

# **Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Date: 4 June 2013**

Agenda item: 13

Wards: All

## **Subject: Merton Young Carers Strategy 2013-2016**

Lead officer: Yvette Stanley, Director Children, Schools and Families

Lead member: Cllr Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member Children, Schools and Families

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officer: Simon Deakin, Children's Trust Board Partnership Manager

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### **Recommendations:**

A. That the HWB receives and notes the Young Carers Strategy

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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1.1. A revision of the Merton Young Cares Strategy which covers the multi agency response to this increasingly prominent group of vulnerable young people; and their families.

## **2 DETAILS**

2.1. The report details a definition of inappropriate caring roles and identifies a series of priorities and actions to address the negative impact of these roles.

## **3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

3.1. None

## **4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

4.1. Consultation with young people carried out in the preparation of the strategy.

## **5 TIMETABLE**

5.1. The report covers 2013-2016 and will be published in early June 2013.

## **6 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

Young Carers Strategy 2013-2016. Final draft.

# Merton Young Carers Strategy

2013-2016



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## Foreword

Merton Children's Trust and Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is delighted to present this strategy to support young carers in our borough. It has been produced by a group of partners in children's services from the voluntary and community sector, health and Merton council.

Young carers are an often overlooked and vulnerable group of young people with a great variety of needs and circumstances. Young Carers take on responsibilities more usually associated with an adult which may be inappropriate - responsibilities in caring for parents, siblings and others, who could have disability, mental ill health, drug or alcohol dependency or a whole range of other issues. This can affect the young people's ability to simply be children, enjoy their childhood and grow up with the same opportunities as their peers. They can be subject to stigmatisation or bullying and may significantly underachieve at school. Their safeguarding is therefore a key priority for the MSCB.

There are more young carers than many people realise – nearly 600 known about in Merton with the actual number likely to be a good deal higher. One of the challenges of the new strategy is to get a better picture of the true situation in the borough to ensure they get the best support and help possible. There is already much good work to build on, particularly the Young Carers Project run by Carers Support Merton.

The strategy will cover the period from 2012-15 and is accompanied by an action plan. Delivery of this will be overseen by the Policy & Practice subgroup of the MSCB and progress reported annually to the main Board.

## Introduction

This multi-agency strategy sets out the issues affecting young carers and their families and priorities to address those needs to make a real difference in their quality of young carers' lives. The strategy was originally developed by the Young Carers Steering Group<sup>1</sup> in consultation with young carers and partners across the children and families sector, and under the auspices of Merton's Children's Trust arrangements. To reinforce the safeguarding and child protection element of support for Young Carers, responsibility is now with the MSCB and the Policy & Practice subgroup.

## Who are Young Carers?

A young carer is a child or young person under the age of 18 whose life is affected by the disability, long term illness/condition of another person. This will include physical, sensory and learning disability, long term illness, mental ill health, alcohol or substance misuse, and conditions such as HIV/AIDS. Young carers provide, or help to provide, care and support to that person and take on a level of responsibility which is normally associated with an adult. The care they provide could be personal, practical and/or emotional.

This strategy presents a vision for improving outcomes for all identified actual and potential young carers in Merton. In implementing this, partners will work hard so that:

- Young carers are safeguarded appropriately and protected from any harm which may result from their caring role.
- Every young person who is a young carer receives adequate support to ensure that they do not take on an unduly heavy or inappropriate caring role.
- Every young carer has the opportunity to extend and fulfil their potential and receive sufficient support to enable them to attend school regularly and benefit from the opportunities offered to all young people at school, college or education provision.
- Every young carer has opportunity to access positive activities.
- Every young carer receives a range of timely, practical and emotional support to help them manage their caring role. Support and information will be readily accessible.
- Professionals recognise that young carers are entitled to be children first and ensure access to leisure activities and having fun.
- Young carers are involved in the design, development and review of services to support them and their families.
- All partner agencies will raise awareness to profile the needs of young carers.
- All partner agencies will commit to improving data collection on the number of young carers and information related to their needs.
- All partner agencies will take a whole-family approach to work with young carers, in the context of an awareness of the individual and cultural identity of each family.

## Young Carers in Merton

- There is no recent accurate figure for Young Carers in Merton, but As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, 255 Young Carers were known to Carers Support Merton's Young Carers project.

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<sup>1</sup> Representatives from Carers Support Merton, Merton Mencap, Crossroads Care South Thames, Merton Council, Children's Services and other relevant sections of the Children, Schools & Families Department, plus Adult Social Care; the Primary Care Trust and South-West London and St George's Mental Health Trust.

