

Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge Scrutiny Review: Young Carers



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Rotherham Youth Cabinet Review Group:

Emilia Ashton (Chair)	Molly Crossmore
Adiba Bi	Omair Kasim
Amariya Bi	Sundas Raza
Josie Brown	Amaan Saqlain

Rotherham Young Carers:

Ella Barlow	Linda Newby
Dylan Brooks	Chelsea Swift
Frankie James	Rebecca Wilson



Contents

	Page No.
1. Why Rotherham Youth Cabinet wanted to undertake this review	1
2. Method	1
3. Context	
3.1 Rotherham Carers' Strategy	2
3.2 Rotherham Young Carers Service	3
3.3 Rotherham Young Carers Council	3
4. Findings	
4.1 Current Carer Offer in Rotherham	3
4.2 Initiatives for Young Carers in Other Areas	4
4.3 Possibility of a South Yorkshire Initiative	5
4.4 Becoming Young Carer Friendly	5
4.5 Costs	5
4.6 Discounts and Concessions	6
4.7 Identifying Young Carers	6
4.8 Publicising Opportunities	6
4.9 Safety	7
5. Agreed Actions	7
6. Conclusions	7
7. Recommendations	8
8. Thanks	9
9. Background papers and references	9
Appendix A Summary of Young Carer Initiatives in Other Areas	10
Appendix B Costing Options for Roll-out of Travel Scheme in Sheffield	11

1. Why Rotherham Youth Cabinet wanted to undertake this review

A core aim in the 2019 manifesto for Rotherham Youth Cabinet (RYC) was:

“We want to work alongside the Young Carers’ Council to ensure young carers have the same opportunities as adult carers in accessing free activities whilst in their caring role.”

This explicitly refers to access to activities when the young person is in their caring role. However, a further consideration raised by the young carers, reinforced by services working with young carers, was the need for opportunities to provide a respite from caring, enabling young carers just to have fun as young people.

These issues led to the selection of young carers as the theme for the Children’s Commissioner’s Takeover Challenge¹ (CCTOC), which is an annual event that Rotherham MBC has supported in its various guises since 2007 when it was known as the 11 Million Takeover Day. The idea is that:

“It puts children and young people in decision-making positions and encourages organisations and businesses to hear their views. Children gain an insight into the adult world and organisations benefit from a fresh perspective about their work.”

(Children’s Commissioner for England, 2015)

2. Method

A spotlight scrutiny review was undertaken by a group of young people from RYC on 2 April 2019 when they took over an Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) meeting. Members of Rotherham Young Carers Council also participated in the review and preparation in advance.

Representatives from the two groups set the context through a short presentation, followed by a focused question and answer session, chaired by Emilia Ashton. The young people explored the current offer for adult carers and young carers, in Rotherham and across South Yorkshire. Key issues regarding access to leisure activities for young carers and how important such activities are for their wellbeing were discussed at length, with constructive challenge given to Cabinet Members, officers and partners from sport, leisure and transport.

Prior to this RYC had researched initiatives in other parts of the country to support young carers and facilitate their participation in sport and leisure activities, providing respite from their caring role. Examples were presented and discussed at the meeting.

A planning meeting was held to discuss the focus for the review and determine which officers and partner organisations RYC and the Young Carers wished to invite as witnesses. The young people devised questions based on their key lines of enquiry and to reflect their research findings and concerns. The Early Help and Family Engagement Team facilitated this work with support from Scrutiny Services and Cllr Steele.

RYC and OSMB would like to thank the young carers, Members, officers and partners who attended for their participation in this review and for their contributions to the discussion on this important issue for young people.

3. Context

Many young people provide a significant number of hours of care each week, both nationally and locally, which may impinge on both their school and social lives. The Carers Trust² reported that 48% of young carers said their caring role made them feel stressed and 44% said it made them feel tired. Given the value of respite from caring for all carers, whether adult or young carers, family income is also a factor in people being able to access leisure activities (see bullet four below).

