

Response from the National Carer Organisations to “Out of School Care in Scotland – a draft framework for consultation”

About the National Carer Organisations

The National Carer Organisations are brought together by a shared vision that all Scotland’s unpaid carers will be valued, included and supported as equal partners in the provision of care and will be able to enjoy a life outside of caring. They are Carers Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, Minority Ethnic Carers of Older People Project (MECOPP), Carers Trust Scotland, the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance, Crossroads Caring Scotland, and Shared Care Scotland.

Questions

- 1. What range of services are needed: regulated out of school care, childminders, activity-based clubs and programmes such as sports clubs, creative arts clubs, outdoor activities, other types of activities? Can you tell us why these services are important?**

All of the services mentioned in question one provide social communication which is an important life-skill for all young people, including young carers, and they should be encouraged to develop these skills alongside exercise, creativity, responsibility and teamwork.

There must be a range of services available for all young people including young carers that meets their unique and individual needs. 95% of young carers surveyed at the Scottish Young Carers Festival in 2019 said that services and activities that they can take part in are important to them. However, due to the nature of caring many young carers cannot attend out of school care activities as these mainly take place immediate prior or after school hours. Most young carers have caring responsibilities to undertake immediately before and after school – such as, but not limited to, preparing meals, administering medication and running errands for their cared for person. This can result in them being unable to participate in many out of school care opportunities meaning that they are often isolated from their peers, have limited ability to participate in activities. In turn this can impact on their ability to build up strong social connections and have a fulfilled life alongside their caring roles.

When asked at the Scottish Young Carers Festival in summer 2019 about the main issues impacting young carers today, a young person stated:

“Being isolated for not being able to take part in things outside school”.

It is also important that there are a range of services available that are suitable for disabled children and young people, not just during term time but during holiday periods too. Access to these services is critical to families with disabled children and young people, not just in terms of social inclusion but in terms of family stability, continuity for the young person, and in supporting parent carers to sustain employment and family stability too.

Rather than incorporate specifics on the provision to disabled children, young people and their families throughout this consultation we instead refer to the Holiday Activity Provision Research project undertaken by Shared Care Scotland which provides more information and evidence across the subjects covered by this consultation and is being submitted as a response under separate cover.

2. What can we do to support community based approaches to delivering out of school care?

Engage with carer and young carer organisations so that they can provide expertise and bespoke services and activities for carers. This requires adequate funding to support ‘out of school care’ provision. Localities should provide specific and adequate funding to carer and young carer organisations to deliver ‘out of school care’ services and activities for young carers and young adult carers. In a recent summer survey carried out by Carers Trust Scotland one young carer said that they want *“more choices, more funding for services, able to have family time and more help at school”*.

3. What name should we use for the range of out of school services and activities? Is there a better term than ‘Out of School Care’?

A generic term that truly represents the plethora of activities and services would be better. At the Scottish Young Carers Festival in 2019, a recurring theme in our consultation area was that many young carers struggle to find adequate support in school, many reporting having negative experiences in school. Phrases such as “Out of School Care” can be controversial for some young carers due to their own personal experiences in school and this wording may reinforce their association of such activities and services to their school experience.

We further believe that when labelling individual activities or services, it is best to keep these as simple as possible and call them for what they are, such as activity clubs, homework classes, supported study sessions, sports clubs, creative arts clubs etc.

4. Do you agree with our 3 key aims for a future out of school care framework?

We agree in principle. However, this requires significant funding and resources for these aims to become a reality. It is also important that there is a variety of activities and services available for children and young people across Scotland, regardless of locality. Additionally, the needs of young carers and disabled children and young people must be considered so that they have the same opportunity as their peers to benefit from activities and services and have more chances to access life enhancing experiences.

5. How can we help to ensure that all families have access to an out of school care place for their child/ren if they want it?

It is essential that affordable and accessible services, activities and transport be provided, and we would recommend that no financial penalties are incurred as a consequence of non-attendance due to caring responsibilities. Recognising the complexities and diversity of caring, it is essential that the needs of young carers are recorded, including through the Young Carer Statement – part of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 – and identified activities and services that would help to meet their personal outcomes are put in place. This may require additional support for the cared-for person in order for the young carer to have a fairer chance to participate in such activities and services.

It is also important to be mindful of ethnic groups and cultural practices, as some young people, including young carers, may require same sex 'Out of School Care' provision to ensure they will be able to engage. Additionally some young carers may have a disability or additional support for learning need themselves and families may require extra support to ensure these children and young people are able to benefit from 'Out of School Care' provision and take forward a place.

