

This document is still in draft format. Once it is submitted to the printers they will design and format the document, adding the appropriate page numbers and graphics.

The front cover has been designed by Eleanor Beer, a graphic facilitator who visually represented the Themes and priorities agreed by young carers and partners at the collaborative consultation event.

Quotes will be contained in bubbles to emphasise the essence of comments made regarding themes.

The Monmouthshire Young Carers Strategy 2017-20

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Monmouthshire Young Carers Strategy 2017-2020

Foreword

INCLUDE PHOTO OF COUNCILLOR GEOFF BURROWS

I am very pleased to be able to offer a few words in respect of this very important document.

A great deal of effort has been put into reaching out to young carers in Monmouthshire. Establishing who they are and ensuring as much support as possible is provided to enable them to carry out their role as Carers and being sure that the impact on their education is mitigated as far as possible.

It is no ones fault that there are young Carers, it is a fact of life that through many circumstances that this is the outcome. It is our responsibility though, to do absolutely everything we can to help them through this period of their lives and just as importantly, giving them the space to be able to be what they should be, children.

I listened this morning on the TV to a very young carer who looks after her mother and who wants to be an actress when she grows up. She was asked what is it like to be a carer, she replied that it is like being an actress in a role, but with proper actresses they get to stop, but this role goes on for ever and ever.

Thank you to everyone who give their time and effort in helping our young Carers in Monmouthshire. To the Carers themselves, words can't describe the respect and pride we have for what you do.

County Councillor Geoff Burrows
Cabinet Member for Social Care Safeguarding and Health.
Carers Champion.

Introduction

This is the first strategy developed solely for young carers in Monmouthshire. In previous years young carers were included in the overarching Carers Strategy which predominately focussed on adult carers. Since the introduction of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 young carers now have the same right to access an assessment as those of an adult. It is therefore only right that a young carer's voice is one that is heard on an equal footing as those of an adult.

This strategy marks the beginnings of new ways of working together to support young carers in Monmouthshire. The strategy will bring to light the importance of recognising the rights that all children and young people have under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as "a human being below the age of 18 years". However this strategy has a number of priorities that reach beyond the ages of 18 as there is a recognition that many young carers are still adapting from the transition of that of a child to one of an adult through to their early 20's.

This strategy is designed to be one that is reflective, relevant, flexible and responsive to the changing needs of young carers. It is for these reasons the strategy has not been set out as a task and finish plan. It does however reflect the views of young carers, what the outcomes will be for them, and how we are going to work together to achieve those outcomes.

What remains core however, is that the strategy ensures young carers remain the focus and at the heart of how all partners work together in the early identification and support they offer young carers.

Changes in Legislation and What that means for Young Carers

With the implementation of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 young carers accessing an assessment will have more of a say in the care and support they receive. This will mean different conversations with young carers, their families, the people they care for and those agencies and partners who will be providing that support.

Who is a Young Carer?

In the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 the Welsh Government has defined a carer as a person: who is providing or intends to provide care for:

- An adult or disabled child who is ordinarily resident in the authority's area, or
- Any other child or disabled child who is within the authority's area

The Act also requires local authorities to provide support to young and young adult carers and to take into account the transitions young and young adult carers make from school to further education, higher education, and employment.

**There is no age barrier to becoming a carer!
A young carer is still a carer!**

Recognising and Supporting Young Carers.

For many young people trying to put into words what is going on in their life is not always easy. Even if they can put it into words saying it in a way that other people understand and relate to can still be a challenge. For young carers it can be doubly difficult because they are undertaking a caring role they may not understand, recognise, or have someone to talk to about it. The earlier someone knows they are a young carer the earlier they can ask for help.

The earlier someone recognises a child or young person is a carer then the earlier that young carer can get help and support.

Young Carers in Monmouthshire

Following a survey in 2010, the BBC estimated there were around 700,000 young carers in the UK. The 2011 census identified 195,000 young carers in the UK with 178,000 of those young carers coming from England or Wales. However, the 2011 were defined a young carers as being aged 5-17 whereas since 2016, in Wales, the definition of a carer and young carer is the same and is therefore age blind. These statistics highlight the variances and lack of comparable data for the true number of young carers in the UK, and conversely in Wales. It would therefore correlate that regional and locality data would too be inaccurate.

