



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

19 OCTOBER 2010

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CARERS - FINAL REPORT OF THE CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following its investigation of support for young carers in Middlesbrough.

INTRODUCTION

2. Young carers are children and young persons under 18 who provide care, assistance or support to another family member. They can often carry out, on a long-term basis, onerous caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility which would usually be associated with an adult.
3. Given that such caring responsibilities can have a serious adverse impact on the life of a young person, the scrutiny panel sought to establish the position in Middlesbrough in terms of support for young carers.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

4. The membership of the scrutiny panel was as follows:

Councillors Ismail (Chair), Williams (Vice-Chair); and Councillors , Dunne (until 13 July 2010), Hawthorne (from 15 September 2010), Majid, Mctigue Mrs H Pearson OBE, Sanderson, Taylor and JA Walker; plus the following Co-optee: Father G Holland.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

5. The terms of reference of the scrutiny investigation were as follows:

- a) *To examine the key drivers behind support for young carers - such as relevant legislation or national guidance.*
- b) *To examine support services available to young carers, particularly any dedicated service provision from the Council or other agencies.*
- c) *To consider how young carers are identified to ensure that their support needs can be met; and also whether numbers are recorded/monitored to assist with service planning.*
- d) *To examine accessibility to support, including whether young carers are involved in planning and decision making to ensure that their needs are met; and also to consider how effectiveness of service provision is measured.*
- e) *To assess whether support is provided in terms of young carers' wellbeing, including in education, leisure and any respite provision.*

HOW INFORMATION AND EVIDENCE WAS OBTAINED

6. The scrutiny panel undertook an in-depth investigation and met on six occasions between 1 March and 31 August 2010 to gather evidence. The panel also visited two support groups for Middlesbrough young carers. Information was submitted by young carers, Council officers, representatives of The Junction Project and staff of Middlesbrough Primary Care Trust (PCT). The panel's final report was approved by the scrutiny panel on 23 September 2010.
7. A Scrutiny Support Officer from Legal and Democratic Services co-ordinated and arranged the submission of written and oral evidence and arranged witnesses for the review. Meetings administration, including preparation of agenda and minutes, was undertaken by a Governance Officer from Legal and Democratic Services.
8. A detailed record of the topics discussed at Panel meetings, including agenda, minutes and reports, is available from the Council's Committee Management System (COMMIS), which can be accessed via the Council's website at www.middlesbrough.gov.uk.

THE PANEL'S FINDINGS

9. The scrutiny panel's findings in respect of support for young carers are set out in this report. Due to areas of overlap between all of the terms of reference, the panel's findings are not set out against a specific term of reference but cover the issues highlighted by them under the following headings:
 - Defining young carers
 - Why support young carers?
 - Identifying young carers
 - Legislation and guidance
 - Intervention and support in Middlesbrough
 - Visits to young carers support groups

DEFINING YOUNG CARERS

10. ¹Young carers are children and young persons under 18 who provide care, assistance or support to another family member. They carry out, often on a regular basis, significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility, which would usually be associated with an adult.

¹ S Becker: *Young Carers - The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Social Work (2000)*.

11. Caring tasks can include household chores such as cooking and cleaning; personal care such as giving medication; emotional support; intimate care such as bathing or dressing; childcare, by caring for siblings; or other tasks such as translation and interpreting for sensory impaired or non-English speaking parents.
12. The person receiving care is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent or other relative who is disabled, has a chronic illness, mental health problem or other condition connected with a need for care, support or supervision. Factors which influence the extent and nature of young carers' tasks and responsibilities include the illness/disability, family structure, gender, culture, religion and income and the availability and quality of professional support services.

WHY SUPPORT YOUNG CARERS?

13. In selecting this topic for examination, the scrutiny panel was aware that a young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care-giving and responsibility to the person in need of care becomes excessive or inappropriate for that child². The reasons for such circumstances vary but can include individual family circumstances, the nature of an illness or disability, or a lack of effective support from outside the family. Irrespective of circumstance, such burdens placed on a young carer can negatively impact on their physical well-being, educational achievement and life chances.
14. It is in this context that the scrutiny panel was concerned to establish the position in Middlesbrough in terms of support being provided for young carers.
15. The panel heard information regarding the results of a recent study on young carers. Recent news articles³ highlighted the results of the study, which was carried out by the **4Princess Royal Trust for Carers and The Children's Society**. The survey results highlighted that young carers struggle to cope with their caring role and with schoolwork:
 - Almost seven in 10 (68.5%) six to 18-year-olds who act as a carer for a relative say they have been bullied at school.
 - More than three in 10 of those who say they have been bullied (31.6%) say it is because they are a carer.
 - More than a third (37.9%) say they worry about the person they care for during lessons.
 - Almost a quarter (23%) say they are stressed in class.
 - Seven in 10 (70.2%) of those questioned admitted that being a carer has made their life more difficult.
 - One in six (15.7%) report being tired at school while others say they are depressed, miss homework deadlines and are either late for school or miss it altogether because of their responsibilities at home.

(Cont....)

