



PE1470/H

Public Petition PE1470 - Young Carer's Grant

Response from Aberdeenshire

Questions for local authorities—

- What are your views / experience on the issues raised in the petition?

The issues raised in the petition seem to be current and relevant to some degree within Aberdeenshire. Targetted support for Young Carers in Aberdeenshire is provided both by Aberdeenshire Council and by CAIR (commissioned by the Council).

Identified Young Carers across Aberdeenshire generally report good levels of support. This statement is based on evidence collected and shared by CAIR Scotland colleagues.

We acknowledge that there will always be an issue with providing appropriate support for unidentified Young Carers, and have work planned for future months which we anticipate will impact positively on the identification process.

In order to improve the service provision for Young Carers in Aberdeenshire, a funding bid was created and has been granted, to allow for focussed work in this area.

It is hoped that a new Project Officer will be in post by August 2013 (recruitment is currently at the very early stages). This person will be tasked with implementing a wide reaching project designed to make schools more carer aware. Their work will lead to earlier and more effective carer identification and better support provision and access thereafter. The profile of Young Carers will be raised - significantly - across the service, and links will be enhanced with other agencies and service providers. It is anticipated that Young Carers will feel safer and will experience improved support.

It is felt that we should be supportive of this petition for the following reasons:

- We should promote, support and maintain Young Carers ability to access education.
- Evidence exists that makes clear that some Young Carers experience economic deprivation as a result of their caring responsibilities and circumstances.
- EMA has to stop if the Young Carer does not attend school at all, and can be difficult to access if attendance patterns fluctuate.
- Attendance can be poor due to caring responsibilities.
- This proposal links to the National Equally Well work stream.

There can be an issue with regards to the arrangement of payment of EMA for Young Carers. The work that will be undertaken by the aforementioned Project Officer will provide worked through examples of alternative and flexible Education packages which will better meet the needs of Young Carers. This will give Education staff a quality

starting point when facilitating individualised arrangements. Guidance given will remind and reassure staff that amendments to EMA can be made to allow Young Carers to access this (this practice is already accepted within Aberdeenshire's Education Service). When patterns of attendance are sporadic - through no fault of the Young Carer - this can be problematic and so perhaps a specific Young Carer's Grant may be more appropriate.

For Young Carers who cease to attend school, EMA is not accessible. For unidentified Young Carers who do not wish to share their status, EMA is more often than not inaccessible. EMA is not payable to those under the age of 16. These Young Carers may experience significant financial hardship, and would benefit from eligibility to support.

- How well do the policies aimed at supporting the needs of Young Carers work in practice?

All young people (including Young Carers) who require additional support in any form will have their needs assessed through the Integrated Assessment Framework (IAF) processes in Aberdeenshire. Identified Young Carers will find that this process works effectively. Unidentified Young Carers may be within the IAF (or other support and monitoring systems) for other reasons, e.g. sporadic attendance, child protection issues etc.

Work will be done to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the challenges faced by Young Carers to allow supports to be designed and implemented appropriately.

It is acknowledged that some Young Carers are not assessed using the Young Carers assessment. However, there is an expectation that enough information can be gathered from the IAF/Multi-Agency Action Planning process to inform the supports needed for any young person within that process, or to identify if a service requires to undertake further assessment. For some young people, the MAAP Meeting will have sufficient information to provide robust and appropriate support, whilst for others the 'caring needs' may not have been identified or be identifiable or be 'screened' by other presenting concerns for the young person. Aberdeenshire is committed to developing effective practices to identify Young Carers, assess their needs, and provide support to enable them to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included, via IAF processes. For those whose primary needs arise from being Young Carers, referral to CAIR can be made.

CAIR Scotland provide specialist support to Young Carers across Aberdeenshire. They report that schools facilitate easy access to Young Carers, and arrange meetings at times as and when requested or required. These arrangements are designed (where possible) around the Young Carer. Young people also have access to support through the Children's Rights Officers, although no information relating to how frequently this is accessed has been requested. Other sources of support in school include pastoral care staff, school counsellors, school nurses and many others. Where appropriate, Young Carers may have a Social Worker as their Lead Professional, when the assessment indicates this is the most appropriate Service to take on the role.

Overall, it is felt by our Multi-Agency Strategic Planning group for Young Carers that support in Aberdeenshire is good for identified Carers. Work planned for coming months aims to improve the service provision for all Young Carers.