

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 24 November 2022

Young Carers

Recommendations

We recommend that the Committee:

- a. Accept the sub-group's report, particularly having regard to:
 - i. reassurances that the initial in-house assessment of young carers is robust,
 - ii. that performance data development with regard to the young carers service should more accurately evidence the types of care, ages and hours of care given, and
 - iii. more proactive signposting to the broad range of support services for young carers is being developed by the Young Carers service;
- b. Agree to become young carers service advocates, raising the profile of the services available within schools and the benefits to both schools and their pupils in taking advantage of these services;
- c. Write again on behalf of the Committee to inform the young carers of the activity resulting from this work and specifically from their meeting with us, thanking them again for the part they played; and
- d. Write to Cathryn Rayner at the Young Carers Service thanking her for the excellent work she and her team undertake in supporting young carers.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Young Carer Sub-group

Summary

1. Following the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee's inclusion of the role of young carers on their 2021/22 work programme the Committee scrutinised the issue at their April 2022 meeting and undertook further investigations, meeting with young carers to better understand the services and support they receive.

Report

Background

2. As part of their work planning in June 2021 the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee included the role of young carers in their 2021/22 work programme. Members wanted to scrutinise the support given to Staffordshire young carers and consider the level of caring roles undertaken, seeking reassurance that these were not at a level that should be provided by social care.
3. At their meeting of 21 April 2022, the Committee received a presentation on the new Together for Carers Service. A new all age strategy had been jointly developed with the five clinical commissioning groups entitled "All Together for Carers (2019-2023)". Implementation of the new service had been delayed due to the pandemic, but finally went live in April 2021, with the commissioned service to run from April 2021-March 2024, with an option to extend to March 2026.
4. N-Compass is the lead commissioned provider for the new service, providing easily accessible information advice and guidance that explains when and how to find support, as well as guidance around eligibility. It makes service referrals as appropriate, for example to the preventative support offer, an enhanced range of preventative support for carers of all ages in the community. They also provide further assessment and support planning where necessary and access to formal support to meet assessed eligible needs.
5. Under the new service arrangements, the initial support and assessment of young carers has been brought back in-house. Skilled, well-trained officers undertake the carers assessment to establish the level and types of care given and the impact on the individual young carer's wellbeing. This assessment identifies where care needs meet the statutory threshold for a referral to adult social care. The carers assessment takes account of the type of care given and the number of hours taken by these caring roles. Referrals to n-compass and the young carers service are made as part of the assessment process.
6. Details shared with the Committee from engagement activities in developing the Strategy had highlighted that:
 - a. Young Carers report their highest need is for support to help them manage at home in their caring role; and
 - b. Some felt there was a need to get better at identifying carers so that we can help to avoid carer crisis.

7. The Together For Carers Service specific performance outcome for young carers is:

“children and young people with caring responsibilities have the support they need to learn, develop, thrive and enjoy positive childhoods.”

8. The success measures for this outcome are identified as:

- a. Young carers report that they know who to speak to if they need support
- b. An increase in the number of young carers known to their school or education provider in order that appropriate support can be provided when required with the aim of improving attendance, improving emotional wellbeing and reducing risk; and
- c. 95% of young carers that want to, have been offered access to peer support and a break from their caring role.

9. Performance data shared at the 21 April meeting had given details of the number of young carers known to the service, their age range, gender and approximate number of hours support they provide for their family member per week. Performance data had been given for 125 young carers receiving services during the first three quarters of 2021-22. From this it had been reported that 43% of young carers were caring for someone with physical disabilities or sensory impairment, approximately 60% were providing between 0-10 hours of support per week and approximately 35% were providing between 11-30 hours of support per week.

10. A greater degree of detail behind these figures had been requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for future performance reporting to help identify the types of caring roles undertaken and allow identification of the age range of carers undertaking these hours of care. The Committee had concerns that, from the data given, it would not be possible to identify if a young carer between the ages of 0-5 was undertaking 30 hours of care per week. Whilst we were reassured this was not the case, a different method of data recording would help evidence this. The minutes of the 21 April Overview and Scrutiny meeting recorded the Committee’s recommendation that development of the data recording would enable a more accurate picture of the type and hours of care undertaken to be evidenced.

11. Also at the April meeting the Committee asked for the opportunity to meet with young carers to seek first hand experience of how the Strategy was working and the level of support received. Initially it was suggested that Members attend young carer respite sessions, but after further consideration it was agreed that a small group of Committee Members

would meet young carers outside of their respite sessions so that these were not disrupted.

12. Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members Bob Spencer (Chairman), Janet Eagland, Gillian Pardesi and Kath Perry met with young carers in September. The meeting was very informal and interactive, enabling honest and forthright opinions and feelings to be shared. We were awestruck by the resilience, empathy, tenacity, and confidence of the young carers we met, whose ages ranged from 8-15 years.

13. The young carers were asked to consider 5 questions:

a. Do you feel supported?

The responses were yes, overall, they did feel supported, including comments that "there's always someone around even if I don't want them and if I need them, I always know someone to text or call" and "yes, because I have a place where I can talk when it gets too much"

b. How are you supported?