- 121 are aged between 5 and 11 years old
- 134 are aged between 12 and 18 Years old
- 163 are caring for a parent

## Young Carers – the national picture

Census data published in May 2013 shows the number of five to seven year old young carers in England has increased by around 80% over the last decade to 9,371. 166,363 children in England are caring for their parents, siblings and family members. This is up by a fifth from when the last Census was conducted in 2001.

Nearly 15,000 children up to the age of 17 are providing more than 50 hours of care every week.

According to the Young Carers in Focus (YCiF) partnership it is likely to massively underrepresent the true picture, <sup>1</sup>, led by The Children's Society and funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

The Children's Society's has found that young carers are one and a half times more likely to have a long-standing illness or disability or special educational need than their peers. The Census reveals that more than 2,000 young carers have "bad" or "very bad" health.

A report by the Children's Society, published in May 2013 finds that:

- Young carers are one and half times more likely to have a special educational need or a long-standing illness or disability
- One in 12 young carers is caring for more than 15 hours per week
- Around one in 20 miss school because of their caring responsibilities
- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level - the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers
- Young carers are more than one-and-a-half times as likely to be from black, Asian or minority ethnic communities, and are twice as likely to not speak English as their first language
- The average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer
- Young carers are more likely than the national average to be 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) between the ages of 16 and 19
- Despite improved awareness of the needs of young carers, there is no strong evidence that young carers are any more likely than their peers to come into contact with support agencies

## What do young carers in Merton want?

Research in for the first Young Carers Strategy in 2009 indicated that:

- Young carers generally enjoy aspects of their caring role
- Young Carers would like more support for the family
- Young carers have underlying concerns about their health which includes, by inference, their emotional health and they would benefit from a key person in their lives to whom they felt safe to go and talk about personal issues.
- Most young carers wanted more of the same current activities, but with regularity both in term time and holidays. Some made suggestions for additional activities.
- It was evident that young carers would like to go on outings as a family as well as individually.
- 19% of young carers said that their caring role sometimes gets in the way of homework.
- It was clear the young carers wanted to be able to do ordinary things like other children and their caring role does get in the way of them simply being young people.
- It appears that current young carers services in Merton are basically providing what the young carers want -1 to 1, family work, activities and outings, but need additional activities to give variety.

## National Context

### National Strategies

There is recognition of Young Carers' needs in documents such as Every Child Matters (2003), Health For All Children (2002), the Education Acts (1996 & 2002), the Children's Plan (2007) and *Carers at The Heart of 21st Century Families and Communities* (2008) – revised in 2010 as : *Recognised, valued and supported: Next steps for the Carers Strategy*.

*This sets out an outcome that:*

'Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive and to enjoy positive childhoods.'

There is continued pressure from groups such as the Children's Society, Princess Royal Trust for Carers, Crossroads, Children in Need and Barnados

The national carers strategy concludes that young carers, like all children, should be able to have an education, enjoy good health and have leisure time. With improved recognition and support young carers chances of being denied such opportunities will be reduced.

### National Research

The Children's Society in 2013 produced a report, *Hidden from View*, which analyses government data tracking 15,000 children across England. It reveals the significant long-term impact that caring has on a child's life.

Research published in May 2010 by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and The Children's Society indicates that over two thirds of young carers have had to cope with bullying at school.

More than half of the young carers surveyed felt unsupported or misunderstood by their teachers; 39% said that none of the teachers at their school were even aware of their caring role.

The Trust has launched an information pack 'Supporting Young Carers: a resource for schools' alongside a poster campaign to run in all secondary schools across the UK, to help address some of these issues.

The survey of 700 6-18 year-olds also revealed that:

- 60% do not think their teachers understand what life is like for them
- Over 50% do not feel supported, although teachers are aware of their caring role
- 38% worry about the person they care for while they are at school

70% of the young people surveyed agreed with the statement that "being a young carer has made my life more difficult".

- There are 175,000 young carers in the UK (2001 Census figures – most recent)
- 27% of young carers (aged 11–15) miss school or experience educational difficulties.
- 68% of young carers are bullied and feel isolated in schools.
- 13,000 of the UK's young carers care for over 50 hours a week.

(Source: Princess Royal Trust for Carers)

Research from the BBC in 2010 indicated there are many more Young Carers than officially recognised

A survey of more than 4,000 UK school pupils found one in 12 had moderate or high levels of caring responsibility - four times the official figure. For the UK as a whole, it would mean 700,000 young people taking on caring duties that would normally be expected of an adult.

## **Key Principles of Practice for Young Carers and their Families.**

The Children's Society have published the "Key Principles of Practice" which, are intended to be used alongside legislation and current guidance and to support agencies to respond to the recommendations of national policy that affect young carers and their families in ways that are sensitive to their needs.

