

The Oxfordshire Young Carers' Strategy 2008-2013

What it is like to be a young carer...

Young carers lives are upside down! - By Cara (17 year old young carer in Oxfordshire)

- As a young carer its hard because you're whole life is turned upside down. You're a young person who has to become an adult before your body matures; so you're taking on responsibility that you shouldn't have to.
- You don't ask for the responsibility, the responsibility asks for you.
- When you are young and you take on a caring role as you grow up you find that you never get out of that caring role because you feel that the person you care for needs you all the time. Emotionally and mentally you still care even if you are not caring physically.
- Day to day is not planned you don't know what is going to happen.
- It's stressful, worrying, scary and uncomfortable; you can also feel good as well though because some days don't feel as stressful as other days.
- You wake up and have to think positive because if you don't the day will be a hard day for you, because the person you care for is expecting and relying on you.

Voice for Young Carers...

A summary by Harry (11), Adrian (13) and Jennifer (14) – (3 young carers from Oxfordshire)

Over the summer period 12 people from Oxfordshire have taken part in a project called Voices for Young Carers (V4YC). What the group has done is drawing stuff and doing stuff; like saying what we do as caring for people. The point of doing this is to come up with a strategy which will help young carers improve their lives and get support. It has been all right, and it has been fun, and we've played cool games. We discuss lots of things about how to improve young carers' lives and our life experiences. It will probably help people and the money there is can help.

Listen up to us because we've got some good advice and usually adults don't listen to children and young people and we are trying to put that right and get what children deserve.

We hope this will make a difference!

Thanks for Picking up the Young Carers' Strategy for Oxfordshire

There are a couple of things you need to know about this document:

- It is large! This is because we think being a young carer is a big deal for lots of children and young people in Oxfordshire.
- It will not fit easily on your office shelf! This is to reflect that being a young person with caring responsibilities is not always easy.

Please keep reading...

1 Purpose of the strategy

The new Oxfordshire Young Carers Strategy 2008-2013 has been developed by young carers with contributions from their parents, specialist young carers' staff, a wide-range of children's and adults' professionals and Oxfordshire county councillors.

It sets out the long-term vision and outcomes for young carers.

In analysing the current position of young carers, their experiences and needs, it identifies 6 sets of things that need to happen to improve day-to-day life for young carers and move them towards achieving their outcomes and overall vision:

- 1 Big Overall Things
- 2 Being Healthy
- 3 Staying Safe
- 4 Enjoying & Achieving
- 5 Making a Positive Contribution
- 6 Achieving Economic Wellbeing

From these, clear strategic priorities and outcomes are distilled. The Young Carers Service Specification is based on these. It is a separate document that shows the different services being set-up. The Service Specification includes dedicated support for young carers and actions which build the capacity of adult and children's services to achieve better outcomes for young carers and their families.

From 2009-10 the investment in services to support young carers is anticipated to increase from approx £200,000 to £400,000 per year for the next two years.

2 What is a Young Carer?

Although there are several different definitions in use, the following definition is the one adopted in Oxfordshire:

“Anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of someone who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, or is affected by substance misuse.” ¹

The third national survey of young carers, who are being supported by specialist young carers projects across the UK, provided the following information which was collected from 6,178 young carers. The majority of young carers care for parents (66%) or siblings (31%) and there are also a small number who care for grandparents or other family members or friends (4%). There are a range of caring tasks which are undertaken by children and young people. These include domestic tasks (68%), general and nursing type care (48%), emotional support (82%), intimate care (18%) and childcare (11%). These tasks vary according to the nature of the cared-for person's illness or disability and the family's individual situation. Ten percent of young carers are caring for more than one person. The care that children and young people provide for their family often means that their own development and needs are compromised. ²

3 How many young carers are there in Oxfordshire?

The estimated number of 11,000 young carers in Oxfordshire is based on national estimates of between 6% and 12% of all children and young people of school age. In Oxfordshire Children & Young People's Survey 2007, 6% of secondary age children report caring for an ill or disabled parent. Therefore the true figure is likely to be higher when sibling-carers are added to the picture.

The figure for primary age children, based on self-reporting, is unusually high at 19% and therefore needs to be treated with caution (surveyed children may have included helping to look after a family member with a minor illness). ³

Apart from the 2007 survey the county council has not established any method of systematically identifying young carers within the school-age population. Work on identification is a key priority.

"It is children's responsibilities that are hidden, not the children themselves.