6. What do children and young people want from out of school care services and does this differ depending on age?

Flexibility in the delivery of 'Out of School Care' is paramount to young carers, this could be a variety of activities and services offered at different times and locations, so that they are able to participate and benefit. It is important that young carers are given a fair opportunity to access services that meets their needs and aspirations. Age appropriate services and activities, recognising the unique and individual journeys of children and young people on their pathway to adulthood is essential, ensuring that they are able to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors in society. Safe spaces where young carers feel confident and able to actively engage and socialise is important. Young carers' services often report that young carers ask for support with life skills, cooking healthy meals, budgeting, confidence building, benefits advice, employment skills, physical activities, supported study and homework clubs.

7. What different activities or provision might secondary school aged children want?

Many young carers and young adult carers take on duties often considered as adult responsibilities at a younger age than their peers, such as - but not limited to - administering medication to their cared for person, managing the household budget and preparing family meals. Secondary school age young carers and young adult carers repeatedly ask for provision to support their life skills, cooking healthy meals, benefit advice, budgeting, employability skills – (such as CV building and job interview skills), supported study and further and higher education support. It is important that young carers and young adult carers have choice and their aspirations and views are taken account on what activities and services are available to them:

“As a young carer I have a lot of adult responsibilities and feel I need to be heard” (Young carer, Scottish Young Carers Festival 2019).

For young people who have a Young Carer Statement, any identified activities and services that would help to meet the young persons recorded personal outcomes must be put in place if the young person’s meets local eligibility criteria.

8. How can we make sure out of school care is an affordable option for more families? (e.g. subsidised provision, remove barriers in accessing benefits, help with the upfront costs)

Young carers make an immense contribution to their families, communities and to Scotland. It is vital that we recognise this and act to ensure they have equal access to support, services and activities that can benefit them to live their life alongside their caring roles. It is important that young carers and their families have a fairer and more equal opportunity to access ‘Out of School Care’ provision. Most young carers are living in households which are in receipt of a form of social security benefits. Furthermore, more young carers are living in the most deprived areas in Scotland on the SIMD scale than the least deprived areas.

Additionally, “28% of younger carers in the most deprived areas care for 35 or more hours each week; this compares with only 17% of carers in the least deprived areas¹”. Indicating that young carers from the most deprived areas will have less time, more caring responsibilities and may be less likely to access ‘Out of School Care’ services or activities. This may also be due to financial constraints and less disposable income being available in the household to pay for activities and services.

The National Carer Organisations recommend that identified young carers are exempt from paying or at minimum offered concessionary costs for accessing services and activities. If a young carer or young adult carer is caring for someone in receipt of/or eligible to a disability benefit, then we believe they should be exempt from being charged for the services and activities that they access. Furthermore, flexibility is essential and due to the complexities of caring, young carers and their families should not be penalised and charged if

¹ Scotland's Carers, 2015, Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-carers/pages/2/>

they register for a service or activity that they were unable to attend due to their caring responsibilities taking priority. It is equally important to remove barriers and provide either grants, reduced fees or exemptions for young carers who take part in activities and services that require families to purchase materials or equipment – such as sports/club kits, art materials or purchasing/hiring musical instruments etc.

Some young adult carers aged 16-18 years old may be eligible to apply for the Scottish Government's new Young Carer Grant, which is proposed that recipients of this grant from 2020/2021, following piloting, will be able to receive free bus travel. However, this is only available to those young carers aged 16-18 years old that meet all of the eligibility criteria. Therefore, there is no such provision of free transport for young carers under 16 years old as a national approach. The National Carer Organisations would like free transport opened to all carers and for young carers, and this could be for any who have a Young Carers Statement. At a minimum we recommend that transport is provided, reimbursed or transport grants be put in place for young carers to give them more opportunity to benefit from services and activities. One young carer at the Scottish Young Carers Festival 2019 said one barrier for them was *"not being able to afford the bus for a certain distance"*.

It is important to note that young carers who live in a rural area may have additional barriers to accessing 'Out of School Care', not only the additional cost of transport but the flexibility of public transport and travel time away from their cared for person to be able access services. We would recommend that more 'Out of School Care' provision be made available in smaller, more rural and island communities in Scotland.

Additionally, just as important as cost is the variety, times and locations of such services so children and young people have more option to benefit.

9. How can services be more effectively delivered in rural/remote areas to meet the needs of families?

Please see our response to question eight.

Ultimately concessionary or free transport to services and activities should be made available to all young carers. Particularly young carers in rural and remote areas find it difficult to access after school clubs due to the distance they need to travel between home and the activity and services. More satellite services or activities in community centres, village halls etc would help to ensure it being less likely there being a postcode lottery for the activities and services available for children and young people to access.

We would also like to see more consideration being given to providing support to local services in order that they can explore the potential of the provisions of the Community Empowerment Act to meet the needs of their local community.