The Principles are:

- Safeguarding - Working towards the prevention of children undertaking inappropriate care of any family member.
- Whole family approach - needs led assessments, ensuring that service provision is child focused and family orientated.
- Young carers and their families are the experts in their own lives and must be fully involved in development and delivery of support.
- Education and Career Choices - Young carers will have the same access as their peers.
- Raising awareness of young carers and monitoring and evaluating services regularly.
- Local young carers projects and direct services should be available to provide safe, quality support to those children who continue to be affected by a caring role.

It is important to recognise that:

- Young carers may be hidden and there is a need to develop pro-active practice to enable families to feel able to ask for support.
- The reasons children undertake inappropriate levels of care may be complex and to resolve them may require a multi-faceted approach.
- Procedures need to be agreed so that the same principles are followed whatever route is taken to gain access to an assessment and services. This will require inter-agency planning and collaboration for strategy and service provision.
- Timely effective assessments of both the person who needs care and the whole family could prevent a child undertaking inappropriate levels of care in the first place.

*"Many of today's young carers will be the adult carers of tomorrow. Doing something now to promote their equality of opportunity, health and information needs, is as much a preventative strategy and a sound investment as it is a matter of social justice and a mark of a decent society."* (Professor Saul Becker, Loughborough University – 2004)



## **Priorities**

Many young carers have been very clear that they enjoy many aspects of their caring role. They feel that they make a positive contribution to their family and the experience has helped them to become mature and independent, as well as to learn valuable life skills. Many feel that caring has strengthened their family bonds.

However, young carers could also identify negative aspects to their caring role, and it is nationally recognised that many young carers experience poor outcomes. This strategy therefore concentrates on actions to prevent young carers being harmed by inappropriate caring and to offer the support they need to learn, develop and thrive and to enjoy positive childhoods and youth and achieve.

### **Key priorities**

#### **Identification and information**

The key to young carers support is identification, and good intelligence.

#### **Engagement and strategic support**

Ensuring that all agencies working with young people are aware and actively supporting young carers.

#### **Early Help, Intervention and Prevention**

Timely identification can ensure that the right help is provided and that young people are safeguarded from the adverse effects of inappropriate caring roles.

#### **Intervention and targeting**

Where intervention and targeting is necessary, commissioning and service delivery will specify specialist services to target the most vulnerable and needy.

#### **Partnerships and Process – a Whole Family Approach.**

Research shows that consistently the first priority stated by young carers themselves is for better care and support for the cared-for person. However when the focus is solely on the cared-for person the role of the young carer and the impact on them can very easily be overlooked. Therefore this strategy is committed to a whole family approach, where the impact of the illness or disability on everybody in the family is considered fully as part of an assessment, and services are put in place that consider the needs of the whole family. This requires streamlined processes of multi-agency support.

A multi-agency whole family approach also demands good understanding from each agency potentially involved about the needs of young carers – and this includes adult services, health and education as well as children's services. Therefore this strategy includes aspects about publicity and training.

Central to the implementation of this strategy is the continued development of clear understanding and awareness between different teams and agencies so that young carers do not “fall through the net” and are protected from inappropriate caring.

## Action Plan

Action	Measurement and monitoring	Outcome / Priority	By who?	By when?
1. Research – identify any links with inappropriate caring role and children who have gone on to be on Child Protection Plans or Looked After.	Production of report	<p>Identification of any causal link between inappropriate caring roles and later statutory intervention</p> <p>Identification and information</p> <p>Intervention and targeting</p>	<p>Young Carers Project</p> <p>Children's Social Care</p>	End 2013
2. Improve engagement with schools – produce protocol on Young Carers support	Produce and monitor protocol	<p>Ensure that awareness and response to young carers is consistent across Merton schools</p> <p>Identification and information</p> <p>Engagement and strategic support</p>	<p>Young Carers Group</p> <p>Young Carers Project</p>	End 2013
3. Engagement with relevant services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Mental Health – building on the Big Lottery project – referrals are low.</li> <li>o Adult Social Care –Drugs and Alcohol – referrals are low.</li> <li>o Acute care.</li> </ul>	<p>Increased number of referrals</p> <p>Annual report to Merton Safeguarding Children Board</p>	<p>Improved engagement with key agencies</p> <p>Engagement and strategic support</p>	<p>Young Carers Group</p> <p>Young Carers Project</p> <p>Adult Social</p>	End 2013

