

scrutiny REVIEW OF YOUNG CARERS

The Review set out:

- To identify how the County Council (and its partners) may empower young carers (YCs) to approach the authority for help (there is a fear that they do not because conversely, they often think that they may be taken into care).
- To achieve a change in understanding and perception around young carers.
- To identify the gaps between provision, need/demand and availability of services.
- To examine the social/economic/educational and health impacts of the issue.

The Children's Services Committee believes that the report demonstrates that these aims have been achieved.

A considerable amount of secondary research and analysis took place throughout the Review. Primary evidence gathering involved Member attendance at the Children's Services Network Seminar on Young Carers and attendance at the Annual Oxfordshire Carers Forum on the 14th November.

Members visited Gloucestershire Young Carers, the Oxford City, South & Vale (twice) and North & West Young Carers' Projects – taking the opportunity to talk to young carers; Hertfordshire Young Carers, the Children's Society and the Oxfordshire PCT. The Review Group also met representatives of the North & West Project here at County Hall, as well as taking the opportunity to view a DVD produced by its young carers. The views of school professionals were also canvassed.

The following framework of questions was applied to visits, interviews and the analysis of evidence undertaken by the Review Group, as it neatly encapsulates the aims of the work.

- How well does the authority do at identifying young carers?
- What are the main obstacles to young carers accessing support?
- What are the main disadvantages young carers experience that affect their health and well being outcomes?
- How should we assess needs, plans and co-ordinate services for young carers?
- How should we design effective IAG and support services for young carers?
- What are the best options for improving service outcomes?

This final report sets out the key themes, areas of evidence, analysis and recommendations.

Among the themes and ideas that the Committee would like to convey strongly – in some instances through recommendations, are:

- The need for a single point of contact in schools for young carers; a person who can give time, space etc to them.
- A focus in the report on the “Every Child Matters” agenda.
- The importance of and hence recommendations around partnership working – how and who identifies young carers? Who takes the lead?
- A recommendation about on the one hand, the legal duty to assess and on the other, the absence of any obligation to provide for the assessed need – and the need, possibly, for lobbying govt.
- A pig push in the review on the connection between young carers and the County Council’s focus on educational attainment and economic well-being. There is no measure of attainment among young carers (whereas, say, there is among cared for children). The Cabinet should be aware that improving the position of young carers may have an impact on the overall attainment statistics and on economic well-being, as we need to look at young carers destinations later on – eg further and higher education.
- Promoting the Children’s Society model in the Review, (the Key Principles and The Pathway) and finding out how Oxfordshire can fit the gaps between need and provision identified there.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to endorse these principles (from the Young Carers Festival 2006 supported by the Children’s Society, and (where appropriate) urges School Governing Bodies to adhere to them:

Oxfordshire County Council/schools should:

- 1. Recognise that the responsibility as a Young Carer (YC) can affect education and school work;**
- 2. Find out about them, what they need and how they are not like other students;**
- 3. Take time to find out about individual problems at home. Sometimes YCs are too embarrassed to say themselves;**
- 4. Not automatically punish YCs if they are late. Sometimes this can’t be helped because they are helping out at home;**
- 5. Provide more support such as lunchtime drop ins and homework clubs;**
- 6. Be flexible – giving more time and help to do homework or coursework;**
- 7. Include information about YC and disability issues in Personal, Social Health & Sex Education lessons;**
- 8. Let YCs phone parents to see if they are OK;**
- 9. Make sure that there is a clear and up to date community notice board that has support info for YC and where else**

- they can get help in the community;
10. Ensure teachers are offered training on YC and disability issues both at university and on inset days.

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED:

1. That Annex 2 to the Review is sent to all schools and linked to the Young Carers Strategy.
2. That Oxfordshire's revised 2008 -11 Young Carers' Strategy when issued, is widely disseminated and adhered to and that the specific educational needs of young carers are addressed.
3. That the principle of a discreet single point of contact in schools is accepted and that each school in Oxfordshire should be advised to nominate a single contact member of staff with responsibility for identifying and supporting young carers and that means, such as a "Toolkit" or School Guidance pack should ensure that training, internet accessible material etc are in place to assist them in this role;
4. That a guide/protocol is developed for schools, modeled on the practices elsewhere including Gloucestershire and the Children's Society;
5. That given the rural nature of Oxfordshire and that many Young Carers have no access to rural transport, resources are made available to ensure that YCs are able to access support services;
6. That with specific reference to the dichotomy in the legislative position referred to in paragraph 49, to lobby Central Government via the Local Government Association to consider a review of legislative requirements and resources around assessments for young carers;
7. To consider the priority accorded by the Council to young carers; does it aspire to provide better identification of, support for and resources for young carers to make Oxfordshire the leader among its peers?
8. That based on the Oxfordshire PCT's experience, to work more closely with GPs to identify previously unidentified Young Carers and ensure that they and their families receive the appropriate support;
9. To explore the benefits of different staffing models for YCs such as in Hertfordshire, where they have 4 Professional

Assistants for YC's centrally based and working on a locality basis, in Children, Schools and Families (the equivalent in Oxfordshire being the CYP&F Directorate);

10. To:

- (a) endorse in principle and enable the Children's Society (by arranging a formal event), to launch the Key Principles and the Whole Family Pathway within Oxfordshire, and that both are adopted, the latter as a tool for practitioners working with YCs;**
- (b) bid to become one of the authorities involved in The Children's Society's roll out of the development of the Key Principles of Practice – Guidance for Practitioners and the Whole-Family Pathway;**
- (c) endorse the roll out of development to local authorities;**

11. To consider in detail the key features of the Children's Society work as described in this evidence and in the publications listed in the bibliography, as good strategy and practice that the County Council should wish to adhere to;

12. That the Review Group RECOMMENDS joint working protocols between adult and children's services (alongside the Schools protocol referred to earlier) for Oxfordshire;

13. It is desirable to achieve a link up of all the direct and indirect funding streams available on behalf of YCs, especially support from Adult Services; this is what the Children's Society seeks to do and on a local basis this is RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet from the Review;

14. That following the example of Nottinghamshire, a "critical friend", likely to be The Children's Society, is invited to evaluate the progress in implementing the new Young Carers Strategy and the impact of the initiatives recommended by this Review, in two years time.