Facts about Young Carers

Nationally

- ❖ 166,363 young carers in England (Census data May 2013)
- ❖ 1 in 12 young carers are caring for more than 15 hours per week
- ❖ Around 1 in 20 young carers miss school because of their caring responsibilities
- ❖ Average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than in families who do not have a young carer

In Rotherham

- ❖ 450 carers aged under 16, with 365 providing care for under 20 hours per week and 85 for over 20 hours per week
- ❖ 1,549 carers aged 16-24, with 1,012 providing care for under 20 hours per week and 537 for over 20 hours per week
- ❖ Of all carers aged under 25, 1,147 (57%) were female and 850 (43%) were male

(Source: Carers' Strategy)

3.1 Rotherham Carers' Strategy

Caring Together The Rotherham Carers' Strategy 2016-2021 recognises that in Rotherham informal carers are an invaluable part of the health and social care economy, and that enabling them to continue in this role is vital. The strategy highlights the importance of identifying and supporting all carers, including young carers and hidden carers. Within the strategy are actions around highlighting young carers' issues with professionals and schools in recognition of the impact of being a young carer. Partners are also aware that a number of hidden young carers are out there so they are raising awareness with GPs and health professionals.

The following definition of a carer is used:

"A carer is anyone who provides unpaid support to a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support."

Within the strategy partners are working towards achieving six broad outcomes for carers, with three of these being in relation to young carers. There is a specific aim:

“That every young carer in Rotherham is supported to have a positive childhood where they can enjoy life and achieve good outcomes.”

3.2 Rotherham Young Carers Service

This service is commissioned by the Council from Barnardo’s who work with young carers aged 8-18 years, offering guidance and support around issues for young carers and to stop inappropriate caring roles, and to reduce the negative impact caring roles have on a child or young person’s ability to enjoy a healthy childhood.

One potential gap identified during the CCTOC discussion was support for young carers under the age of eight. Although there are carers in Rotherham who are younger than eight, and the service has worked with very young carers, they are not referred to the service as they do not meet the criteria.

3.3 Rotherham Young Carers Council

At the time of the CCTOC the Young Carers Council had seven members. The young people meet monthly to discuss future plans and how to raise awareness of the young carer service. They do this by attending events and participating in surveys to give their views on current services. Their aim is to be a voice for other young carers in Rotherham and to shape decisions and service delivery that will impact on young carers. They also have some opportunities for access to respite and to meet other young carers and have fun in activity sessions, although this is limited by available funding.

The awareness raising has had a positive impact as the annual Rotherham Voice of the Child Lifestyle Survey in 2018, with year 7 and year 10 students, showed 47.2% of young carers had heard of the young carers’ service, compared with 37.3% in 2017.

4. Findings

4.1 Current Carer Offer in Rotherham

One of the questions raised by RYC was the possible lack of parity between what is in place for young carers and adult carers, with a perception that there was more available for adult carers to access. Local support groups for carers seem primarily for adult carers, often linked to specific health conditions. These groups tend to meet during the day and may be joint for carers and the people for whom they provide care, or carer peer groups. The Connect to Support Rotherham website and Voluntary Action Rotherham Gismo directory contain information for carers and details of local groups. Examples of activities offered include coffee mornings, day trips, craft sessions, guided walks, nail painting, exercise sessions, evening meals out for all the family and complementary therapies.

Many discounts or offers for carers are specifically when they are in their caring role, accompanying the person for whom they provide care, rather than as respite. For example the national CEA card scheme for UK cinemas enables a disabled cinema goer to receive a complimentary ticket for someone to go with them when they visit a participating cinema. Eligibility criteria are also frequently linked to benefits, for example Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Not all offers are currently available to young carers.

Travel pass

If a disabled person meets the qualifying criteria in relation to benefits they may apply for a special pass with a 'plus C' logo that allows one carer to travel with them for free within South Yorkshire. The carer can be an adult or young carer.

Rotherham United

A concessionary price is offered to a supporter who qualifies for high rate DLA or enhanced PIP, plus an additional free carer if required. This is currently for an adult carer but the club has agreed to look at extending this to young carers.

Through the Community Sports Trust a number of free projects are running with different funding pots and aims and they have previously linked in through Children in Need and National Citizenship Scheme (NCS) projects. It was a case of linking in better with young carers as there were a number of current activities people could get involved in.

Rothercard

This longstanding Council scheme is currently undergoing an in-depth review, involving OSMB. At present, providing certain eligibility criteria are met, Rothercard entitles people to a concessionary rate on a range of activities at the four leisure centres, Rotherham theatres and at selected leisure venues across South Yorkshire. A Junior Rothercard rate was also introduced on some sporting activities for under 16's.

