



Response From
Perth & Kinross Council
Education and Children's Services

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION OF PE1470
What are your views on what the petition seeks?

Local authorities—

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

The issues raised within the petition are pertinent to discussion already held between Perth and Kinross Council, partner agencies and Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Services Young Carers Group (PKAVS). Locally, PKAVS Young Carers Project provides a range of prioritised support for local Young Carers, from individual intensive support to group support based on an individual needs assessment.

The Perth and Kinross Joint Strategy for Young Carers 2011 – 2014 was developed by a multi- agency team in partnership with PKAVS to support the needs of young carers within Perth and Kinross. This strategy was developed as a result of the Scottish Government's publication of 'Getting It Right for Young Carers – The Young Carers Strategy for Scotland 2010-2015' alongside the National Strategy for adult carers. An easy read summary strategy was also produced in consultation with young carers and distributed to schools.

Perth and Kinross Council and their partner agencies have a responsibility to support young carers. By supporting them they can help to improve their emotional and physical well-being and their ability to combine caring responsibilities with education, social opportunities and to ensure a life outside caring so they can continue to care as they wish.

It is acknowledged that the number of young carers recorded in schools greatly underestimates the true figure. It is estimated that 27% of all young carers in secondary school and 13% in primary school experienced some educational problems.

The Young Carers' strategy continues to be actively supported and monitored by PKAVS, Education, Social Work, NHS, Adult carers and voluntary agencies. The purpose of the Perth & Kinross Young Carer's strategy is to:

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- Continue the development and operation of services for young carers, so that their needs and demands can be met more effectively;
- Set objectives and show how the progress will be monitored and evaluated;
- Identify actions which will support the development of more seamless links between the various services in order to provide more effective support to young carers, in particular the PKAVS Young Carers Project;
- Raise awareness for young people of what the role of a young carer is so they can recognise if they are undertaking this role;
- Raise awareness about the needs of young carers across agencies; and
- Help signpost young carers to relevant support, including dedicated young carer services.

Perth and Kinross Council, in conjunction with partner agencies, is continuing to raise awareness across all agencies about Young Carers, the support that they may require in school, or at home and opportunities for professionals to identify and meet their specific needs.

Currently demand outstrips supply in relation to Young Carer Services, with the number of young carers increasing year on year, and a waiting list now in place. This increase in demand reflects increased awareness of the young carer role, but we are also aware that there is likely to still be unmet need within Perth & Kinross if national estimated figures are applied.

We are also aware that the age at which a child can be identified as a young carer appears to be getting younger with a recent referral being for a four year old. This gives added priority to ensuring that all services are aware of Young Carers' needs.

Access to education can be a crucial lifeline for young carers, and many cite their time at school as a chance to have a break from their caring duties, and to feel "normal".

Perth & Kinross Council is supportive of the petition for Young Carers under 18 to receive a paid carer's allowance (or equivalent) and student carers should be entitled to receive a carers grant (or equivalent) funded by the Scottish Government. During consultation events held locally, many young carers have raised financial disadvantage experienced by them, from limiting their travel options to curtailing food choices.

The proposal that Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) could be broadened to specifically include Young Carers has been considered. However, as it is dependent on 100% attendance at school this may not match the needs of the young carers, who can often be required to undertake their caring role in place of going to school. EMA is also only available to young carers over 16 years old.

Another significant issue with regard to EMA is that it is obviously **not** available to young carers over 16 years who have left school.

- **How well do the policies aimed at supporting the needs of young carers work in practice?**

In line with the principles of GIRFEC every child is entitled to the support they need when they need it, and young carers are included in this approach. However, most young carers do not access support services through social work and it tends to be through education or health that most Young Carers are identified. This emphasises the need to ensure that all professionals are able to identify young people undertaking caring roles, and to support the young person as required to access support and inform services.

Work continues locally to raise awareness of young carers throughout education, social work and universal health services such as GPs.

The full impact of Welfare Reform changes is not yet evident locally, but it is envisaged that this will impact on Young Carers. This will be monitored as part of the regular multi agency working group meetings.

Although it is unclear from the petition how a young carers' grant would be implemented and at what age Young Carers would become entitled to such a grant, it would be a significant support in theory to offer a young carer. In conclusion Perth and Kinross Council would support the ethos of this petition whilst acknowledging the need for clearer implementation and costing plans to be undertaken.

C Mackie

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