

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 19 January 2022

Report Title

Findings from Spotlight Review of Support for Young Carers

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-wide

Report Summary

To summarise the findings and recommendations from the 22 October 2021 Health Select Commission spotlight review in respect of support for young carers.

Recommendations

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and response:-
 - a) That action plans and performance matrix be supplied as part of the next update in 12 months' time.
 - b) That a plan be developed to address the current data gap in respect of young carers who mature into adult carers, with a view to providing the best preparation possible and making this transition as seamless as possible for young carers who may continue to have caring responsibilities into adulthood.
 - c) That consideration be given to how best to provide additional support to young carers seeking to access employment skills, education and training.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Health Select Commission - 25 November 2021

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Findings from Spotlight Review of Support for Young Carers

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the discussions of the Adult Carer's Strategy at the 8 July meeting of Health Select Commission, a spotlight review was undertaken in tandem with Improving Lives Select Commission to examine the support available for young carers both during the pandemic and entering the recovery phase. Members met with service leads from the Council's Early Help Service and partner organisation Barnardo's on 22 October 2021.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Members sought assurances that robust and proactive efforts are made to identify Young Carers who are in need of support. Members requested to be kept informed of high-level action plans. Members also expressed concerns around unmet needs in the Borough and indicated interest in the outcomes of the targeted engagement programme. The response from service leads in the Council and Barnardo's provided assurances that young carers are proactively sought out. The family support elements of Early Help are robustly assessed, and it was noted that not all young carers who are supported through Early Help and other partners are necessarily known to Barnardo's. It was also noted that Housing Officers, for example, can be important eyes and ears to identify a need early. This is everyone's responsibility.
- 2.2 Members also requested clarification around the allocation of moneys to help young carers. The Covid Outbreak Management Funds (COMF) grants are time-limited and have been made available for the delivery of a specific programme for young carers. For that reason, the impact of that piece of work will be assessed separately. All of the money allocated for this work goes directly to the service.

Assurances were sought around support in place for young carers who may not self-identify or make themselves known to the service. The service leads acknowledged that sometimes there might be a fear that the child will be removed from the home, so there can be hesitation to engage. The service does not take refusal at face value. Very skilled workers in the service persist and try different methods. The service takes responsibility for finding the right way to engage the child and family. If the service identifies a need, but the child does not want to engage, the service must respect that decision but also makes sure that the child's school and other professionals in their lives are keeping an eye out to monitor. Sometimes a child might not want to do specific young carer activities but might be happy to come to a youth event associated with Early Help. Numerous examples of siblings who did not engage at first, have begun to show interest after a sibling becomes familiar with the service and the community. The young carers service at Barnardo's is often pulled into the wraparound Early Help plan for a family, where appropriate.

Members expressed hopes that training and good practice is available to

contractors recognise a young carer who may need help. The response from leads confirmed that trainings have been delivered to various council contractors such as Mears, to spread the message that safeguarding is everyone's business. Following on from these trainings, several situations where concerns were flagged early resulted in significant positive outcomes.

Members also further inquired around the plan for young carers who age out of the service age group as they become adults. The response from leads acknowledged that the best time to help a young person prepare for what will happen when they turn 18 is when they are 16 or 17. Assurances were provided that pathway exists for the most vulnerable young people as they turn 18, but there remains a gap in data around the journey of young carers who become young adults. Without a cohort of young people who have agreed to contribute to this research, this will continue to be an area of unknowns.

What support is available to help the young carers be able to access employment skills, training, and higher education. Liaison with local universities, particularly Rotherham and Sheffield Hallam campuses, has been very positive, with focus group weekends available to the young people to familiarise them with the environment and other carers who are university students and prospective students. However, limitations remain for young people who wish to pursue education but are limited to a short radius from home because of their caring responsibilities. For many young carers, options further afield would be out of reach.

Assurances were requested that teachers and other professionals such as GPs are trained and supported to identify a need. The response noted that the service liaises with link workers in schools according to the school's unique framework. This supports teachers and safeguarding leads in schools to be able to receive that information. As restrictions have eased, professionals are spending more time with young people and referrals are rising.

Assurances were sought around the provision of face-to-face support during COVID-19. The response noted the impact of restrictions on face-to-face activities, such as only one child being allowed to be transported per car journey. These precautions were especially important because many of the young people have a vulnerable family member. Home visits were conducted during the pandemic, although some young carers chose to suspend these, and community events were held but not in the large numbers as in the past.

Clarification was requested around the process for getting support for a mental health need that has been identified. Barnardo's does not attempt to

tackle significant mental health problems; they coordinate the referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to give the right support. On a day-to-day basis, the work focusses on issues like self-esteem, stress, anger, and relaxation. These are tailored to the needs of the individual child based on what the young people feed back that works for them, and these sessions are not time-limited.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Recommendations were generated by Members and derived from discussion during the Q&A session with service leads.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 Members have regard to the expressed views of their constituents in their formulation of scrutiny priorities and lines of inquiry. Recommendations from scrutiny are produced as outcomes of consultation with Members in their role as elected representatives of Rotherham residents.

5.0 Legal Advice and Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6 Human Resources Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

7. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

7.1 The implications for children, young people and vulnerable adults are set out in the main body of the report.

8. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

8.1 Furthering equalities and human rights is an objective of scrutiny; therefore, Members give consideration to equalities in the development of scrutiny work programmes, lines of inquiry and in their derivation of recommendations designed to improve the delivery of council services for residents.

9. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

9.1 There are no climate or emissions implications associated with this report.

10. Implications for Partners

10.1 Implications for partners are set out in the main sections of the report.

11. Risks and Mitigation

11.1 There are no risks arising from this report.

12. Accountable Officer(s)

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