² J Frank & J McLarnon: *Key Principles of Practice for Young Carers and their Families - The Children's Society 2008.*

³ See web page from Sky News: <http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/UK-News/Young-Carers-Feel-Bullied-And-Stressed-At-School-According-To-New-Research/Article/201005315633384?f=rss>

⁴ *The Princess Royal Trust for Carers was established on the initiative of Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal in 1991. At that time people caring at home for family members or friends with disabilities and chronic illnesses were scarcely recognised as requiring support. The Trust is now the largest provider of comprehensive carers support services in the UK, including support for young carers.*

- Nearly four in 10 (39.4%) say their teacher does not know even they are a carer and almost half (46.1%) do not feel they could tell their teacher about their role.
16. The poll, which questioned 700 young carers, aged six to 18, about their experiences, shows that the difficulties these youngsters face can often be overlooked. Many of them are caring for people with mental or physical illnesses, disabilities, and alcohol or drug issues while also trying to keep up with their schoolwork. The results also show that many young carers have to endure bullying, mental health problems and a lack of support from their teachers - all because they care for a family member who is unable to cope without their help. Carole Cochrane, Chief Executive of the Princess Royal Trust for Carers said:
- "Sadly, without the right support, many young carers will underachieve or drop out of school altogether, which has a long and enduring impact on their future prospects."*
17. The Princess Royal Trust recognises that the key to supporting young carers is identifying them in the first instance. To assist with this - and recognising that schools have a key role to play - the Trust has developed an ⁵online resource for schools. This is designed to help all schools in the UK to identify and support young carers and their families more effectively.
18. The resource pack takes staff through all the necessary steps needed to help young carers, from developing their understanding of young carers, through to practical and strategic support and finally onto building a healthy school environment where young carers can flourish. The aim is to guide schools in creating detailed actions that will inform a school action plan for young carers. Within each chapter a target audience is highlighted, although it is advised that information should be shared amongst colleagues to ensure that a collaborative approach towards support is developed. The pack highlights:
- What it means to be a young carer and the impacts that caring can have on a young person.
 - Barriers to learning, such as attendance, bullying, behaviour and transport.
 - Supporting young carers in school, through early intervention and identification.
 - Building a healthy school environment where young carers and their families feel safe, accepted and understood.

IDENTIFYING YOUNG CARERS

19. The number of young carers locally and nationally is not known. Although estimates have been produced to attempt to gauge the position, this is hard to accurately verify as:
- Young carers may not see themselves as such - perhaps because they view their responsibilities as a family duty or something that is expected of them.
 - They may be reluctant to draw attention to their family's situation - for fear of inappropriate intervention; because of the stigma surrounding some health conditions (such as mental illness); or because of the stigma attached to their role, which they perceive could result in problems such as bullying.

⁵ See <http://www.carers.org/professionals/young-carers/articles/schools-resource-pack,6282,PR.html>

20. The Office of National Statistics mid-year estimate for 2007, indicated that there were 27,400 children and young people aged 5-19 living in Middlesbrough. According to a 1998 publication⁶ up to 4% of young people could be young carers - which could mean that there are over 1,000 young carers in Middlesbrough, based on the 2007 population figures. However, The National Carers Strategy published in 2008 estimated that around one in ten children could be a young carer - which could increase the earlier figure to around 2,740 locally.

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

21. Guidance from The Children's Society⁷ indicates that "It is important to be clear that Section 17 of **The Children Act 1989** places a **duty** on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area through the provision of services."
22. The Act requires local authorities to identify children in need; provide appropriate support; make an assessment of need under The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; Part III of the Education Act 1993; The Disabled Persons (SCR) Act 1986; or any other relevant legislation.
23. In addition, there are a number of pieces of legislation and Government guidance that can be applied to young carers. These are summarised below:
- a) **The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004** requires local authorities to inform **carers**, in certain circumstances, that they may be entitled to an assessment under the 1995 and 2000 Acts. When undertaking a carer's assessment, the local authority must consider whether the carer works, undertakes any form of education, training or leisure activity, or wishes to do any of those things. The Act also provides for co-operation between local authorities and other bodies in relation to the planning and provision of services that are relevant to carers. This Act has been used as the basis of developing Middlesbrough's Multi-Agency Protocol for Identification, Assessment and Support for Young Carers and their families. Good practice dictates, and young carer organisations advise, that local authorities and their partners should put in place guidance to young carers and their parents. Training should also be provided to statutory services and resources should be made available to agencies and individuals supporting those working with young parents.
 - b) **The Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986** includes a local authority responsibility to determine whether it should provide support to a disabled person living at home who is receiving care from a family member, and should also have regard to the ability of that person to continue to provide care.
 - c) **The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995** includes provision that, where an authority has carried out an assessment under paragraph 22 above, a carer may request the authority to make an assessment of the (carer's) ability to provide such care.

⁶ Aldridge, J. and Becker, S. *The National Handbook of Young Carers Projects*, Carers National Association)

⁷ 'Include Project -Supporting Pupils Who Are Young Carers' 2008.

- d) **Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Circular 10/99 - Social Inclusion: Pupil Support** - This refers to possible lateness or absence of young carers because of their responsibilities; suggests that schools should set time limits for absence and set some school work; indicates that referrals to outside agencies should be handled sensitively; and suggests that schools should consider designating a member of staff to have responsibility for young carers.
- e) **The National Service Framework for Mental Health 1999 - Standard 6 - Caring for Carers** outlines the roles and responsibilities of Social Services, GPs, Primary Care Teams and others with regards to assessing and meeting carers,' needs including young carers.
- f) **The National Carers Strategy, Caring about Carers (Department of Health) 1999** outlined the adverse effects on young people of being a carer and highlighted support which should be provided.
- g) **The Framework for the Assessment of Children and Their Families 2000** - This outlined the need to make a family assessment and provide assistance in conjunction with adult and children's social care, health services and schools.
- h) **The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000** applies to carers over 16 who are caring for someone over 18 and requires authorities to carry out an assessment of the ability of the carer to provide care.
- i) **Updated Drugs Strategy 2002** - The needs of children of problem drug users are included in the young people element of the strategy as one of five groups requiring targeted interventions.
- j) **Hidden Harm - Responding to the Needs of Problem Drug Users 2003 and 2006** - Aspects of the lives of children of problem drug users are highlighted, including having to act as carers for their parents and younger children.
- k) **National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services 2004** - Children of substance misusers and children of parents with specific health needs eg those with mental health problems are identified as groups of children "in special circumstances" who should receive targeted and specialist services to meet their needs.
- l) **Every Child Matters: Change for Children - 2004/2005** - The associated Outcomes Framework identifies the need for support for children and young people from vulnerable groups.
- m) **Multi-Agency Protocol for Identification, Assessment and Support for Young Carers and their Families** - Details of this protocol are included in the following section of the report 'Intervention and Support in Middlesbrough.'