Currently if people have a carer or paid personal assistant, they may apply for a 'One for One' sticker to be placed on the front of their Rothercard. This gives the carer free entry to leisure facilities and discounted rates at Rotherham Theatre when accompanying the person for whom they provide care.

It was agreed that the CCTOC was timely to look at potential options and incorporate some of the work young people had already done on best practice in the review. It would be helpful to learn how other local authorities were managing initiatives, through grants and funding regimes and how it was brought together. Money will be a factor in what discounts are offered and where and it is a case of how clever RMBC can be as a Council and with partners. Sustainability is crucial whatever results from the review as it is a big disappointment for people when schemes end or the money comes to end.

OSMB agreed to involve either a young carer or a RYC member in the review of Rothercard to contribute their views and ideas.

4.2 Initiatives for Young Carers in Other Areas

RYC had researched what is happening elsewhere to support young carers and outlined examples of positive initiatives in Fife, Luton and Doncaster. Various these included discounts on goods and/or free or reduced cost access to sport, gym and leisure provision. Appendix A has more details about these projects. RYC also made a valid point that on a wider scale ideally there should be universal access for young carers to such initiatives rather than them being limited to a few areas in a so called "postcode lottery".

Of particular interest was the Young Carers Travel and Leisure Access Pilot in Sheffield for reduced rates for travel and leisure activities during the 2018 summer holidays. The summary evaluation report and learning from the pilot were shared at the CCTOC. Representatives from Sheffield Young Carers, South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) and Places for People Leisure who had all been personally involved were present to talk about the pilot and answer questions.

Next steps would be a wider roll out in 2019 with 200 cards this year which should reach a lot of young carers, but not all. A carer card for both adult and young carers, similar to DNA in Doncaster is being introduced with various discounts in places like Star/Jump which should hopefully increase access.

People in Sheffield had stressed the importance of travel as well as leisure access because if someone is unable to get to an activity then it does not really work on its own. Costs of public transport to travel to activities were cited as a barrier for some young carers. SYPTE worked with Sheffield Young Carers to set up the pilot scheme with free travel offered in the school holidays by loading it on to smartcards, either a Megatravel or a 16-18 pass. One of the barriers had been that young carers had to travel to kiosks or interchanges to activate the passes and going forward SYPTE would consider a monthly pass which would only need activating once.

4.3 Possibility of a South Yorkshire Initiative

With a scheme in place in Doncaster and proposals for a similar scheme in Sheffield, the young people enquired about the possibility of introducing something South Yorkshire wide. The general view was that at this stage it was probably advisable to focus on developing Rotherham's offer as this would be done more quickly. However, it was recognised that going South Yorkshire wide would eliminate issues for young carers who live on the border of neighbouring authorities with differing offers. RYC will raise the issue with the Mayor of Sheffield City Region.

NCS was trialled in Sheffield last year but the residential element is a challenge for young carers in having so much time away from home. Sheffield Young Carers were trying to work with local providers on a more tailored model and that might be something that could also be looked at more widely.

4.4 Becoming Young Carer Friendly

The consensus was that the best way for organisations to become more young carer friendly was through dialogue with young carers and getting feedback from them to inform how services are delivered. It is important that any such meetings are young people friendly and not intimidating so that people can put forward their views and ideas.

Places for People had heard about the personal experiences of some Sheffield young carers - what they go through and why they enjoy respite, which was educational for those delivering or potentially delivering activities. An open invitation was extended to partners to attend Rotherham Young Carers Council, which meets on the last Thursday of every month.

4.5 Costs

Further work would be needed to calculate if there would be any actual increased cost or lost income from offering discounted or free access to leisure activities or travel. For example, free bus travel to access an activity was not actually a cost or lost fare but rather giving someone access to a bus they would not otherwise have caught, unless they displaced a fare paying passenger. Or if three extra people go swimming that is not lost income or a direct cost to the organisation as there is no additional cost in providing them with access to the session in the pool. The key is the marginal cost of an additional user which may be small providing they do not displace a full cost individual. Administrative costs for running leisure or travel card schemes such as those in the Sheffield pilot would need to be factored in.

4.6 Discounts and Concessions

Sport and leisure providers at the meeting were open to exploring discounts and new initiatives for young carers, subject to identifying funding, and to link young carers in better with existing activities. For example, when Rotherham Titans Community Foundation works with schools children are automatically given a free ticket and plans to extend that next year.