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What is known is that in Monmouthshire, at the time of going to print, the Young Carers Project was supporting 130 young carers, and the 2011 Census estimated there were 20,006 under 18's living in Monmouthshire. It should be noted that the 2011 census defined a young carer as being aged 5-17 whereas since 2016, in Wales the definition of a carer and young carer is the same and also age blind.

Using the Monmouthshire data it would indicate that only 0.65% of under 18's were being identified as young carers. Therefore there is a recognition by Monmouthshire County Council and partner organisations that there are many more young carers we do not know of, and many children and young people who do not recognise themselves as a young carer. This strategy will help Monmouthshire County Council, partner organisations and individuals to find those hidden young carers by working in different ways, so we can therefore paint a more accurate picture of young carers in Monmouthshire.

What we do know about Young Carers in Monmouthshire

Some children and young people said they liked being a young carer because it made them feel they "have done something good". This doesn't however detract from the life of a young carer in Monmouthshire and that the range of support they give is varied

and has an impact upon them personally. It is demanding on their time, emotions, understanding, capabilities, health and well-being and education. For some young carers there is a change in the family dynamics. Rather than being recognised solely as a child their caring role can overshadow and overlap this recognition and their role as child/young person changes. They are someone who has listen to others worries; think about finances; make sure medication is collected and taken and in some instances they take a back seat because they can't have equal family time due to the needs of the person being cared for, in essence they become a Young Carer.

How the Strategy was Produced

We applied the same methodology to producing this strategy as the same one we applied to the adult strategy, Monmouthshire Carers Strategy 2016-19, because it worked. It worked because the writing of the strategy was turned on its head and with the consultation moved to the front the process and the writing to the end. To do that we adapted a methodology from the King's Fund called "Community Orientated Primary Care". To make it work for children and young people we drew upon the expertise and knowledge of those who knew young carers and children better than we (The Monmouthshire Carers Project) did. Through all stages of planning the Monmouthshire Carers Project worked with young carers, the Young Carers Project, grass-root workers and professionals.

The first part of this methodology was to ask young carers and those who supported young carers to tell us what mattered the most to them, tell us what they did, what support they had and anything else they wanted us to know about being a young carer. The reason this worked so well was because of how young carers were engaged.

All young carers were invited to an event at Hilston Park, Monmouth on 27th October 2016 and on the day 34 young carers and 30 adults attended, the latter ranging from social care professionals, community members, elected members and the third sector. The day was designed to be interactive, fun, engaging and most importantly one where everybody was equal. Hilston Park designed an activity programme that complemented group discussions, and was accessible to all regardless of age and ability.

Comments, themes and key points were captured and summarised by a graphic facilitator, Eleanor Beer bringing discussions to life in a way that everyone could relate to by picturing themes. The second stage moved into prioritising needs and everyone voted on the key themes in order of their own priorities. The key themes contained within this strategy are now the mainstay of how we will all work together in Monmouthshire to support our Young Carers.

1. Young Carers and their Education

Young people spend the greatest proportion of their day in a learning environment and it is here that young carers felt they should be getting the greatest support for and earliest identification of their caring role.

Young Carers Said

Young carers can often be caring for relatives without their teachers' or tutors knowledge. If they are not identified and supported, their caring role can seriously affect their future wellbeing, life chances and levels of aspiration. Research from The Carers Trust has shown that around one in 20 young carers miss school because of their caring responsibilities. The caring role can limit a young person's ability to fully participate in school/college life, their attendance maybe low or sporadic and attending school/college on time can be difficult. Most importantly their ability to keep up with their own education is a major challenge as they juggle it with their caring role.

Young carers often experience stress and fatigue and will often find it more difficult to concentrate in class. Young carers are more likely to experience bullying which can be down to many different factors including being seen as isolated or different which can lead to them being teased or ostracised because of their family's circumstances or problems. Trying to cope as a young carer when coupled with bullying will make their life in school/college even harder. For some they may become withdrawn, depressed or over sensitive.

What are we going to do?

- Work with partners in education to integrate YC's awareness into the whole learning programme
- To have a designated YC lead in each school or further education establishment in Monmouthshire
- Each school/college to have one designated point of contact for Young Carers, so one person can tell all that need to know about the young carer
- Work in partnership with education so young carers will have flexibility to continue with their education and caring role
- To work with partners in Education to commit to adopting the Carers Trust and Children's Society Young Carers in School Award.