24. The scrutiny panel was advised that officers in Children, Families and Learning and Social Care are involved in ensuring that the Council's obligations in supporting young carers are fulfilled. This is undertaken in conjunction with partner agencies and organisations, in particular The Junction, as shown in the following section of the report: '**Intervention and Support in Middlesbrough.**' At the time of the scrutiny panel's investigation, and owing to the fact that The Junction is commissioned on behalf of the Council to deliver support to young carers, there was no dedicated service or designated officer for young carers within the Children, Families and Learning Department. The panel was advised that, as this issue had been highlighted, this responsibility would be taken on by the Head of Achievement.

INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT IN MIDDLESBROUGH

25. The scrutiny panel considered information in respect of:

- The Junction Young Carers Project and the role of Children, Families and Learning in service commissioning.
- Middlesbrough Children's Trust
- Middlesbrough Connexions
- NHS Middlesbrough
- Adult Social Care involvement

26. Details of the involvement of these agencies and services are shown below.

The Junction Young Carers Project and the role of Children, Families and Learning in service commissioning

27. The Junction is a voluntary organisation and a registered charity based in Redcar. It offers a free and confidential information, support and counselling service to all young people aged 25 years and under in Redcar & Cleveland. The service is open to all young people regardless of gender, race, ability, sexuality and other aspects of themselves that makes them who they are. The project is largely financed by the Community Fund and funding from other major trusts.
28. The Junction also runs a **Young Carers Project**, which provides support to young carers from Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland Borough. This service is commissioned by Children, Families and Learning. Details of commissioning and funding arrangements are shown from paragraph 38 onwards.
29. The Young Carers Project provides practical, social and emotional support to children and young people aged between five and 18 years of age who take (or share) responsibility for the care of a family member. The scrutiny panel heard information from the Chief Executive and support workers from The Junction, as well as from some of the young people who use the service.
30. Support services offered to young carers vary. These can include group activities such as general play for younger children to swimming, cooking, art, drama and sport, or one to one discussions and confidential support from a project worker. Group sessions are generally held on a fortnightly basis at locations in Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland. Children and young people from each borough are able to attend all sessions, irrespective of location, with transport being provided as necessary in staff members' cars. The project does not have a dedicated transport provision.
31. An information leaflet for young carers, about the project, says:

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| <p>WHY DO WE OFFER YOU SUPPORT?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for another person can be hard for children and young people. • It can affect your experiences at school and it can affect your friendships. • We believe young carers should have the same opportunities as other young people. • We want you to be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enjoy going out with friends - have time to yourself - enjoy your time at school - feel safe and well - plan for your future |
|--|

32. The leaflet also states that all advice is provided in confidence and that:
- “You can talk to us about whatever you want. We will listen, we won’t tell you what to do. We’ll explore the options with you. We’ll help you make decisions for yourself.”*
33. An individual assessment is made for each young carer involved with the project and support is provided as necessary. This can vary widely - from providing very intensive support in one to one sessions to providing opportunities to socialise with other young people. The project is also involved in ‘signposting’ young people to other appropriate support, including mainstream services such as Connexions or health and mental health support services.
34. The needs of young carers are very varied. Some cope well and do not need a lot of support. There are different types of carers, in that some are short term, some are long term, while others are intermittent carers. While some care for profoundly disabled adults, others may be caring for very young siblings. Some are sole carers and others are joint carers with siblings or another adult. In some cases, such as drug or alcohol dependency, the adult being cared for can be difficult to manage. Accordingly, many of the young people who need the greatest support are from families that are particularly challenged or chaotic in nature, although this is not always the case. In short, there is no ‘typical’ young carer and The Junction provides a place where the wide ranging needs of young carers can be supported. One particularly valuable aspect of the project has been found to be through the young people involved being able to share common experiences.
35. The scrutiny panel heard that the project currently supports over 200 Middlesbrough Young Carers. This is the number of young people who receive regular support, although numbers do vary. The trend is for an increase in numbers as more young carers and agencies become aware of the service available. During 2009-10 there were 95 new referrals from Middlesbrough and there have been around 10 per month so far in 2010-11, though in one particular month there were 29 new referrals.
36. Young people accessing the project are consulted regularly to ensure that it is meeting their needs and the project’s desired outcomes, as well as accommodating young people’s views in service planning - for example older service users have asked for a residential experience, which management are now seeking to provide. Consultation takes place via 1:1 guidance sessions with each young carer and also as part of group work. An individual approach is taken for all service users through a system of assessment, planning, action and review. This system takes account of the wellbeing of each young carer and ensures that they can be signposted to appropriate external support. Respite provision can be made by The Junction and project support workers have also been involved in providing an advocacy service to the young people in certain circumstances.
37. In addition to working directly with young carers, the Junction has also provided multi-agency training to raise awareness of the needs of the carers and highlight issues around identifying them. This has included training for the Parent Support Advisers that are deployed across Middlesbrough’s schools.

