

Making a step change for young carers and their families: Putting it into practice

Key Briefing: Identification and assessment pathways: 'No wrong doors'

Introduction

Carers Trust and **The Children's Society** delivered a one year Department for Education funded programme between April 2015 and March 2016 to support local authorities develop collaborative, whole family models that effectively implement their duties toward young carers and their families as set out in the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014. This series of **Making a Step Change: Putting into practice** briefings draws on practical examples in undertaking these duties to identify, assess and support young carers and their families within a whole family approach.

Summary

This briefing highlights the need for local authorities to develop clear embedded, collaborative models for identifying, assessing and supporting young carers and their families, in order to ensure a 'Whole Family' and 'No Wrong Doors' approach. It highlights the importance of a broad approach to identification where young carers and families are identified - and assessment and support triggered – whichever 'Door' is knocked on. And sets out the benefits of establishing **a clear integrated pathway (or flow diagram)**.

Legislation, Guidance & Strategy

The new provisions for assessing young carers in the Children and Families Act 2014, work alongside measures in the Care Act 2014 for transition assessment for young carers as they approach adulthood, and for assessing adults, to enable a "whole family approach" to providing assessment and support.

Responsibilities for identifying and supporting young carers are placed on the local authority as a whole, as set out in the Children's Act 1989 (amended by Children and

Families Act 2014) and the Care Act 2014. Under the Children's and Families Act 2014, 'A local authority in England must take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are young carers within their area who have needs for support.'

Furthermore, a local authority in England must now assess whether a young carer within their area has needs for support and, if so, what those needs are¹ and local authorities must also determine the arrangements for a future review.²

Key Issues and Principle Challenges

Identification can only be accomplished effectively through strong leadership collaboration and between services: where all services are involved in the identification of young carers and where the whole system ensures that young carers and their families experience 'Open Doors' to support and can move along clear pathways to appropriate support that meets their individual needs.

The document **No wrong doors: working together to support young carers and their families** sets out clearly that 'there should be "no wrong doors" for young carers and their families. *Young carers should be identified, assessed and their families supported regardless of which service is contacted in the first place.*' (p3). It also sets out the principles that should underpin identification, assessment and whole family approaches. For example, 'No wrong doors' states that. *'At the first point of contact, all those undertaking or receiving referrals or with responsibility for undertaking assessments will have a key role in identifying young carers.'* (p4). However, in order to achieve these principles, they must be enabled locally and translated into practice on the ground through collaborative working, processes and pathways. Early identification of needs is key and therefore many services need to be involved, including education, health and social care services and third sector agencies.

However, those identifying young carers must be clear about how to support those young carers to move through the correct doors which will enable them and their family to be appropriately assessed and supported. Again, a whole family approach to assessment³ and support must be enabled locally and translated into practice on the ground through collaborative working, processes and pathways.

One key challenge to the development of effective integrated pathways ensuring **joint responsibility and collaborative working between children's and adults services** within a local authority. The development of a local memorandum of understanding or joint working protocol based on the No Wrong Doors memorandum of understanding⁴ is key to this joint approach, as is the establishment of a multi-

¹ The Children Act (Amended by Children and Families Act 2014))

² The Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015

³ See 'The Care Act and Whole Family Approaches' ADASS (2015)

⁴ No wrong doors: working together to support young carers and their families: A template for a memorandum of understanding between statutory Directors of Children's and Adult Social Services – March 2015

agency strategy group for young carers and their families. Similarly, collaboration with Health is vital.⁵

Putting it into Practice

Local Authority Trailblazers from the *Making a step change for young carers and their families: Putting it into Practice* project have demonstrated innovative ways of implementing identification and assessment pathways into a whole family, whole council, whole system approach to supporting young carers and their families.

Learning from the Making a step change: Putting it into practice Project
In LIVERPOOL a pathway for young carers is embedded within their Early Help Framework – a broader, robust, integrated and whole family framework for identifying the needs of all children. The previous **CAF** pathway has been updated to reflect this and in line with new duties under both Acts. Liverpool's **Early Help Assessment Tool** is used for gathering information and a standard approach in assessment for the identification of Early Help needs. This integrated approach brings adults and children's services together in identifying, assessing and supporting the needs of all children and young people including young carers.