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

Through early identification, intervention and support in schools/colleges young carers will have the same access to education and career choices as their peers.

2. Time Away from Caring/Chill Time

Young carers don't find it easy to switch off from their caring role to enjoy their own time in the way they want. They recognise they need this time to relax and be their own person but the caring dynamics within the family didn't always make it easy or practical.

Young Carers Said

Many young carers felt that their caring responsibilities limited their opportunities and ability to take part in an active social life or have their own interests outside the home. They did not feel they had enough of their own free time to relax. In some instances the home environment made it difficult for young carers to have their own space to take time away from caring, or have friends round as they felt they were always on call. Many young carers just wanted time alone with their parents.

Some young carers felt guilty about leaving the cared-for person at home to go out with friends or take part in activities. Even when they were having their free time, some young carers felt unable to fully relax and enjoy themselves because they felt anxious and concerned that something might happen to the cared-for person in their absence.

Finances and transport proved to be a problem in allowing a young carer time away from caring. For those families on low incomes this severely restricted opportunities for a young carer to access activities. For older young carers, they didn't find it easy to get a part-time job as there wasn't always someone else to help out with caring. With time being of the premium it wasn't always easy to get the cared for in the car, or find someone to look after the cared for when a young carer wanted to go somewhere. Lack of finances and transport for young carers greatly reduced their ability to take time away from their caring role.

What are we going to do?

- To work with families and partners to look at ways to free the young carer's time up, so they can have more of their own time away from the caring role
- To look at flexible respite options for families to allow a young carer to have their own time/family time
- To have an annual Young Carers Rights Day, whereby young carers can have their day away from the caring role to meet other young carers, organisations and support agencies in a fun, relaxed and safe environment.
- To offer young carers training so they can provide peer to peer support to other young carers to feel confident in articulating to others the need for their own time

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

Young Carers will feel confident and supported to have time to pursue their interests and social life away from the caring role.

3. Mental Health

Young carers recognise there are two sides to the coin with mental health, their own mental health needs and those of the person they care for. In some instances the primary illness/disability significantly affected the mental health of both the young carer and the cared for. Being unsupported with mental health illnesses for both the young carer and cared for markedly affects independence, coping and/or parenting ability.

Young Carers Said

Their own mental health needs aren't always recognised and taken into account and they therefore find it difficult to know who to talk to and get help from for themselves. Mental health professionals were not always aware their patients were also parents and that there might be a young carer involved in the parent's care.

Young Carers said they didn't know who to talk to about mental health illness regarding the person they care for. When things were explained to them and the person they care for, neither of them fully understood what was being discussed. As young carers were regarded as a child/young person professionals didn't recognise them as having a caring responsibility and therefore didn't include them in conversations about the cared for. Young carers said they wanted to be included because they were the ones who had to cope with the effects of mental illness on a daily basis.

Changes in mental illness sometimes fluctuated and changed rapidly so there was a sense of lack of control and a daily routine for young carers and their family. This led to anger and frustration because of not knowing what was going on and not knowing how to cope.

What are we going to do?

- Offer training for
 - Age appropriate Mental Health First Aid Training
 - Mental health awareness
- Create better links to raise the awareness of and support for young carers with
 - Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services - CAMHS
 - Primary Care Mental Health Services PCMHs
 - Health and Social Care Professionals
- Provide a range of information to support young carers
 - On- line
 - In leaflets
 - Through schools and colleges

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

Young carers will be able to access support for their own mental health needs and be recognised, included and supported when their young carer role is affected by mental health illness.

4. Educating Others About Young Carers

Do people really understand the terms young carer and what that means? Professionals and adults tend to focus on the adult or child with the disability or illness, yet they are in a prime position to identify that there may be a child or young person providing care. As a result the needs of the child or young person may go unnoticed. It is everybody's responsibility to identify and support young carers and those they care for.

Young Carers Said

They didn't think others really knew what young carers did and how their lives were different to children/young people who didn't have a caring role. They felt people weren't aware of the level of responsibility young carers undertook and if they did know they could help lessen the impact of that child's/young person's caring role.

