

Southampton Young Carer Strategy 2021/26

Carer Friendly Southampton



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Part One

Foreword

This Young Carer Strategy is a direct result of listening to the young carer. They shared their experiences at the Health & Scrutiny Overview Carers Inquiry and felt very strongly they should have their own strategy, so here it is.

There are two other pieces of council work the Young Carer Strategy supports:

Southampton's vision to become a Child Friendly City by 2024/25 and Southampton Health and Wellbeing Strategy which is about helping everyone to live long, healthy and happy lives with the greatest possible independence.

Young carer across the city do incredible work but it can put a real strain on them. We want to make sure they can also go to school and learn, meet their friends, have hobbies and interests and not be held back by inappropriate or excessive levels of caring.

To do this we need to work with young carer and each other across health and social care (e.g. doctors, hospitals, council, social workers) to make sure we get it right for young carer.

We've asked Zunayrah Rizvi, a young carer, to share her hopes for this strategy:

I am hopeful that we will see more support in schools in the future and lots of fundraising for more young carer projects. It will mean a lot to young carer to be able to know that there is someone there to always speak to if you are feeling down. It is essential that we can identify as many young carer as we can and most importantly, that every young carer should feel that they're fully supported!



Introduction

Our vision is that Southampton is a city where children and young carers have the same opportunities as other children to get a good start in life, so they can fulfil their potential and become successful adults.

We owe it to young carer to:

Identify them

No-one at school knows I'm a carer

Listen to them and understand their needs

I want to learn about what to do in emergencies, I find them very frightening

Support them appropriately

Sometimes it's very hard, I have to take on too much as a young carer and there's no-one there to help me

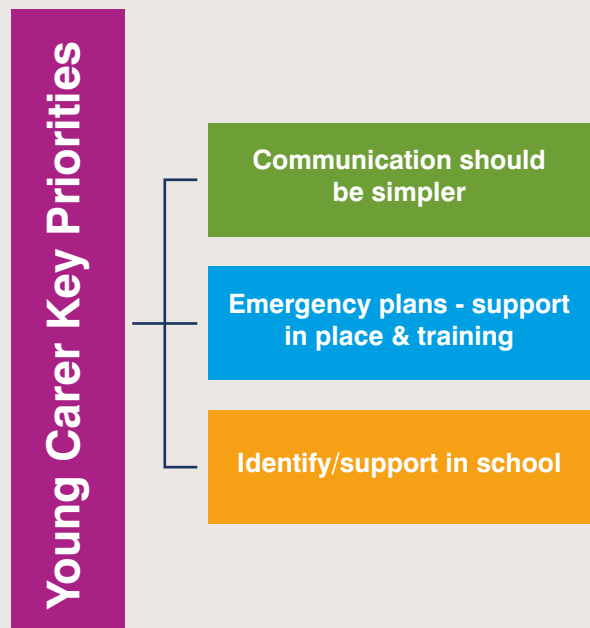
To do this, the new strategy sets out work we need to focus on to promote the health and well-being of young carer and reduce the significant disadvantages that young carer currently experience due to caring. Young carers will make sure we do what we say we're going to do. To support the work the strategy will have a detailed action plan what we will do, when it will start, how long it will take.

Young carer have identified three things that are important to them and that they would like us to start on immediately. These form an essential part of the strategy.

Southampton City Council Young Carer' Key Priorities



Young carer immediate priorities



Who are young carers?

A young carer is someone under the age of 18 who looks after a relative with an illness, disability, mental health condition, a drug or alcohol problem. Young carer often take on practical and/or emotional caring roles.

What young carer do to help will be different for each person. Some will have a big family with lots of people helping, while others may have a small family or possibly no-one else to help. Why the relative needs help will also make a difference to what a young carer does.

Sometimes:

- The work they do or decision they have to make is something an adult should do e.g. wash someone, give someone medication or decide what money to spend on food. These are caring roles that are 'inappropriate' for a young person to do;

- A young person may do so much caring that they can't live the life of a child e.g. have a social life. This is called 'excessive' caring and would normally be expected of an adult
- Young carer are so worried about leaving the person they care for that they might miss school.

