

PE1470/O

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF PE1470

Response from East Dunbartonshire Council

Local authorities—

- What are your views / experience on the issues raised in the petition?
- How well do the policies aimed at supporting the needs of young carers work in practice?

East Dunbartonshire Council recognises the veracity of many of the issues raised by this petition. Concerns such as identification, social exclusion and the need for inter-agency collaboration are recognised as potential barriers for all with additional support needs. This council has recognised that more needs to be done to secure positive outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in line with GIRFEC and with GIRFEYC.

In accordance with the issues raised in the petition, this response will focus on key area 9 of Getting It Right for Every Young Carer: **We will encourage and promote carer-friendly employment practices**

Within East Dunbartonshire Council, progress has been made in recent years in improving the outcomes for vulnerable young people, including young carers. Issues such as identification and sharing information between agencies are improving, supported by key strategies such as **Opportunities for All** and key documentation such as the **EDC Post-16 Transitions Framework**. This documentation gives clear guidance to schools and partners and makes reference to the establishment of inter-agency **Post-16 Transition Planning Groups** in every EDC school which meet at agreed times to discuss pathways for vulnerable young people, including young carers.

The notion of young carers being an 'invisible group' facing 'exclusion from society' is extremely pertinent. With the more intensive support now provided by **Skills Development Scotland** for pupils identified on their Risk Matrix, improvements are anticipated in outcomes for all vulnerable young people. However, a number of issues have emerged recently: the **SDS Risk Matrix** rarely correlates with education's **SEEMIS Risk Matrix**; the accuracy of data is unclear; and Careers Advisors may not be aware which issues are giving rise to a young person's additional support need. Hopefully this will be resolved with the new Data Hub as information should be continuously lifted from SEEMIS, however, business rules have not yet been established. More transparency in how SDS identify need and more recognition nationally of local benchmarking tools to provide a service dependent on real facts would be greatly welcomed.

Recording also presupposes effective identification and schools welcome the

increased focus on supporting young carers, now with greater knowledge and vigilance, through, for example, visits to schools by the Young Carers Network. These have resulted in increased access to support and counselling on a more regular basis. There is still scope to provide clearer guidance on identification within current Pupil Support Group/Guidance/Key Adult structures. There is also scope for improvement in supporting young carers, in common with supporting other young people with additional support needs and we will take this forward at our Supporting Learners Forums next session. In addition, our ASN Team recently debated the guidance provided in the Additional Support for Learning and Young Carers Annual Report and have agreed to make contact with the other local authorities highlighted as demonstrating good practice in addressing the additional support needs of young carers.

In terms of 'ensuring the right financial support to help young people to participate in the option which is right for them' as one of the three critical elements of 16+ Learning Choices, work has been done in schools to promote the existence of EMA and to simplify access towards it. In common with other local authorities, EDC does not have sufficient detailed knowledge of withdrawal of school-administered EMA for non-attendance due to young carers fulfilling caring responsibilities. EMA has not, however, been withdrawn on the grounds of non-attendance for any young person on an Activity Agreement. We will ensure that withdrawal of EMA on the grounds of attendance is scrutinised by Post-16 Transition Planning Groups in the future and if necessary make reparations.

In terms of the appropriateness of issuing grants to young carers, we feel that, in common with other additional support needs, early identification, support and outcome-focused interventions are important, so that young people's access to education is maximized. We strongly agree that by securing these targets, young carers' experiences and life-chances will be strengthened. There is not currently an appetite to support one-off payments to young carers as this is not seen as the best method to securing positive outcomes. Rather we will work to ensure that the aspirations documented in GIRFEYC are more fully realised.

In summary, there is a readiness and willingness from education staff and SDS to support young carers, but adequate structures to identify, record and communicate are not yet fully developed. Providing a grant directly to young carers would not be a solution, rather all agencies need to continue to collaborate and remain focused on improving outcomes.