Due to the universal nature of schools and primary care, all families are known to statutory services, but health and disability issues and caring responsibilities may not have been recognised. In addition, specialist services and voluntary organisations already know many families where children have caring responsibilities. This is not about identifying a new client group - it is about making the links for existing service users." ⁴

Article 12: Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

4 Shared Values and Principles of Practice

Key Principles of Practice supports agencies to respond to the recommendations of national policy that affect young carers and their families in ways that are sensitive to their needs. 5 These are fully endorsed by the Oxfordshire Young Carers' Strategy:

- There is a need to safeguard children by working towards the prevention of children undertaking inappropriate care of any family member.
- The key to change is the development of a whole family approach to needs-led assessments, to ensure that service provision is child-focussed and family orientated.
- Young carers and their families are the experts in their own lives and as such must be fully involved in the development and delivery of support services.
- Young carers will have the same access to education and career choices as their peers.
- It is essential to continue to raise awareness of young carers and, to support and influence change effectively, work with young carers and their families must be monitored and evaluated regularly.
- Local young carers projects and other direct services should be available to provide safe, quality support to those children who continue to be affected by any caring role within their family.

5 A picture of the service area under consideration and context

The profile of the needs and vulnerabilities of young carers has been growing over the past ten years through improved understanding by the media and Government. The lobbying of key organisations such as the Princess Royal Trust for Carers and The Children's Society has increased pressure on Local Authorities to respond to the Government's emergent agenda to see significant change in the lives of this group of children, young people and their families.

The first Young Carers' Strategy for Oxfordshire came to an end in March 2008. This document provided a dynamic and well regarded plan to provide support for young carers in the county. The work carried out as part of this strategy has provided a solid foundation to develop further support to Oxfordshire's young carers and their families.

2008 has seen the publication of key national documents which present an evolving link between the support given to parents experiencing multiple disadvantages and the vulnerability of their children; this is a government initiative called '*Think Family*'. The national Independent Living Strategy also identifies parenting as a key priority for disabled adults:

“We will promote more joined-up working between health, education and social care to provide timely and flexible support where this is needed by families affected by parental disability”.

Along with this strand of Governmental thinking, there is also the new National Carers’ Strategy ‘*Carers at the Heart of 21st Families and Communities*’, which provides a ten year plan for all carers. The vision is that

“Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve against all the Every Child Matters outcomes”.

The document sets out a number of commitments which should ensure significant change for young carers. They are integrated into the new Oxfordshire strategy.

In 2008 councillors completed a scrutiny review of young carers’ services in Oxfordshire. Comparison was sought with other children’s services authorities and took into account the opinions of young carers living and using services in the county. The recommendations contained in the scrutiny review have been endorsed as Cabinet decisions and are contained in the new Oxfordshire strategy.

6 Consultation with Stakeholders

The development of the strategy has been highly participative of the following groups of stakeholders:

Young carers (aged 8-19yrs): 14 came together as V4YC (Voices for young carers) on a weekly basis throughout the summer holidays to develop the priorities for the strategy and presented to a Joint Commissioning Event involving key decision-makers. They also presented to the ChYPIN event ‘We Care, Do you?’ on 6th October, attended by 100 young carers, convened to approve the strategy.

10 parents of young carers have held a telephone-based Sounding Board and contributed their ideas and priorities.

Professionals providing dedicated young carers’ projects, universal, targeted and specialist children’s services and adult mental health services have received paper-based consultations on the strategy, have attended the Joint Commissioning Event and the ChYPIN event. Individual meetings between key decision-makers and lead officers for young carers and children’s commissioning have helped form the strategy.

7 Current Services

Currently there are three Young Carers' Projects based in the Carers' Centres (North & West, City and South & Vale). All are voluntary organisations receiving funding from Oxfordshire County Council (Carers' Support Grant, Children, Young People & Families and Connexions) and their own fundraising. Between them they work with 750-800 young carers per year. The majority are between 8 and 15yrs old.

They offer groups, trips and breaks from caring. The projects have undertaken an advocacy and support role with individual children and families in some cases. Work with schools is carried out by the South & Vale and City projects.

The projects are providing for few children under 8 yrs old and over 15yrs old. The City project is doing some under 8s work with one local Children's Centre. The over 16s are often taking on mentoring roles with younger children rather than receiving their own dedicated services.

Young carers who are in touch with the projects frequently report that monthly contact is insufficient for their needs.

