



## **PE1470/D**

Response to Public Petition PE1470 from The Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance:

*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.*

The Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance is recognised by Scottish Government as one of the seven national carer organisations, and is the organisation that they approach on issues which concern young carers.

Current membership of the Alliance comprises 48 organisations across Scotland. Survey work has shown that at least 1 in 10 children and young people have a caring role, indicating that there are over 100,000 young carers in Scotland (Getting It Right for Young Carers, The Young Carers Strategy for Scotland, Scottish Government, 2010). The services within the Alliance currently provide support to around 4,000 young carers.

I have collated a response to the petition on behalf of the Alliance to present the views of member organisations. The following services provided information:

- Fife Young Carers
- Edinburgh Young Carers
- PKAVS Perth and Kinross Young Carers Service
- The Princess Royal Trust Dumfries and Galloway Young Carers Service
- Orkney Young Carers Service
- The Princess Royal Trust Greater Pollok Young Carers Service
- VSA Aberdeen Young Carers Service

Services were asked whether they were aware of issues around young carers they supported accessing the current EMA, and what their views were on a potential Young Carers Grant being available.

Response:

All respondents agreed that young carers would have issues in being paid EMA, as it depended on 100% attendance at school.

Out of 7 responses, 3 services said that the young carers currently being supported by their service were having issues.

There may have been underlying reasons for this, and information revealed:

- One service was supporting mainly younger young carers, who were not eligible for EMA. However, they said that school attendance for these young carers was not good, and had they been of age, this would certainly be an issue. In a very rural area, where replacement care could not get to the home, young carers would choose to stay at home to look after their parent
- One service said that they didn't have many young carers who had stayed on at school beyond 16
- One service said that as EMA was an important component of the family budget in their area, it was their experience that parents actively encouraged their children to attend. It was their experience that attendance at school was improved and that more young carers were staying on at school.
- One service said that they were aware of a young carer having to drop out of a college course as they were having financial problems, but couldn't be certain that was about EMA. However, it did indicate the importance of being financially solvent.
- One service said that it was their policy to liaise with the schools and that schools understood the issues around non-attendance for young carers.

Other issues connected with the EMA were about it being means tested, which meant that perhaps where 2 parents were working, but the young carer's role was as carer of a sibling, they were missing out on an allowance. Young carers in this situation could benefit from a young carers grant.

Transport issues were also mentioned. In one rural area, transport was provided for those outwith a 3-mile radius, but for those living within this, they had to pay their own transport costs, and often didn't have the luxury of a parent being able to drive them to school. A young carers grant could acknowledge additional costs attributed to the caring role.

All respondents were in favour of the petition in theory. People made the following comments:

- It might not encourage young carers to stay on at school (this was from a group of young carers).
- There might be difficulties in setting criteria for those who would be entitled to the grant
- It should depend on the level of the caring role (from another group of young carers)
- Good practice should be developed where young carers are identified in school and the grant would be part of the individual's support plan.
- Statutory providers would have to accept that it needn't always be another statutory service who defines the young person as a young carer.

- A grant might help young carers to be more aware and self-identify, where this is not always currently the case – this in turn might encourage staff at school or college to be more supportive.

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