



Northumberland

County Council

FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE 9, JANUARY, 2020

Young Carers (YC) Support Services

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services Cath McEvoy - Carr
Cabinet Member for Children's Services Councillor Wayne Daley

Purpose of report

- To provide members with an up to date picture of the work being progressed to identify, assess and support young carers (YC) across Northumberland.
- To highlight the positives and benefits, the current gaps in support and the challenges and risks posed by these. It contains details of the proposed delivery model moving forward, the effect this will have on current commissioned providers and the work which will be undertaken with them to support the changes.

Recommendations

- Members to receive the information being provided and support the proposed changes to the provision of services to young carers.
- Members to identify any areas for additional scrutiny if appropriate

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the 'Living' priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2018-2021, " we want you to feel safe, healthy and cared for "

Key issues

- There is a need for a consistent countywide Young Carers offer.
- There is a need for a wider, more inclusive and flexible support offer which is dependent on the specific needs of the young carer.
- The budget for the current young carers groups, whilst limited to only three areas of the county, is predicted to be overspent for the current financial year by £3,900 with the current level of commitment. (60 young people currently access the services)
- Children attending these groups have not always been approved as being eligible for a funded service despite attempts to tighten this up and therefore their young

carers status is not always accurate . Similarly, the threshold for agreeing services is variable as a result, in part, of the differing referral routes.

- The commissioned groups have not always followed contract requirements and do not provide evidence of outcomes; this is sometimes due to a lack of clarity around what the intended outcome should be when the placement is agreed and a lack of consistency in the information shared by the providers when it is requested.
- Results from a recent Young Carers (YC) consultation in July were disappointing. Evidence shows that YC do not readily identify or respond to questions about being a YC for fear of statutory intervention. YC are “reluctant to self-identify fearing statutory intervention” (Carers Northumberland Report, 2019, p15)
- NCC have consistently been unable to provide accurate data on the number of YC within the county; in part this is due to the inconsistent use of the children's social care recording systems and the current referral process.
- Identification of YC through school or health networks is not routinely happening. Surveys of activity sessions do not help to provide any data of statistical significance. The only reliable information is from the School Health and Wellbeing Survey (2017) which was self identified and anonymous.

This indicated that there were:

165 YC at primary level

199 YC at secondary level

TOTAL: 354 YC in Northumberland

However, more worrying was that a further:

570 pupils were 'not sure'

125 pupils 'prefer not to say'

(See Carers Northumberland Report,2019)

- The main challenges for our partners, including health, adult services and education, is the identification of YC and the lack of a consistent county wide pathway and service for YC. (See Carers Northumberland Report 2019)

Background

In April 2015 two pieces of legislation came into force, giving new rights to care and support for young carers (YC), young adult carers and their families (the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014.) The positive in Northumberland is that the procedure for a parent carer to have a separate assessment is now in place. However, Local Authorities must also assess whether YC themselves have support needs and take 'reasonable steps' to identify and try to provide for those support needs.

Work has been undertaken in the last 3 months on the appropriate identification, referral and assessment of YC and positive processes are in place which will, in time, provide NCC with more robust information on the number and support needs of YC across the county. This includes:

- The youth service participation team have now taken the lead on awareness raising and identification which will involve activities such as providing school assemblies and an identification training offer through the Early Help training programme .

- A new separate YC assessment has been written called the 'Young Carers Health and Wellbeing Check' which includes a toolkit for multi agency partners to identify the individual needs of the YC. This will be processed through the front door and triaged to consider safeguarding and support needs. Referrals can be monitored and data collected from the LL modules.

The focus has now moved to the 'reasonable steps' the Local Authority must take to provide support services for YC across the county.

Our current support is through three commissioned young carers groups, however, this support does not cover the whole county (Hexham, Berwick and Cramlington only) and therefore there is inequality of access for young people. These contracts are demand led and have been difficult to monitor both in terms of spending and outcomes for the young people. The contracts were due to expire in August 2019 but have been extended to the end of March 2020. However at a cost of £1,000 per YC annually, this limits the number of YC that can be supported; at the moment we are aware of 60 young people accessing these groups. However, we are unable to determine how often they are attending and the impact this is having for them.

