

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 26 OCTOBER 2009

REPORT ON: POLICY ON PROVISION FOR YOUNG CARERS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 491-2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek Committee approval for a policy on provision for Young Carers

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- i) notes the content of this report; and
- ii) approves the policy (appendix); and
- iii) instructs the Director of Education to monitor the implementation of the policy.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 There are a number of definitions of the term 'young carer'. For the purposes of this report, a young carer is under 18 years of age and helps to look after a family member. Caring can involve physical or emotional care, or taking responsibility for someone's safety or well-being. The Carers National Association in 1998 defined a young carer in the following terms: "A young carer is anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of a person who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, or is affected by substance use."
- 4.2 Because of the circumstances in which some children and young people become carers (for example, because of parental drug or alcohol abuse), many find it difficult to share their problems with others and can go to great lengths to keep their backgrounds from others. Therefore, it is not possible to be precise about the numbers of children and young people who are caring for others, including their own parents and siblings.
- 4.3 Dundee City Council believes in supporting all children and young people to achieve and attain at the highest levels through education. It is our task to provide appropriate support in individual circumstances to each child or young person so that they gain maximum benefit from the provision that is available to them.
- 4.4 The department has had a fruitful relationship with Dundee Young Carers Project over a number of years. Joint approaches to supporting young carers at school have resulted in the production and dissemination of a bespoke resource pack for schools to promote their work in supporting and sustaining young carers in their learning.
- 4.5 Training has been made available by the Dundee Young Carers Project to all schools to enable them to make best use of the resource pack and learn more about the difficulties faced by young carers in their daily lives and how best staff can identify and respond to their needs.
- 4.6 Young carers, by definition, have additional support needs. This new policy is designed to give practical support to this not insignificant group of challenged children and young people. It says how we will help any child or young person who helps to look after someone at home.
- 4.7 The policy was produced in collaboration with Dundee Young Carers Project and involved young carers in the initial and final drafts.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.
- 5.2 While there are no major issues, it is worthy of note that this new policy will facilitate the elimination of the challenges faced by this often hidden group of children and young people to enable them to have improved equality of opportunity.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), and Director of Finance have been consulted. The Scottish Social Services Council, trade unions, Parent Councils, Head Teachers and, most importantly, young carers themselves have contributed to the shaping of this new policy.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

JIM COLLINS
Director of Education

DATE: 14 October 2009

Dundee City Council Education Department

Policy on Provision for Young Carers

1.0 What is meant by 'young carer'?

- 1.1 A young carer is under 18 years of age and helps to look after a family member. Caring can involve physical or emotional care, or taking responsibility for someone's safety or well-being. The person being cared for may be a parent, sibling, other family member or friend and may not necessarily be living in the same house as the young carer themselves. The level of responsibility assumed by a young carer is often inappropriate to their age and at a level beyond simply helping out with jobs at home, which is a normal part of growing up.
- 1.2 A further definition is also helpful: "A young carer is anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of a person who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, or is affected by substance use" (Carers National Association, 1998). This includes situations when a young person has to assume caring responsibility for sibling/s due to the lifestyle or absence of one or both parents.

2.0 Statement for children or young persons and their families

- 2.1 Dundee City Council believes in supporting all children and young people to achieve and attain at the highest levels through education. It is our task to provide appropriate support in individual circumstances to each child or young person so that they gain maximum benefit from the provision that is available to them.
- 2.2 When a young person looks after someone in their family, he or she may need extra support to help him or her get the most out of education. This Young Carers' Policy says how we will help any child or young person who helps to look after someone at home.
- 2.3 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 identifies young carers as a specific group that may need additional support for learning to overcome barriers to learning caused by their caring responsibilities.