There are no specialist services for under 8s and over 15s.

Countywide, there is inconsistency in the targeting of services towards young carers in the highest need.

The Children, Young People & Families Directorate has the following services:

- A part-time Young Carers' Strategic Development Officer.
- An emergency respite fund which is used in a wide range of ways to relieve the stress of caring for children and young people.

8 Cost of Services

Currently the Area Based Grant, administered by OCC contributes:

£86,000p.a. to the Young Carers' Projects

£23,000p.a. Emergency Respite Fund for young carers

Children, Young People & Families contributes:

£35,000 (former Children's Fund) to the Young Carers' Projects

£30,000 for one Connexions post managed by Oxford City Carers' Centre

£35,000 strategic development work

Total £209,000

"I feel like no-one understands me and I find it hard to express myself - Young Carers (Projects) have provided me with a lifeline..."

Young carer at ChYPIN 5

9 Young Carers' long-term vision

V4YC Vision

In 5 years...

We want young carers to be basically happy and having fun in life and caring for the person they love

We have a voice, listen to us!

The way you are brought up effects your whole life so...young carers should be listened to and heard because their points of view aren't getting heard and dealt with enough

We'd like more people to know about young carers so that people and friends recognize the young carer, everyone knows about young carers, the prime minister knows about young carers!

- People who are carers being voices for carers
- A young carer needs to be a Member of Parliament
- Young carers being a huge organization

Young carers' time, patience and effort should be recognized and treats to get a break should be awarded

We want young carers to be spotted and supported because they are 'adults' in their own right

We'd like workers who have been young carers themselves

It is crucial that information is fed back to young carers so they know what is happening and what will change

Sharing responsibility is what we want!

In five years I would hope young carers are recognized more and happy

10 Needs Assessment

The following sections bring together current information about young carers in Oxfordshire and outlines the priorities of young carers, their parents, the decisions and recommendations of the County Council, the National Carers' Strategy and consultations with professionals.

Big Overall Things

- **Tell the World:** Everyone needs to be aware of young carers, the kinds of things they do and what they go through. For the decision-makers to get the services right, there have to be ways of spotting and counting young carers.
- **Reward Me:** Young carers need to be recognised and rewarded for what they do.
- **Listen to Me:** Young carers do not want their business spread around, but if they received more respect and understanding they would be able to be more open that they are young carers
- **Support Me and the Person I Care For:** Young carers want relationships with supportive adults who listen, are trustworthy and give help.
- **A Chance to Have Fun:** Young carers need more opportunities to relax and be children

Every Child Matters – what does it mean for young carers?

The Outcomes:

V4YC's message to the decision-makers is:

**"The wool has been pulled over your eyes!
Young carers are not safe, not healthy, not at
school, not happy and don't have no money"**

Being Healthy – For young carers this means enjoying good physical, mental and emotional health

Article 23: If you are disabled, either mentally or physically, you have the right to special care and education to help you develop and lead a full life.

Article 39: You have the right to help if you have been hurt, neglected or badly treated.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

What we know

Stats and Facts

- Multiple parental disadvantages (including disability and maternal mental illness) impacts on their children's own health: 18% of children admit to having run away from home; 16.3% spent less than an hour on physical activity in the last week; 12.5% had not seen friends or participated in any organised social activity in the last week; 5.4% had drunk alcohol in the last week; 7.3% admit to feeling unhappy with their family. ⁶
- Amongst Yr 7-11s (ages 10 – 16) who care for their Mum or Dad who is ill or disabled, 25% had nothing or crisps/chocolate/fizzy drink for breakfast, vs 20% of all Yr 7-11s; 14% never sit down for a family meal, vs 7% of all Yr 7-11s. ⁷

What are the issues

- Research has consistently shown that young carers experience a variety of health problems. These include **physical health** problems (eg. back problems as a result of inappropriate lifting) or **mental health** problems (eg. due to worry, bereavement, anger/conflicting emotions, disruption to family life) ⁸
- Young carers tell us how demands of home and school obliterate normal childhood experiences and lead to great emotional and psychological stress. Behavioural problems, poor self-confidence and low-mood are common. ^{9 & 10}
- Young carers describe living life as 'an adult when you are still a child', yet service-providers often discount the role of the young carer, treating them as a young child when the work they are doing is adult work.
- Young carers of adults with mental illness fear that they will 'inherit' the illness themselves and are often ignored and 'kept in the dark' by

health professionals. Health professionals frequently do not ask the young carer about changes in the adult's condition or behaviour, or how they are managing the caring role. However, young carers commonly report being relied on by professionals to undertake intimate care, practical tasks and administer medication. ¹¹