38. The Young Carers Project is funded through the Children's Fund, which was established as a national programme by the Government in 2003 to address issues of social exclusion among children, young people and their families. The Young Carers Project is supported by funding of £93,000 in 2010 -11.
39. The way in which the Children's Fund initially operated meant that it was necessary for local authorities to involve an 'accountable body' to oversee funded projects. Middlesbrough Council therefore commissioned the national charity Action for Children to manage the Young Carers Project on the authority's behalf. Action for Children's website (www.actionforchildren.org.uk) indicates that the organisation 'supports and speaks out for the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people in the UK.' The Junction's contractual relationship is with Action For Children in terms of finance, performance and monitoring, although the Council does receive regular reports on performance of the project from Action for Children. These reports have highlighted that the project is working well, with no areas of concern. In addition, the Chief Executive of The Junction indicated that he plans to introduce a process of 'social accounting' - which is an externally validated self-assessment tool - to further measure effectiveness.
40. The Children's Fund is due to end on 31 March 2011. As this has been known for some time, Action for Children are currently working through an exit strategy with The Junction. This has led to a very uncertain position for the Young Carers Project in Middlesbrough, with the Junction currently being engaged in trying to identify appropriate funding sources so that the project can be continued from April 2011. The only certainty at the present time (end of August 2010) is that the contract with Action for Children to deliver a Young Carers project ends on 31 March 2011.
41. The position regarding the Council's involvement has subsequently been clarified with Children, Families and Learning. The authority is currently awaiting the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, which is due in October 2010. As part of anticipated reductions in all public expenditure, Children, Families and Learning, along with all Council departments, is evaluating all of its spending as part of the authority's budget review exercise. While it is anticipated that funding for Junction's Young Carers Project from the Children's Fund will cease, the current Government has announced a new funding opportunity - 'Youth in Focus' - to support vulnerable young people. Local authorities will not be able to access funding directly, as there will be a requirement to form a partnership of voluntary, public or private sector organisations with relevant expertise, led by a voluntary sector organisation.
42. This programme, which will be administered through The Big Lottery, will provide funding of up to £30m to support vulnerable young people in the following categories:
- Young carers
 - Young people leaving care
 - Young people leaving youth offenders' institutions
43. While further details of funding arrangements are awaited, it is possible that funding could be accessed from the Youth in Focus programme to support the Young Carers Project.

Middlesbrough Children's Trust

44. Following the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, the subsequent enquiry report (produced by Lord Laming) highlighted a lack of systems of accountability in Children's Social Care, a lack of accountability in senior management and poor partnership working between relevant agencies such as local government, health and police. Children's Trusts were established as part of the 'Every Child Matters: Next Steps' guidance which came about directly as a result of the Laming Report.
45. Middlesbrough Children's Trust is concerned with improving the well-being of all young people living in Middlesbrough, including vulnerable groups such as young carers. As such, the scrutiny panel heard information from the Chair of the Economic Well Being Theme Group of the Children's Trust.
46. The scrutiny panel heard that the theme group had identified in 2009 that there was an issue in identifying young carers so that support could be provided. The theme group was of the view that numbers being identified were low, which supports the information on the potential number of local young carers highlighted earlier in this report. Accordingly, it was identified that there was a need to raise the profile of this issue, especially in schools but also with all agencies involved.
47. Information sharing between relevant agencies was identified as an area for improvement and a protocol is being developed by the Children's Trust in this regard. Particular reference was made to the involvement of Adult Social Care and the need for that service to highlight any cases of potential young carers identified by staff who are providing support for a vulnerable adult.
48. Reference was also made to a piece of work which is being undertaken by Middlesbrough Children's Trust on children's mental health and wellbeing. This will take account of all potential influences on mental health issues, including the responsibilities of being a young carer. It is hoped that this work will result in available resources being better targeted in this area.

Involvement of Middlesbrough Connexions

49. Connexions was established as a national scheme to offer confidential advice and support to all 13-19 year olds (and up to age 25 for young people with special needs). The service aims to help young people to make informed career choices and provides impartial advice on education, employment and training. The local Connexions service is now part of Middlesbrough Council.
50. Middlesbrough Connexions has also been highlighted by the Children's Trust as a means of identifying and supporting young carers. The majority of young people in Middlesbrough are now in contact with Connexions and all have an identified personal adviser. However, the organisation's involvement illustrates that there is a local issue in identifying young carers. Of approximately 14,000 young people aged 13-19 currently registered with Connexions, only 14 are identified as young carers. An area which has been identified as a possible means of highlighting potential young carers relates to school attendance.

51. One of the benefits of the transfer of the Connexions service to Middlesbrough Council is improved information sharing with schools. Schools now highlight any individual attendance problems directly with Connexions, which is alerted if attendance falls to 70%. As attendance problems can be linked to being a young carer, Connexions' discussions with the young person concerned will now include investigating whether they fall within this group. If so, they will be referred to appropriate support.

