



Working together to support young carers

Summary

Cumbria memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Statutory Directors for Children's Services and Health and Care Services

What is a Young Carer?

The term 'young carer' should be taken to include children and young people under 18 years, who provide regular and ongoing care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses drugs/alcohol.

The term does not apply to the everyday and occasional help around the home that may often be expected of or given by children in families and is part of community and family cohesion.

The key features are that caring responsibilities are important and relied upon within the family in maintaining the health, safety or day to day well-being of the person receiving support or care and/or the wider family.

Why have a Memorandum of Understanding?

Young carers tell us that they value their caring roles and are often proud of what they do. However, we also know that caring for someone on a regular basis can put young people under a lot of stress and result in them not having the same life chances that other young people have.

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 child, and risks impacting on his or her emotional or physical well being or educational achievement and life chances.

Cumbria is adopting the MoU to:

- reduce inappropriate levels of care by young people and
- to try and ensure that young carers can have the same life chances that other young people have.

What does it recommend?

The MoU provides a clear direction to services that they should adopt a 'whole family' approach in order to support young carers, and their families.

This guidance reflects current national policy and is intended to promote working together between Children's Services and Health and Care Services, and offers an enhanced basis for working in partnership with health and third sector partners.

Who is it for?

The MoU is mainly for young carers, their families and people who work with them, particularly in the local authority, and its partners. It is about how Health and Care Services and Children and Young People's Services work together.

What are the key points I need to know?

Our main focus will be to ensure we develop better ways of identifying where caring by children risks becoming excessive and/or inappropriate and putting in place the support that prevents this happening. Timely assessment and early intervention can prevent a child undertaking inappropriate levels of care.

We also want to ensure that young carers are supported to flourish and reach their potential.

The memorandum is an agreement between Children's Services and Health and Care Services that:

- young carers are identified, assessed and their families are supported in ways that prevent inappropriate caring and support parenting roles regardless of which service is contacted first.
- young carers are helped to achieve their potential; and, to have the same access to education, career choices and broader opportunities as their peers.
- young carers and their families are involved and listened to when services are planned.

In order to achieve this, it is agreed that:

- When a referral is made about a parent, or sibling, with a disability, dependency or illness, agencies consider, with a whole family approach, whether there is a child in the family who is providing personal care, practical help or substantial emotional support or who is otherwise adversely affected by the illness or disability.
- If a young carer is identified, the service which has identified them, (whether it is Children's Services or Health and Care Services) is responsible for referring on, or for assessing the needs of that young carer, within the family context.
- The assessment will be carried out by Cumbria's local Young Carer organisation.
- A further assessment may be carried out by Children's Services, using the Common Assessment Framework, or a Child in Need referral if appropriate.
- It may sometimes be necessary for Children's Services and Health and Care Services to assess jointly.

For further information contact:

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