- The narrowness of the GPs' contract does not encourage their recognition and support for young carers. ¹² There is a lack of support for young carers from GPs and other health settings. The National Carers Strategy recommends tailored training materials. ¹³
- Both local scrutiny and national reviews highlight that young carers report a lack of reliable care for the cared-for person and respite for themselves.
- There is a lack of awareness of the process or structure for schools to communicate their concerns about young carers to the Primary Care Trust. ¹⁴
- Young carers' parents have highlighted the lack of access to bereavement support services and whole family end-of-life planning.

What would be better?

- Linked-up resources available on behalf of young carers across Children's and Adults' Services, PCT and provider trusts to achieve more joined-up service delivery, using the GPs' quality framework, the common assessment framework and team around the child as ways forward ¹⁵
- Make sure health professionals ask which adults have children and then support them in their parenting role.
- Ensure health professionals take into account the impact of the parent's condition on dependent children/young people when assessing need and risk, and communicate appropriately with the young carer.
- Provide child-friendly advice and information to young carers about mental illness, substance misuse and physical illness.
- Provide tailored training materials for GPs and other health staff, including hospital discharge teams
- Improve awareness amongst GPs and primary health colleagues to increase identification of young carers, recognise the implications for their health and signpost to appropriate services and support
- Provision of family rooms to facilitate visiting between in-patients who are parents and their children in hospitals and rehabilitation units.
- Embed guidance to help teachers identify and support young carers, through the Healthy Schools Programme

- Ensure school nursing services are working to the benefit of young carers
- Make sure breaks from caring are available to young carers
- Ensure each young carer has a 'tell person' in whom they can confide
- Young carers need mentoring services and emotional support for bereavement, trauma, managing anger and frustration.
- Health education for young carers: especially on growing up, relationships etc.
- Develop the adult-carers' services and organisations to recognise and support the needs of older teenagers and young adults
- Recognise that some illnesses (e.g. blood born viruses such as HIV and AIDS) may have stigma attached to them for young carers and their families.

"We feel invisible people need to know about us."

Key message from V4YC

Stay Safe – For young carers this means being protected from inappropriate levels of care and preventing bullying

Article 9: You have the right to live with your parents, unless it is bad for you.

Article 37: You have the right not to be punished in a cruel or harmful way.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

What we know

Stats and Facts

- 2% of families in Britain suffer multiple disadvantages which contribute to them remaining in poverty with complex needs and low aspirations. Key features were: at least one parent with longstanding limiting illness, disability or infirmity; mother with mental health problems; low income; worklessness; poor education and housing. ¹⁶ If this figure is transposed onto Oxfordshire statistics we would expect to see 1,840 families affected.
- 2-3% of the under 16 pop in England/Wales are the children of problem drug users. ¹⁷ Using this figure we can estimate between 2,300 and 3,500 children of problem drug users in Oxfordshire.
- It is estimated that 50 - 75% of the looked after children's population have experience of significant caring duties. ¹⁸
- There are children assessed under child protection procedures and children in need receiving social work support, whose caring responsibilities are significant, but no figures are available at present.
- The Emergency Respite fund has had 216 applications from young carers between February and December 2008, of whom 50% have allocated social workers working with them or members of their family.
- 39% of young carers in touch with an Oxfordshire Young Carers Projects report that they have been bullied at school.¹⁹
- Amongst young carers:19% have been bullied out of school, vs 9% of all Yr 7-11s; 20% have bullied someone else, vs 12% of all Yr 7-11s. ²⁰

Issues

- Children's services professionals working at all tiers of services are inconsistent in identifying young carers from the children and young people there are working with and do not recognise their needs.
- Adult services do not consistently or systematically record the presence of children in the client's household and they do not publicise adults' entitlement to be supported as parents.
- The system for identifying young carers within families who are receiving family support or adult health/social care services needs to be developed
- Bullying is a major problem reported frequently by young carers and is among the reasons for wanting to keep silent with peers about their caring responsibilities.

What would be better?