Young carer want to help the people they love, this strategy wants to support them to be a young carer and support them so that they do not have inappropriate or excessive caring roles.

Life will change as a young carer becomes an adult. They may want to leave home, start work or go to college or university. Young people move into adult life at different times and so most services that work with young people believe they should support them until the age of 25. To recognise this, this strategy will include young adult carers up to the age of 25.



What do young carer do?

Young carer might do some, all or more of the things below
...unpaid and while trying to maintain a life of their own



Key facts and figures about carers and caring

- 2018 BBC survey estimates that there are over 800,000 young carers
- 1 in 8 of those were aged younger than 8 years old
- A third of carers reported having a mental health problem
- Nearly half of young carers said nobody in their school was even aware of their caring responsibilities
- Many young carers are proud of their caring role and do not want to be pitied or they don't think that telling their school would change very much for them
- In Southampton the number of young carers (aged 8-18) in touch with the Young Carer Service in 2020/21 = 420, with 80 young carers receiving active regular support.

Evidence shows that being a young carer can impact on school attendance, attainment, personal development and welfare. For example:

- More than 1 in 4 young carers miss school regularly.
- Young carers have an average of one grade GCSE level lower, across all the subjects they take, than a young person who has no caring role.
- 6 in 10 young carers say they are bullied.
- Some young carers are worried that their family will be broken up by social services if they tell anyone that they are struggling.

Nationally young carers say the caring roles they do often affect their physical and/or mental health. A survey of young carers in Southampton, conducted by No Limits in 2020, asked, 'Has your caring role affected your emotional well-being?' Of those that responded 60% replied 'yes'. They often:

- feel tired and 'run-down';
- suffer from anxiety, stress and depression; and/or
- find it harder to participate in social activities, which may contribute towards feelings of isolation and loneliness

On the other hand, young people often find they grow personally with their care-giving experience.



Carers Comments

What young carer say might help them:

- ✓ 24/7 support service from young carer project - crisis usually happens in the evenings or at weekends
- ✓ I have someone who helps me with my mental health, my head of year and the head of wellbeing in our school
- ✓ I like the idea of maybe knowing who else in my school is a young carer so we could take time out together to talk to each other, if in case we don't feel comfortable talking to a "grown up" about how being a carer affects us.
- ✓ Give me a break from my caring role (to do an activity, have breathing space)
- ✓ Chats with teachers to ask how everything is. Talking about young carer in things like circle times at school
- ✓ Have Your Say (e.g. Carers' strategy)

What young carer say is difficult for them

- ✗ There has been no opportunity to share my story
- ✗ I worry that social work will get involved
- ✗ I didn't realise I was a carer or that my life is different to that of my peers
- ✗ I don't receive support from school
- ✗ They didn't offer me support before and they knew about my caring role before.
- ✗ I often don't have time to study and I can't go spend time with my friends at all, and I can't travel much
- ✗ My younger brother can be disruptive, it can be hard to complete homework, home learning and lack of sleep at times.

Relevant Legislation & Safeguarding

This is a summary of the relevant legislation, detailed legislation is an appendix to the action plan.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014, both significantly strengthened the rights for young carer. They aim to assess and support children and young people from taking on excessive or inappropriate care. They also recognised the need to improve the support young carer get when they move from being a young person to being a young adult.

The NHS Long Term Plan - says that the NHS needs to improve identification and support for carers and young carer. The plan says that the NHS will introduce 'carer quality markers' in primary care, provide better support for carers in emergencies, publish top-tips for supporting young carers.



Part Two - What we are going to do

What Southampton will look like from a young carer's point of view

The vision for this strategy is presented as 13 young carer 'I-statements'. These statements include what young carers wanted, recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry and the Unicef Child Friendly City values.