3.0 Each of our schools:

- respects a young carer's right to privacy and will only share information with people who need to know to help the young carer
- has a member of staff with special responsibility for young carers (a) who is known to all pupils and other members of the school community and partner agencies and service, and (b) who lets all children or young persons enrolled in the school know what can be done to help young carers
- has access to a specific member of staff from the Dundee Young Carers Project with whom they can liaise on general or specific issues about young carers
- can work with staff from the Dundee Young Carers Project who are available to deliver lessons/assemblies with the aim of raising awareness and identifying hidden young carers in the school environment
- can put young carers in touch with Dundee Young Carers Project
- can put families in touch with other support services
- can make arrangements to facilitate contact with parents who have mobility or communication problems

- addresses the challenges faced by young carers through our personal and social development programmes
- has access to training materials and awareness raising tools provided by the Dundee Young Carers Project
- will consider alternatives if a young carer is unable to attend activities that take place outwith the normal school day due to their caring role (e.g. sports coaching, detention, concerts, excursions)
- allows young carers to telephone home during breaks and lunchtimes
- can give parents advice about how to get their children into school where transport is a problem

4.0 Identifying a young carer

4.1 Unless the school is advised about a child or young person's home circumstances, young carers risk first being identified by negative aspects of their behaviour or work. Some young carers worry about bullying or interference in their family life and may seek to conceal their role from their peers and from teachers. Some of the warning signs that might indicate that a child or young person has unrecognised caring responsibilities include:

- regular lateness or possibly increasing rates of unauthorised absence
- tiredness in school
- erratic response to homework with incomplete or late returns or non-compliance with set tasks
- lack of concentration, anxiety or worry
- under-achievement for potential capability
- behavioural problems, especially inappropriate responses possibly resulting from anger or frustration
- few or no peer friendships but possibly with a good relationship with adults and presenting as very mature for their age
- victim of bullying, perhaps linked to a family member's disability, state of health or substance misuse problem, or young carer not being perceived by peers as dressing in the latest fashion
- lack of interest in extra-curricular activities, especially after school
- lack of equipment (e.g. gym kit) or absence notes
- apparent parental disinterest due to non-attendance at parents' meetings

4.2 The above may be indicators of a range of problems, some not associated with a child having a caring role at home. However, in dealing with any child or young person exhibiting any of the signs, staff should consider asking the child or young person if they are helping to look after someone at home. Staff should also enquire from colleagues with pastoral responsibilities for the child or young person.

4.3 When there are concerns about a child or young person, each local School Community Support Service team together with school-based teaching and support staff should also consider the possibility that a child or young person may be carrying out caring roles, especially when working directly with family members.

4.4 Any concerns about a child or young person who may be considered as a yet unidentified young carer should be reported to the member of staff with responsibility for young carers as should new information about identified young carers.

- 4.5 The member of staff responsible for coordinating young carer support is the key person in school through which relevant matters need to be passed.
- 4.6 It is preferable to start from a positive base. Therefore, our enrolment process will seek sensitively to establish if:
- the child or young person has additional support needs which may include having parents/relatives with disabilities or long-term physical or mental health problems
 - the child or young person has a responsibility for looking after that person over and beyond normal, interpersonal relationships within a caring family setting
- 4.7 Information gained as a result of this process will be held securely and made available in the first instance to the designated member of school staff with responsibilities for young carers. While we will respect the right to privacy, we would wish to establish if the family is in contact with a support service that could help reduce their reliance on the child or young person. We will only share information about young carers and their families with people who need to know in order to be able to help. Before sharing information with anyone else, we will seek consent from the young carer or, if they are not able to understand, from a parent.

5.0 Children (Scotland) Act 1995

- 5.1 Most young carers will meet the definition of a 'child in need' under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and may be entitled to an assessment from Children's Services. In the event of any young carers being considered to be at risk of significant harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed.