- Help to prevent bullying. Young carers taking part in developing anti-bullying strategies
- Spot young carers early, assess once and give the right kind of help quickly to stop problems becoming serious later
- When it is a teenager that is caring, support needs to be based on that, not treat them as a young child: young carers' role and maturity should be respected
- Young carers need professionals with passion about these issues
- Create specialised help for young carers and their families in local areas
- 'Young-carer-friendly' assessment format and pro-active criteria for assessment need to be embedded within the work of children's social care teams. This will include their assessments of children undertaken under s17, s47 and children on the brink of/entering the looked after system.
- Find out how many young carers get social workers for other reasons eg. entering care, child protection etc.
- Emergency respite fund (linked to young carers' assessment) to continue being targeted towards the young carers in most immediate and high need.
- Extended programme of training on whole-family support for all staff in local services

- Implement the Whole Family Pathway ²¹ together with the joint protocol between adult and children's services: 'Delivering Social Care Across Service Boundaries' ²². This gives teams authority to work flexibly together across eligibility thresholds and to share resources when adults and children have needs within the one family.
- By recognising and helping young carers, shift support towards prevention rather than waiting for families to be in crisis.
- Coordinate support around whole families rather than just the adult or the child.
- Develop whole-family plans and care-packages so that numbers of forms and assessments are kept to a minimum and professionals work together.
- Lobby Central Government via the Local Government Association to review legislative requirements and resources around assessments for young carers

"I wake up knowing I got to look after everyone even if I'm not 100% - its harder than you think."

Young carer at ChYPIN 5

Enjoy and Achieve – for young carers this means having the same opportunities for friendship, relaxation, fun, learning and achievement as their peers who do not have caring responsibilities.

Article 29: You have the right to education which tries to develop your personality and abilities as much as possible and encourages you to respect other people's rights and values and to respect the environment.

Article 31: You have the right to play and relax by doing things like sports, music and drama.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

What we know

Stats and Facts

- Based on 43 children ranging from Yr 5-11 pupils (9-16 yr olds), approximately half said they had taken full days off because of their caring responsibilities (ranged from taking one day off to only attending about 35 days in the year. 2 young carers said they no longer attended at all).
- Over half had taken part days off because of caring duties. 25% told truthful reasons for absenteeism, 37% gave false reasons. Half of the children reported difficulties in having nowhere to do school work, threatened and actual detentions, being unable to keep up, missing deadlines, getting suspended, being taken to court for non-attendance, permanent exclusion. ²³
- Amongst Yr 7-11s who care for their Mum or Dad who is ill or disabled, 21% have skived or bunked off school a few times or quite often, vs 17% of all Yr 7-11s;
29% had special help for learning or behaviour, vs 12% of all Yr 7-11s;
9% plan to leave school ASAP, vs 7% of all Yr 7-11s. ²⁴
- More than 750 children and young people are known to the young carers projects in Oxfordshire – they gain support and take part in activities providing them with breaks from caring, with large numbers of young carers staying in contact for many years.

Issues

- High levels of caring can have an adverse impact on young carers' education and enjoyment. Educational difficulties include absence, lateness, tiredness, difficulty joining extra-curricular activities, bullying, restricted peer networks, poor attainment, incomplete homework and coursework, anxiety and behaviour problems.
- Research reveals that the mean age of young carers is 12years. Transition from primary to secondary can be problematic. Young carers often leave settings where their practical and emotional needs are supported and enter much larger schools, further away from home, where the practicalities of life become harder to manage and there are no support systems. 25
- It is nationally and locally recognised that being a young carer can seriously impact on attendance, achievement, emotional health and wellbeing, social isolation and bullying. Reports also highlight the transition to adulthood as a particularly vulnerable time. 26
- Young carers have frequently expressed the desire for more frequent young carers' groups eg. fortnightly rather than monthly.
- All the parents consulted identified more frequent group work as a priority for their young carers. Parents reported good outcomes for their young carers in terms of increased self-esteem, confidence, social skills arising from contact with the young carers' projects. Parents also recognise the need for more opportunities for their young carers for relaxation, child-centred experiences, the chance to 'be a normal child'.

What would be better?

