clear and staff should be understanding.

'Help with applications, finances, personal statements that count towards something not just school grades. To know we can do more than just care.'



57% of respondents felt that being a young carer impacted their ability to get their ideal job in the future. Some responses include worry over leaving their cared-for person, barriers in accessing higher or further education or unable to focus due to their caring role. Other responses were positive, with young carers feeling that skills they have developed from caring roles will contribute to ideal jobs in the future.

'It seems like everything is playing against you in all aspects of your life and is very off putting'

63%

do not feel they received support as a young carer transitioning from primary to secondary.

67%

feel that money impacts their future options.

83%

feel they can plan for their future.

52%

feel that being a young carer impacts their future options.

What are your hopes for young carers futures?

'That one day we will get the correct support for our caring roles.'

'That there is more awareness.'

'Funding for further education (as a young carer).'

'I hope that young carers (festival) keeps running and they get to keep helping young carers get a break from their caring roles.'

What are your fears for young carers futures?

'Employers not understanding me as a young carer.'

'That I won't get enough support going into jobs/university.'

'I am scared that I will have to take care of my brother when my parents pass.'

'In case people don't fund young carers (service) and I can't go anymore.'



Young carers identified key support they think they would require to be successful in a job, including awareness and understanding from management and colleagues, flexible hours and more time to complete tasks.

'To better understand young carers may have little to no work experience BUT life skills'

Young Carer Services

Workers from young carer services also shared their views in the Consultation Zone, reflecting on the past year, identifying support needed for young carers and sharing best practice.

The majority of respondents found they have provided more support to young carers in the past year, due to additional funding and respite opportunities and partnership working. However, for those providing less, they highlighted prohibitive rules across local authorities and staff capacity as key barriers in providing support.

'There are young carers that we cannot provide best support for as there is not enough staff. So many children needing support!'

Workers identified financial support that young carers and their families need, including grants for essentials such as food, heating and hygiene. Support with cost of living is also a key priority and greater knowledge around what is available for families.

Feedback also outlined what support young carers need during important transitions in their lives. It is important that young carers have as much information in advance as possible when transitioning, whether from primary to secondary, or into further or higher education. There should also be clear communication between settings to ensure staff are aware of individual situations. Practical examples of support were also given such as transition days, self esteem worksheets and confidence building buddies.

Local carer services shared examples of good practice when supporting young carers to achieve their future ambitions. Examples include offering group work sessions in primary and secondary schools, employability projects and networking with local organisations and partners to provide as many opportunities as possible for young carers. One to one support through a designated employment worker also ensured young carers can be fully supported to achieve their ambitions.

When asked what needs to change for young carers in Scotland, greater recognition and awareness is key. This is important particularly in schools. Greater funding and mental health support were also cited as important changes for young carers.

Graphic Facilitator

The Consultation Zone was attended by a graphic facilitator, that captured the conversations and comments young carers were having with one another. This allowed the involvement of young people who didn't feel comfortable to write their thoughts. These illustrations were displayed around the Consultation Zone for young people to add thumbs up post-it's to the posters they felt displayed issues that most resonated with them.

Key themes to emerge from these graphics are:

- The importance of support during transitions and the future for families.
- Raising awareness of young carers and what caring roles look like.
- Listening to young carers: real communication and not questioning a young carers' knowledge.



Key Priority Areas

Having listened to the views of young carers at this event, Carers Trust Scotland have identified key priority areas:

- Caring roles impact how young people feel about their future, including guilt in leaving their families, worry about caring their entire lives or stress of balancing caring roles with work. Social lives and mental health can be negatively impacted by caring responsibilities.
- There needs to be greater support in place for young carers going through important transitions; whether from primary to secondary, or into further or higher education, or paid work. Clear communication between staff about individual situations and greater understanding from school staff, management and colleagues will support young people during these important periods in their life.
- Young people find themselves worrying about money due to being a young carer and can miss out on opportunities as a young person due to costs. Greater financial support is needed for young carers and their families. There also needs to be greater awareness of what support currently exists.
- There needs to be greater recognition of young carers across society, particularly within schools, to ensure young carers are fully supported.
- Young carer services must be fully funded to ensure they can continue to offer the vital support to young carers across Scotland.

What you can do in your role

Following our Scottish Young Carers Festival, we invite all decision makers to:

- Take action in your professional capacity around the priority areas identified at the Scottish Young Carers Festival to help improve the provision of support and outcomes for young carers.
- Engage with your local carers service, schools and further and higher education institutions to ensure that support is being put in place for young carers.
- Work with local carer services to raise greater awareness of young carers in your community.
- Ensure you are working with young carers to find solutions, involving young people in early consultation phases whenever possible.
- Communicate and be transparent about progress.
- Reflect on your own personal pledge in your role to help all young carers feel supported.
- Champion and help to amplify the work of Carers Trust Scotland and the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance in your professional capacity and through your communication channels.
- Actively support and promote Young Carers Action Day which take place on 13 March 2024.

Get in touch

If you would like to discuss these findings further with a member of the Carers Trust Scotland team, or would like access to the full Festival report, please contact scotland@carers.org