I statements:

I feel that what I do as a young carer is recognised, understood and valued

I have good quality information and advice which is relevant to me

I shouldn't have to take on adult tasks or make adult decisions (like doing all the housework, paying the bills or providing emotional/practical support to other members of the family)

I am listened to and feel part of the team planning care for the person I care for

I know where to get help from when I need it (for me or my cared for person)

I know where to get help when things go wrong (for me or my cared for person)

I can balance caring with my education and/or paid work

I can have a break and time for myself or with other family and friends

I feel that I am supported to look after my own health and wellbeing

I feel supported moving from being a young carer to a young adult carer

I feel supported when my young caring role ends

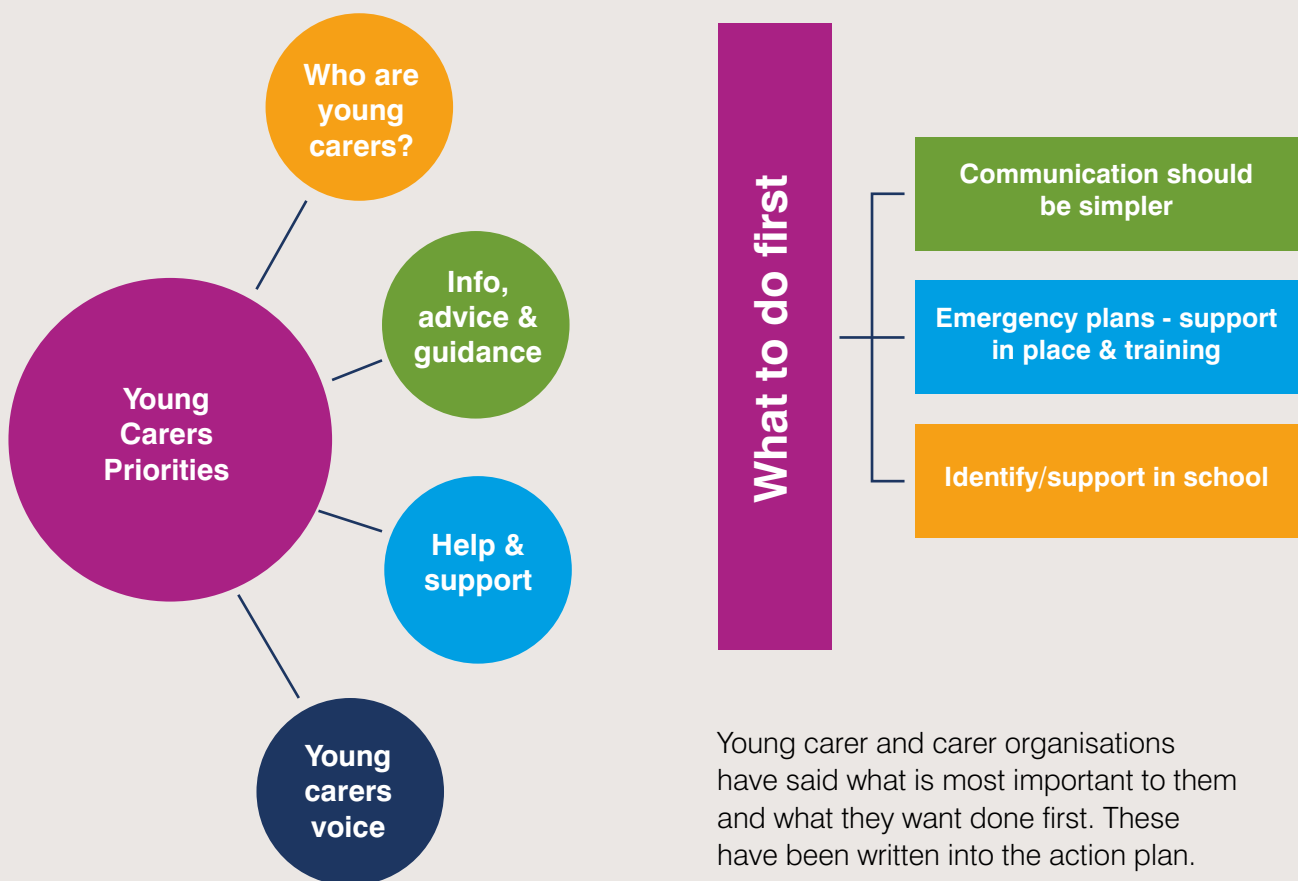
I can get support I need without anything getting in the way (so, for example, there is good transport to where the support is and staff recognise young carer, are child-friendly and talk in a way young people can understand them)

I want to be supported by people who really care, listen to me and want to help me

Priorities we agree we need to focus on

Young carer and services who work with young carer have spoken about a lot of things that need to change. When everything is brought together they can be grouped into four themes.