- Dedicated services for young carers offering group activities, breaks, supportive peers and adults with more capacity than at present. Without them many young carers would have no relaxation, no play and no peer group.
- Breaks and groups need to be more targeted towards the young carers in the highest need.
- Young carers need time and experiences which are appropriate to their age, not reflective of their 'adult' responsibilities.
- Young carers need environments in which they can feel safe and express their feelings.
- Stop punishments for being late or absent from school or missing homework when these are due to caring
- Stop labelling everyone as 'behaviour problems' – look behind the behaviour

- Raise awareness across schools, educational services and other children's settings of the impact of caring responsibilities. (An annex of the Scrutiny Review is to be sent to all schools).
- Improve identification of young carers, their needs and the ways they can be helped in school, based on the guidance and principles issued by The Children's Society
- LAs must know the whereabouts of vulnerable children (including young carers) and identify their progress.
- A discreet single contact-person to be established in all schools with responsibility for identifying and supporting young carers. This support should include each young carer agreeing who their 'tell person' is.
- A school protocol and guidance pack to be introduced and training provided in conjunction with the Healthy Schools Programme.
- The specific educational needs of young carers must be addressed.
- Transition points need special focus ie. from early years to school; from primary to secondary; from secondary to further education, training, employment
- Support to be available right across the spectrum from nursery-primary-secondary-college
- Find out how many young carers have poor school attendance, exclusions and special needs
- Make information accessible in other languages.

"School should always be ready to talk to you even on the worst bad days."

Young carer at ChYPIN5

Making a Positive Contribution – for young carers this means promoting and recognising young carers' contributions and developing their participation in decision-making

Article 13: You have the right to find out things and say what you think, through making art, speaking and writing, unless it breaks the rights of others.

Article 12: You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

What we know

Stats and Facts

- Young carers are involved in awareness-raising events, District Youth Forums, becoming trained mentors for younger children via the Young Carers projects.
- Young carers have made films in the projects to show their experiences and explain their contribution to their families and society.
- Young carers have contributed to 'On the Receiving End' a training DVD produced by Oxfordshire Children & Young People's Board.
- Young carers have built their own website in Oxford City.
- 12 Young carers as V4YC (Voices for Young Carers) have developed and designed this commissioning strategy.
- There is individual case evidence that some young carers are at risk of offending. However no data is collected so it is unclear how prevalent this is.

Issues

- Young carers need opportunities, like V4YC, to participate in service-development. Due to the richness of their experiences they have much to offer in ideas and views on the services provided to the cared-for person as well as the children and young people's services they use. 27
- The ChYPIN Event 'We Care, Do You Care?' and recent DVD productions by the projects show that young carers gain great value from expressing themselves and educating others about the realities of caring. These opportunities should continue at both local and national level.

- There are greater barriers for young carers from BME groups and refugee, asylum seeking families in having their voices heard within statutory agencies. 28

What would be better?

- The continuation of young carers' involvement in the commissioning process, including procurement, monitoring and evaluation.
- Empower young carers to run their own public awareness campaign
- Give money to young carers themselves to spend
- Value and recognise young carers' achievements outside school.
- Once a year young carers could award adults certificates for supporting young carers
- Cabinet decisions: wide dissemination of the young carers' strategy as part of the process of raising awareness of young carers' profile and needs.
- Find out how many young carers are getting into trouble with the police
- Actively encouraging young carers from BME groups to participate in ongoing service development.

"Listen to us! - put your feet in our shoes for one day and see what it feels like to be us."

Key message from V4YC

Achieving Economic Wellbeing – for young carers this means overcoming socio-economic disadvantages to achieve their full potential and a secure future

Article 27: You have the right to a good enough standard of living. This means you should have food, clothes and a place to live.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

What we know

Stats and Facts

- There is no service for 16-25s and young adult carers do not access adult carers' services.
- We have one young carers' Connexions worker attached to the City and North schools.
- Young carers frequently describe problems associated with living on benefits, low incomes and bad housing.

Issues

- The transition from school to further education, employment or training and adulthood as a vulnerable time for which there are few sources of support. 29
- In Oxfordshire most young carers over 16yrs drift away from the projects and those that stay in contact do not have dedicated young adult services – they become mentors, supporting their younger peers.
- Adult carers' projects are not engaging young people. However, we know from case examples that the transition to adulthood can be difficult and challenging, often resulting in young carers sacrificing their own opportunities in order to support the cared-for person or siblings.

What would be better?

- Provide services across the age range: including under 8s and 16-25 yrs.
- Find out what young adult carers (16-25) need and build a service which enables them to achieve their ambitions in education, training, employment, independent living, housing and enjoyment.
- Help young adult carers to get their entitlements as adult carers.
- Support young carers after their caring responsibilities have ended.

