**Young Carers Support Services**

**Stakeholder Engagement Analysis Report**

**Public Health and Strategic Commissioning**

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**Protective Marking: Public**

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# Introduction

The aims of this stakeholder engagement exercise were to identify areas of success and improvement in young carers support services funded by Warwickshire County Council.

Objectives:

1. Understand the most significant **impact** a caring role has on young carers and their families in Warwickshire
2. Understand the most important **changes** that young carer support has made to young carers, their families, and the ability of other stakeholders to identify and support young carers
3. Understand what is it about the current **support** services that caused those positive changes
4. Identify support **gaps** and views on how current support could be improved

This work will directly inform development of a business case to retender the young carer support service, and development of an updated service specification for April 2019.

# Methodology

The engagement exercise involved 11 focus groups attended by 275 young carers and an online survey for parents of young carers, schools, Warwickshire Young Carers (the current provider) and other interested individuals or organisations (n=124). For details please see Appendix 1.

This Council engagement project is in addition to an engagement exercise the current provider undertook with young adult carers (18 to 25 years) during two events, July 2018 and September 2018 (Appendix 3).

# Key Messages

* The impact of caring responsibilities on young people varies significantly depending on the availability of additional support, the needs of the cared-for person, and the young carer’s individual circumstances (age, school, location etc.). Some young carers feel extremely positive about their caring role, while others experience a range of detrimental effects.
* Young carers are clear that they need more support at school. Most do not feel understood or well supported at school, and others experience bullying linked to their caring role. Young carers want someone at school who understands them; who understands how caring responsibilities can make school harder, and for bullying to be dealt with more effectively. Most young carers want better pastoral support - to be “understood” - but extra help in lessons, for homework and for exam revision, were also mentioned.
* Young carers and their parents overwhelmingly said that regular young carer groups are an essential source of support, and have a significant and positive impact on their lives. Meeting other young carers like themselves helps them to feel less isolated and alone. Groups are an opportunity to socialise, have fun and enjoy rare time away from their caring responsibilities. The groups act as a gateway to further specialist support, information and advice, once trusting relationships have been established.
* Mental health issues, such as stress, anxiety and depression were the most commonly reported negative effect of caring responsibilities. Although young carers said that group attendance helps to manage these issues, many requested easier access to additional mental health support, such as counselling.
* Common suggestions to improve group provision included more frequent groups, groups in school holidays, more outdoor activities, and help with transport to attend.
* Warwickshire Young Carer staff reported they are working near capacity, so their ability to support a larger number of young carers through the existing service model e.g. by facilitating larger or more frequent groups, is limited.
* A parent and social worker expressed the view that young carer support is dependent on group attendance. The support given to those who cannot, or don’t want to, attend group sessions needs consideration.

## Recommendations for service specification

In line with Warwickshire’s One Organisational Plan to use resources differently and transform the way we commission and deliver services, the Young Carers Support Service specification is being revised to take a more outcomes-focused approach. It is recommended that the following areas are considered throughout the redesign process:

1. An emphasis on partnership working with other stakeholders, including schools, to develop a better understanding of the impact of caring responsibilities on young people’s lives.
   1. The provider should explore creative ways of raising awareness of young carers, and supporting schools to develop an in-house support offer.
2. The development of a robust targeted offer, making best use of signposting, community support, and digital resources in order to:
   1. Enable those young carers not attending group provision to access information, advice and guidance.
   2. Enable the provider to manage demand as larger numbers of young carers are identified as having support needs.
3. Improved pathways to access mental health support
   1. The provider should work with young carers to develop personalised support plans for issues that affect them most, for example, helping them to manage stress or anxiety through relaxation strategies.
   2. This process should include assessment and review using an appropriate tool e.g. PANOC[[1]](#footnote-1)
4. Continued opportunities for peer support and social activities, either through group provision or creative alternatives.
5. A robust assessment process to ensure that young carers with the greatest levels of need access timely targeted interventions as part of an enhanced programme of support.
   1. To make best use of resources, individual reviews should also be conducted at appropriate intervals to ensure the allocation of targeted support remains proportional to assessed levels of need.

# Responses - Consultation Analysis

## Young Carer focus groups

275 young carers were invited to participate in the focus groups, although not all chose to contribute their views. The young carers participating were aged 8 - 18 years old, and focus groups were facilitated in all five Warwickshire districts and boroughs, with a younger (8-12) and older (13-18) group in each area. The exception was Bedworth, which has one combined age group (8-18). The distribution of boys and girls was broadly equal.

Figure 1 Focus Group Participation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Younger** | **Older** | **Total** | **Total young carer population\*\*** | **% of total population** |
| **Stratford** | 21 | 26 | 47 | 472 | 10.0 |
| **Rugby** | 34 | 30 | 64 | 434 | 14.7 |
| **Nuneaton and Bedworth\*** | - | - | 68 | 719 | 9.5 |
| **Warwick** | 35 | 24 | 59 | 435 | 13.6 |
| **North Warwickshire** | 20 | 17 | 37 | 260 | 14.2 |
| **Total** |  |  | **275** | **2320** | **11.9** |
| \*Combines Nuneaton younger (n=28), Nuneaton older (n=18) and a separate Bedworth combined group (n=22) \*\* Young carers known to Warwickshire Young Carers as of Dec 2018 | | | | | |

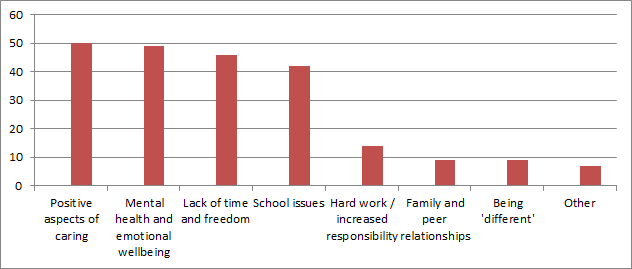
If all young carers at the 11 focus groups we joined gave comments, we estimate we reached approximately 12% of all carers known to Warwickshire Young Carers services (Figure 1). Given our assumption, that approximately 80% contributed views in each group, the figure is around 10%.

Responses to questions were recorded verbatim on post-it notes and analysis includes responses from all groups.