Responses included "someone I trust and open up to about things that get tough", "peer support", "counsellor", "different groups", "my teacher, she helps if I have a bad day"

c. What is the thing that helps you most?

These responses included "talking about it", "music and friends", "peer support is very cool as I can talk openly in a group my own age", "no matter how much I push them away they still show they care, and they don't give up trying to help"

d. If you were struggling with your caring role, how would you get support?

Responses were talking to: friends; their counsellor; family support worker; teachers; or contacts from the young carers service.

e. If you could share one thing with people who aren't young carers, what would it be?

The comments shared were:
"It's not easy"

“You lose time to enjoy being a kid and relying on others having to make decisions and looking after someone isn’t exciting or fun, it’s draining”

“It may sound exciting and fun, but it isn’t”

“Never ever think something is simple, you have no idea what my life is like or who I am as a person. My life made me grow up so I’m not like every other girl my age, if people think they know who you are they probably don’t, so don’t let them think they do.”

“I had to grow up quick so I’m very mature”

“Be yourself”

14. From broader discussions with the young carers key points shared were:

15. **Immediacy of support** – concerns were shared around young carers having to wait for meetings with their social worker or family support worker. There are several issues here, there is a national as well as a local difficulty in retention of social workers. It may be that changes to social worker and/or the use of agency social workers could therefore be impactful, however, irrespective of this none of these are 24hour services. There are, however, different avenues of support which have been highlighted with us by respite care colleagues, such as the Silver Line App, which would offer out of hours support.

16. **Awareness of support** – The different support avenues should already be signposted to young carers via schools, although having listened to the feedback from young carers, Young Carer Service colleagues have identified a need to better highlight these different support avenues and are considering how best this can be achieved in a more proactive way. Raising the awareness of young carers to the range of out of hours support, help lines and websites available to them when they are not in school, or respite care activities, should help address some of the concerns around accessibility of support.

17. **School support** – the young carers shared different school experiences with us, some very positive, some negative. (It should be noted that only a few Staffordshire schools were represented from within the group of young carers we met.)

18. One individual and one school in particular were raised with us for praise by the young carers.

a. Leek First School was highlighted as a school where support for young carers wellbeing is excellent, with complete confidence in the teaching staff that support would be given appropriately whenever needed;

- b. Mrs Julie Clayton at King Edward VI High School, Stafford, who's supportive work for the wellbeing of students was shared with us as invaluable. We understand that the school structure at King Edward's supports the wellbeing work of Mrs Clayton.
19. However, some young carers had less positive experiences, with a particular concern around a lack of awareness of their unique situation amongst some staff which could result in poor support and/or have a negative impact on wellbeing and performance.
20. A set of free training is available to schools from the Young Carers Service in the form of Young Carer Aware for all staff and Carer Champion training for an individual or small group of staff. The Carer Champion training shares good practice recommendations to help appropriately support young carers, including the production of a single page profile that is owned by the young carer and shared with school staff, so they are aware of the circumstances for that individual. This profile can be regularly updated and removes the anxiety for the young carer of continually having to share their story. This is particularly important to ensure school staff understand the circumstances, can tailor support appropriately and negate the painful experience for young carers of having to suffer the distress caused through the constant re-telling of their story.
21. The Young Carers Service also provides a range of services to schools including assemblies for pupils and "we care", a course for young carers. Of the free training and wider offer available, less than 10% of Staffordshire schools have taken up this opportunity. Whilst schools themselves have had an incredibly difficult time over the pandemic years, there is a role for us as members to play in highlighting the availability of these opportunities and championing their importance within our school communities.

Conclusions

22. In undertaking this piece of work our main concern had been to ensure the roles undertaken by young carers were not at a level that should be provided by social care. We are satisfied that the in-house assessment undertaken by skilled county council staff is robust, identifying inappropriate levels of care and referring to social care services as appropriate, in line with the Care Act and the Children and Family Act 2014.
23. We have already highlighted our concerns around the performance data, suggesting that for this to effectively evidence the hours and types of

care undertaken by children of different ages there is a need to give greater detail and subdivide the current data ranges reported.

24. We were impressed with the officers we met from the young carers service. In particular Cathryn Rayner, Team Leader for the Service, who is clearly dedicated to her work and knows the young carers well. There are also a wide range of services available to support young carers and indeed to support schools in their approach to young carers. We already have reassurance from Cathryn Rayner and the Young Carers Service that they will be working towards more proactively signposting the range of support and services available to young carers, particularly those that are out of hours services. There is, however, a clear role for us as councillors, and specifically for us as members of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee in championing the importance of the free support, guidance and training available to schools from the young carers team, raising their profile and advocating the benefits of this service to both schools and their young carers.

25. We were delighted to have met with the young carers themselves and were overwhelmed by their resilience and confidence. We have written to thank them for giving up their valuable time to meet with us and for speaking so openly and frankly about their experiences. We intend to write again to explain the outcome of this work to show that their time meeting with us has created positive change.

26. We have also written to congratulate the school and staff member who were held up by the young carers as those who had helped and supported them so positively.

Link to Strategic Plan

27. Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence.

28. Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

[Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda 21 April 2022](#)

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