Improving Assessment and Support for Young Carers Transition to Adulthood
The Children’s Society: Working to disrupt multiple disadvantage during childhood

Right now in Britain there are children and young people who are facing one, or many disadvantages. We work with these young people step by step for as long as it takes.

The Children’s Society’s **Include service** is home to the National Young Carers Initiative

- Developing Good Practice recognition and support for young carers across England
- We campaign for change and promote best practice within central and local government.
- We enable young carers to have a voice by giving them a platform to share their experiences and raise awareness about the issues they face.
- Reaching out to the most isolated young carers and those with complex needs
- We deliver training and consultancy to Voluntary and Statutory agencies across England including Health and Social Care Providers, Education, including Higher and Further Education and Academic Institutes and more.

    **We advocate with and on behalf of young carers everywhere!**
Setting the Scene

Young and young adult carers gained additional rights through the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014. Rights to:

- Be identified and not be ‘Hidden from View’.
- An assessment of their needs.
- Have their future needs considered:
- A ‘Whole Family Approach’.

There is an explicit requirement which states that children’s and adults services must cooperate with each other and other relevant partners, including GP practices, housing, educational providers and others including the voluntary sector; this duty is reciprocal in order to identify young carers, prevent and reduce inappropriate and excessive caring responsibilities being taken on by children.

Similar duties have also been placed on NHS England and clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) to promote integration with care and support under the NHS Act to identify young carers and reduce harm.
Transition for Young Adult Carers

This action seeks to improve support for young adult carers to enable them to make positive transitions between the ages of 16-24.

The Department of Health and Social Care will fund a project on transitions for young adult carers. The project will look to identify and disseminate effective practices to support and enable young adult carers to make positive transitions between the ages of 16-24, and identify the types of practical and emotional support that can enable a young adult carer to achieve a positive transition.
In 2018 The Children’s Society highlighted the serious vulnerabilities of young people in transition to adulthood and the need to improve their support to ensure they reach their full potential.

The ‘Crumbling Futures’ report revealed the extent to which young people face multiple disadvantages across different areas of their lives.

- Highlighting 1 in 5 sixteen year olds experience five or more complex issues that can affect their health, safety or development.

- Due to their age these young people often fall through the gaps between children’s and adults services, meaning support can fall short at a time when they need it the most transitioning to adulthood. This support then often disappears entirely as they turn 18 years old.

Our focused work with young carers has highlighted that these young people face particular and conflicting issues and disadvantages that impact upon their aspirations, positive life experiences and decision making as they approach adulthood.
Identify and disseminate effective practices that enable Young Adult Carers to make positive transitions between the ages of 16 and 24 including improved equitability of transition assessments being delivered for young carers nationally.

An outline of current practice regarding young carers’ transition to adulthood across nine regions of England.

Identify the types of practical and emotional support that can enable young adult carers to achieve a positive transition from childhood to adulthood.

Build a comprehensive picture of transition assessments nationally.

Produce tools and resources for both young people and professionals based on any gaps in provision and services.

Ensuring key professionals are aware of their duties, roles and responsibilities in ensuring transitional support is provided.
Who are Young Adult Carers?

Young Adult Carers are often referred to as being: ‘Young people between the ages of 16-24 years who provide care to someone on a regular basis’. Although there is no legal definition for Young Adult Carers, they are often referred to as being young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years old (some definitions refer to them as being from 14 to 25 years old) who provide, or intend to provide, care for another person who has a long-term illness, is disabled, has a mental health condition, or an addiction problem. They may be caring for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other persons with care needs.
Young Adult Carers often fall through the gaps in support, and are hidden from services designed to support them. They tell us that they often have to choose between their own future aspirations or caring for their family, with significant impacts leaving them vulnerable to risks related to their safety, health and future opportunities and well-being later in life.

- Feeling anger, stress, guilt, and resentment.
- Becoming even more isolated as a young adult and experiencing loneliness.
- Not pursuing their future goals.
- Not achieving or reaching their potential in education.
- Feeling guilty if they do leave home for university or employment.
- Struggling with higher education, as they may miss days at their place of study or experience disruption due to their caring role.
- Feeling pressure to remain in the family home or at least close by.
- Experience negative impact on their well-being.
- Experience financial issues, living with low income or in poverty.
- Losing all support if it is dropped when they reach 18 years old.

Detrimental to this is that often these young people feel they are managing all of their issues alone without any guidance or support and that they face significant barriers to accessing support.
Rights for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

Assessment

Audit | Analysis | Goal | Measure

Result | Evaluation | Plan | Process

Quality | Quantity

Care Act 2014

Children and Families Act 2014
Our Methodology: Co-Production with Young People and informed by professional agencies

Over 150 young adult carers informed this work by sharing their experiences of transitioning to adulthood.

Discussions included their receipt of any transition assessments, pathway planning activities and their perceptions in hindsight of what would have improved these experiences and processes.

Additionally they engaged in ‘train the trainer’ activities to develop skills in consulting with others and resilience building activities for their own well-being.

Focus group workshops were held across England with multi-agency professionals including commissioners, directors of services, management and practice level service providers to gather experiences of current practice and challenges in delivery of the duties outlined for young carers transition to adulthood.

Online surveys were sent to 152 local authorities and 265 young carers services across England regarding locality provision, strategies and support.

