

# Making a Step Change for young carers and their families: Putting it into Practice

## Briefing: Leadership and Management

### 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 it 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

A MASC survey of local authorities showed a growing number of sound examples of work with young carers. It indicated continuing challenges in ensuring local authorities retain leadership and accountability, coordinating overall strategy and management across statutory, private and voluntary sector services.

This briefing looks at the vital role of leadership and management in making a step change for young carers and their families, as a part of the *Making a Step Change for young carers and their families: Putting it into Practice* (MASC) project.

### Key issues

The principle issue emerging through MASC between March 2015 and March 2016 is that more local authorities need to take the opportunity of the recent legislation (the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014) to review their leadership and management arrangements.

MASC showed questions persisted about accountability, especially where a service is heavily outsourced. In addition, unless specified in the contract, there is a tension for many commissioned services in delivering AND taking part in wider strategic thinking and planning where that dual role needs explicit support and probably funding. Where matters relating to young carers are included within wider management arrangements, the challenge is for their specific needs not to get lost.

Where there is a dedicated management group, this needs to include a range of stakeholders who recognise young carers are everyone's responsibility, working to a shared strategy.

## **Principle challenges**

Challenges encountered through MASC were that the local authority:

- Maintains its accountability for ensuring the legal duties in the Care Act and Children and Families Act are undertaken;
- Ensures joint commitment within adult and children services across statutory, private and voluntary sector partners;
- Retains oversight and management co-ordination for ensuring no wrong doors and effective identification, assessment and referrals for support;
- Does not contract out the core legal responsibilities required of local government to third party organisations, which may become isolated and overwhelmed and are unable to undertake these demands.

## **Learning from the MASC programme**

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 require the local authority to ensure the identification and assessment of young carers. This duty is retained by the local authority. The process by which this is done may be delegated to voluntary or private organisations working with young carers and their families, but responsibility and accountability to ensure they happen remain with the local authority.

Within children's social care there is the risk that the threshold is gauged as child protection rather than responding to the needs of the young carers. Within adult care there may be a blockage in perceiving the nature and extent of caring being undertaken by the child or young person and assuming things are alright because the person being cared for is managing.

- Learning from MASC was that leadership and management co-ordination was at its strongest where local authorities:
- Understand the new duties required by local authorities in respect of young carers and young adult carers and their families;
- Understand how the Care Act and the Children and Families Act work together to create a cohesive legislative framework;
- Sign up to and implement a Memorandum of Understanding for joint working across adult and children services and with the NHS;
- Engage in enhanced partnership working between adult and children services and health and third sector partners.

## **Putting it into practice**

MASC supported six local authorities to develop policy and practice with young carers and their families in line with recent legal changes and to share their learning and experiences.

### **Case Studies**

**In Liverpool**, strong partnership working is underpinned by explicit elected member leadership and effective senior management coordination. The authority makes clear that it retains the duty to ensure the identification, assessment and referral of young carers for advice, help or support. It contracts out the young carer assessment and support planning function but does not seek to delegate the accountability. In addition, its contract includes development work which maximises voluntary sector expertise through strategic contribution.

Jane Weller is Commissioning and Contract Manager for Liverpool City Council: "It is essential that the local authority retains overall accountability and that it provides leadership when delegating functions to provider organisations. This should be clearly defined within a contractual arrangement with regular ongoing support provided to ensure successful delivery and positive outcomes."

Louise Wardale is the Barnardo's Keeping the Family in Mind Coordinator. She adds: "As the commissioned service, it essential that we provide a combination of direct and strategic development work. This allows us to, not only assess and support young carers, but critically influence the local systems to improve identification and support needs of young carers. The local authority recognises that this is essential if we are to bring about improvements and better outcomes for young carers and their families."

**In Surrey**, strong leadership, the Memorandum of Understanding and a joint strategy are translated into practical action through a 27 member steering group, drawing together local authority and health, private and voluntary sector partners across adult and children services. The group brings the strategic objectives alive through focus on an action plan which they call the 'To Do List' for which each partner is accountable to the group for its own actions and progress.

John Bangs is the Carers Strategy and Development Manager with Surrey County Council. "We have made a lot of progress through participation in the Young Carers Trailblazer programme and have had great support from senior managers and County Councillors. There is growing recognition that supporting young carers really does need to be everybody's business. We could otherwise be leaving young carers at risk of harm through undertaking inappropriate care and there is strong determination to avoid this".

Debbie Hustings is the Partnership Manager Carers, Guildford and Waverley, East Surrey and Surrey Downs CCG. "The importance of the role of health providers in helping to identify and refer young carers to support cannot be over emphasised. We need to make every contact count whether this is through GP, hospitals, community providers, pharmacy or mental health services. Each contact presents an opportunity for a health professional to make a difference for that young carer. Most young carers will not have a social worker but nearly all will have a GP. Health professionals have a pivotal role to play. By engaging and working with all health providers we can create wraparound services for the young carer and their families. This is best achieved through partnership working at a strategic level. Our multi agency Surrey Young Carers Strategy speaks to health and helps normalise young carers across the whole health economy. Both commissioners and providers take ownership to deliver on whole systems approach to ensure young carers become everyone's business."

## Conclusion

Each local authority faces a different mix of challenges depending on, for example, local leadership, co-ordinated management, practice champions, funding and profile. The principle issue that MASC raises is how each authority holds and demonstrates its legal accountability under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 to ensure the identification, assessment and support of young carers and their families.

This challenge can be framed by some critical questions:

- At a leadership level, is there a Memorandum of Understanding that is in place between (at least) Children and Adult Services that takes account of the legal duties? Is there a means of implementation and review to ensure its effectiveness?
- At a management level, is there an inter-agency steering group that includes local authority adult and children services, health and key voluntary sector and private providers? Is there a Terms of Reference for the group? Who is its Chair? Does it have an action plan which is reviewed and updated regularly?
- At a practice level, what awareness raising is there for a wide range of workers in touch with families about need and how to pass on concerns? With children and adult care workers what training and support is there about identification of young carers and the assessment of need within a Whole Family Approach?

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