6.0 School support for identified young carers

- 6.1 A member of the staff in each school will lead on our support work for young carers. This member of staff will be the point of contact for young carers and their families and will liaise with young carers' services. Their name and contact details will be made available in the school prospectus or, by telephone, from the school office. For ease of reference, this person will be termed the *Young Carers' Co-ordinator*.
- 6.2 The Dundee Young Carers Project has a named member of staff allocated to liaise with every school cluster in the city.
- 6.3 Wherever possible, staff will talk to young carers in private and not in front of their friends unless the young carer asks for a friend to be present. In preparing this policy, young carers themselves identified confidentiality and sensitivity from teachers and support staff as key requirements. Sensitivity to the needs of the young carer will include being careful not to ask even well-intentioned questions about how the family members are when the young carer is in the presence of his or her peers.
- 6.4 Young carers will be given a 'phone card' to identify themselves to school staff, if necessary, so that they may have access to a telephone to contact home if they are worried about a relative without having to explain their need (see Appendix 1).
- 6.5 Where possible, schools will negotiate deadlines for homework and the submission of coursework in advance of these being set (NB deadlines for some things cannot be changed, such as presentation of course work as part of an externally moderated module). The occasionally abrupt and significant changes to home circumstances that can occur (for example, where a young carer's parent has bipolar disorder) highlight the need for deadlines to be set aside and/or re-negotiated on an individual basis.

- 6.6 When an identified young carer is given a detention, schools will consider allowing this to take place at break and lunchtimes rather than after school.
- 6.7 When absence notes are not produced because of the known home circumstances of the young carer, arrangements are agreed for appropriately coding and recording absences.
- 6.8 Schools will liaise with support services to ensure that families can be advised where additional help may be available to them.
- 6.9 If a parent is unable to travel to parents' sessions due to family circumstances, we will try to make alternative arrangements. The young carer or parent may request this.
- 6.10 Schools will provide advice about how children can get into school where transport is a problem.
- 6.11 Our schools and services welcome any young person, parent or family member who wishes to discuss their family circumstances so that we can help their child in achieving their potential.
- 6.12 Schools will take an active role in seeking to identify and provide support to hidden young carers.

7.0 Further information and useful contact details

- 7.1 The Council's 'Carers Strategy 2008-2011' is available to download by clicking on the following link:
http://www.dundee.gov.uk/dundee/uploaded_publications/publication_921.pdf
- 7.2 All young carers can ask for an assessment, no matter how old or young they may be. This is also the case for young carers aged 16-18. A young carer can ask for an assessment if he or she cares for an adult or a child. The Community Care and Health Scotland Act (2002) states that young carers under the age of 16 can ask for an assessment without the consent of their parents. If a young carer's statutory assessment is being sought, people are advised to contact the Dundee Young Carers Project (ref para 7.3) for more information. Clicking on the following link reveals a leaflet on assessment which can be discussed with a young carer.
<http://www.youngcarers.co.uk/YCPAssessmentLEAFLET.PDF>
- 7.3 Dundee Young Carers Project
PRT Dundee Carers Centre
Telephone House
21 Ward Road
Dundee
DD1 1ND

<http://www.youngcarers.co.uk>

Tel: 01382 224324
Fax: 01382 224326
E-mail: enquiries@youngcarers.co.uk
- 7.4 Other helpful websites
<http://www.youngcarer.com>
National site for young carers
<http://www.riprap.org.uk>

For young people with a parent who has cancer

<http://www.nch.org.uk>

This website contains information on young carers

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/young_carers.html

Barnardo's is a national charity that works with young carers

<http://www.youngcarers.net>

National site for and about young carers

<http://www.nacoa.org.uk>

Site for children of alcoholics

www.tacade.com

Link to national Young Carers Education Resource Pack

www.carersuk.org

National carers site. Links to national research: Young Carers in the UK: the 2004 Report

www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/surgery/

This health-related website also covers issues of family relationships and identity

www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/isfc.pdf

Local authorities, agencies and professionals who have responsibilities for providing services to young carers and their families can use this self-evaluation guide to help evaluate and improve the services provided for young carers and their families.


Policy dated: October 2009

Review and renewal date: December 2012 or sooner if circumstances dictate

Responsible officer: Head of Support for Learning

Appendix 1

Sample young carer's card to facilitate telephone use

 <p>Dundee CHANGING City Council FOR THE FUTURE</p>
<p><u>School Session: 2009-10</u></p>
<p>J..... S.....</p>
<p>needs to use the phone to contact home. Please allow him/her to do so on request.</p>
<p>Signed: _____</p>