Telephone interviews were carried out with young carers services and commissioners of young carers service provision to understand local support and strategies.
Chapter 4
A focus on the young carers transition assessment
What it is:

• It is about how changing from being supported by children’s services to adults services will affect the young carer.
• It is a discussion with the young carer to find out more about their future aspirations.
• It is about the levels and types of caring they provide.
• It is gathering information needed so the ‘assessor’ can make decisions with them about the future.
• It is thinking about whether more support would help.
• It is the responsibility of the local authority.

What it’s not:

It is not a young carers assessment

It is not an assessment for an adult carer

‘Post 18 years is too late’
What we found:

• 13% of young adult carers reported they had received a transition assessment.
• 51% reported that they had not received a transition assessment.
• 36% didn’t know if they had received a transition assessment.

“There needs to be clearer communication between professionals and us as young carers. I thought I had a transition assessment but apparently that was just a young carers assessment and then I had an assessment last year but that was a carers assessment ‘cos I am over 18 now, so I have no idea what happened to the transition assessment” (Young adult carer)

“I had an assessment, I am unsure if it was a transition assessment or not – but nothing came of it anyway” (Young adult carer)

Those who had received a young carers transition assessment reported positively about the outcomes in ensuring they could pursue their future aspirations and reducing negative impacts of their caring roles. Key to this was the inclusion of relevant topics for themselves, the interrelation of their caring roles and the needs of their whole family.

“After having what I now know to be a transition assessment my family had a care needs assessment. This meant support was put in place to help me and my family so I can go to university”. (Young adult carer)
survey responses showed local authorities to be commissioning the completion of young carers’ needs assessments to the local young carers service providers. However, the commissioned contract activities were found to be inconsistent in the approach to the young carers transition assessment:

- 70% of the contracts commissioned to the young carers services included the statutory young carers’ needs assessment.
- 31% of these contracts also included the young carers transition assessment.
- 42% of the professionals – both service providers and commissioners – who attended workshops and focus groups also reported having no specific provision for transition assessments included in the commissioned service within their locality;
- 36% reported they didn’t know if this was happening.

The data gathered from the local **young carers services** showed:

- 44% of young carers’ service providers said they felt they held responsibility for completing young carers’ transition assessments.
- 23% had been formally commissioned by the local authority to complete the young carers transition assessment.

Despite the legislation and guidance outlining the duties for local authorities to carry out young carers transition assessments **before they turn 18** and when it is of significant benefit:

- 35% reported this was completed by adult services after the young person has reached adulthood, which is in fact a carers assessment and not a transition assessment.
- 35% reported they didn’t know when they were supposed to complete them with the young person.
The local authority survey data outlined that the majority of commissioned contracts focus on respite and social support for young carers to ensure they feel less isolated. **Sixty four percent** of young carers’ services reported they had not been formally commissioned to deliver young carers transition assessments but were informally providing this support anyway. However, the limited resources and capacity of young carers’ service providers often prevented them from offering consistent support provision.
I might want to move out of home one day.

Will it take account of how my families needs may change?

Should I go to college / University?

How long will the support plan take to start?

How will I manage the level and type of caring I provide in the future?

What are my options for work or an apprenticeship?

Will I need to continue to provide the same care or will things change?

What exam subjects should I choose at school?

Will it take account of how my families needs may change?

I might want to move out of home one day.
Recommendations

- The Young Adult Carers recommended the Young Carers Transition Assessment should be completed between the ages of 14 and 16.

- The assessment should take account of choices related to their post-16 future and help them to plan for this future. Leaving this until just before they turned 18 was too late for them to receive appropriate support.

- The assessment should not just focus on the current needs of the young carer and their family, but also on the likely ways in which these needs will change over the coming years as the young person transitions to adulthood.

- The transition assessment should be the start of the bigger transitional support process and be ongoing, taking account of changes in need, young carers isolation in the community and their aspirations.

- Having a specific guideline for professionals completing the assessment process with young people would reduce ambiguity.
The Young Adult Carers recommended that key to the transition assessment is to tailor it to the wants and aspirations of the individual and this could include information regarding:

- school, including primary, secondary and pupil referral units
- Further and higher education:
- Vocational training opportunities including the Governments T-Level Transition offer and apprenticeships
- Opportunities and aspirations for employment
- Housing and accommodation
- Their mental health and wellbeing including isolation and loneliness
- Transition from a young carers support service to a young adult carers support service
After the assessment:

Afterwards the young carer and parent(s) should be provided with a written report outlining:

• What was talked about.
• What will happen next.
• Whether the young carer, the person they care for or someone else in the family should get help.
• What support will be provided.
• What other services might be able to provide and if any referrals are being made.
The Office of the Children’s Commissioner report on young carers (2016) highlighted differences in the recording rates of young carers and young adult carers within local authorities’ performance and monitoring reports.

Therefore, the monitoring of completed assessments with young carers, or the type of completed assessment i.e. transition assessments, is not always considered as a requirement for data sharing with the local authority and so young carers’ data is not always systematically shared across different agencies. Additionally, at a national level Government is not currently collecting data or monitoring whether local authorities are delivering the duties and outcomes for young carers.
What’s Needed?

As support for young carers is now a specific statutory obligation a system for tracking how young carers and young adult carers, are identified and supported is required.

Local carers strategies should include the monitoring requirements for young carers and young adult carers.

Mechanisms should be devised where local authorities can identify the numbers of known young carers, their receipt of an assessment and support for the whole family in their areas and there is a need for a more effective system for collecting data nationally.
The Children’s Society Include Programme
National Young Carers Initiative
Tel: 01962 711511

helen.leadbitter@childrenssociety.org.uk
childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer
@ChildSocInclude   @HelenLeadbitter