

Young Carers Strategy

2009



TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH



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TORFAEN

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Foreword...

Young Carers are special people who take on extra responsibilities in their young lives. For a variety of reasons they fulfil the role of carer to someone close to them.

The range of caring tasks they undertake is often complex and demanding. It can, for example, involve the physical care of someone who has an illness, a disability, a mental health condition or a substance misuse-related condition. A considerable amount of a Young Carer's time may be involved in doing general domestic tasks, providing personal care, and giving emotional support; many of these duties may be taken for granted, such as collecting prescribed medication and arranging medical appointments. Many Young Carers are also responsible for looking after younger brothers and sisters.

To their immense credit, Young Carers do not generally consider their role to be an intrusion in their lives; it's something they do while other young people of a similar age are growing up with a greater sense of freedom, choice and opportunity.

However, the impact of caring for someone affects the way Young Carers grow up and will often restrict their participation in everyday activities. Whilst they may feel proud of what they achieve, it can also create unwanted additional responsibilities and pressures. Dealing with school life can be harder for Young Carers and opportunities to participate in social and leisure activities with their peers may be limited by a sense of duty and routine. Dealing with isolation and exclusion is not easy for a young person who has his or her own health, personal, social and developmental needs.

The purpose of this Strategy therefore is to acknowledge that Young Carers are important and need recognition and support. It reflects the aim of the over-

arching Carer Commissioning Strategy 2008 - 2013, the first joint Health and Social Care Commissioning Strategy for Carers in Torfaen, to ensure that Young Carers are listened to.

We aim to provide support through a flexible programme that allows Young Carers to enjoy growing up alongside their peers.

This Strategy has been developed through consultation with Young Carers and the many statutory and voluntary organisations involved with young people. It is an important step in the right direction. It conforms to the expectations of legislation and presents a real opportunity to demonstrate that Young Carers are valued and highly respected by the communities they live in.

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Section 1: Introduction

- I.1 Strategic Vision
- I.2 Definition
- I.3 Joint Planning

Introduction

I.1 Strategic Vision

This Strategy brings together agencies with the view of raising awareness and improving outcomes for Young Carers in Torfaen. It incorporates the views of Young Carers and key agencies. It has been developed because Young Carers have been identified by legislation and guidance as a group of young people in need of support.

The Strategy is important because being a Young Carer may:

- Adversely affect a young person's physical or emotional wellbeing and limit their social or educational opportunities
- Not be recognised by professionals and therefore Young Carers may lack information about their caring role and the needs of the person they care for
- Hide the level of need the cared-for person has until a crisis occurs. This then may leave the Young Carer and the cared-for person vulnerable
- Limit the choice of the Young Carer to care or not to care.

I.2 Definition

Torfaen County Borough Council defines a Young Carer as a child or young person under 18¹ years who carries out significant caring and household tasks for a:

- Parent(s)
- Grandparent(s)
- Sibling(s)
- Relative(s)

Who

- Has a physical disability
- Has a mental health problem or learning disability
- Has a long term illness
- Has a problem with substance misuse

¹Arrangements are currently in place to extend the age to 21 years in some circumstances.

1.3 Joint Planning

The planning of services for Young Carers takes place through the Young Carers Strategy Group which comprises representatives from Torfaen County Borough Council, Crossroads SE Wales, TVA (voluntary organisations) and Torfaen LHB.

The steering group reports to the Children and Young People's Partnership, which is responsible for implementing the Young Carers Strategy. In practice this involves establishing task-focussed sub-groups to carry forward specific priorities in this Strategy.

Section 2: Legislation and Policy Context

- 2.1 Welsh Assembly Government and the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child
- 2.2 Relevant legislation and guidance

Section 2 Legislation and Policy Context

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2.1 Welsh Assembly Government and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Welsh Assembly Government has formally adopted the UN Convention as providing the underpinning principles for services for children and young people. Within this context the Assembly has adopted seven key aims for all services dealing with children and young people.

These key aims include ensuring that all children have a flying start in life and the best possible basis for their future growth and development. They also cover provision of care and other services; protection from abuse; victimisation and exploitation; access to play; the need to respect and listen to children and child poverty. Within Torfaen these core aims have been formally developed within the Single Plan for Children & Young People (2008 - 2011) and the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services agenda.