For those young carers whose families were with a housing provider be it rented or a housing association, there wasn't an acknowledgment of the impact the caring role had on the upkeep and maintenance of their property. Many families found it difficult to keep up with the day to maintenance because of the demands of the caring role. There was also a higher proportion of families facing a negative financial impact where there was a caring responsibility. They found specialist equipment expensive to buy, there was a reduction in income due to combing the caring role with a job and for some working wasn't viable because there was no replacement care to allow the adult(s) to work, and young carers to find a part-time job.

What are we going to do?

- Explore options so young carers are
 - Recognised as carers by emergency services
 - Are supported by housing providers
- Setting up a young carers group to
 - Produce appropriate information leaflets for professionals about young carers
 - Awareness raising training sessions run by YC's
 - For professionals
 - For schools during Inset days

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

Young carers will be recognised and supported by professionals, agencies and individuals so they can make a positive impact to the caring role.

5. Health and Wellbeing

Young Carers feel proud of their caring role and how it helped those around them. They felt it had a range of positive impacts, including developing their emotional and listening skills and gave them empathy and an understanding of others. Conversely the caring role can have a negative impact upon a young carers own health and wellbeing as it wasn't always recognised or prioritised by themselves or others.

Young Carers Said

As young carers were busy looking after someone else they didn't always make the connection that they too have their own health and wellbeing needs. They said the caring role had a great impact upon the quality and amount of sleep they need. Young carers also worried about how they were going to get things done such as practical jobs around the house or being physically able to move someone around. They felt stressed because of not having their own time and in some instances they had to listen to the cared for whilst not having the opportunity to download themselves to others.

Not understanding what was going on and other people not understanding made young carers feel angry and frustrated. When they got emotional and upset as young carers they wanted to talk to others about it. For some young carers they had physical injuries from repeatedly having to support or move someone with poor mobility.

What are we going to do?

- Provide training on how Young Carers can look after themselves including:
 - Anxiety – coping techniques
 - Pain management – coping techniques
 - Managing stress within the family
 - First Aid
- Signpost to appropriate on-line resources for health and wellbeing
- Link in with partner agencies, including Leisure Centres and Health, to offer young carer friendly health and wellbeing support/training
- To offer all young carers discounted access to Monmouthshire County Council Leisure Services

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

Young carers will recognise the importance and be supported to manage their own health and well-being.

6. Medical Support/Medication

It isn't uncommon for young carers to help with medication be it reminding/checking that it has been taken and/or helping to administer it. Sometimes the young carer will have to collect the medication and they aren't always aware what the medication does and how it affects the person taking it. Young carers, some at a very young age, come into contact with a range of medical professionals because of their caring role. It is important that young carers are heard and included by healthcare professionals as it is the young carer who lives with their caring role on a daily basis.

Young Carers Said

Not all young carers were allowed by their pharmacy to collect medication and this was especially difficult if their parents weren't able to collect it because they were in work. This led to stress and anxiety for the family because of getting medication on time. When collecting medication pharmacy staff did not explain what the medication was for and how the medication could affect the person being cared for. For many young carers they didn't know if the side effects were normal, if it was the illness making the cared for behave in a certain way or if the carer for was getting worse despite the medication.

Young carers came into contact with a range of health professionals who didn't talk to them in a language they understood. Young Carers were also excluded from conversations despite the fact they had a caring role, and if they were the primary carer they did not know what was going on. It was as if they were expected to care but

not considered and treated as an equal partner in care. Young Carers didn't always understand the condition of the person they were caring for and it wasn't explained to them and the cared for in a way they both understood.

What are we going to do?

- Through the Carers Trust work with pharmacy students to provide information and training on young Carers Work
- Work with community pharmacies to be young carer aware so they are confident in supplying dispensed medicines appropriately to a young carer
- Work with health professionals to provide to age appropriate information to young carers on health conditions and medication
- Work with community pharmacies to provide collection/delivery options for young carers
- To have closer links with GP surgeries so they are more young carer aware
- Look at signposting to appropriate medical links
- Provide training to health professionals on the importance of identifying and supporting young carers
- To establish links within health who can talk to young carers about their caring role

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

That young carers will be treated by health professionals as equal partners in care and that health professionals will maximise their resources and knowledge to reduce the level of health care provided by a young carer.