### Impact

**Q1) What is the main impact of caring on your life?**

Facilitator prompts for this question included: think of the best and worst things about caring, and the effect at home, at school and other places. The discussions generated 204 unique comments, some of which covered multiple themes. A total of 226 thematic references were identified during coding analysis.

The chart below illustrates the number of responses related to each theme. 

The outputs of the Q1 focus group exercise suggest the following:

* The theme evident in most comments was the positive aspect(s) of caring. These comments often mentioned feeling good about helping someone, and feeling closer to family members as a result of caring. Young carers also referred to the rewards associated with caring, particularly the opportunity to access group sessions and activities, and an increased ability to help their peers due to their caring experience.

*‘Really happy being a carer because I get to do things like this.’ (Coming to YC group)*

*‘I like being a young carer because I really get to give my family a big rest.’*

It is important to note that while the positive aspect(s) of caring was the most frequently occurring theme, only 22% of the total responses were of a positive nature. The remaining responses, while addressing a range of themes, reflected the detrimental impact of caring responsibilities on young carers’ lives.

* Of those comments detailing the negative impact of caring responsibilities, mental health and emotional wellbeing was the area most frequently cited (21% of responses). Twenty-two individuals specifically referred to stress associated with caring, with others mentioning anxiety, depression, and panic.

*‘Depression and mental health can be something you struggle with.’*

*‘Caring too much is stressful.’*

* A lack of time for themselves and / or a lack of freedom was also evident as a significant impact of caring responsibilities. Socialising and spending time with friends was particularly cited as an area of life impacted by having limited time away from caring, and young carers referred to being unable to get out of the house due to the needs of those they care for.

‘I don't have as much time to play as much as my friends.’

*‘(Being a young carer) stops me doing lots of the things I want to do.’*

* School was the third most frequently cited area of young carers’ lives that is negatively impacted upon by their caring roles. Particular issues raised included insufficient time to manage homework and revision; a lack of understanding by teachers of what being a young carer involves; and bullying. Year 6 pupils specifically cited the pressure of SATs as a cause of stress due to teachers’ expectations around revision, and several young carers mentioned being too tired to concentrate at school.

‘I wish I could have more sleep and more help with homework.’

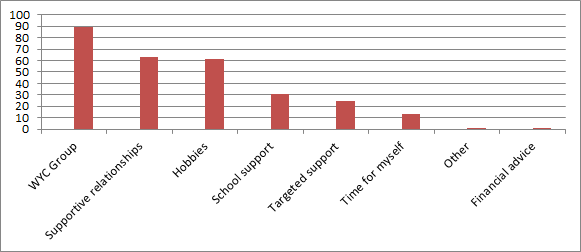
‘When there are lots of things going on at home it can affect doing homework - I can't use the computer downstairs if my brother's having a meltdown.’

### Support

**Q2) What support / services help with being a young carer?**

Facilitator prompts for this question included: think about different parts of life - home, school, other places; think about the things that help you relax and balance your caring responsibilities. The discussions generated 238 unique comments, some of which covered multiple themes. A total of 284 thematic references were identified during coding analysis.

The chart below illustrates the number of responses related to each theme.

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The outputs of the Q2 focus group exercise suggest the following:

* Peer support through Warwickshire Young Carers groups is the most valued source of support to young carers, with almost a third of responses (31%) referring to group attendance. Young carers highlighted the importance of meeting people in a similar situation to themselves and having the opportunity to socialise, and also cited the range of activities and outings as things that help them to enjoy life. Discussions with young carers suggested that attending group sessions is also a means of accessing information about other services, and opportunities to talk to support workers on a 1:1 basis.

'I feel better about X’s issues because when I come here, I feel like everyone is going through the same thing as me.’

‘Going to Young Carers helps a lot because it means we can take a break from all of our stress!’

‘(WYC group) lets me be free when we go on trips, time away from home, helps me with everything possible.’

* Supportive relationships, both personal and professional, are also important for young carers managing their caring responsibilities. Responses indicated that having someone to talk to is helpful, with the majority of young carers choosing to talk to friends or family members. Young carers also mentioned talking to teachers, support workers (including WYC), social workers and counsellors. Several young carers also noted therapeutic relationships with pets.

*‘Having people listen to you helps a lot.’*

*‘Good understanding friends, teachers that understand.’*

* Hobbies are important to young carers in terms of relaxing and taking a break from their caring responsibilities. The range of hobbies discussed included some accessed outside of the home, such as sports clubs and Scouts, but were predominantly those enjoyed in young people’s homes, such as computer games, listening to music, and reading. This question indicated that the majority of young carers use technology in some form (social media and / or a games console or computer) for recreational activities.

‘I do gymnastics and it clears my mind with the events of the day.’

‘Playing football without my brother.’

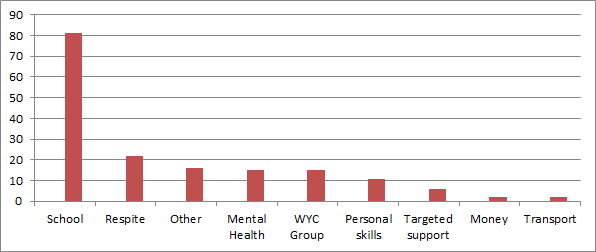
‘Instagram’

### Improvement

**Q3) Where are the gaps in services / support?**

Facilitator prompts for this question included: things that can be improved; think of any areas where you might like more help or support. A total of 170 thematic references were identified during coding analysis.

The chart below illustrates the number of responses related to each theme.



The outputs of the Q3 focus group exercise suggest the following:

* School is the area of life in which young carers would most welcome additional support, with 48% of responses referring to difficulties here. Issues raised tended to be more pastoral than academic; the most frequently cited were the need for greater understanding from teachers about the role of young carers, and school’s failing to deal effectively with bullying. Many young carers indicated that they would like a designated person to talk to at school about the impact of their caring responsibilities, as some of the school-based issues raised (such as limited time for homework and persistent lateness) were exacerbated by a lack of teacher understanding.