2.2 Relevant Legislation and Guidance

The duties and powers of local authorities to assist young people with caring responsibilities are established in a number of key pieces of legislation. These include the **Children Act 1989**, **Children Act 2004** and **Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 1995** and the **Children and Families (Wales) Measure** (see Appendix I for details).

Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families: This guidance produced by the Department of Health, Department for Education and Employment and the Home Office in 2000 specifies how assessments should be carried out. In the guidance document, Practice Guidance, it is recommended that the practitioner be required to look at any child in the context of the whole family.

The Strategy states: 'An assessment of family circumstances is essential. Young Carers should not be expected to carry inappropriate levels of caring which have an adverse impact on their development and life chances. It should not be assumed that children should take on similar levels of caring responsibilities as adults. Services should be provided to parents to enhance their ability to fulfil their parenting responsibilities'.

Section 3: Key Underlying Principles of Practice

Section 3 Key Underlying Principles of Practice

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- Young Carers are young people first and appropriate support/ services should reflect this
- Young Carers have the right to assessments of need in order to identify any additional support required
- All services must be accessible to all sections of the community and take into account individual requirements of culture, religion, language and custom.

The following underlying principles requested by Young Carers are an integral part of this Strategy:

- That all services are acceptable, accessible and appropriate to identified need
- That all professionals working with Young Carers balance the fine line between helping and intruding.

The themes that run through this Strategy include effective multi-agency working, involvement of Young Carers in planning and delivering services and improved information to all parties.

Section 4: Scope of the Strategy 2009 – 2010

Section 4 Scope of the Strategy 2009 – 2010

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The scope of the Strategy for the Torfaen area sets out the framework for Young Carers multi agency services from January 2009 - December 2010.

The Strategy has been produced by the Young Carers Strategy Group for the Torfaen Children and Young People's Framework Partnership.

The overall aim of the Strategy is to raise awareness of, and improve outcomes for, Young Carers and their needs arising from their caring roles and responsibilities. It will also strengthen multi-agency support to achieve a balance between caring and living ordinary lives through services designed to:

- Acknowledge the strengths of Young Carers
- Involve Young Carers in the design and development of support services
- Provide a range of timely, appropriate and quality support
- Ensure that Young Carers and their families have access to early interventions that support the family as a whole
- Include Young Carers awareness raising as part of existing and future training programmes for staff from key agencies
- Support Young Carers whilst performing a range of tasks for family members
- Regularly monitor and review the support given to Young Carers
- Maximise the development of Young Carers in order to enable them to fulfil their potential.

Section 5: Analysis of Young Carers and Research

Section 5 Analysis of Young Carers and Research

The 2001 Census suggests that there are around 175,000 Young Carers in the UK. Previous figures suggested that the numbers were between 20,000 and 50,000 children and young people caring for members of their own family.

The next Census, in 2011, will again include a question to help identify carers.

Information from MIND 2007 suggests that:

- According to the Carers National Association, 29 per cent of all Young Carers are providing care for someone with a mental health problem
- The average age of Young Carers is 12
- 56% of Young Carers live in lone parent families
- 10% of Young Carers are caring for more than one person
- 20% of Young Carers and their families receive no outside support services other than their contact with the Young Carers Project.

More recently The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, which currently supports 15,500 Young Carers, published a report jointly with Alcohol Concern highlighting the negative effect that a parent's chronic drinking can have on their children's wellbeing. The report 'Keeping it in the Family' estimates that approximately one million children live with a parent who is dependent on drink. It highlights cases where a parent's drinking is so debilitating that children have been forced into caring roles.

It is difficult to be certain how many Young Carers live in Torfaen as so many young people do not identify themselves to services. However, in March 2008 the Young Carers Project identified that there were 100 Young Carers known to the project.

Section 6: About Young Carers

- 6.1 What do Young Carers do?
- 6.2 The impact of caring
- 6.3 What do Young Carers want?
- 6.4 Pen picture from some of our Young Carers

Section About Young Carers

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6.1 What do Young Carers do?

