

# WOKINGHAM YOUNG CARERS SERVICE

## REPORT FOR WOKINGHAM BOROUGH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

January 2020



### 1. The Young Carers Service

**i** Wokingham Young Carers service is a commissioned service which is delivered by The Berkshire West Carers Hub a department of Carers Trust East Midlands (CTEM). The contract management and monitoring of the service is undertaken by a lead officer in Strategy and Commissioning at Wokingham Borough Council.

The contract to deliver a young carers service was awarded to CTEM in 2016. The contract value is £60,149 per annum. The service is commissioned until March 2021 and 1.5 staff are employed by CTEM to deliver the service. The local authority funding does not currently cover the whole cost of delivering the service (although the funding equates to a high percentage of the total cost to run the service) and additional costs are currently supplemented by our organization and fundraising.

There is no definitive number for how many young carers there are in the borough or in England, the 2011 census estimated that 166,000 young carers were identified in England alone.<sup>1</sup> Recently it has been suggested by a BBC research paper that as many as 1:5 secondary school students in England have a caring role.

In the borough of Wokingham the conservative number of young carers under the age of 16 based on the 2011 census is 230. This is considered to be far lower than the actual number. Families may hide that their children have a caring role out of concern of them being taken into care, or in other cases, caring is seen as a normal part of family life and don't identify with the term 'Young Carer.'

In 2016 the Wokingham Young Carers Service supported around 24 young carers, over the last three and a half years the service has grown to support over 205 young carers. This amounts to a total growth of 754%. Our largest rate of growth has been in the last 18 months on average receiving 11 referrals to our service each month.

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*A young carer is anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of a person who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, and is affected by substance use (Carers National Association, 1998)*

<sup>1</sup> UK Data Service > Case Study. Beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk. <https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/impact/case-studies/case-study?id=207>. Published 2019. Accessed August 8, 2019.

## 2. Current Service Statistics

**i** These statistics are current as of the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

### Young Carers Supported

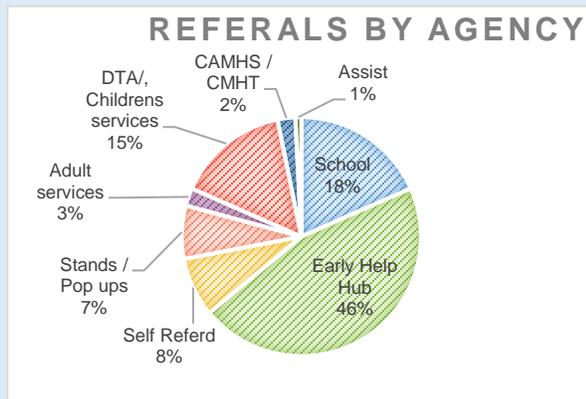
There are currently 194 active registered young carers being supported by our service with an average engagement rate of 59 unique young carers per month. This is up 125% from July 2018 at which time we had 85 young carers active and an average engagement of 27 unique young carers per a month.

Gender	No of YC's	School age	No. of YC's
Female	100	Junior school	58
Male	93	Secondary school	118
Transgender	1	College/ 6th form	18

The youngest registered young carer is aged 5 and the oldest is 17, our largest grouping of young carers is secondary school age with an even split across male and female.

In 2019 we received 126 referrals to our service. 55% of referrals resulted in young carers assessments and being registered as a young carer, 37% of referrals were declined by the family, 8% were assessed and deemed not to be a young carer.

In terms of organizations referring, 57 referrals came from the weekly Early Help Hub. This was our largest referrer in 2019. Our second largest referral group was schools with 23 referrals and Children's Service workers including early help workers were the third highest referrer with a total of 19 referrals.



## 3. Needs of young carers

**i** According to *Barnardo's Still hidden Still ignored; Emma James, December 2017* the three most commonly identified challenges that young carers experience are the impact their role has on their educational achievement, emotional wellbeing and feelings of isolation or loneliness. This extensive study was based on research involving 800 teachers, 40 front line young carers workers and 79 young carers.

Most young carers will be late to school during the year, many will receive on average lower grades at GCSE than students who have no caring role. Young carers often feel isolated and

not able to engage in the same social activities as others due to their caring role, and many suffer with anxiety due to worrying about the wellbeing of the person they care for.