In Oxfordshire, the Young Carers Service worked with the Carers Project Team within adult services to make recording children and young people – whether they are identified carers or not – part of their adult carers' assessment process. The Customer Services team (who received training on young carers) provide a one point enquiry service for all enquiries related to Council services via a contact centre. They process the adult carers assessments in the first instance with those trained 'Young Carer Champions' being in a better position to identify young carers and refer on to the young carer service. The adult carers' assessment asks whether the adult carer has children and, if so, records their names, dates of birth and caring responsibilities. Adult services receive and follow-up on this information, which means they get a clearer picture of the family. This process has been effective at identifying children who could be or are young carers, with adult services identifying 170 young carers through this route to date, according to local authority data. The Young Carers Service then emails the parents of any children identified with contact details of the young carers service and a referral form.

Oxfordshire County Council are now looking to use this model when gathering information to assess disabled adults.

Similarly, in **Devon**, a referral route is embedded within the Adult Carers process.

In Surrey, the work is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding that is supported by a large and broad strategy group. This supports the **expectation and practice - now firmly embedded within Surrey that adults' services** need to be identifying young carers when undertaking assessments for disabled parents. Only if the young carer has further needs would they be referred by adults' services on to support from the Children's Services'.

⁵ See An integrated approach to identifying and assessing Carer health and wellbeing NHS England (2016)

Both adults and children's services undertake statutory young carers needs assessments, and use the young person appropriate tools **About Me** and **iCare** that form part of the information gathering required for the statutory assessment.

The Surrey Young Carers provides early intervention support to well over 2000 young carers a year and the service has its own light touch assessment. Young carers are also identified through the **early help assessment**.

Surrey NHS have developed their own **young carers pathway** where young carers who are identified are (generally) referred through to the young carers service by the completion of an **online 'carer prescription'**.

Conclusion

Children's and adults' services, as well as health and other partners needs to work closely together in order to develop clear, embedded and systematic ways of identifying, assessing and supporting young carers and their families.

Improved early identification and support will come about where identification **triggers are clearly embedded** such as the example in Oxfordshire where the Adult Carers Assessment process triggers identification of young carers and where young carers are identified through a broad early help process for all young people as in the Early Help Assessment Tool in Liverpool. Training across teams and different services is also key.

Health, schools and colleges are especially vital in identifying young carers early and therefore should have clear links into a pathway.

Finally, where an established integrated pathway (or flow diagram) is in place, that draws together the individual identification mechanisms or referral pathways into one place, Commissioners will be able to evaluate clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the whole system and where 'doors are truly open' and whether any 'Wrong Doors' remain.⁶

Next Steps

- Include young carers in your JSNA
- Be proactive, creative and systematic in identifying young carers in your local area
- Undertake a mapping exercise of where young carers are currently being identified
- Identify gaps where identification is not taking place
- Develop identification triggers across the system
- Develop training across health, social care and beyond
- With stakeholders, map out your whole system pathway for identification and assessment

⁶ See Making a step change; Putting it into practice briefing on 'Measuring Impact'

Tools and Resources

The Making a step change: Putting it into practice webinar **Referral pathways – from identification through assessment to support**

The Children's Society has developed the **Whole Family Pathway**, to ensure that however a family (Parent or Child) in need of support first makes contact with an agency, the same key points are followed.

In Suffolk they use the **ACCORD** protocol to promote the safety, wellbeing and best outcomes for families where there is a disabled parent, through services working together effectively to deliver prompt and coordinated responses at all levels and stages.

The **School Nurse Young Carers Pathway**.

The YCRG screening tool (YC-QST-20) for identifying young carers and explanatory model.

List of tools for measuring outcomes: <https://professionals.carers.org/young-carer-assessment-tools>

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Daniel Phelps and Fraser Cook, on behalf of Making a step change: Putting it into practice

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