We have called these our 'priorities' as they need to be done sooner than other things. Work to change the lives of young carer has been identified within each priority. An action plan has been written which shows what work will be done, when it will happen, who will do it and when it is expected to finish.



Young carer and carer organisations have said what is most important to them and what they want done first. These have been written into the action plan.

Areas of work for each priority:

Who are young carers

1. Tell people who live and work in Southampton about young carer and what they do. If we tell enough people, young people themselves will recognise they are a young carer and adults will be able to spot young people who have a caring role.
2. Increase number of:
 - Young carer known to schools, colleges and services for children and young people;
 - Young carer known by their doctor;
 - adults who let their doctor know they have a Young carer; and
 - Young carer who are found by social care (children's and adults) when supporting the person who needs the care.
3. All services that support carers and the people they care for to work together so that they decide on similar ways to search for young carer and know how best to help everyone.
4. Young carer to have one way of showing people and services, including emergency services, that they are a young carer – possibly a Young Carer Card.

Information, advice and guidance

1. Increase the number of young carer who receive information and advice from the NHS and Social Care, as well as from specialist carer and young carer services.
2. Age-appropriate support for young carer.
3. Develop a range of information that is accessible and relevant to very young carer (primary school age to young adults).
4. Explore how information can be put online for young carer to access.
5. Identify support within the local community so young carer know what help is available.



Help and support

1. Provide assessments (a chat to find out a bit about you and the caring you do) that understand that young carer need to have a caring role that is not excessive or inappropriate.
2. Increase the number of young carer assessments completed.
3. Help develop 'what to do in an emergency' training and plans.
4. Enable young carer to stay in education (the right support for different ages, so primary/junior/secondary and college students get the right help).
5. Enable young carer to stay in employment while they care.
6. Provide high quality support while a young carer moves to become a young adult carer.
7. Support to young carer after their caring role has ceased.
8. Look for more young carer in e.g. black Asian or minority ethnic communities (BAME), or young carer who are supporting adults with drug and alcohol problems.
9. Work with local transport providers and community transport to improve access to transport so that young carers can get to e.g. school, clubs and meet friends.
10. Explore whether different venues around the City might be helpful for young carer to meet and get support.
11. Make it easier for young carer to get support or a break from caring (such as having interpreters at appointments) – including someone else to care for the cared for person or them having something to do, so the young carer can have a break.

Young carer voice

1. Young carer will be supported, and encouraged, to help change services so that they recognise, listen to and support young carer.
2. Young carer wishes and knowledge will be used when writing documents that will affect them, for example city wide transport plans.
3. The Stronger Communities Youth Participation team will work with carers and young carer services to ensure that their rights as children are promoted within our ambition to become a child friendly city.
4. Ensure that young carer knowledge about the person they care for, and their skills in how to care for them, is valued and used when planning care for the person they care for.
5. Work with young carer and the people they care for to make sure services they use meet their real needs.
6. Develop 'vox pops' or short videos featuring young carer to help train professionals, local provider/s of young carers support services

NB: The wording 'local provider' has been used rather than naming current providers as the strategy is for five years and service providers may change.

Measuring success

Different people will want different ways to know how well the strategy has worked. Everything will be based on the 'I statements'. We will use numbers e.g. number of people attending a service and we will also talk to young carer and other people about what they thought of a service or how the strategy's actions from the action plan has worked for them. We will look at what has worked for people and what needs to change to make them work in the future.

Council officers will report quarterly to the Southampton Partnership Board, or it's equal if it changes over the next 5 years, and will tell them what has made things better for young carer, what hasn't changed and if anything has made things worse.

This strategy cannot be delivered by Southampton City Council alone and we will be working closely with the partners listed to achieve change across the City:

University of Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

Solent Foundation Trust

South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

Hampshire Constabulary

Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service

Local provider/s

Voluntary sector

The action plan shows what work will happen, when and by who and will be available on the Southampton website www.southampton.gov.uk.