Involvement of NHS Middlesbrough

52. The scrutiny panel was aware that the National Health Service across the Tees Valley area is involved in supporting carers generally and sought to ascertain the organisation's involvement in supporting young carers.
53. NHS Tees representatives indicated that the NHS works with both adults and children who are unwell. From a health point of view, the key issue is was understanding a medical condition and providing appropriate support, both for the patient and, where appropriate, also for other family members including siblings. People with long-term conditions have a named health carer or community nurse and a GP, who are involved in identifying a family's needs. Reference was made to a document which was produced by the Department of Health entitled "Carers at the heart of 21st Century Families and Communities" which highlighted that young carers are particularly concerned about gaps in support around the family and the person they care for. In Middlesbrough, a working group of representatives from different organisations - including MNHS Tees, Middlesbrough MIND, The Junction Project and Connexions - has been established to examine the issue of carers in general and to highlight any gaps in service provision.
54. Reference was also made to an NHS Tees Briefing document entitled "Carers Funding" which was produced in early 2010. It has been established nationally that only a proportion of the overall carer population receives the support they require and this was identified by the PCT as an area for investment locally. This issue was highlighted in the PCT's Annual Operating Plan for 2010/2011 and an additional £329,000 has been invested in Carers Support across the four Tees primary care trusts. Further investment is planned in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013. In Middlesbrough, funding of £78,755 was provided to MIND to support carers. Although none of this funding was specifically earmarked for young carers, it is anticipated that the multi-disciplinary working group that has been established will ensure that issues surrounding young carers are recognised and addressed.

The involvement of adult social care in supporting young carers

55. The Adult Social Care function recognises that, in a family where an adult who requires support is looked after by a young carer, increased support to the adult can alleviate a young carer's responsibilities and improve the quality of their life. Where a young carer is identified in a family, the service is also involved in referring them to the Junction Project.
56. Information was also considered in relation to how Adult Social Care is involved in financing some aspects of support for young carers. Historically carers services have been supported by a ring-fenced Carers Grant. As part of the arrangements for Children's and Adult Social Care to be separated, the Carers Grant was allocated at 80% for Adults and 20% for Children. The Carers Grant is now not ring-fenced and forms part of an Area Based Grant. In 2010/11 the allocation overall was £823,750 resulting in £709,00 to Adult Social Care, and £164,750 to Children's Services, still divided on an 80:20 split.

57. The scrutiny panel heard from officers of Children, Families and Learning that this amount is provided within the overall budget heading of Safeguarding and is therefore used for a wider remit than support for young carers. A proportion of this funding is, however, used to support young carers - £15,000 was contributed towards supporting The Junction Young Carers project in 2010/11 and activities and events are organised by the Children With Disabilities Team which are potentially open to sibling young carers.
58. In terms of young carers, operational practice within Adult Social Care is to make a referral of an identified young carer to The Junction Project for a carer's assessment and support. In addition, any young carer over the age of 16 has the right to access a direct payment for carer-specific services.
59. In relation to responsibilities between services, guidance "Working Together to Support Young Carers" was produced by The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) and The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) in the form of a memorandum of understanding between Statutory Directors for Children's Services and Adult Social Care Services in 2009. Social Care may identify young carers following an assessment of the adult that they may be caring for, and then complete a referral to The Junction. However the service is also aware of the requirements of The Children's Act 1989 section 17, regarding a child in need, and also section 47 in relation to Child Protection.
60. The published Carers Strategy for Middlesbrough 2009-2019 identifies specific issues regarding young carers and substance misuse. An excerpt from the strategy regarding young carers is provided below:
- "A young carer is anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of someone who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, or is affected by substance misuse."*
61. Adult Social Care's vision is that:
- Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve against all the Every Child Matters outcomes.*
62. In addition to the service's commitment to supporting all young carers, it is recognised that children and young people in families affected by substance misuse face particular challenges. It is imperative that the welfare of these children is protected and that they are able to access appropriate support. As a result, the Carers Improvement Partnership within Adult Social Care has developed an action plan specifically to address issues around substance abuse. The action plan contains a number of areas specifically relating to young carers and includes:
- Training and awareness raising for key workers across health, social care and the third sector.
 - Raising the profile of carers and their achievements across all agencies and establishing carer champions in each organisation.
 - Improving early identification of hidden carers, including young carers.
 - Improving engagement with service users and carers and their involvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services.

63. Also, the Government has recently announced a consultation on what it should prioritise to support carers from 2011-2015. This will focus on how best to deliver the five goals for carers in the existing Carers' Strategy, launched in 2008. The overarching vision is that by 2018:
- “Carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. Support will be tailored to meet individuals' needs, enabling carers to maintain a balance between their caring responsibilities and a life outside caring, while enabling the person they support to be a full and equal citizen.”*
64. The five areas that are being focussed on to achieve this are:
- Carers will be respected as expert care partners and will have access to the integrated and personalised services they need to support them in their caring role.
 - Carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role.
 - Carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role.
 - Carers will be supported to stay mentally and physically well and treated with dignity.
 - Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve against all of the Every Child Matters outcomes.
65. In response to the strategy refresh exercise, Social Care is to hold an event to discuss the review with carers in Middlesbrough, with young carers being invited to the event.
66. The scrutiny panel also heard that Adult Social Care makes referrals of any young carers that the service identifies to The Junction Young Carers Project. The panel was advised that - especially in view of the current uncertain funding position of the project - it is recognised that its future funding is an issue for Adult Social Care to consider as part of its holistic services to carers. Indications from officers were that that the service needs to further understand the level of referrals and support mechanisms needed for young carers.
67. Adult Social Care has also been involved in working directly with The Junction on the topic of young carers. In 2009, the organisation was commissioned to undertake a bespoke piece of work regarding young carers and the impact of caring for an Adult with mental ill-health. This resulted in a series of recommendations, some of which were included in the department's Carers Service Improvement Partnership Action Plan. In addition, Adult Services has purchased a number of short breaks, which are free of charge for use by carers.
68. This includes the Jonas Centre at Redmire, which is in a countryside location with log cabins for group accommodation. Facilities include table tennis, playing fields, children's playground, farm, shop and meeting room facilities. It is hoped that this can be made available for The Junction for use by young carers in the future.