*‘Teachers don't help and try to give me detentions for taking my sister to school.’*

*‘Schools don't understand what being a young carer is. They don't talk about it much.’*

*‘Being picked out as a young carer - we're not different. We're the main people they (bullies) target, we get called special.’*

* Young carers also indicated that they would like more opportunities for respite from caring. They expressed a desire for more time to do things for themselves, such as pursuing hobbies and interests, but also highlighted the lack of support available to facilitate this, with some responses citing a need for more support for cared-for relatives. Responses also indicated that this lack of support affected the amount of time they could spend with other family members.

*‘I wish there were more chances for my sister to be away from home so I can spend more time just me and my mum.’*

*‘A chance to relax and clear your mind.’*

* Other responses to this question were wide-ranging, but another prevalent theme was a desire for increased mental health support (with several young carers specifically mentioning self-harm).

*‘When I get upset I could use some help at school, home or in young carers, and the same for bullying. More counselling and emotional support.’*

* Areas for improvement specifically linked to the Young Carers support service included more frequent groups (weekly rather than fortnightly); more opportunities for 1:1 support and quiet discussions in group settings; and a dedicated 18-25 group to support with employability skills.

*‘1:1s aren't regular, they are at the request of young carers, and boys tend to ask for help less.’*

## Stakeholder survey

In total 124 people responded to the survey.

The vast majority of respondents (69%) were parents or family members of young carers. Much smaller numbers responded from other stakeholder groups such as schools (5%) or adult social care (Figure 3). In terms of where respondents were from, there was significant underrepresentation from Nuneaton and Bedworth areas, and slight over representation in Stratford upon Avon (Figure 2).

The majority of respondents (62%) reported one carer in their family, but a significant minority (36%) had two or more (Figure 4). The age profile of young carers reported by survey respondents (Figure 5) was different to the age profile of carers registered with WYC (Figure 6). The survey significantly underrepresents carers over 18 years of age, and over represents careers 17 and under. Some respondents indicated there were very young carers in their household, under 6 years of age in some cases.

Figure 2 Answers to, “In what capacity are you filling out this survey?” (n=124)

Figure 3 Survey respondent profile compared with known reference profile across Warwickshire Districts (n=124)

Figure 4 Number of young carers in the family (n=86)

Figure 5 Age of young carers in the family (n=114)

Figure 6 Age profile of (n=2,283) young carers registered with Warwickshire Young Carers Project (Q3 2018/19)

### Impact

Response themes below were derived from all stakeholder groups. We noted responses from parents (n=86) did not generally produce significantly different themes from organisations and other individuals (n=38). Where this is not the case, it is explicitly highlighted in the text.

**Q1)** Parents were asked: What are the most important changes that young carer support services have made to your child and your family in the following areas?

Organisations were asked: What are the most important changes that young carer support services have had on your organisation’s ability to identify and support young carers, in the following areas?

Participants were invited to respond under the 5 every child matters outcomes headings below.

**Enjoying good physical and mental health**

Of the 124 respondents, 115 (92.7%) answered this question providing 219 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion of responses related to each theme.

* Responses indicated mental health improvements were the most common benefits of young carer support (24%). Increased confidence, comfort, self-esteem, reducing anxiety, stress and feeling more positive about caring were frequently cited at school and at home.

*“Child feels good about themselves and has some time to have fun and feel positive which helps when home back to being carer” [parent/family member]*

*“Taking part in activities has encouraged social interaction and encourage [sic] a growth in self-esteem. Helped to understand other people's lives in parallel to our own giving peace of mind and reducing stress.” [parent/family member]*

* The opportunity to take part in new activities that would be otherwise closed to them was considered important for young carers as a chance to have fun and try new things away from the stresses of home (22%).

*“Taking part in activities which is just for her not all the family. Being able to do things that she wouldn’t be able to with her sibling.” [parent/family member]*

*“Both of my children love the activities provided. It's a great place for them to be themselves and get away from home for a bit.” [parent/family member]*

* Young carer support was considered to help improve relationships (20%). Particularly valued was meeting other young carers in similar situations and realising they are not alone in having caring responsibilities. Others mentioned improved confidence to socialise more.

*“My son feels more comfortable and less alone and it's showing in all aspects of his life” [parent/family member]*

*“My daughter is more confident to talk with others and mix” [parent/family member]*

* Other significant impacts of young carer support were creating time for the carer (time for self,) by creating their own space, an opportunity to forget caring responsibilities, enjoy childhood and be a kid (16%). To a lesser extent, one-to-one support from support workers, feeling listened to, and being able to talk to people who understand them also benefitted young carers (12%).

*“My daughter has struggled with the change in the dynamics of the family due to her brother’s issues and Young Carers have helped her to somewhere to 1, be a child, 2, give her somewhere to get away from everyday things 3 gives her people to talk to who understand.” [parent/family member]*

“*Providing the opportunity and space for young carers to talk to a member of staff and peers about anything that is bothering them. Staff are then able to assist directly or make referrals to other services where appropriate*.” *[respondent role not answered]*

**Feeling safe and protected from harm**

Of the 124 respondents, 94 (75.8%) answered this question providing 120 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion of responses related to each theme.

* Over half of respondents (52%) highlighted the different kinds of support available to young carers as crucial to supporting them to feel safe and protected from harm. This wasn’t necessarily support they had accessed, but simply knowing how and where to access help, advice and support was greatly valued. Where they had accessed support, being able to talk about issues without judgement, including physical and mental bullying at school, helped contribute to feeling safe.

*“They know where to access the support when needed at school and at home. [They] have someone to talk to / support them when they are at a vulnerable point / state of mind.” [parent/family member]*

*“Young carers appear to be more aware of services and support available for them which is supported by the increasing recognition of their 'existence'.” [Adult/children’s social care]*

*“Young Carers often share that they feel, much better knowing other young Carers in school as they felt less alone and less isolated, and suffered less bullying and greater staff understanding.” [WYCP]*

* Many (20%) commented that young carer groups provided a safe space where children could enjoy themselves away from the pressures of family life.

*“escape from home life to make them feel they are normal within a safe and welcoming environment” [Other Organisation]*

* Relationships were again referenced as a significant source of support and safety, particularly meeting other young carers in similar situations, not feeling alone, and having a support network outside of the home (13%).

