

Annual Young Carers Q3 (January 2023) to Q4 (March 2024)

Statutory Duties towards Young Carers

The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to take 'reasonable steps' to identify young carers in their area who have support needs. A young carer is someone under the age of 18 who helps to care for a family member, relative or friend. A young person aged 16-25 with caring responsibilities can be known as a young adult carer.

As a young carer you might support someone who has a disability, a long-term illness, or a problem with alcohol or drugs. Without this help, they would struggle or not be able to cope.

Young carers often do a lot of helpful things, such as:

- Cook and prepare meals
- Help with the shopping
- Clean around the house
- Manage medicines or money
- Give personal care
- Help their special person move and get out of the house
- Look after their siblings
- Give emotional support
- Keep an eye on things generally

If young carer families start to struggle financially, young carers also often take on work in addition to their caring responsibilities.

There are 1600 assessed Young Carers in Wiltshire. These children and young people are currently supported under the commissioned provider who provide all onward services to individuals aged 5-18 years old (services extend to 25 years).

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel highlighted in its annual report 2022/23, that Young Carers are an emerging theme. Agencies are not always recognising this role for children and the impact this has upon them. These children can be providing crucial support for their parents or other adults, sometimes where they have substance misuse problems, mental health needs or where domestic abuse is present, all which impact on their own capacity to support their children.

Previous research, published by the Department for Education (Cheesbrough et al., 2017) and others (TNS BMRB, 2016), shows that children with caring responsibilities experience a range of both positive and negative outcomes and these are directly affected by the level of informal or formal support they receive. It highlights the challenge of identifying 'hidden' young carers and emphasises the need for all services working with vulnerable children and adults to take a whole family approach to assessing need.

The review and subsequent expansion of the Young Carers Assessment Service alongside Youth Action Wiltshire the new contracted support provider demonstrates the commitment of the local authority to these children and young people.

Wiltshire's Young Carers (YC) Assessment Service

In 2018 the young carers assessment team were Tupe'd across from the previous provider. The team consisted of three assessors working part time alongside a part time administrator and manager. In February 2019 the manager and administrator left Wiltshire Council and the day-to-day management of the service was moved into the East Support and Safeguarding Team.

The oversight of our work with young carers then replicated the routine, audit and performance management already in place for the rest of the service. This highlighted that we had no means of monitoring the number of young carers or the length of time the assessment took to complete. This led us to introduce the Young Carers At a Glance report which enables us to capture all of the data within one place. These audits also led to the practitioners receiving training around writing clear analysis of need, alongside taking a holistic approach to assessments; completing referrals to other agencies which may have been needed, such as adult social care.

We have worked closely with adult social care to promote the role of a young carer, ensuring all staff are aware of the process to refer for assessment. This has led to an increase in referrals from adult social care.

Wiltshire Young Carers Service have collaborated with Youth Action Wiltshire (commissioned provider) to update the current assessment with participation with the young carers themselves, the assessment will go live in July 2024.

From January 2023 to March 2024, 511 YC assessments were completed, of this 96% were assessed as a Young Carer, 42% were sibling carers for siblings with ASD and/or ADHD. 18% cared for a parent with Mental Health concerns, 8% cared for a parent with Fibromyalgia and the remaining 32% cared for a parent or sibling with physical disability or life altering illness such as cancer.

Ages ranges:

Age	Number assessed	%
5	3	1%
6	8	3%
7	17	6%
8	30	10%
9	34	12%
10	29	10%
11	23	8%
12	32	12%
13	34	12.2%
14	19	6%
15	16	5%
16	15	5%
17	15	5%

Until May 2024, the Young Carers Assessors establishment was 1.3FTE. Due to staff changes, the capacity reduced to 0.8FTE and led to staff within the wider Support and Safeguarding Service (Family Keyworkers and Social Workers) undertaking these assessments. An additional £120,000 has been provided which has seen the successful recruitment of 2 FTE who are now in post, with a total of 2.8FTE in the service.

The process has remained the same, with the relevant cohort assessed and referred to the commissioned service to provide the support as necessary. Where the child and family have a wider need than the young carer aspect, this is identified and can be opened as a Support or Child in Need Assessment.

From 01 May 2024 the Young Carers Service moved to the Integrated Front Door. This supports the early identification of young carers via our Early Help Hub and MASH and places the Young Carers Assessors in a well-established service with strong performance oversight.

Local Practice Standards state that the Young Carers assessment should take place within 40 working days (national standard is 90 days) and initial visits within 20 days. This is reported via the case management system and reports produced for POG provide analysis around this as well as monitoring data around new referrals and how many young carers are referred on to the provider. From June this year, new practice standards were launched outlining that initial visits are to be completed within 10 days and assessments within 25 days, to follow the same standard as Support Assessments. Thematic audits have been added to the Directorates overarching audit schedule and are reported on in Audit SMT and quarterly reporting to the Performance and Outcomes Group. The upcoming themes are: Q2 Quality of Plans with provider, Q3 Assessment Quality and timeliness.