Various scenarios for providing free travel for young carers in Sheffield, both for all young carers (estimated to be 7,300) and for 100 young carers aged 12+ during their 12 months with Sheffield Young Carers Service had been developed by the service. These scenarios included full year, all school holidays and summer holidays only, calculated by using the price of the 28 day Get About Pass or the weekly pass as appropriate. Estimated costs ranged from £2.9m plus administration for all young carers for a year, to £5,000 plus administration for 100 young carers in the summer. A further option was to look at developing a zero fare pass where travel companies would invoice SYPTE for any completed journeys using the pass. The figure of 7,300 was based on research that found 1 in 12 children and young people have caring responsibilities. See Appendix B for more details of all scenarios.

Any permanent free travel concessions would have to be offered across the whole of South Yorkshire by SYPTE and the potential costs were very high when extended to all four local authorities. It was agreed that it would be useful to know more on the numbers and costs with a breakdown for each of the areas and especially for Rotherham. The possibility of local authorities earmarking specific monies from their budgets to SYPTE was raised and the need to consider both the costs and benefits of initiatives for young carers.

Following the CCTOC, SYPTE provided Scrutiny with costings for providing South Yorkshire Young Carers with a zero fare pass. These were based on an assumption of 0.56% of South Yorkshire's young population being young carers but further detail was not provided on how this percentage had been derived. This equated to 7,700 individuals, which, using other assumptions, would generate an annual cost of approximately £1.3 million. SYPTE costings included the additional re-imbursment to transport operators through the child concession. In contrast, Sheffield Young Carers Service had calculated 7,300 carers for Sheffield alone, indicating the need for clarity on who would be included as a young carer.

4.7 Identifying Young Carers

As the Carers' Strategy recognises, further work is needed to identify young carers and hidden carers of all ages. For the pilot in Sheffield SYPTE had been uncertain about who would be classed as a young carer in the absence of specific criteria, compared with eligibility for a disabled travel pass, for example, which was clear as people were assessed by their local authority. Sheffield partners had considered that having a young carer's assessment would work as the criterion. Eligibility criteria for any initiatives for young carers in Rotherham need to be determined by partners.

4.8 Publicising Opportunities

Following from the question of parity between adult and young carers it was highlighted that with information about discounts for carers the normal assumption is that they are for adult carers, so people need to know clearly if it means all carers, including young carers. Communications need to demonstrate that offers encompass all ages and are promoted in a child-friendly way so young people understand what is available for them to access.

4.9 Safety

The travel access issue needs to be thought through fully because of the age of some of the younger carers and potential safeguarding issues with regard to travelling on their own. Scenarios for Sheffield had been developed on the basis of travel passes for young carers aged 12+.

5. Agreed Actions

During the question and answer session RMBC and partners committed to take back a number of points and discuss them further, either within their own organisations or more widely at partnership fora. These were:

- More dialogue to take place with young carers on what they would like to see in Rotherham.
- Linking the issues raised to the review of Rothercard as this was very timely.
- Places for People were happy to replicate the Sheffield initiative for young carers in Rotherham if that would be something they would be interested in and to set up cards for discounted rates (20% in Sheffield).
- Raising the issue of access to leisure activities with all providers in the Rotherham Active Partnership.
- Rotherham United agreed to consider new projects and discounts, in addition to linking in better with existing activities that young carers could be involved in.
- Considering discounts at Rotherham Civic Theatre for young carers.
- Rotherham United to consider extending the adult carer free ticket initiative to include young carers.
- Approaching Sheffield Steelers regarding free tickets for Rotherham young carers as with the Sheffield Young Carers.
- SYPTE will discuss the points raised regarding travel and travel costs, such as costed options for various scenarios in Rotherham as they had done in Sheffield.
- Places for People confirmed they would accept young carer discounts across South Yorkshire in their leisure facilities and would also introduce anything developed in Rotherham in their three Sheffield sites, but do not operate in Doncaster and Barnsley.

6. Conclusions

As seen in section 5, it was evident that the organisations at the CCTOC meeting were keen to look at ways of improving opportunities for young carers to access discounted or free activities to give them a vital break from caring. The importance of aligning this with concessionary travel was also emphasised from a financial perspective as many families with young carers are on low incomes.