*“[about young carer groups] Safe environment with friends who have similar problems” [parent/family member]*

**Enjoying life and achieving aspirations**

Of the 124 respondents, 92 (74.2%) answered this question providing 143 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Socialising (26%), having fun (24%) and becoming more resilient in life (20%) were the most common sources of support to enjoy life and achieve aspirations. Respondents told us that giving young carers the opportunity to access new social events, like young carer groups or trips, helped them be more comfortable socialising, making new friends, and feeling a sense of belonging

*“My child experiences bullying on a daily basis at school and has found it difficult to make friendships. At young carers, the activities (especially the residentials) have given her a chance to socialise in a positive way.” [parent/family member]*

* Trying new activities and hobbies, holidays, and days out, were a great source of fun for young carers, particularly because they would not otherwise be able to do these things due to time restrictions at home.

*“Given him opportunity to enjoy aspects of life that he isn’t able to experience at home. From eating socially, mixing with peers and experiencing trips. All experiences that he wouldn’t have opportunity to if it wasn’t for young Carers.” [parent/family member]*

*“Taking part in activities and trips which they would otherwise be unable to do.” [parent/family member]*

* Young carer support had an impact at school. Many parents (14%) commented on improvements in attendance and/or achievement since their child had attended young carers groups, on top of being more confident and trying harder at school. Young carer support workers, schools and adult social care respondents also gave examples of how support had benefited school attendance.

*“Some young carers find it difficult to leave their parent whilst at school and some refuse to attend. I will make a referral to adult social care for support to the parent. In most cases the young carers will attend school safe in the knowledge their parent is receiving help whilst they are at school.” [WYCP]*

* Young carer project workers are a source of one to one support for achievement, mainly through increasing awareness of opportunities and removing barriers to aspiration (13%).

*“Working with a young carer who felt unable to plan for their own future because of their own caring role. Talking 1:1 to the young person I gave them information about Carers allowance and that they could balance caring and college and this allowed them to study the subject they wanted. This gave them a more positive view of caring and what they could achieve while not "letting anyone down".”[WYCP]*

**Making a positive contribution to the community**

Of the 124 respondents, 86 (69.4%) answered this question providing 110 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* As a result of young carer support nearly half of responses (47%) mentioned different elements of feeling positive about caring, and this had improved their recognition of how they are contributing to wider society. Many felt young carer support had led to young carers feeling recognised, included, valued, appreciated, supported, important (further afield than their immediate family), proud, and willing to take on more caring responsibilities. In one case this was balanced with the realities of the restrictions on young carer’s time.

*“I believe that the majority of people living in [location removed] are not aware of the Young Carers [group] meetings unless they have a child that goes. I believe it is difficult to get involved in community activities due to constrictions on the carers time. However our young carer identifies as a carer and has definitely been encouraged to value the caring that is undertaken.” [parent/family member]*

* As a result of young carer support services many respondents reported young carers were taking part in more school activities, extracurricular activities, volunteering, and generally getting more involved outside of the home (28%).

*“More likely to get involved in community projects. Want to share their experiences by helping others, getting involved in fundraising.” [School]*

*“Took part in some school activities and has had access to dedicated group while in primary school” [parent/family member]*

* Support and the confidence to self-identify as a young carer, and value that as something positive, gave some the confidence to want to help and support others. This included helping raise awareness and talking about being a carer at school.

*“[Name removed] is very proud and very vocal about young carers. She is currently helping her school to provide more support for other young carers as she highlighted to them the importance of it” [parent/family member]*

*“Most young carers do not realise they are young carers. Once we have completed their referral, carers assessment and support is put into the household for the cared for, the young carer can then go onto lead a more happy and active life.” [WYCP]*

**Achieving economic well-being and being prepared for adulthood**

Of the 124 respondents, 65 (52.4%) answered this question providing 87 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Improving life skills was mentioned most under the “achieve economic well-being and preparing for adulthood” banner (33%). This included supporting the young carer to plan their own future, being more social and meeting new people, gaining confidence and realising their own potential. Many told us how young carer support had improved young carers self-expression, made them happier and improved their mental health.

*“Supported in planning for the future and being valued/learning to value himself” [parent/family member]*

*“Feel supported in planning for their future.” [School]*

*“She is able to say how she feels and what confused her” [parent/family member]*

* A quarter of responses (25%) mentioned support had helped their education. This was broad and included help with education applications to college or University, advice on further education opportunities, and school work support.

*“Entered further education, completed university degree, feeling more confident and able to find work, whilst also able to reach out for help” [parent/family member]*

*“The advice given with reference to the availability of work, education, apprenticeships etc. is invaluable. The bias given is based on being a carer and about the opportunities given to carers for instance bursaries etc. This information is extra to what is offered at school. Additionally trips to Universities that are arranged are absolutely brilliant as many young carers do not always have a driver in their family.” [parent/family member]*

* The “Other” category was significant in this category (18%). This included some suggestions of inconsistent support.

*“There are still (in my opinion) a number of gaps in the services available for young people age 16 - 18 and inconsistencies between teams about what can and cannot be done for such service users.” [Adult/children’s social care]*

*“This is one area that I know worries my daughter, hopefully as she progresses in her education she will continue to be supported to make decisions that are right for her and her future success.” [parent/family member]*

*“This is tough, as he is only young, but hopefully this support will help him prepare.” [parent/family member]*

* Employment and transitioning to adulthood made up the more minor themes. Help with employment responses were varied, including helping with CVs, applications, apprenticeships, work experience, and advice on opportunities, training and skills development programmes. Support to transition to adult support services was talked about in the context of helping reassure the young person of the future of the cared-for person through planning, so they could worry less. It was acknowledged that transitioning to adult services was problematic in the past.

*“Discussion about future - and that she need not worry about her sister” [parent/family member]*

*“We offer support up to 25 and refer on Young Carers to adult services where required - though often they have struggled to engage with the adult services in the past.” [WYCP]*

**Other**

Of the 124 respondents, 38 (30.6%) answered this question providing 50 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Almost 1 in 4 of the “other” comments about how young carers support had affected young carers was about raising their general confidence (24%). This included aspects of raised self-esteem and being more confident to talk about feelings and thoughts.

*“Giving him the confidence to socialise with other people. To grow as an individual rather than always being seen as someone's brother.” [parent/family member]*

*“[name removed] is more confident after attending young carers and seems to have more belief in himself” [parent/family member]*

* Confidence was often related to the themes of being happier (16%), being less stressed (16%) and being more social (12%).