This study showed three clear goals for young carers support; Identification, Education and ongoing peer support. These are the key areas of support we now offer.

## 4. Current Support offered

### **i** Identification

Under the Children's Act 2014, local authorities have the duty to actively identify young carers, carry out young carers' assessments and to implement support to reduce impact. This is both when a young person is caring and preventative when there is evidence to suggest a young person will be a young carer e.g. a 5 year old who's parent is severely disabled.<sup>2</sup>

- Wokingham young carers service carries out the statutory young carers' assessments for Wokingham borough council.
- We have actively increased the number of young carers identified in the borough by 754% over the period of our contract.
- Over the last year we have become an integral part of the Early Help Hub in Wokingham; in 2019 we have received 57 referrals from this source. Being part of their team meetings allows us to advocate for cases involving young carers we work with and we are able to give input into the support the family needs as a whole.
- In February 2019 we attended team meetings for all workers of Early Help and children centres to explain the support we offer and deliver information about the identification of young carers. Building an effective working relationship with Early Help has increased the multi-agency support available to young carers

### Education

- We work with schools to establish support for young carers. We offer all schools, free assemblies, staff training and support and send out materials for schools including lesson plans on a quarterly basis.
- We currently have 3 secondary schools in Wokingham borough that have taken up the Young Carers in Schools award and 3 others, that although not on the award have a working relationship with the young carers service. One of the schools has made us their nominated charity for the next year. We also have many primary schools we work with referring children to us and receiving advice and support from our service.
- In the last year we have worked with St Crispin's school, meeting weekly with 3 students who were young carers whose attendance had dropped below 60%, and

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<sup>2</sup> Carers Trust, *Rights for young carers and young adult carers in the Children and Families Act*, Carers trust, March 2015. [accessed online 8.8.19]

supported the students to increase their attendance significantly. St. Crispin's has now appointed a member of staff to lead the support for young carers in school.

#### Ongoing Group support

Wokingham young carers' service offers a continuous support model. Unlike other services which offer targeted intervention for 6 – 8 weeks, a young person or child once registered with us has access to our continuous support till they stop being a young carer in our borough.

- All young carers receive a monthly newsletter from our service which invites them to activities and provides updates about our services.
- Starting in September 2018 we provide weekly groups for young carers all year round. During term time we run separate weekly children's and youth groups in Wokingham and in Lower Earley. The aim of the groups is; to allow young carers to meet up and build relationships with one another to reduce the impact of loneliness and isolation, to give them a place to be kids/ youth and to give them access to workers to chat to and get any support they need in their caring role, education or personal wellbeing.
- During holidays we run different activities for youth and children. For our children we run day camps at Dinton Pastures in the summer and have this year also put on; a drum workshop, Halloween party, Christmas party, Easter egg hunt and other fun activities. For our youth we have run; a snow tubing trip, bake off competition, ice skating, archery, pizza and movie nights and more. This year we also put on a family fete day for the whole family which was attend by 100 people, as well as two Scottish premiership players and the Deputy Mayor of the borough.
- We run a young carers forum which empowers our young carers to lead the direction of our service and encourages them to raise awareness. In January a group of our young carers took to Wokingham market wearing shirts and handing out flyers to local residents to raise awareness of the impact being a young carers has on mental health.
- This year we took 8 young carers to the Young carers festival for a weekend , the young carers who went loved the event and all grew closer to one another sharing more about their home lives and supporting each other via the Social media group they set up on what's app and snap chat.

#### Other support

- Carer assessments- When coming across families in particular where there is a lot of practical support and especially if the young person or child is the primary/ sole carer we will contact the adult social care team to arrange a carers needs assessment to reduce the practical impact on the young carer.
- Signposting – we at times sign post young carers to additional support such as CAMHS and other agencies. Staff from the service meet monthly with primary CAMHS to get advice and resources to support young carers.
- Cross working –When needed, we attend or submit reports for TAF and CIN meetings and advocate for our young carers at these meetings. We have also

carried out joint home visits with staff of the early help team to support transitions from Early Help into Young Carers or when a young carer's assessment would help identify next steps for early help in supporting a family.