"A prime minister runs a country. He has help from all the government under him and everyday they make decisions for him so that he doesn't have to. He and all these people run an entire country together but they are paid well for their hard work, so it seems fair. We, sometimes with our parents, sometimes without, run our homes like our own little countries. Everyday we have to make decisions that will effect our little country just as much as the ones the prime minister makes affects his and most of the time without the help he would get. And how much do we get paid...?"

Young carer at ChYPIN 5

Strategic Priorities

Based on the Every Child Matters needs assessment the key priorities can be summed up as:

1. Awareness-raising, identifying young carers and enabling all children's services to recognise and respond to their needs.
2. Early intervention which has a specific focus on assessing the impact of caring on a child or young person and provides both tailored and multi-professional support to parents and children, within a whole-family framework.
3. More respite and peer support for young carers providing opportunities for relief from caring, play, friendship, child-centred experiences.

Objectives which cut across all three priorities:

- The development of services for under 8s and 16-25s
- Ongoing participation by young carers and their parents in the design and monitoring of services; the promotion and implementation of Children's Rights in all aspects of young carers' services
- Finding out more about the impact of caring on Oxfordshire's children and young people so that at the end of the strategy the next steps will be clear.

The detailed ideas of what would be better for young carers will provide the targets and action plans within these strategic priorities.

Outcomes

These are the anticipated outcomes of the strategic priorities by 2011:

1. Schools, children's and adult services across health and social care will be aware of young carers and their needs and will be systematically identifying them and responding more appropriately.
2. Families will be receiving co-ordinated and timely interventions so that disabled and unwell parents are supported in caring for their children and young carers' needs are assessed and met.
3. Respite and peer support services will be reaching more young carers (5 -25) and targeted towards those in the highest need and hard-to-reach groups.

Impact on Local Area Agreement Targets

The strategic priorities are expected to contribute to better outcomes in the following LAA targets:

Young people's positive activities

First time entrants into the Youth Justice System aged 10-17

16-18s not in education, employment or training

Carers receiving needs assessment, review, advice or information

Key Stages 2, 3 and 4

Opportunities to change and reshape existing provision

In November 2008 the Public Service Board considered the allocation of the Carers' Support element within the Area Based Grant and confirmed that the current spend on young carers should continue. In addition, the CYP&F Directorate has identified additional funding. From April 2009 the strategy will be supported by an increase in funding of approximately double the current rate until March 2011. This will be spent on both internal and external commissioning. The detailed proposals for young carers' services from April 2009 are contained within the county council's Young Carers Service Specification. This can be obtained from Hannah Farncombe, Service Manager Strategy, Performance & Development, CYP&F.

January 2009

"I really liked the ideas that came forward, they were really sensible serious ideas which we (adults) wouldn't have thought of and they wouldn't cost a lot."

A senior manager after meeting V4YC

Appendix One: References

1.	Carers National Association (now Carers UK) 1998
2.	Dearden & Becker 2004
3.	Oxfordshire CYP Survey 2007 of 6,500 children/YP
4.	W.Sussex Social & Caring 2002
5.	Key Principles of Practice (Young Carers), The Children's Society 2007
6.	Think Family: Family & Children Study 2005
7.	Oxfordshire CYP Survey 2007
8.	The Education Network 2005
9.	'Good Days, Bad Days' DVD by N&W Young Carers Project
10.	'Cool Young Carers Care' DVD by Oxford Young Carers Project
11.	Keeping the Family in Mind – Barnardos 2007
12.	Oxfordshire County Council Strategy Review 2008
13.	National Carers Strategy 2008
14.	Oxfordshire County Council Scrutiny Review 2008
15.	OCC Cabinet Recommendation to OCYP Trust
16.	Cabinet Office Families at Risk Review 2007
17.	Dept of Health 2000/2001 Census of problem drug users in treatment
18.	Based on OCC internal monitoring by CLA consultation worker
19.	Oxfordshire Young Carers Projects 2008
20.	Oxfordshire CYP Survey 2007
21.	Whole Family Pathway, The Children's Society 2008
22.	Delivering Social Care Across Service Boundaries 2008
23.	Young Carers Experience of School survey, Oxfordshire County Council 2006
24.	Oxfordshire CYP Survey 2007
25.	Aldridge & Becker '93; Dearden & Becker 2000; Frank 1999
26.	National Carers Strategy 08; Oxfordshire County Council Scrutiny Review 2008
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28.	www.refugeetoolkit.org.uk 2009
29.	National Carers Strategy 2008; Scrutiny Review 2008