

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

Response to the “‘Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014’ – 10 years on” Call for Evidence

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I am responding as: an academic

Organisation: Academic, part of the Centre for Care

Anonymised: no

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6. What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 provide a framework that is useful to young carers and their family, creating clear definitions for young carers and their entitlement to recognition. Young carers and their families are found to be informed about their particular needs and some are aware of the possibility of support. We know from research conducted in 2016 by the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England that just 20% of young carers might be identified by the local authority with calculations based on a low estimate of the young carer population (1), although data available on this is poor. Administrative data should be available to assess the implementation of these duties but is not routinely collated and monitored. Where young carers, disabled children and their parents are familiar with local authority or third sector young carers services, they often value their expertise and resources - but more needs to be done to increase identification and awareness of support available.

Some families with more than one child that is a young carer can feel restricted by the targeting of support from age 5 upwards, not recognising especially young children and their role in care.

The limitations and weaknesses of the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 have a negative impact on young carers, young adult carers and their families. The legislation is weak in terms of a family's eligibility for support once a young carer has been identified and needs-assessed. It also lacks measures that monitor the implementation of the legislation and the fulfilment of duties on local authorities to identify and assess the needs of young carers.

References

- (1) The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England. (2016). *Young Carers: The support provided to Young Carers in England*. London: The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.

7. What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

My research has found that the processes of identification appear to have driven greater activity to raise awareness of young carers. This is also likely to be the result of a stronger network of third sector young carers services, with limited financial support from local authorities.

Once families become aware of the use of the young carer label to identify their child, they can have a mixed experience. They may receive beneficial interventions from professionals and be offered additional opportunities for the child identified as a young carer, such as one-to-one support and trips with other young carers. At the same time they are unlikely to receive offers of services that change care arrangements. Families are typically ineligible for adult social care services and priced out of private services. The young carer and their family then live with the difficulties of knowing that their child is labelled as different and disadvantaged but without the means to address it (2). The imbalance between the obligation to identify young carers and the weaker powers to offer services can stigmatise families whilst continuing their exclusion from social care services that could alter, reduce or stop the child's role in care. My research has found that disabled parents and disabled siblings of young carers experience stress and stigma because of this predicament. Young carers and young adult carers may also be put off from accessing support because of the concern that the most impactful forms of support are withheld and identification opens few doors.

References

- (2) Alexander, C. (2021). Affects of policy design: The case of young carers in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. *Social Policy & Administration*, 55(5), 968-980. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12692>

8. Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had an impact on the early identification of young carers:

No it has not made a difference/It has made little difference/Neutral / It has made some difference/It has made a big difference - *leave multiple choice blank if possible or select 'it has made some difference'*

I wish to draw the APPG's attention to upcoming research that will provide new insights into identification processes and how it can be improved. I will be working with a group of young carers and young adult carers that will be developing their own research interests in this area. The group will be supported to contribute through participatory research and will improve our understanding of the processes that support children and young people to identify themselves as carers. They will conduct original research on how growing up as a young carer affects the way that children view support services.

The project will explore:

- factors which help to connect young carers and young adult carers with services.
- factors that increase the isolation and present barriers to support amongst young carers and young adult carers.

- the potential to increase identification of young adult carers, strengthen the benefits of this process and reduce any negative impacts or stigma.

During 2024 the young adult carer participatory research group could be available for discussion with the APPG about their lived experiences and their views on improving identification processes, if this would be helpful to the APPG's upcoming work (3).

References

- (3) More information about the Centre for Care research group on 'Care trajectories and constraints':

<https://centreforcure.ac.uk/research-groups/care-trajectories-and-constraints/>

18. What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

The Children and Families Act 2024 and the Care Act 2014 do not address the urgent need for social care services to be provided on a greater scale to adults with care and support needs, including those assessed as having lower levels of needs. Data shows an increasing gap between the number of people requesting support from adult social care and the number actually receiving any support (1). It is estimated that nearly half a million adults are waiting for care or for an assessment (2).

This could have a positive impact on large numbers of young carers and young adult carers by creating choice about whether they could reduce or stop their caring role. We should encourage and respond to the reasonable expectations from young carers, young adult carers and their families that where children and young people have become involved in care, families should be able to draw on public services to reduce, mitigate and prevent unpaid care work by children and young people.

The lack of duties and powers for NHS organisations to contribute to a whole family approach severely limits the extent to which young carers and young adult carers are identified, assessed and offered services that reduce or improve their involvement in care.

References

- (1) The King's Fund social care 360 - access
<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/social-care-360>
 (2) ADASS Autumn Survey 2024
<https://www.adass.org.uk/adass-autumn-survey-part-2-final-report-press-release>

19. Any other comments?

Many young carers and their families struggle with poverty because of low levels of welfare payments and high housing costs. For example, my research found that low levels of Universal Credit payments resulted in impoverished conditions and poor housing for some families with young carers. In another case, limited availability of housing and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) rules for those without citizenship status resulted in young carers living in poor and insecure housing (4). The combined impact of poverty and punitive 'hostile

environment' policies on families that have migrated to the UK, intensify and worsen the circumstances for children and young people involved in providing care. This is an especially disadvantaged group in need of support.

References

- (4) Alexander, C. (2021). Unequal Conditions of Care and the Implications for Social Policies on Young Carers. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 38(5), 505-518.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-021-00781-w>