Young Carers perform a range of caring tasks:

- Domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing
- General care and support such as nursing type tasks – giving medication, changing dressings, assisting with mobility
- Emotional support – ‘being there’ and in some cases providing a safety net for the person they care for
- Intimate care – washing, dressing and assisting with toilet requirements
- Child care – helping with younger siblings in addition to other caring tasks
- Other tasks – helping with household and other administration tasks, bill paying, accompanying to hospital / support groups and other social events
- Responsible for contacting emergency help
- Responsible for making the decision of when to contact emergency support.

6.2 The impact of caring

There are positive effects of caring that are reported by Young Carers themselves such as learning practical skills, feeling good about themselves because they are supporting someone close to them and an increased sense of responsibility.

However Young Carers often miss out on many everyday activities that other young people take for granted. The impact of this may lead to:

- Educational problems, e.g. lateness or absence because of their caring responsibilities/tiredness, loss of concentration/diminished opportunities for extra curricular activities or the completion of homework
- Limited opportunities, horizons and aspirations

- Limited opportunities for social and leisure activities
- A lack of understanding from peers and restricted friendships
- Isolation, a feeling of exclusion and of being an outsider
- Bullying
- ‘Stigma by association’ related to a physical disability or mental health illness
- Fearing what professionals might do
- Living with silence and fear
- Health and emotional difficulties including self harm
- Unexpected and early entry to adult responsibility often resulting in difficulties in transition to becoming an adult.

6.3 What do Young Carers want?

Young Carers in Torfaen, working with Children’s Services as part of the reviewing team for this Strategy, have identified factors they feel they need most when accessing services. These included having consistency, having someone to talk to, someone who understands their circumstances, is non-judgemental, and is able to empathise and represent them without further threat of a ‘cascade of intervention’ or separation from their families. They identified that they would like:

- Recognition of their role
- Services that are acceptable and accessible
- Support when and where they feel they need it – especially in schools or other educational settings
- Information/training, particularly on the cared-for person’s illness/disability
- A break from their caring responsibilities
- To meet with Young Carers in a similar situation
- Support for the whole family – including benefits advice
- Having a say in decisions.

6.4 Pen picture from some of our Young Carers

14 year old Ryan – I help care for my mum who suffers with her mental health and is addicted to alcohol. I have to take responsibility for household tasks, paying bills and looking after her when she is unwell. I worry a lot when I'm not there to keep an eye on her because of what she might do. People say I shouldn't bother, it's hard but I do it because I love her – she's my mum.

16 year old Louise – I help care for my step brother who is disabled. He is unable to walk or talk and because he is heavy it takes two people to lift him. I help my step mum lifting him and give her a break by feeding him, helping him get dressed and keeping him occupied.

13 year old Jamie – I live at home with my mum who is unwell and needs help with most things. I help with everything including household chores, shopping and personal care. We have help from carers who come in to give me a break. I like helping although at times I find it hard.

Section 7: What is currently in place for Young Carers in Torfaen

Section 7 What is currently in place for Young Carers in Torfaen

- A Young Carers Project is based in the voluntary sector. The Project is run by Crossroads South East Wales and funded by the local authority's Social Care and Housing Service, Children and Young People's Partnership and from charitable sources
- A Young Carers information booklet and promotional leaflet
- Within Crossroads SE Wales is a service to support Young Carers of people with mental health problems
- Torfaen Carers Strategy 2008-11 (which includes a section on Young Carers)
- Information for Young Carers on the Torfaen Council website
- Developing facilities and resources at Torfaen Carers Centre specifically for Young Carers
- Joint assessment visits by the Children's Services Division and the Crossroads Young Carers Project Worker.

Section 8: Priorities for 2009 – 2010

Section 8 Priorities for 2009 – 2010



The priorities for January 2009 - December 2010 are based on:

- Work completed by the Young Carers Strategy Group
- Information gathered from consultation with Young Carers
- Information from the Carers Forum Consultation
- Relevant legislation
- Standards contained in the NSF Chapter 6 relating to Children and Young People in Special Circumstances along with Chapter 2 – Key Actions Universal to all Children.

