



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01470

Name of petitioner

Lauren King MSYP on behalf of Scottish Youth Parliament

Petition title

Young Carer's Grant

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to establish a Young Carer's Grant for carers in full-time education or under the age of 18.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

This petition originally emerged as a Members Motion presented by a group of Edinburgh MSYPs (Sara Ansari, Jahura Hussain and Kelley Temple) at a National Sitting of the Scottish Youth Parliament in October 2011. The idea, based on consultation they had carried out with young carers, received extremely strong support from their fellow MSYPs, with 85% voting in favour of the motion:

“Young carers under the age of 18 should be entitled to receive the unpaid carers allowance (or equivalent) and student carers should be entitled to receive a carers grant (or equivalent) funded by the Scottish Government.”

Ensuring support for young carers has been an important issue for young people and the Scottish Youth Parliament for a number of years. As part of the Scottish Youth Parliament's Youth Manifesto consultation in 2011, the manifesto, 'Change the Picture' (<http://www.syp.org.uk/our-manifesto-W21page-82-/>), was shaped by 42,804 responses from young people - the largest youth consultation of its type in Scotland. 88% of respondents agreed with the statement ***“Young carers in Scotland should be shown that they are appreciated members of society and should be offered more support inside and outside of education. The Scottish Government should produce a Young Carers Strategy to help improve the lives of young people who are young carers for the benefit of every single young person who cares in Scotland”***, with just 6% disagreeing. Based on this strong support, the statement is included in the manifesto, which shapes the basis of the SYP's policy and campaigning work for the 2011-16 Parliamentary term. We welcomed the publication of a stand-alone young carers strategy, 'Getting It Right For Young Carers', towards the end of the youth manifesto consultation in July 2010. Young carers are well-represented within the Scottish Youth Parliament's membership, with 12% of our 2011-2013 cohort of MSYPs indicating that another person relies on them for day to day care and attention (<http://bit.ly/WkXNxU>).

The lead petitioner, Lauren King, is heavily involved in a Young Carers Forum in Motherwell, which was established in response to concerns from young carers in her local area at a lack of channels to share issues of mutual concern and to have their

voices heard.

At the October 2012 SYP National Sitting, Lauren presented the issue as an option for a Public Petition. From a competitive and diverse shortlist of issues that are of importance to young people, MSYPs voted for the principle of a Young Carer's Grant to be presented to the Public Petitions Committee as a priority for positive change for young people.

Based on this strong support, the Scottish Youth Parliament is submitting this petition as the next stage in seeking to secure this important provision.

Petition background information

A Young Carer is a child or young person who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.

Young and student carers are a largely invisible group who provide crucial emotional and physical support and care and are unremunerated for it. Young carers, young adult carers and students face a multitude of problems including serious barriers to their education, social inclusion, health problems and often live in extreme poverty.

When young carers go to college or university they are allowed to access a student bursary or loan, but consequently lose their carers allowance. The maximum level of financial support a Scottish Domiciled Student can access is less than someone on benefits and below the relative poverty line. Therefore young students with caring responsibilities do not have access to enough financial support to study and perform their caring responsibilities. This leads to increased drop out, mental health illness and lower academic achievement.

Why Young Carers Need Financial Support

- Being a young or student carer can have a negative impact on their life or student experience and leave the young person feeling isolated from others.
- Many carers give up an income, future employment prospects, and pension rights to become a carer.
- Many carers also work outside their home and try to juggle jobs with their responsibilities as carers.

Carers save the Scottish economy £10.3 billion a year - the cost of providing NHS services in Scotland.

In the Young Carers Forum that Lauren is involved with, a recurring issue that emerged from their engagement and consultation was always that young carers had to continuously miss school - not because they wanted to but because of their caring role. Many of the young carers lived in poverty or had a low income due to having only one or no parents working. Therefore, they depended on their education maintenance allowance to help them and their family pay for bills and get by but, due to the poor attendance, many of the young carers' EMA would be cut off or stopped for a period of time. This could leave a young carer feeling isolated as, in many cases after 16, they no longer belong to a support project so have no where to turn for help.

It is estimated that there are around 100,000 young carers in Scotland, around 10% of the school-age population (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Unpaid-Carers>). The Scottish Government's 2010-2015 Young Carers Strategy, 'Getting It Right for Young Carers', highlighted research that showed that the majority of young carers experience economic deprivation. This partly relates to the increased probability that they live with a disabled adult who is less likely to be working and more likely to be relying on benefits. However, the research importantly recognises that young carers experience financial hardship in their own right. Case studies in the strategy highlighted examples of young carers who had to leave school to care for a

parent but were unable to claim Carer's Allowance due to being under 18 (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/319441/0102105.pdf>). For those who remain in full-time education, and similarly are not entitled to Carer's Allowance, their caring responsibilities can prevent them from working part-time to supplement any income from EMA, student loans and bursaries - in addition to increasing their chances of dropping out or their education suffering as a result of working to make ends meet on top of caring.

Carer's Allowance (<https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/overview>), which along with other welfare and benefits is reserved to the UK Parliament, is not an option for many young carers. Currently, to be able to apply to receive it, a carer needs to be spending at least 35 hours a week caring for someone who is ill or disabled and receives Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance. They can't get Carer's Allowance if they're under 16, in full-time education, or earning more than £100 a week. Whilst some young carers who are ineligible may qualify for Carer's Credit (<https://www.gov.uk/carers-credit/overview>), as a National Insurance credit, this will not make a difference to their ongoing costs of living and is of limited use in this context.

The SYP is not prescriptive about how a Young Carer's Grant might be delivered, and whilst we recognise that welfare and benefits are reserved issues, we feel there is plenty of scope within the Scottish Parliament's devolved powers, including within education and student funding, and funding for national carer's organisations, to deliver much-needed financial support to Scotland's young carers.

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/YoungCarers>

Related information for petition

Scottish Youth Parliament 'Change the Picture' Youth Manifesto - <http://www.syp.org.uk/our-manifesto-W21page-82/>

Scottish Youth Parliament 2011 Member Census - <http://www.syp.org.uk/img/Scottish%20Youth%20Parliament%202011%20Member%20Census.pdf>

Carer's Allowance Overview - <https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/overview>

Getting it Right for Young Carers – The Young Carers Strategy for Scotland 2010 – 2015 - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/319441/0102105.pdf>

Scottish Government Unpaid Carers Information - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Unpaid-Carers>

Carers Scotland - <http://www.carersuk.org/scotland>

Young Carers Net - <http://www.youngcarers.net/>

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

NO

How many signatures have you collected so far?

150

| Closing date for collecting signatures online |
|--|
| N/A |

| Comments to stimulate online discussion |
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