*“Overall sense of happiness, less anxiety” [parent/family member]*

*“All getting on better and happy with there [sic] own company and being around others” [parent/family member]*

*“His anger management has improved immensely, being able to self sooth [sic] and know that he is not alone” [parent/family member]*

* Many respondents (22%) took the opportunity to praise the young carer groups as valued support for their child or organisation.

*“Incredibly valuable support at critical times in his life. A sense of purpose and also peace of mind for us as parents to know he has the safety net of Young Carers.” [WYCP]*

* Other positive changes from carers support (10%) included gaining practical skills in cooking, homework advice, and how a whole school approach was achieved in an infant school.

*“The cooking that is done at the meetings is really important and enjoyable. Organising homework advice etc. too is brilliant as some carers do not get practical advise [sic] covering this” [parent/family member]*

### Support

Response themes below were derived from all stakeholder groups. We noted responses from parents (n=86) did not generally produce significantly different themes from organisations and other individuals (n=38). Where this is not the case, it is explicitly highlighted in the text.

**Q2)** All were asked: What specific support do you think caused the positive changes you mentioned above? (Tick all that apply)

All 124 respondents completed this question, selecting 836 support options; an average of 6 to 7 per person. The chart below shows the proportion (%) of responses for each pre-specified option.

The vast majority of respondents told us that opportunities to meet new friends (84.7%) and attending regular group sessions with other young carers (83.9%) were the most significant sources of support for young carers. Helping make time for themselves - a break from caring (78.2%), going on trips and activities (75.0%) and support from other young carers (74.2%) were also very commonly selected options, a consistent finding across the different respondent types.

Support through technology (16.1%) was consistently one of the least selected options.

### Improvement

Response themes below were derived from all stakeholder groups. We noted responses from parents (n=86) did not generally produce significantly different themes from organisations and other individuals (n=38). Where this is not the case, it is explicitly highlighted in the text.

**Q3)** Parents were asked:How could your child be better supported in the following areas? Organisations were asked: How could your organisation be better supported to help young carers across the following areas?

**Enjoying good physical and mental health**

Of the 124 respondents, 57 (46.0%) answered this question providing 64 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Just less than a third of respondents (30%) suggested improvements to young carers groups. This included more outside activities, groups more often - particularly in summer holidays to avoid isolation, more volunteers to help at the groups, group talks on mental and physical health, more and broader activities (Zumba, cooking lessons, arts/crafts, board games/card games), and more money to provide more activities, transport and staff to support. One respondent suggested that there was a lack of support outside of group attendance.

*“Extension of the current service provision, currently groups run fortnightly and not during school holidays, which would be beneficial as this time can be extremely isolating”* *[parent/family member]*

*“More money to provide more activities and transport and more staff” [Early Help Officer]*

*“No longer accessed support as she did not feel she was listened to at young carers group. A few children regularly prioritised for activities at the detriment of other children and poor communication with group leaders. Since she has stopped attending groups no contact from leaders and it seems as though it is the group or nothing.” [parent/family member]*

* Mental health was the next most common area for improvement suggestions (25%). They included more timely access to other services, particularly one-to-one counselling and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Others suggested more individualised support, more continual support (more regular than fortnightly group sessions) and a general lack of mental health support for young people under the age of 18. This meant WYC staff do a lot of intensive work with young carers while they wait for referrals to other services. Others suggested young carers would benefit from talks from mental health professionals, staying safe on the internet, and what to do if bullied.

*“More funding for counselling as he is still waiting for this to happen” [parent/family member]*

*“In house counselling support or more money or provision to buy in services for counselling as list are long and the wait times are often months” [WYCP]*

*“Regular 121 to ensure all [young carers] get opportunity to talk about any difficulties” [parent/family member]*

* Many requested more opportunities to improve physical health, such as more opportunities for outside activities, access to a greater range of activities, more sports, and specific supported gym trips (20%).

*“More chances for sports outside like five a side football” [parent/family member]*

*“Support to attend gym or dance class” [parent/family member]*

* Additional areas of suggested improvement were to increase awareness of young carer issues and work better with other organisations including: adult social care, GP practices, and health. Other suggestions included ensuring schools have up-to-date list of young carers, more regular meetings between schools and young carer support workers, and having a school young carer lead who teachers can report issues to (currently rare).

*“Ensure schools have an up to-date list of Young Carers, to be able to support them fully” [School]*

*“Better working links with CAMHS” [WYCP]*

*“Better working with Adult Social Care/ GP Practices/ Health staff to raise awareness in order that they more fully understand the issues facing young carers and the impact caring has on their physical and mental health” [WYCP]*

* The final theme (5%) was about improving young carers life skills, such as improving their confidence, encouraging shy young carers to join in, and cooking lessons.

*“Needs confidence building loves sport but doesn’t feel good enough” [parent/family member]*

**Feeling safe and protected from harm**

Of the 124 respondents, 40 (32.3%) answered this question providing 41 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* The most common comment here was that the young carer felt safe and protected, and many comments related to this feeling while away at young carers groups (27%).

*“I think the group have a very strong identity on how to feel safe and protected from harm at the sessions” [parent/family member]*

*“Yes he does feel safe” [parent/family member]*

* Respondents made reference to a need for better access to appropriate services (17%). They ranged from better access to home adaptations, not falling off the radar due to home-schooling, recognition of young carers by adult care, continuing support groups for teenagers and above, and access to CAMHS.

*“Feel confidently [confident] within School. He’s getting constant detentions as struggling - he’s awaiting CAHMS for Asperger and dyslexia” [parent/family member]*

* Another 17% of respondents suggested a need for more training, including talks, or support with: online safety and risks, first aid, basic fire safety (for families with disabilities), dealing/understanding siblings challenging behaviour.

*“More training and support with online safety and risks” [WYCP]*

* Other themes were reported by less than 15% of respondents. They ranged from opportunities to have a private safe-space to have conversations, someone to check in now and again how they are feeling (at school), and better access to be able to talk to support staff, who could be perceived as busy.