The immediate starting point needs to be more in-depth conversation with young carers to understand their needs better and to pinpoint a small number of priority activities they would like to be able to participate in. Although it is positive to have whole family initiatives, or ones for the cared for person and the young carer together, the need for respite and to enjoy leisure time with other young people should not be overlooked. Actually having time for leisure activities may also depend on the availability of alternative care to allow young carers to have a break, as some young carers reported that their caring responsibilities precluded them from participating in the Sheffield pilot.

Various positive ideas emerged during the meeting, although further work is needed by the Council to explore with partner agencies what might be possible either to extend to young

carers (if not already included) or to develop for young carers. This might include linking in with other activities already taking place, for example at Rotherham United and Rotherham Titans. It could also be through the wider network of sport and leisure activity providers across the Rotherham Active Partnership as well as Places for People Leisure. Evaluation of current projects and what can be learned from them and built on for the future is important. Eligibility criteria for who is classed as a young carer will need to be jointly agreed by the Council and partners.

Rotherham libraries already provide activity sessions for children and young people including school holiday and after school reading and craft activities, Lego clubs, code clubs and reading groups, which could be another potential area to explore further.

Budget and resource implications of potential initiatives will need to be calculated and considered by the Council and partners, as any schemes need to be sustainable in the longer term rather than time limited. It was stressed that discussion should not focus purely on costs but should include cost benefit analysis given the savings to adult social care from the informal care provided by carers and the need to support all carers' health and wellbeing. There was discussion on whether providers incurred actual costs or lost income from offering free leisure or travel access but some initiatives are likely to involve administrative costs to implement and oversee.

At the time of writing this report, the Department of Health and Social Care had recently announced a £5 million funding pot The Carers Innovation Fund to improve support for carers which may be worth consideration.

Wide promotion and communication in a child-friendly style will be a key aspect of the future offer for young carers so they know about the activities available and that partners are involved and committed.

7. Recommendations

- 1) That RMBC and partners engage with young carers during 2019 to develop a priority list of activities that young carers in Rotherham would be interested in participating in.
- 2) That RMBC and partners work together to develop an improved and sustainable offer of discounted access to leisure activities for young carers from 2020.
- 3) That in developing this improved offer RMBC and partners also consider support for young carers to travel to leisure activities, including concessionary fares and travelling safely.
- 4) That RMBC and partners agree clear eligibility criteria for young carers for future initiatives.
- 5) That the new offer for young carers is communicated and well publicised by the Council, partners and schools.
- 6) That information and publicity for any current activities that are open to both adult and young carers is updated by the end of 2019 to make it clearer who is eligible. Ideally this should be in a well promoted single point of access so it is easy for everyone to find the information.

- 7) That work continues through the Carers Strategy Action Group to identify other young people who are young carers and for partners to consider ways to support young carers aged under eight who do not meet the criteria for the Young Carers Service.
- 8) That progress on developing and implementing the new offer is reported to Rotherham Youth Cabinet and OSMB during 2020.

8. Thanks

Councillors Alam, Allen, Clark, Cooksey and Watson

RMBC: Helen Barker, Sarah Bellamy, Andrew Burgin, Pepe Di'Iasio, Sean Hill, Shokat Lal, James McLaughlin, Toni Paxford, Luke Sayers, Chris Siddall, Jon Stonehouse, Paul Woodcock and Nathanael Zytowskiak

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Lindsay Jones, Rotherham Titans Community Foundation
Emily Newman and Mark Rawding, Places for People Leisure
Emma Schofield, Rotherham United Community Sports Trust
Laura Selby, Sheffield Young Carers Project and Dua'a, Sheffield Young Carer

Thanks also to other members of Rotherham Youth Cabinet and Rotherham Young Carers Council who were involved in the preparation for the spotlight review.

9. Background papers and references

Agenda Papers and Minutes from OSMB Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge meeting on 2/04/19
Rotherham Youth Cabinet Manifesto 2019
Evaluation Report from Sheffield Young Carers Summer Holiday Pilot

References

1 Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge
<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/learn-more/takeover-challenge>

2 *Invisible and In Distress: Prioritising the Mental Health of England's Young Carers* (Carers Trust 2016)

Contact

Janet Spurling, Scrutiny Officer, RMBC janet.spurling@rotherham.gov.uk

Fife

In a three year scheme that ran until March 2019 young carers had access to a free leisure pass which helped them to be more physically active. Different activities were offered dependent on age:

- Under 14 - free swimming
- 14-17 - free gym and swim
- 18+ - free gym, swim, fitness suite and health classes

Regular evaluation was carried out and a survey of 32 young carers shared with RYC showed most used the pass weekly, it had encouraged them to be more physically active and had allowed them to spend time with friends. One young carer said:

“With this I am able to have some alone time when I need it, build up my self-confidence and take time out of my caring role ...”