Our new team members will work closely with the new commissioned service (details below). They will also work closely with the Social Work/Early Help teams to develop understanding of young carers and the impact of their role. Children and young people with Social Workers or Family Key Workers will be assessed by their allocated workers with the support of the YC Assessment Service, to enable them to tell their story once, whilst ensuring that good quality assessments are completed.

The team will assess and offer bitesize training within the directorate (Families and Children's Services) to ensure our commitment to identifying young carers continues.

The provider

As of 1st April 2024, Youth Action Wiltshire are the contracted provider to support young carers and young adult carers (5-25) under the carers contract, their parent organisation Community First is also part of a wider consortium supporting carers over the age of 18.

Youth Action Wiltshire will be supported by a consortium of providers for adults led by AGE UK and including Alzheimer's support, Wiltshire Service Users Network and Citizens Advice Wiltshire in addition to Forward Carers for the new carers digital offer. Forward Carers will be supporting carers aged 10 years old and above with signposting, support groups and training as well as the carers emergency card and a 24/7 service 7 days a week.

Commissioning services have also increased funding to the Youth Voice Team to create young carer roles for voice, advocacy and secondary schools and colleges. In the upcoming year, the Voice and Participation Service in Wiltshire is poised to implement three roles aimed at elevating outcomes for young carers. The Young Carers Voice Worker is anticipated to be a linchpin in empowering young carers active involvement in the development of youth-led services. This includes the establishment of the Young Carers Council, driving innovative changes, producing comprehensive reports based on invaluable feedback, and implementing action plans derived from the insights of young carers. Moreover, efforts will be directed towards promoting youth-friendly consultation materials, and disseminating positive stories through strategic social media campaigns, thereby establishing a robust platform for impactful youth-led services.

The new contracted provider will be expected to create young carers support plans following the assessment, increase the number of young carers accessing services and support communities to understand the importance of young carers and keeping them involved in healthcare systems.

Upon receiving the assessment, Youth Action Wiltshire will identify the right support alongside the child and young person. This could be mentoring, respite, webinars and activity days depending on the individual needs. All young carers assessed to have a need, will join the young carer network.

Working Together

Youth Action Wiltshire and the local authority have collaborated on the Young Carers Assessment tool in participation with young carers, this will inform the support plan created by the provider. The new assessment tool is being uploaded to Liquid Logic to support the new ways of working with our young carers and gain the best information from an assessment. This will go live in July 2024. Once the 2FTE team members are in place a workshop will be held in August to review the process of how the assessments are handed over to the awarded provider.

Testimonies

Young Carers Quotes

“Wiltshire Young Carers Service has helped make me the person I am today.”

“I couldn't have done some of the things I've done without the support I have had, not just from the staff but also from the other young people. “

“Wiltshire Young Carers Service, has stopped me being lonely. I now have people I can talk to and lots of things to look forward to”

“I'm so much happier, I have friends who understand me, I'm doing better at school and enjoying life”

“Being with other young carers means you can talk about things, without worrying about being judged or bullied”

Parent/Carer Quotes

“We are really grateful for the support from WYCS. Our son has a very poorly older brother & YC helps him voice & articulate how hard things sometimes are. YC provides respite with other children who get it. Thank you”

“Thank you for everything you do, the incredible support & the most amazing opportunities you provide for my children”

“Young carers have provided amazing opportunities for all three of my children that unfortunately I cannot normally provide. I think it's helped their confidence around new people & has helped them meet others who are in a similar position & knowing they're not alone.”

Young Carers Story, From A Cared for Person

"Both my children D aged 14 & E aged 8 have really found meeting other children in a similar situation helpful, as it makes them see they aren't alone. D really enjoyed the residential trip, spending a couple nights away from home, with other kids & doing activities with their Young Carers Support Worker. This has also been a massive help with E who is really struggling to leave my side due to worrying about me being on my own, she usually won't go anywhere with anyone bar her dad or best friend. But on meeting her Young Carers Support Worker she immediately said how cool she is & enjoys going off with WYCS doing crafting & arty things. E has been struggling a lot more than we realised with my health & it's having a big emotional trauma impact on her especially while at school knowing I'm home alone as she fears I will die alone.

The school now have her in ELSA & counselling, hoping that will help. Wiltshire Young Carers Service have been a massive help to her making her realise other parents are poorly too & it's not just her mum that's poorly & she's made a couple of young carers friends she enjoys seeing on trips etc. You guys really are heroes & we thank you for all your help & support."

Report completed by:

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