*“To be able to go and speak to support staff” [parent/family member]*

*“To ensure [young carer group]] staff are aware of each child needs to supper [sic] them correctly” [parent/family member]*

* Suggestions to improve school support included: increasing student awareness of support at school; more funding in school to help provide more activities and group meetings for young carers; identifying young carers at intake; and having a smoother transition for children who start part-way through a year.

*“Though many schools have certainly achieved a better understanding of our young carers day to day lives some of our young carers still experience obstacles at school and this leads some young carers to being home schooled and this sometimes doesn't have a positive outcome and some of the young people fall off the radar, especially those in rural communities.” [WYCP]*

**Enjoying life and achieving aspirations**

Of the 124 respondents, 41 (33.1%) answered this question providing 43 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Almost half (47%) of respondents cited “ongoing support” as the best way to support young carers to enjoy life and achieve their aspirations. This meant carrying on with support already in place, or adding to it, such as supplying transport. This included continuing to support regular group sessions and trips, young carer groups in school holidays, providing more respite help at home, more WYC staff to meet rising demand, and providing adult carers with a timely Transition Assessment to allow early intervention.

*“More funding e.g. to help them with transport to and from clubs and activities.” [parent/family member]*

*“Continued Young Carer groups” [parent/family member]*

*“Ongoing support as he grows older and has different needs” [parent/family member]*

*“More help within the home for some Young Carers who are the main / prime carers” [School]*

* Around a quarter (26%) made suggestions to boost the life skills of young carers. The most common was building confidence to get involved, attend groups, and achieve their aspirations. This also extended into other useful skills like learning how to be more assertive, breathing and stress relief, first aid training, and support with homework.

*“Activity’s to boost confidence more” [parent/family member]*

*“Give encouragement and praise to further develop her” [parent/family member]*

*“How to be assertive and building confidence breathing and stress relief” [parent/family member]*

* The final grouping (16%) was about broadening the horizons of young carers so they didn’t limit their aspirations, particularly if they had a small circle of friends and family. Suggestions included: visits to young carers group from adults with different jobs; young carer family days with activity information and awareness materials; and practical assistance to take them to open days for colleges and universities

*“For people in different jobs to come and have a chat with us police paramedic fire service people that run there [sic] own business” [WYCP]*

*“More access to local activities and more understanding of Young Carers issues and support to limit obstructions. Support with further education and colleges to have a young carers lead” [WYCP]*

* Other suggestions (12%) included having being a young carer recognised in forms or applications.

**Making a positive contribution to the community**

Of the 124 respondents, 38 (30.6%) answered this question providing 38 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Around a third (32%) suggested ways to increase community involvement of the young carer. This included arranging workshops or activity days with the community facilitated by adults, fundraising for a community charity, Duke of Edinburgh/Prince's Trust Award, cubs, or support to attend other community clubs/activities outside of young carers group.

*“Maybe allowing them to contribute towards voluntary sessions with various other disabled people within the community to see how much there help and presence can bring joy and relief to those around them as they do for the person they care for which may not always be apparent in their situation” [parent/family member]*

* Just over a fifth (21%) suggested supporting young carers into helping roles, such as young carer champions, young carer volunteers, and other opportunities to help those in a similar situation.

*“To give him the opportunity to help other carers and give something back” [parent/family member]*

*“Encouragement to assist others” [parent/family member]*

*“Offer volunteering opportunities” [parent/family member]*

* An area mentioned here and elsewhere was support for respite (18%). Mainly transport for young carers with disabled parent(s) that don’t drive, but also more young carer groups, especially in the summer holiday, which can be particularly isolating.

*“Access to family respite care services” [parent/family member]*

*“Better transport facilities or a scheme to help YC [young carers] get out into the community if they have disabled parents who can not transport them” [WYCP]*

* Some (13%) also believed that young carers should be recognised more.

*“More recognition in schools” [parent/family member]*

*“Be celebrated in a town wide day” [School]*

*“Promote Young Carers organisation” [School]*

**Achieving economic well-being and being prepared for adulthood**

Of the 124 respondents, 37 (29.8%) answered this question providing 38 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* The most common suggestion here was more support with a young person's career (42%). This included direct support with school, as well as access to job advice, career guidance, work experience, and the opportunity to see employers. But also support or short-term care packages to help young carers take-up these opportunities.

*“Extra support through exams” [parent/family member]*

*“YC open days at colleges, Work placements, Universities etc. with the provision of transport and expenses for YC to go and find out about other opportunities. A short term/interim care package for the dependant whilst the YC is away” [WYCP]*

* Some suggested extra support with money and benefits (13%); specifically training in benefits awareness, access (EHCP, DLA, PIP, Bursary and housing) and family budgeting.

*“Help with the changes and awareness of the benefits and changes that will be happening” [parent/family member]*

*“Support with budgeting and finance for older [young carers]” [parent/family member]*

*“Advice on jobs and how to get money and how to cope and deal with money” [WYCP]*

* Others suggested specific skills to prepare adulthood such as help preparing meals, and building independence by helping young carers get away from family for a bit (13%). One parent said their child (aged 12-17) was not being prepared for adulthood but didn’t suggest a solution.

*“Help with budgeting and preparing meals” [parent/family member]*

*“No he is not being prepared for adulthood” [parent/family member]*

* Support to transition from school to work and between different age young carer groups were suggested in a minority of cases (13%).

*“Transitional support from school to work” [parent/family member]*

*“If the Local Authority shared destination data for registered young carers it would be possible to act quickly to work with NEET young carers straight away” [WYCP]*

* The “other” category (18%) was mainly comments that young carers are already supported in this area via young carer group, or words to the effect of, I can't think of anything.

**Other**

Of the 124 respondents, 20 (16.1%) answered this question providing 22 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Most respondents used the “other” option to praise Warwickshire Young Carers for their support (27%), and to request more funding (27%). For example, more funding for growth of young carer groups (suggesting capacity was at its limit), for more regular groups, and groups closer to where they lived.