7. Information & Communication

The reoccurring theme that always comes up from young carers is the way in which others, especially professional adults, communicate with them. In some instances professionals didn't communicate with them as they didn't recognise the role of a young carer. However, young carers see the right information and the way in which it is conveyed to them as being key to their understanding.

Young Carers Said

They wanted information in a language that was relevant to them and the person being cared for and it needed to be appropriate to both their levels of understanding. Young carers wanted information in a range of options including apps. They especially wanted to be included in conversations and be listened to and respected by professionals so they could feel confident to ask questions.

What are we going to do?

- Work with partners so they provide age appropriate information

- Work with partners so they give young carers the right information at the right time
- Making website information for and about young carers in Monmouthshire more accessible for both young carers and professionals
- Encourage partnership sharing of information for young carers
- Develop a Young Carers Newsletter
- Produce an information leaflet to leave with young carers after an assessment

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

Young carers will have access to age appropriate information to help them in their caring role and will be included in age appropriate conversations about their caring role.

8. Future Planning

Young carers tend to think about their future when they are around 16, as they are making choices about their education or careers prospects. For younger carers future planning tends to be more immediate centring around what they will do when they get home, get up or when they're at home. Young carers post 15 tend to think how their future choices will fit in with caring and the impact it will have on the cared for. Young carers thinking of their choices and aspirations for future are greatly limited in comparison to their peers who do not have a caring role.

Young Carers Said

For young carers the day to day life of caring and balancing school or college didn't always give them time or space to even to think about future planning. What was the same for all young carers was worry. Worrying about what would happen when they weren't there to care. For those embarking upon or already in University caring was always in the back of their mind. Some young carers didn't want to think about University because they didn't want to leave the caring responsibility to someone else, or there simply wasn't anyone else who could help. Career prospects were difficult to think about because young carers didn't know how they could fit a job in around caring, which potentially limited their choice and ability to work.

What are we going to do?

- Work with partners to look at what support the cared for can receive
- Create better links with the family to see where additional support can come from
- Work with young carers to explore their options outside of the caring role
- Better links with Department of Work and Pensions
- Prepare young carers earlier on in their education to think about and plan for the transition into further/higher education and work
- Work with key agencies to prepare for the transition phase from child services to adult services

- Provide training and support for young carers to become positive roles for peer support

What will be the outcome for Young Carers?

Young carers will be supported as young as possible to feel confident to have choices to plan and undertake their future aspirations.

Implementation of the Monmouthshire Young Carers Strategy 2017-20

Next Steps

In collaboration with carers and partners Monmouthshire County Council will use the key themes as their action plan, and for some of those themes there is already work underway, for others this strategy will be the starting point. The Carers Strategy Group will work together on common and shared objectives, for other themes the Monmouthshire Carers Project will work with young carers, carers groups and partner organisations. This strategy is the tool by which we can ensure the young carers' voice is heard to instigate change, action and improvement for their lives.

Monitoring

To ensure we are doing what young carers have asked, and that we are doing it right there are a number of ways we can do this. The Carers Strategy Group formally reports and records what it is doing, how it is doing and how well it is doing and at those meetings there will be regular updates on the strategy. We will work alongside the Young Carers Project and partners who support young carers to ensure the themes within this strategy are discussed, monitored and recorded. The Young Carers Project will ask carers for their feedback on the themes and in turn will provide updates. At young carers' events we will ask for feedback. We will ask our partners, internal and external for feedback. All of this data will provide us with a wealth of information that allows us to monitor how well the strategy is going.

Review

Through the whole monitoring process we will be reviewing what is going well, what is not going so well. We don't want to waste valuable resources on something that is going to produce small effect, when those resources might be best used elsewhere for greater effect. At the end of the 3 year strategy we'll look at what worked well what didn't, lessons learned and how to take best practice and the right young carers support forward, into the next strategy.

Looking towards the next strategy

The next strategy is always on the horizon. When we have a year left to run on this strategy we'll start to plan for the new one. We won't know the form and function of it

yet, as we can't predict that. What we do know is the next strategy will build on the firm foundations that this one has laid, as have previous years, and a young carer will always remain at the centre, and that the voice of Monmouthshire young carers will be one that is heard.

Useful Contacts

Young Carers Project

Carers Trust, South East Wales

<https://www.carers.org/local-service/south-east-wales>

01495 769996

Monmouthshire Carers Team

01600 730513

www.monmouthshire.gov.uk