- This year we nominated three young carers for the Mayors honour role to acknowledge their hard work, commitment and contribution to their families. All three candidates were successful and presented the award at a council meeting in Shute End.

## 5. Support via Wokingham borough services

**i** Under the Children's and families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014, young carers have a right to a young carers assessment and support, and local authorities are required to be proactive in identifying and supporting young carers and reducing the impact of their caring role. Carers Trust has developed clear guidelines for the acts in plain English.<sup>3</sup> Although we have been commissioned to support young carers the onus to identify still remains on the children's and adults services team when they come into contact with families and people with disabilities.

Over the last year we have improved in particular our working relationship with the Early Help team in supporting and identifying young carers in the borough. We have also cross worked many cases and carried out home visits together when appropriate. As well as attending team meetings to give advice on identifying young carers and the support we offer. This is an important relationship and we are thankful to the managers of the children's centres for their work to ensure we work together well to support the families in our borough.

We are part of the Carers Strategic Group and through this have developed relationships with the adult social care team allowing us to contact them and get support for young carers and family in terms of care assessment resulting in equipment being put into the family home and in some cases arranging for paid carers to support families. We have also been able to actively contribute to the new carers strategy and receive contract monitoring and support from the Strategy and Commissioning Team.

We have been successful in working with Early Help to increase the support they give to young carers. We are continuing to develop good working relationships with other teams in the council such as Adult Social Care.

The following case study from May 2019 demonstrates the support we have provided to a young carer. (*Used with permission of young carer*).

We received a referral in January from Children's Services after a family had gone through child protection and court proceedings.

We carried out a young carer's assessment on a 15yr old male and confirmed he was delivering a high level of care to his disabled mum and younger siblings. Once the young person was identified we were able, together with the adult disability

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<sup>3</sup> [https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/children\\_and\\_families\\_act\\_briefing.pdf](https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/children_and_families_act_briefing.pdf)

services, to implement home support both in terms of equipment, support in school, and the young carer attending our weekly our youth groups. The support has helped this family and the young person feel safe, we have reduced the impact of their caring role and the family has now been stepped down to CIN (Child in need) as services continue to work to get the right level of support for the family including in home care support.

The young person while at the young carers' festival spoke with me about the impact this process has had on him and how much fear it had caused him. His father died some years before he was looking after his mum. The young boy talked to me about the huge emotional turmoil he experienced faced with a reality that because of the disability in his family he could lose his mother also.

This year we will see the implementation of the new carers' strategy for the borough as part of this we hope to see clearer pathways put in place in particular between children's social services, adult disabilities and the young carers' service to ensure young carers are being identified at the earliest opportunity and supported holistically.

## 6. Future support

**i** Our contract has been extended to March 2021 as the new voluntary sector review is undertaken. We hope to have the opportunity to bid for the new contract to continue to deliver this service. We will be working with commissioners to ensure they are fully aware of the growing needs and demands of the service and hope that this growth would be reflective in the new contract value.

We would like to develop a study group as young carers have asked for support with their education. Through the creation of a study group with tutors, we hope to support them in overcoming the hurdles they face in completing school work at home. This alongside multi-agencies working together it would allow us to offer support to cover the three key noted areas of impact.

In the coming year we will be focusing on improving our current work and creating more opportunities to empower young carers to speak out and affect change:

- In January 2020 we will, be sending 3 young carer ambassadors to an event run by The Children's Society to explore how to improve identification of young carers.
- Young carers will be meeting with the Rt. Hon. John Redwood MP around the new governments' social care green paper.
- We will be setting up a program to help young carers become ambassadors in their schools and supporting them to set up their own groups in school with support from the young carers' staff.

## APPROVAL OF REPORT

We approve the above report to be submitted to the oversight and scrutiny committee.

Name	Title	Date
Phillip Hollis –(author)	Young carers support worker	29.08.19
Brigid. Dos. Santos	Manager West Berkshire Carers Hub	14.08.19
Hayley Rees	Lead Commissioner for Children's Services, Wokingham Borough Council	29.08.19
Children's Services Leadership Team	DCS Carol Cammiss	08.1.2020
Phillip Hollis	Young carers support worker (stats updated)	08.1.2020

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