*“The young Carers has made a massive impact on us as a family. The support and unconditional friendship given to us has enriched our lives as a family (single parent) My daughter has changed and has grown in confidence and zested for her future” [parent/family member]*

*“Under the circumstances of budget and lack of time we believe the team at [young carer group location removed] do a brilliant job but obviously with a larger budget and more time I am sure the opportunities open to them would be very beneficial” [parent/family member]*

*“More funding for growth!” [WYCP]*

* Others suggested new activities that might help young carers; such as pottery or arts classes to take their mind off things, a "life skills" training arm, and encouraging young carer activities away from the home (14%)

*“pottery and art classes for creativity to take mind of the stresses and pressures of life” [parent/family member]*

* Transport was again mentioned as a barrier to attending young carer groups for some. (n=2)

*“Getting to and from young carers can be difficult have tried to do car share” [parent/family member]*

### Other comments

**Q4)** All were asked: Please feel free to provide any other comments on young carers support services in Warwickshire

Of the 124 respondents, 88 (71.0%) answered this question providing 91 thematic references. The chart below illustrates the proportion (%) of responses related to each theme.

* Most respondents (84%) used this “other” option to praise Warwickshire Young Carers for the support their family had received and the difference it had made.

*“This service can not be described, it has helped so many children who should be able to be children but cannot for whatever reason have a break from it all. They are struggling but amazing children and your help and support is crucial to their support system” [parent/family member]*

*“My child loves attending, the staff and volunteers are enthusiastic and I can’t say enough about the service provided” [parent/family member]*

*“Since being at young carers my son has improved his social skills, his ability to make friendship, it [is] really the only opportunity he gets to socialise. We would certainly struggle without their help and support” [parent/family member]*

* Some (n=7) made reference to a stretched system, raising issues like not being able to get a common assessment framework in place[[2]](#footnote-2), not being able to access young carers group, and that young carer groups were overrun.

*“Having contacted the young carers support services to get access for my daughter I’ve been promised phone calls etc. however after 2 years of trying have now given up. My daughters school has just recognised that there is a few Young carers at the school and has set their own group up. Which she has just started attending. I’ve found general access to the support severely lacking. As a result of this my daughter now feels isolated and suffers from depression and anxiety.” [parent/family member]*

*“Feels like system very busy and over run. I feel we are a bit too much hassle and not enough space for us - this may change as time goes by we don’t know” [parent/family member]*

* The “other” category (n=4) included specific suggestions such as:

*“Sport is neglected” [parent/family member]*

*“Think reworking of the rugby young carers group should be seriously looked into” [parent/family member]*

*“Fantastic support in younger groups - unfortunately my daughter doesn’t want to go to older group. Are alternatives possible?” [parent/family member]*

* Other comments highlighted how one-to-one support is perceived to be dependent on group attendance and a suggestion to widen the net of agencies referring in to young carer support.

*“A lot of the support appears to be geared around social activities. 1:1 support appears to stop if the young person does not attend the activities.” [Social worker]*

*“Linking in with other services for young people. Ensuring GPs, health visitors, family support workers, early help, children centre staff etc. know how to refer - not just concentrating on schools” [Other individual – role not specified]*

* Transport was raised again by two people.

*“Getting to from young carers can be issue has been reason hasn’t attended every time” [parent/family member]*

# Appendix 1 Methods detail

## Young Carer Focus Groups

Warwickshire Young Carers (WYC) run a series of young carers’ peer groups across the county with the objective of providing respite from caring responsibilities, and opportunities for social and educational activities.

The lead Commissioner and Public Health Registrar attended a total of 11 young carers groups across the county and facilitated a short focus group session (20-30 minutes) at each. This was either done as a full group session, or carried out with several small groups. A total of 275 young carers were invited to participate in the focus groups; however participation was voluntary and it is estimated by facilitators in attendance that approximately 80% of attendees contributed their views.

The purpose of the consultation was explained to all participants as follows:

*‘The reason we’re here is to gather your experiences of being a young carer; what has helped you; and any suggestions you have for better help in the future. The Council part fund some young carers support services across Warwickshire with public money so we have a responsibility to make sure we get the most benefit for each pound spent. Every few years we need to look at the support on offer and make sure we are providing the best we can. We have some ideas about what we think value for money looks like, but because we’re thinking about the best ways to support you, your views on what makes a good service are very important to us.’*

The facilitator asked the participants to try and answer the following three questions:

1. What is the main impact of caring on your life?
2. What support / services help with being a young carer?
3. Where are the gaps in services / support?

For all three questions, young carers were asked to consider their lives as a whole, rather than those activities / issues specific to the young carers support group.

Discussion was held in groups with participants facilitated by the service commissioner or a public health registrar to support understanding and aid consideration of each question.

Participants were asked to write their answers on post-it notes, which were collated on flipchart sheets during the discussion. Bedworth group, the last, used a different format. Previous answers to the questions were summarised on post-it notes and participants were asked whether they agreed with what others had put, and were encouraged to identify any new issues that others hadn’t mentioned. This was done to check whether we’d reached saturation in the issues that were being raised.

Participants were thanked for their time and invited to talk to the Commissioner / Public Health Registrar on a 1:1 basis if they desired.

### Analysis

Each post-it response was written verbatim into Microsoft Excel. For each question, responses were read initially to gain familiarity with the range of responses and initial themes were outlined and described. Each response was then re-read and coded into one or more common themes. Where there were significant “other” responses e.g. above 10%, they were reviewed to identify new themes. Initial coding was done by Rob Davies and reviewed by Laura Hyland. Any disagreements in interpretation were resolved through discussion. Longer responses, containing different issues, were categorised into more than one theme.

## Stakeholder Survey

An online survey was posted on the Ask Warwickshire Website for 2 weeks from Monday Feb 4th to Fri 15th 2019 inclusive and was promoted to:

* Parents of young carers - via Warwickshire Young Carers website, tweets and project workers texting parents
* Schools - via Warwickshire Young Carer School coordinator
* Warwickshire Young Carer staff - via CEO and Manager
* CAMHS practitioners - via CAMHS commissioning lead
* Adult social care staff - via commissioning lead to practitioner email groups
* 602 Warwickshire consultation and engagement subscribers using GovDelivery

The questions were worded slightly differently depending on whether the respondent stated they were taking part in the survey as a parent, school, or other organisation or individual. We asked three main questions