Luton Active Young Carers' Card

This card allows young carers aged 11-18 to take part in different sports activities including swimming, badminton, table tennis, gym, foot golf and pitch and putt at a fraction of the standard cost. A young carer may participate in ten activities for £1 each time (card price £10). When the card is finished, another can be applied for up to a maximum of 3 in total. This gives young carers the opportunity for activities with friends and other young carers.

Doncaster DNA Card

This card gives young carers discounts on high street brands and iTunes, reduced cost train travel and access to discounted activities such as the cinema, skating and bowling. It also allows young people to identify themselves as a Young Carer to teachers or professionals as well as allowing them to explain how they are feeling without words through a traffic light system.

Sheffield Young Carers Travel and Leisure Access Pilot

Places for People and Sheffield International Venues (SIV) put on activity days for young carers in June 2018 and also offered members of Sheffield Young Carers (SYC) free swimming, tennis and ice skating during the six-week summer holidays, as well as discounted leisure access for a whole year. SYPTE offered free bus and tram travel to SYC members during the school summer holidays. Two schools, Firth Park Academy and Meadowhead School, agreed to be involved in the pilot to explore ways to increase access to respite for young carers who are not SYC members.

19 young carers applied to participate in the free travel scheme, which was offered over four weeks of the holidays, with 35 weekly passes activated by 18 individuals. 16 young people attended the Places for People open day and 11 applied for annual passes. 15 leisure sessions were accessed at their venues during the summer - six swims, three gym sessions and six free tennis sessions. Nine young people attended the SIV open day and 23 applied for annual passes.

Feedback was received from eight of the young carers who had participated in the pilot and a majority said the passes helped them to - get a break from their caring; feel less stressed; see their friends more than normal; do more exercise than normal and feel healthier in body or mind.

Appendix B

Costing options developed by Sheffield Young Carers Service for roll-out of free travel scheme for young carers in Sheffield

Option 1: Free travel for all young carers in Sheffield for one year

28 day Get About Pass - £33.20 x 12 months = £398.40

X 7,300 young carers in Sheffield¹

TOTAL: £2,908,320 plus administration costs to include estimated 2 FTE staff

Option 2: Free travel for all young carers in Sheffield during school holidays (the most isolated and difficult times for young carers)

Weekly Pass – £8.30 x 13 weeks = £107.90

X approx. 7,300 young carers in Sheffield

TOTAL: £787,670 plus administration costs to include estimated 2 FTE staff

Option 3: Free travel for young carers accessing Sheffield Young Carers Service (SYC) during their 12 months in the service

28 day Get About Pass - £33.20 x 12 months = £398.40

X 100 SYC members aged 12+ (younger members unlikely to be able to travel independently)

TOTAL: £39,840 plus administration costs to include estimated 0.1 FTE staff

Option 4: Free travel for young carers accessing SYC during school holidays in their 12 months in the service

Weekly Pass – £8.30 x 13 holiday weeks = £107.90

X 100 SYC members aged 12+ (younger members unlikely to be able to travel independently)

TOTAL: £10,790 plus administration costs to include estimated 0.1 FTE staff

Option 5: Free travel for young carers accessing SYC during the six-week summer holidays in their 12 months in the service

Weekly Pass – £8.30 x 6 summer holiday weeks = £49.80

X approx. 100 SYC members aged 12+

TOTAL: £4,980 plus administration costs to include estimated 0.1 FTE staff

Option 6: Development of a zero fare pass where travel companies invoice for any completed journeys using the pass.

Further research would need to be done to measure the average number of journeys young people take using the passes. This would then show whether the costs of developing and funding zero fare passes for young carers would be more cost effective than issuing weekly / monthly passes.



Contact Us



Rotherham_YC

/Rotherhamyouthcabinet



/Rotherhamyouthcabinet



Rotherhamyouthcabinet@gmail.com
sarahbellamy@rotherham.gov.uk



@Rotherham_YC

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