69. In addition, Adult Social Care provided funding in 2009/10 to The Junction to undertake a piece of work on hidden carers. This funded a Young Carers Project Worker who planned and delivered awareness training on the needs of young carers. The project worker improved the early identification of young carers by delivering awareness and training sessions for workers in agencies across the statutory and voluntary agencies including schools, colleges, training schemes, youth centres, youth offending service, education and welfare services, adults and children's social care services, health services, housing agencies and MIND. They also developed and delivered awareness raising and training sessions for children and young people who use statutory and voluntary services, both universal and targeted. The project supported young carers to feel less isolated improving self-esteem, emotional and physical health, self-confidence and resilience. Although the target was to identify 60 hidden carers, this target was exceeded and 79 hidden young carers were identified and supported through this project. Ongoing support to these individuals has continued to be provided by The Junction, as required.
70. In some circumstances, joint working with Children Families and Learning is required to provide all necessary support to a young carer. Adult Social Care follows the requirements of the 'Multi-Agency Protocol for the Identification, Assessment and Support for Young Carers and their Families 2008-2011,' which has been developed in this regard. This protocol clearly outlines the legislative framework and the requirements from both services - it is a statutory duty of adult social services to support disabled adults in their parenting role. As a result of the assessed need, an adult may access a range of resources to help them carry out their role as a parent. Social care fully recognises that it is not acceptable to agree a community care package that depends upon a child carrying out caring responsibilities that are inappropriate to their age. If suspected that the child may be in need of Children's Services, or may be at risk, the protocol requires that the relevant referral is made for an assessment. The protocol, which is a key document for addressing young carer issues, was submitted to, and considered by the scrutiny panel as part of its investigation.
71. The protocol has been developed in response to practice guidance issued in relation to the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004, which states that Local Authorities should have "*a protocol, shared between adults and children's services, for identifying and assessing young carers.*" The panel found that the resulting document is based on an exemplar protocol developed by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, The Disabled Parents Network and The Children's Society, for use in meeting the practice guidance outlined above.
72. In Middlesbrough, The Carers Service Improvement Plan and the Children and Young Peoples' Plan include the development of a protocol, which will help to improve service provision to young carers. The protocol is designed to cover all providers of services both statutory and non-statutory and encompasses the Council's vision for children and young people - that is to create an environment that raises their hopes, aspirations and achievement and promotes pride through citizenship. Children should grow up healthy, safe from harm, free from poverty and supported to achieve their full potential and enabling them to become active citizens of Middlesbrough. This protocol is cross-referenced to:
- Middlesbrough Children and Young People's Plan (the multi-agency strategic plan, which all Children's Trusts are required to produce as part of the Children Act 2004).

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- Carers' Service Improvement Plan.
- Middlesbrough's Local Area Agreement (LAA's are about improving services and increasing economic prosperity for local people, which are three-year agreements between Middlesbrough, as a local area, and Central Government.)
- South Tees Joint Strategy for Improving Outcomes for Children with a Disability and those with Complex Health Needs.

73. It is also recognised that the protocol will need to be cross-referenced with other relevant plans and policies. The protocol aims to improve the recognition of and service provision to young carers and their families by outlining good practice for all services and agencies working in Middlesbrough who may come into contact with young carers and/or their families. It aims to ensure that all young carers are identified and supported as early as possible
74. It is recognised that all services should aim to ensure that people with disabilities and /or other care needs do not have to rely on the inappropriate caring role of a child. Until this is achieved, support should be given to young carers and their families to reduce the impact of the caring role on the child. The protocol outlines the roles of all services in ensuring the family is offered an appropriate assessment of their needs, and in working in partnership to meet those needs.
75. Whilst the welfare of the child is always paramount (Children Act 1989), all children benefit from having well-supported parents. In carrying out a referral or assessment, staff aim to adopt a whole-family approach that supports adults who have care needs with their parenting role wherever possible.
76. The protocol indicates that there should be a lead member of staff in Adult Social Care and Children's Services, with each being responsible for policy and procedure relating to young carers and their families.
77. It is the statutory duty of adults' services to support disabled adults in their parenting role. As a result of an assessed need an adult may access a range of resources to help them carry out their role as a parent: Throughout any assessment it is important to consider and record the following:
- Dependent children and their ages.
 - Children in the family who may be helping to provide care.
 - What assessment and support can be offered to the whole family.
78. Adult Social Care acknowledges that it is not acceptable to agree a community care package that depends on a child carrying caring responsibilities that are inappropriate to their age, regardless of how competent and willing they appear to be. The position should be regularly reviewed and all workers should understand and follow the South Tees Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) safeguarding and child protection procedures. If it is suspected that the child may be in need of children's services or at risk of significant harm, an appropriate assessment will be undertaken, which should avoid duplication with other assessments.
79. The child can also be referred to The Junction's Young Carers' Project for a young carer's assessment of need and for access to support services for the young carer and / or their family.