* **Q1)** Parents were asked: **What are the most important changes that young carer support services have made to your child and your family in the following areas**?
  + Participants were invited to respond under the 5 every child matters outcomes headings. Plan language examples of the types of things under each category were given.
    1. Enjoying good physical and mental health
    2. Feeling safe and protected from harm
    3. Enjoying life and achieving aspirations
    4. Making a positive contribution to the community
    5. Achieving economic well-being and being prepared for adulthood
* **Q1)** Organisations were asked: **What are the most important changes that young carer support services have had on your organisation’s ability to identify and support young carers, in the following areas?** (same every child matters headings given)
* **Q2)** All were asked: **What specific support do you think caused the positive changes you mentioned above? (Tick all that apply)**
  + Examples of support were drawn from previous literature about what had helped young carers manage their caring responsibilities.
* **Q3)** Parents were asked: **How could your child be better supported in the following areas?** Organisations were asked: **How could your organisation be better supported to help young carers across the following areas?**
* **Q4)** All were asked: **Please feel free to provide any other comments on young carers support services in Warwickshire**

### Analysis

Each response was available verbatim in Microsoft Excel. For each question, responses were read initially to gain familiarity with the range of responses and initial themes were outlined and described. Each response was then re-read and coded into one or more common themes. Where there were significant “other” responses e.g. above 10%, they were reviewed to identify new themes. Initial coding was done by Rob Davies and reviewed by Laura Hyland. Any disagreements in interpretation were resolved through discussion. Longer responses, containing different issues, were categorised into more than one theme.

# Appendix 2 Equality and Diversity Analysis

All 124 survey respondents were asked to answer seven equality and diversity questions at the end of the survey.

Of all respondents, the vast majority (80%) were aged 30 to 59.

Just over a third of respondents (34%) said they had a long standing illness or disability. This compares with 19% for the working age population (16-64 years) in the UK (2011 census).

Respondents were overwhelmingly of white ethnicity (93%), in line with wider Warwickshire population (88.5%, 2011 census, Warwickshire)

Women were over-represented, making up 82% of respondents, but 50.5% of Warwick population (2016 ONS mid-year estimate)

The vast majority (98%) of respondents said their gender identity matched their sex registered at birth.

Most respondents (51%) identified as Christian, compared to 64.5% in wider Warwickshire (2011 census). A further 41% identified as having no religion, much higher than 24.1% in the wider Warwickshire population.

The majority of respondents were heterosexual (89%) with 7% not answering this question or preferring not to say.

# Appendix 3 Young Adult Consultation



**Young Adult Carers Consultation**

**21st July 2018[[3]](#footnote-3) and YAC Group Consultation 6th September 2018[[4]](#footnote-4)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What kind of support, help, information and guidance would have been useful to you aged 14-16?** | * Advice to home-schooled YC’s about Post 16 choices * Different kinds of education; Sixth form, college & apprenticeships * Help to keep calm owing to the step up to A levels * How to apply for Apprenticeships * Help choosing a college * Instant support * More careers advice at 14+ * More communication with schools re: work etc. * Schools being aware of YC’s responsibilities * Help to find work experience * Revision groups for those who find it hard to or can’t revise at home * Help schools to identify YC’s as early as possible * Groups/forum/email to share information confidentially |
| **What kind of support, advice, guidance do you think Young Carers over 16 need?** | * Information should follow you all through your education * Sixth forms to do more to support YC’s * How to manage being a YC & still going to college, Uni, work etc. * Help with transport to look at colleges out of a YC’s immediate area * Have a group to go to after results day for help * Preparation for turning 18 & where you can go to for help as a YC * Help with applying to Uni, work etc. that fits around the care you provide * How to better balance being a YC & homework so we don’t fall behind * Advice about how to achieve the job you want * Help with knowing which subjects to study for particular courses/careers * Self-esteem, confidence sessions * Sex education & information * Group workshop on next steps after results day * Support when you don’t get the results you need * Talking through housing options & signposting to housing providers * Having someone to support with going out * Life Skills training – gaining independence * Emotional support networks for mental health, exam stress etc. * Signposting to mental health support services * Having quiet spots at group * Revision groups/study skills/exam prep * Peer mentoring * Info about apprenticeships * Info about colleges * Info about part time jobs * Volunteering opportunities |
| **What support would you like from Warwickshire Young Carers to help you to prepare for when you turn 18?** | * We want WYC to know when we are turning 18 & tell us what service is available to us after 18 * Help choosing a university * Still have one to ones with WYC staff * A group for YC’s over 18 * Support in how to talk to parents about my wishes * Careers help * Help with finding work * Help to prepare for independent living * Help with making the decision to move out & leave the cared for * Help to move out * Financial support * Budgeting & financial planning * Inform what adult life is like, preparing them for what they will face, e.g.: paying bills |
| **What kind of things would you like Warwickshire Young Carers to provide when you are over 18?** | * A possible older version of group that you could attend * Access to more careers support & advice * Activities & opportunities to chill out * Meet up at the pub * Go Karting * Track day & bikes * Knowing someone is there if you need them * Signposting * Support to understand adult responsibilities * Housing support * Support in dealing with changes * Advice if needed throughout the start of adulthood * More coffee chats/catch ups/one to ones * Help to support mental health, e.g.: confidence boosting classes & activities, counselling * Monthly or quarterly group * Cooking Skills * Country Walks * Kingsbury Outdoor Education Centre * German Market * Camping * Paintballing * Clubbing * Another festival! * Ghost hunting |
| **Once you are over 18, how much longer would you like Warwickshire Young Carers to support you?** | * Up to 25 unless we say otherwise * Up to 25 so that it gives us the support if we need it in the future * WYC should contact us quarterly up to 25 to ask how we are doing * Whenever it is needed, nobody knows fully * Maybe a separate number for them to call that directs them to the best place for support if too old * For as long as I need them * Forever! |
| **Any other comments?** | * Can we do stuff like this more often please? * Young Carers is like a second family * Brilliant activity * Nearly 10 years of my life with YC’s has given me so many opportunities. Thank you! * It was great to meet new people & see old faces that I haven’t seen in ages! |

1. https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/manchester/fsd/files/young\_carers\_multidimensional\_assessment\_caring\_activities.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. a national, standard approach to assessing any additional/unmet needs a child or young person may have and for deciding how any such needs can be identified and should be met effectively [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Outdoor festival style event to consult 18-25s [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Follow up consultation with n=28 young carers [↑](#footnote-ref-4)