	o Public Health - school nurses from April 2013.				Care	
4.	Improve liaison with the Education Welfare Team to assist identification	SLA to ensure reporting of identified young carers	Identification and information	EWS	Young Carers Project	End 2013
5.	Training for practitioners.	Ensure that training is provided and available to key partners. Monitor through SIS	Identification and information	MSCB Training	MSCB Training	End 2013
6.	Training awareness for young people – PHSE etc. Explore ways of introducing awareness of young carers into the curriculum	Monitor through SIS	Identification and information	School Improvement Service Young Carers Project	School Improvement Service Young Carers Project	End 2013
7.	Early Years – improve liaison for early identification.	Produce agreement	Early Help, Intervention and Prevention	Early Years & Childcare Service	Early Years & Childcare Service	End 2013
8.	Young Carers Champion in the local authority – senior officer and a councillor	Role agreed and developed	Engagement and strategic support	Children, Schools & Families	Children, Schools & Families	March 2013
9.	Monitoring and reporting to MSCB – annual report	Produce report	Engagement and strategic support	Children, Schools & Families MSCB Business Management	Children, Schools & Families MSCB Business Management	As required for the Forward Plan of the MSCB

## Specific issues

### Health

#### The issues

Young carers...

- ...are concerned about their own health, especially their emotional well-being. They feel they need someone to talk to about their worries.
- ...physical health can suffer, often as a result of tiredness or a poor diet.
- ...can have little time available for active pursuits and exercise
- ... can be exposed to inappropriate caring roles

#### Improvement

We will aim to :-

1. Ensure that young carers have someone to talk to where they can safely express their concern about their emotional wellbeing.
2. Support young people to be appropriately informed about the disability or illness that affects the family, and know what to do in an emergency.
3. Ensure that young carers are protected from inappropriate caring.
4. Support young carers to make healthy lifestyle choices, access opportunities for relaxation and physical exercise.
5. Ensure health professionals are well informed about the needs of young carers and services available to them.

## Safeguarding

### The issues

Young carers...

...often report that they are victims of bullying, although local data is patchy.

...parenting can be impaired or compromised due to substance misuse or mental ill health.

...can be relied upon for adult tasks (eg child care, cooking, giving medicines) or adult levels of responsibility, which may lead to increased safety and emotional vulnerability.

...may have an increased risk of offending locally, e.g. through anger management issues; but little is understood about this.

....may be compromised in terms of accessing support and services due to their caring role

### Achievement

### The issues

Young carers...

...have fewer chances for time away from caring to have fun and enjoy themselves.

...families can have limited opportunities to enjoy themselves

### Improvement

We will aim to :-

1. Identify the extent of bullying as a result of young people's caring role, and provide support and advice to young carers who experience the bullying.

2. Ensure professionals who are supporting parents are trained to be aware of the needs of young carers; and the impact that illness/mental illness/disability and substance misuse etc. can have on their ability to parent.

3. Support young carers to ensure their own personal health and safety and emotional wellbeing.

4. Research whether locally young carers are more at risk of offending, and implement appropriate action depending on findings.

5. Ensure that these young people have information and support to access any services they require.

### Improvement

We will aim to :-

1. Provide opportunities for young carers to enjoy themselves within specialist projects and help them to access mainstream activities.

2. Provide support for families to enjoy time together.

together as a family.

...can have educational difficulties – eg frequent absences, falling behind with homework or revision, persistent lateness.

...often have parents who find it difficult to access parents evenings and school events and to organise activities for their child.

...or their families may see the caring role as a stigma, and this can contribute to the complexity of enabling access to services.

3. Identify young carers in schools and ensure that support services are appropriate and timely.

4. Provide support for young carers who are not achieving to their potential educationally because of their caring role.

5. Provide schools with tools to help support educational opportunities for learning about and de-stigmatising young carers for pupils and students

6. Ensure young carers are able to have breaks away from their caring role.

## **Positive activity and participation**

### **The issues**

Young carers...

...can have little opportunity to engage and participate in decision making processes

...can have fewer choices and feel they have little control

...may be unidentified by agencies, and their numbers significantly underestimated.

## **Deprivation and child poverty**

### **The issues**

Young carers...

... are more likely to live in poverty, and in families without a breadwinner

...can experience more difficulty in accessing further and higher education and qualifications

### **Improvement**

We will aim to :-

1. Ensure that young carers are encouraged to be engaged and able to participate in key decisions on local provision
2. Engage young carers with planning and management of services and activities
3. Engage young carers with planning and management of services and activities
4. Listen to young carers when key decisions affecting their lives are made

### **Improvement**

We will aim to :-

1. Ensure that families that include young carers are given information and guidance on benefits and other entitlements relevant to their situation and supported to get benefits by properly trained staff.
2. Give support to families with debt and budgeting issues.
3. Support young carers with the transition into adulthood to access further education, training and employment.
4. Ensure that work to address child poverty locally recognises the position of young carers.

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