80. Services should include the following questions in their referral/assessment/enrolment processes:
- Could the child be a young carer
 - Does the child have disabled parents/other disabled family members/family members with other care needs?
 - Is the family member for whom they are caring already receiving services from another department or agency?
 - Is the child's school involved or aware of what is happening and the family situation?
81. Any 'young carer' assessment should trigger the offer of an assessment or review to the person who needs care. The young person who is a primary carer of his or her parent or sibling may have a good understanding of the family's functioning and needs, which should be incorporated into the assessment. During any assessment process relating to young carers, workers should:
- a) Consider the family as a whole, acknowledge parents' strengths and be aware of undermining parenting capacity.
 - b) Consider the wishes of the young carer.
 - c) Work in partnership with colleagues from across all services.
 - d) Ensure that the assessment process is appropriate to the carer's age and specific to their needs as a young carer.
 - e) Recognise that families may be fearful of acknowledging children's caring roles.
 - f) Ascertain if the illness/disability is stable or changing.
 - g) Maintain a focus on positive outcomes for the young person and their family when working with other departments/ agencies.
 - h) Respond to young carers' needs for emotional support and counselling.
 - i) Consider the family's housing needs and access to welfare rights including benefits.
 - j) Be sensitive to cultural perceptions and needs around disability, illness and caring whilst recognising a child's fundamental rights to a safe and secure childhood.
 - k) Recognise there may be differences of view between children and parents about appropriate levels of care. The resolution of such tensions will require good quality joint working. This work should include direct work with the young carer.
82. Monitoring criteria and the review process in respect of this protocol are being developed and co-ordinated by The Junction in partnership with other agencies.

VISITS TO YOUNG CARERS PROJECT

83. Arrangements were made for scrutiny panel Members to visit two sessions organised for young carers as part of The Junction's Young Carers Project. These were:
- The group for younger children at Thorntree Youth Centre
 - The group for older young carers at The Compass Centre in Redcar.
84. The sessions are split on the basis of age, in accordance with the split between primary and secondary schools. The panel's findings from the two visits are summarised below:

Visit to the young carers project at Thorntree Youth and Community Centre

85. This visit was held on 28 April 2010. Twelve children aged between seven and nine attend the group once a fortnight and ten were in attendance during the visit. All the children are collected from home and transported to the Centre by Link Workers employed by The Junction. Session activities vary, with the focus of the session being on healthy eating, with the children painting t-shirts bearing their own healthy eating messages and pictures.
86. The children chatted to panel Members about their families and those that they helped care for. The children listed a number of tasks that they undertake, including shopping, cooking, cleaning, signing for deaf parents and gardening. All of the children said that they had always been involved in helping at home and all seemed to accept that this was a normal part of their life.
87. The purpose of the support session is to allow the children to enjoy themselves but also for project workers to identify any problems they are having that could need support. As well as activity sessions at the community centre, the children are also taken out on visits - for example paint-balling, visiting a local park or for a meal.
88. All of the children who spoke to scrutiny panel members indicated how much they enjoy attending the project, which gives them the chance to make friends, play, and enjoy excursions - which some children said that they would not otherwise have the chance to do.

Visit to the young carers project at the Compass Centre, Redcar

89. This visit was held on 28 April 2010. Approximately 10 young carers aged between 11 and 16 attend the group once a fortnight. The session provides an opportunity for young carers from Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland to engage with one another socially and participate in activities such as pool and football. Occasional outings are also arranged.
90. The young carers chatted to the Panel Chair about their caring responsibilities and the support that the Junction Project provides. A number of points were highlighted by the young people, including:
- All were extremely complimentary about the project and the fact that it allows them some respite from their caring responsibilities as well as an opportunity to speak to other young people in a similar position. The emotional support of the project is also invaluable.
 - The view was expressed that the issue of young carers is not widely recognised or understood.
 - The suggestion that schools are best placed to identify young carers but might not be doing enough - perhaps through lack of knowledge or understanding. A trained mentor or specialist in each school was suggested as, while some teachers are aware and very supportive, they can still fail to *understand* the issues involved.
 - The view that a facility such as a drop in centre (along the lines of the Connexions service) could increase the number of known young carers. One young person queried whether Connexions staff are trained in this area.
 - Involvement with the Junction Project has resulted in a parent who is being cared for receiving assistance from Social Care - they had previously believed that they would not qualify for help.

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- Further publicity is needed to help in identifying and assisting more young carers.
- One young carer remarking that “The Junction project has been a Godsend” and another stating that “Whoever thought of the Junction Project should get a medal.”

CONCLUSIONS

91. Based on the evidence gathered in the scrutiny investigation the Panel concluded that:
1. Young carers can be as young as five years old and are a vulnerable group who require support. It has been shown that the responsibilities of being a young carer, which can be wide and varied, can greatly affect their health, education, social life and general wellbeing, and can ultimately have a negative impact on a young person’s life chances. Young carers can be deemed to be making a valuable, and sometimes unseen and unrecognised, contribution to society by potentially taking on responsibilities of agencies such as social care or health.
 2. A key issue surrounds identifying young carers so that they can be supported. This has been identified as an issue nationally. It is most likely that the number of young carers currently being assisted is low in comparison to the actual number of young people undertaking caring responsibilities. There are a number of reasons for this - such as a lack of awareness among relevant organisations and agencies of young carers’ needs and concerns; young carers’ own lack of awareness of their entitlements; their reluctance to seek formal help; or simply a wish to not be identified as a young carer. Identifying young carers as early as possible will also ensure that their progress can be tracked to close the attainment gap. In highlighting that more young carers could be identified in Middlesbrough, it is recognised that a balance needs to be struck between identifying more and having sufficient resources available to support them adequately. It should be recognised, however, that low level intervention at an early stage can prevent the need for young carers to access higher cost support in later years. A school is one of the most likely places where young carers who are not already known to relevant agencies can be identified and then helped. However, evidence from young carers themselves suggests that more could be done by schools to understand the problems faced by this group and to support them.
 3. The Council’s responsibility for looking after the interests of young carers is effectively undertaken by The Junction, which is an external service commissioned to support Middlesbrough’s young carers. The scrutiny panel is of the view that the Council’s overall involvement in this issue, including links between Children, Families and Learning and Adult Social Care, could be strengthened. For example, during the scrutiny panel’s investigation it was ascertained that there was no service practitioner in Children, Families and Learning who was responsible for young carers, although this issue was addressed during the course of the investigation. Adult Social Care is also involved, though more indirectly, in supporting young carers. Indications from the service were that it needs to further understand the level of referrals and support mechanisms needed for young carers.