The review has proposed a new, more inclusive and varied support package which includes the provision of a dedicated YC support worker in the voluntary sector to carry out an assessment and use the toolkit, Active Northumberland passes, referral to other specialised commissioned services, access to existing YC groups and improved access to universal young people's provision through the youth service.

Work already completed to support the scoping of the new proposal includes :-

- Active Northumberland has provided a proposal for the provision of a sport/leisure pass for the YC, plus friend, at a negotiated reduced cost of £150.00 annually and funding has been identified from elsewhere in children's social care for these passes.
- Work with Adult Services and Carers Northumberland on the scoping of a possible alternative provision of a specialist YC worker in the voluntary service has taken place and a tender process considered.
- Existing personnel (e.g Public Health locality coordinators and commissioning officers) have been deployed to ascertain emerging views of the current providers, particularly in the Cramlington area (where the largest amount of referrals come from) and the Public Health locality coordinator has 'mapped out' alternative provision available in the Cramlington area for youth participation.

The Proposal - please see attached flow chart

The proposed new service is a joint offer provided by the Local Authority and the voluntary sector, drawing on the expertise of both and based on research evidence. The Local Authority will retain the duty around promotion, identification and assessment, and crucially the requirement to monitor numbers and outcomes on the existing Liquid Logic system already used in children's social care.

The more in depth assessment of the individual YC needs will pass from the 'front door', after screening, to a voluntary sector provider to work with the referred YC on a

bespoke support package. The provider will work to a set of milestones and outcomes set at the beginning of the contract .

The Local Authority will also review and check the status of the YC at six month review periods.

The new service would begin in the new financial year, April 2020, and based on the figures from the above wellbeing survey it is envisaged that numbers supported will at least double to 120 by the end of March 2021 , and increase in subsequent years with increased awareness raising and promotion by the youth service. The costs p/a will be £40,000 allocated to the voluntary sector for the provision of the YC specialist worker which includes a £2,000 urgent YC support fund and £9,000 for Active Northumberland leisure passes. TOTAL £49,000.

This will be procured through a tender process for the voluntary sector work and an SLA for the Active Northumberland work.

The benefits of this new proposed service will include:

- A comprehensive assessment of need which will lead to better individual support sourced from a range of provision, both universal and targeted.
- Better monitoring and data collection, for support planning and outcomes for YC.
- Spend being managed more effectively.
- Raised awareness and identification of YC.
- An equitable countywide offer.
- Increase in YC numbers being supported for the same budget.

Implications

- Ending the existing contracts may be viewed as funding withdrawal by the providers and parents. To mitigate this risk the new proposal includes placing specific duties on the specialist YC worker, within the voluntary sector, to assist the current providers with funding applications and support. This will be enhanced with support from children's social care managers, the Youth Service and Public Health locality coordinators.
- With improved awareness raising and identification support needs may increase beyond capacity. However a wider offer including universal services and schools should help to mitigate this.

Policy	The proposed service provision is based on current Government focus on early help and prevention and the statutory duty on local authorities to identify and assess young carers
Finance and value for money	The new model represents much greater value for money and encourages communities to be self sustaining and NCC to be clear in its offer for YC
Legal	The new proposal will ensure compliance with the local authority's statutory requirements.
Procurement	The proposal encourages greater clarity and consistency in NCC commissioning arrangements

Human Resources	NA
Property	NA
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed
Risk Assessment	There is a risk that by ending funding to the current providers that there could be a perception that services for young carers are ending. However there will be a clear communication strategy with our communications team to ensure that positive messages about the new improved offer are made in the local media and through social networking.
Crime & Disorder	NA
Customer Consideration	YC will be part of the further design of the new support service, mainly via the provision of the specialist YC worker and the youth service participation team
Carbon reduction	NA
Health and Wellbeing	The health and wellbeing needs of YC will be included as a priority via the new assessment process and toolkit proposed
Wards	All

Background papers

The proposed YC pathway is attached to this report

Report sign off

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

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