

Support for Young Carers

House of Commons

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Key messages

- Councils currently support many young carers to continue their caring role through provision of a range of services such as information and advice, home care and respite care.
- Supporting and improving the wellbeing and rights of young carers is a priority for local government. We recognise that the role of carers in our health and care system is vital and the contribution carers make to people with social care needs is significant.
- Councils are under a legal duty to identify young carers and carry out impact assessments on the impact of the child and whole family. However, finding young carers is challenging as they are often isolated and hidden from view. The last census puts the official figure for young carers at nearly 170,000, however, research by the BBC and Nottingham University in 2018 suggested the true figure may be four times higher than official estimates claimⁱ.
- The responsibility to meet the assessed needs of young carers is covered by the Children and Families Act 2014. Young carers have the right to a 'carer's assessment', which is the duty of the local authority. This assesses the effect on the young carers' wellbeing, health, education or friendships – and whether they should continue carrying out that level of care.
- The LGA recently published *Supporting Carers* a case study guide that outlines some examples of good practice of councils working with young carers.ⁱⁱ
- It is essential that carers have the support they need to maintain their own wellbeing and to be able to lead fulfilling lives; to maintain social relationships, undertake education and training, maintain employment, be active community members, and so forth. Councils' ability to provide this well-being support is undermined by the continued cuts to council budgets.
- The Government published its [Carers Action Plan 2018-2020](#) in 2018. It is important that local government is involved in the implementation of the carers action plan and that it is fully funded.
- The ability of councils to provide the support needed to all carers, is undermined by the funding to councils and the impact on social care budgets, coupled with increasing demands and increasing costs. We are calling on the Government to use the upcoming Spending Review to fund the £3.1 billion shortfall facing children's services by 2024/25.

Further information

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Briefing

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The LGA recently published [Supporting Carers](#) a case study guide that outlines some examples of good practice of councils working with young carers.

It notes the measures that councils take to ensure that caring responsibilities do not have an adverse impact on their wellbeing. This includes providing information and advice, attempting to lessen caring responsibilities by providing respite care, help with employment and linking carers up with community services such as gyms and art classes.

In 2018, the Government published the [Carers Action Plan 2018-2020](#) that set out a range of actions to support young carers. The actions aim to do this by focusing on improving the identification of young carers; improving their educational opportunities and outcomes; providing support to young carers, particularly to vulnerable children; and improving access to services. In supporting the transition for young adult carers, the Government seeks to identify and disseminate effective approaches to transition assessments that will translate into support that enables young adult carers to make positive transitions between the ages of 16-24. It is important that local government is involved in the implementation of the carers action plan and that it is fully funded.

Adult social care funding and reform:

Adult social care faces a funding gap of £3.6 billion by 2024/25. This includes an immediate and annually recurring market provider gap of £1.44 billion – the difference between the estimated costs of delivering social care and what councils pay.

The response to our social care Green Paper on published last November found that unpaid carers underpin the care system. Some respondents to our consultation highlighted that carers face a number of challenges including a lack the training, space or equipment needed to offer the best possible care, or struggled to provide care due to other responsibilities. Caring for a friend or relative was said to limit opportunities to work, while also placing enormous stresses and strains on those carrying out informal care.

It is vital that the forthcoming Care and Support Green Paper delivers a sustainable solution that ensures the long-term future of social care. Adult social care helps to transform people's quality of life and supports adults and carers of all ages with a range of different needs.

The Government must use the upcoming Spending Review to secure the short- and medium-term sustainability of adult social care and support. Without such funding we will continue to see the consequences of underfunding, including: difficulty sustaining quality services; further instability in the provider market; growing unmet and under-met need; increased strain on unpaid carers; decreased ability to help mitigate demand pressures facing the NHS; and further pressure on the social care workforce.

The role of public health in supporting carers

While caring has been shown to be beneficial to health, it is acknowledged that if the provision of care becomes too time-consuming, without the provision of breaks and respite, it can become detrimental to health. It is important that carers have the support they need to maintain their own wellbeing and to be able to lead fulfilling lives; to maintain social relationships; undertake education and training; maintain employment; and be active community members.

Good local public services are the essential bedrock for mental and physical health, wellbeing and resilience. The transfer of public health from the NHS to local government and Public Health England (PHE) five years ago was one of the most significant extensions of local government powers and duties in a generation. It represents a unique opportunity to change the focus from treating sickness to actively promoting health and wellbeing.

However, councils are having to carefully consider how best they can spend their public health funding, which has been reduced by £600 million from 2015/16 to 2019/20 by central government, to maximise cost effectiveness and improve health outcomes. The LGA have called on the Government to reverse the cuts made to the public health budget between 2015 and 2020ⁱⁱⁱ.

Local government funding

Local government provides more than 800 local services, a significant proportion of which help improve wellbeing and tackle the social determinants of health, such as housing, employment, welfare, leisure and transport. Such services will also help support the health and wellbeing of carers.

It is therefore essential that potential solutions identified in the care and support green paper feed through to the Spending Review. This must provide an additional source of funding for local government as part of an overall settlement that provides sustainable funding for all the vital services that councils deliver. We have argued publicly that all funding options must be on the table – however unpalatable – given the scale of the current crisis.

A whole sector settlement that includes a new source of additional funding for social care is what is urgently needed.

Experience of young carers

Figures from the Carers Trust and Children's Society show the numbers of young carers and the difficulties that they face.

- The 2011 Census identifies 166,363 young carers in England – a fifth higher than a decade previously. However this is thought to be an underestimate. A BBC News and Nottingham University survey in September 2018 estimated that there are more than 800,000 secondary-school age children carrying out some level of care.
- Of those, the survey suggests more than 250,000 young carers are carrying out a high level of care, with 73,000 taking on the highest amount of care^{iv}.

Many young carers struggle to juggle their education and caring which can cause pressure and stress:

- 68 per cent of young carers are bullied in schools.
- Only half of young carers have a particular person in school who recognises their carer responsibilities and provides support.
- Young carers responding to a survey missed or cut short many school days every year. The average was 48 school days missed or cut short because of their caring role.

- Many services are only funded to work with young carers up to the age of 18. In a survey, 79 per cent of young carers said they were worried about moving on as they felt there was no support for them^v.
- One in 12 young carers is caring for more than 15 hours per week. Around one in 20 missed school because of their caring responsibilities.
- Young carers are 1.5 times more likely than their peers to be from black, Asian or minority ethnic communities (BAME), and are twice as likely to not speak English as their first language.
- Young carers are 1.5 times more likely than their peers to have a special educational need or a disability^{vi}.

ⁱ [Being a young carer - BBC News](#)

ⁱⁱ <https://local.gov.uk/supporting-carers-guidance-and-case-studies>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-report-spending-reductions-councils-public-health-services>

^{iv} https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/Being_a_young_carer 2018

^v <https://carers.org/key-facts-about-carers-and-people-they-care> 2019

^{vi} https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/hidden_from_view_-_final.pdf 2013