4. The scrutiny panel received very positive feedback from the young people involved with the Junction's Young Carers Project, which appears to value, understand and address the problems faced by young carers in Middlesbrough. However, the funding position regarding the project - and therefore its future - is uncertain after March 2011. Given the Council's responsibility for young carers, this is an issue of some concern. The current position is that the project is funded through a Government Children's Fund grant of £93,000 per year, with Children Families and Learning contributing an additional £15,000 through Carers' Grant funding received from Adult Social Care. This issue will need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.
5. The panel recognises and welcomes the important work being undertaken by The Junction Young Carers Project. However, as some of the project's support sessions are based in Redcar, the scrutiny panel wishes to explore whether there may be an opportunity to enhance support in Middlesbrough, possibly through the development of the My Place youth project.
6. The Junction does not have a dedicated transport provision and relies on staff from the Young Carers Project to collect young people from their homes and take them to the support sessions in Middlesbrough or Redcar. This situation is not ideal and consideration needs to be given to this issue.
7. Indications from NHS Middlesbrough early in the scrutiny process were that local health organisations are looking to commit additional funding to supporting carers (including young carers) across the Tees Valley area. However, following the change of National Government in May 2010, the forthcoming changes to NHS structures and outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review of autumn 2010 are likely to have a significant impact on those plans. The scrutiny panel wishes to highlight this issue and suggest that it should be pursued further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

92. Following the submitted evidence, and based on the conclusions above, the scrutiny panel's recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Executive are as follows:
 1. That the issues surrounding young carers should be further highlighted and publicised in schools, both by The Junction Young Carers Project and by Middlesbrough's Children, Families and Learning Department. In order to identify young carers as early as possible and assist in tracking progress and closing the attainment gap, the results of the scrutiny panel's investigation should be highlighted and schools encouraged to make use of resources such as The Princess Royal Trust's 'Resource Pack for Schools,' which has been developed as best practice to help schools to identify and support young carers and their families more effectively.
 2. That, in order to maximise support to young carers and make best possible use of available resources, measures are put in place to strengthen liaison and links between Children, Families and Learning, Adult Social Care and The Junction Project. In the first instance, and in accordance with recommended best practice, a named lead officer, with responsibility for young carers, should be identified in each of the Council service areas.

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3. That urgent consideration is given to the uncertain funding position surrounding The Junction's Young Carers Project after March 2011. This should include how the authority can ensure that its obligations towards young carers can continue to be fulfilled, for example by assisting the Junction in bidding for grant funding, such as from the Government's forthcoming Youth in Focus programme, or by considering how Carers' Grant funding received from Adult Social Care is allocated.
4. That the feasibility of incorporating some element of support for young carers at the My Place development in Middlesbrough is explored - for example by promoting its use among young carers as a social facility, by advertising support services available, or by training staff in assisting or identifying new young carers so that appropriate referrals can be made.
5. That the possible use of Fleet Services transport and/or Ayresome Community Transport, by The Junction's Young Carer's Project is explored and incorporated in Children, Families and Learning's forthcoming review of home to school transport. Other possible sources of transport provision should also be explored, such as funding from minor grants schemes.
6. That NHS Middlesbrough is contacted with a view to ensuring that it continues to be involved in the issue of supporting young carers, particularly given the earlier indication that this was an area that was likely to benefit from additional resources in future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

93. The Panel is grateful to all those who have presented or provided information and evidence during the course of this investigation, and who have assisted in its work. The panel would like to place on record its thanks for the willingness and co-operation of the following:

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K Buckle, J Catron, J Keelty and G Rollings.

Officers from Dept. of Social Care, Middlesbrough Council:

L Grabham and M McKay.

Staff from The Junction Project, Redcar:

E Cowle, M Geldart and L McAnelley.

Representatives of NHS Middlesbrough:

A Greenley and G Humphrey; and

Young carers attending The Junction's support sessions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

94. The following background papers were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Reports submitted to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 1 and 22 March, 14 April, 15 June, 8 July and 31 August 2010.
- Children's Society Publication - 'Supporting Pupils Who Are Young Carers.'

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- HM Government Publication - 'Carers at the Heart of 21st Century Families and Communities.'
- NHS Tees Briefing - ' Carers Funding.'
- Middlesbrough Children and Young People's Trust Document - 'Multi-Agency Protocol for Identification, Assessment and Support of Young Carers and their Families.'
- Princess Royal Trust Publication - 'Resource Pack for Schools.'

**COUNCILLOR JAVED ISMAIL
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