The 2009 - 2010 Strategy has identified ten key priorities which will make a difference for Young Carers:

- 1 Information in place for existing and potential Young Carers to recognise their role and seek assessment
- 2 Further develop peer-support groups (NSF6.2)
- 3 An inclusive approach to services and additional targeted services (NSF 6.4)
- 4 Establish or maintain monitoring of take-up of service provision to ensure equitable access (NSF6.4)
- 5 Monitor attendance and requirements for additional support at school to ensure the Young Carer's needs are met (NSF6.6)
- 6 Ensure Young Carers have a high profile within the Children and Young People's Partnership
- 7 Raise awareness of Young Carers with key agencies in order to identify their special circumstances and make appropriate referrals
- 8 Maintain and develop Young Carers' assessments
- 9 Develop the work of the Young Carers Project
- 10 Maintain appropriate models for consultation with all Young Carers and their families.

Section 9: Making sure the Strategy results in an improvement in services for Young Carers

Section 9 Making sure the Strategy results in an improvement in services for Young Carers

It is essential if this Strategy is to improve the lives of, and outcomes for, Young Carers in Torfaen that monitoring of the Strategy and Implementation Plan takes place. This should be undertaken by regular meetings of a delivery and monitoring group.

The monitoring group should include:

- Young Carers
- Representatives from the Young Carers Project (Crossroads SE Wales), Social Care and Housing Services (both Community Care and Children Services) and Educational and Health staff

Annual reports and quarterly feedback should take place with the Carers Strategy Group to inform and discuss progress as well as the Core Aim 2 Group of the Children and Young People's Partnership.

Appendix

Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004

The Children Act 1989

Carers (Recognition and Services Act) 1995

The Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000

The Children Act 2004

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure

Appendix

Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004:

The Act amends the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 and the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. This Act gives carers more choice and opportunities to lead a more fulfilling life. It similarly:

- Places a duty on local authorities to tell carers of all ages, including Young Carers, about their rights. Informing children of their right to an assessment must be undertaken in the context of family assessments and undertaken in an appropriate manner.
- Places a duty on local authorities to consider whether the carer works or wishes to work, wishes to study or have some leisure activities, when they are carrying out a carer's assessment. This applies to any assessments carried out under the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995, which has no age limit, and assessments of young people aged 16 and 17 years caring for adults carried out under the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000.

The Children Act 1989:

The intention of the Children Act 1989 is to enshrine good practice in making decisions with, and on behalf of, children by setting out a wide range of checklists, duties and rights for those involved in such decisions. The Children Act places specific responsibilities upon social services in respect of 'children in need.' Section 17 (10) of the Act states that a child should be taken to be 'in need' if:

- He/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/ her of services by a local authority or his/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him/her of such services; or
- He/she is disabled.

Given this definition, in many cases children and young people who have the responsibility of caring for someone will be considered 'children in need'. The annex to the letter to Directors of Social Services from the

Chief Inspector (1995) states that 'many Young Carers with significant caring responsibilities should therefore be seen as children in need'.

Once a child or young person has been assessed as being 'in need' the Children Act specifies that a range of support services must be made available. Section 17 (1) refers to a general duty to provide a 'range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs'.

Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995:

This Act came into force in April 1996. The Act gives rights to a large group of people, including children, who provide a substantial amount of care and support to relatives or friends on a regular basis.

The Act places a duty on local authority social services to assess the ability of a carer to provide and continue to provide care to the person being cared for. This definition includes young people under the age of 18 years and enables them to request an assessment when the person they are caring for is being assessed.

However, if a young person does not request an assessment, social services should still consider whether there is a need to assist the child either through the provision of community care services for the user or through the provision of services to promote the welfare of the child.

The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000:

The only group of young people who have caring responsibilities who can benefit from this Act are those over the age of 16 years who care for someone over the age of 18 years. The Act enables these young people to ask for an assessment of their own needs from their local authority and for the local authority to provide services to meet those needs. Young people over 16 years caring for people over 18 years can also access direct payments to help them to have more choices and control over the services they use.

Children Act 2004:

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on services to ensure that every child, whatever their background or circumstances, has the support they need.

The Children and Families (Wales) Measure:

Based on provisions of the Children Act 2004, the Child Poverty element of the 'Measure' places duties on all public agencies to prioritise child poverty and set out clear objectives through a published strategy (Children and Young Person's Plan) for the reduction of child poverty in future years.