10. How can we ensure that children with disabilities and additional support needs can access out of school care services?

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act (2004) statutory guidance (2017) states that “*the education authority must make adequate and efficient provision for such additional support as is required by each child or young person with additional support needs, for whose school education the authority are responsible*”. It should therefore be mandatory for all staff working in ‘Out of School Care’ services to attend relevant Additional Support Needs training such as Young Carer Awareness or Positive Behaviour Support in order to support children to be fully included in all activities and services.

Funding should be made available for additional resources and equipment to meet the needs of all young people attending. This also includes the hire or purchase of accessible venues including a quiet space or nurture room for children with disabilities and additional support needs.

Partnership working between education, health and social care, and third sector is paramount to plan for inclusion of young carers in ‘Out of School Care’ activities.

We also refer to the findings of the Holiday Activity Provision Research from Shared Care Scotland for more detailed information in response to this question.

11. What flexibility do parents and carers need from out of school care services? Can you tell us why this flexibility is important?

Most young carers have caring responsibilities to undertake immediately before and after school therefore flexibility in different times and locations of all activities and services should be reviewed to include the needs of young carers.

During holidays many of the activities and services are booked up and paid for in advance. Due to the nature of the young caring many young carers are unable to book and pay for these activities in advance as they may need to cancel at very short notice and therefore incur a financial penalty as a result. Young carers should be able to change to a more flexible option such as being able to book the week before or even the day before, or not incur a financial penalty as a result of cancelling.

The cost of ‘Out of School Care’ provision varies significantly between different services and this creates a barrier for young carers accessing activities and services. As detailed in question eight, the National Carer Organisations recommend that identified young carers are exempt from paying or at minimum offered concessionary costs for accessing services and activities. If a young carer or young adult carer is caring for someone in receipt of / or eligible to a disability benefit, then we believe they should be exempt from being charged for the services and activities that they access.

12. What is important for parents and carers in terms of location of out of school care services? Should they be delivered in school, community facilities, outdoors?

Please see our response to question eight and nine.

'Out of School Care' provision should not be a postcode lottery for young carers. By not having activities and services delivered locally to them means that young carers do not get a choice in what activities and services they wish to access. It is also important to recognise the community connections that local services can deliver to young carers and their families, helping to combat feelings of social isolation and providing families with trusted professionals that they have access to for information and advice.

Consideration should also be given to disabled parents who may not be able to access unsuitable buildings, therefore excluding them from participating in their child's after school care.

13. What ages of children do parents/ carers need provision for?

Provision should be made for all children from birth to eighteen. Some young carer organisations support carers from as young as five to allow them to flourish as children and have a life alongside their caring role. Many young adult carers have told us at the Scottish Young Carers Festival that if their caring role allows, they appreciate the chance to have a quiet space to complete homework or attend supported study sessions to help with their course work.

14. Do parents/carers need food provision as part of after-school and holiday clubs?

Yes, young carers often have a poor diet or do not eat due to their caring role.

In a survey conducted by Carers Trust Scotland in 2015, 50% of young carers said the 'meals they mostly have are ready or quick meals', which can lead to health issues and obesity. 17% said they "don't eat healthy meals because they take more time to make" and over 30% said they eat no fruit or vegetables.

Additionally, young carer services have reported an increase in referrals they have made to local foodbanks for families on low income or in receipt of benefits.

Young carers should have access to free food provision at all 'Out of School Care' activities and services that they attend. During school holidays, caring responsibilities for young carers often intensify and they often report that they see less of their friends, leading to social isolation. For some young carers their main meal of the day is the lunch they have at school, this may be because of time pressures of cooking and due to many of these young people

being eligible for free school meals. School holidays can be a barrier to young carers accessing free and healthy food. Therefore, holiday clubs should offer free meals as standard.

15. What qualifications, skills and experience should the out of school care workforce have? What is most important and why?

At a minimum all staff should attend child protection / safeguarding, first aid, health and safety, GIRFEC, ACES and ongoing CPD training relevant to their role.

As good practice staff or volunteers should have experience of working with children and young people and a willingness to undertake a relevant qualification to their role. It is important to consider relevant transferrable skills from other professions.

It is the recommendation of the National Carer Organisations that every organisation or service providing 'Out of School Care' have at least one staff member attend Young Carer Awareness training.

16. Thinking about the full range of provision - regulated out of school care, childminders, holiday programmes and other activities - should qualification requirements for staff working across these provisions be the same or different? Why?

Qualification requirements should be different across the sector to reflect the activity and service they are providing. As above there should be a minimum training requirement for each staff member and a willingness to undertake a qualification relevant to their role which should be funded by the organisation or service provider. However, all roles should be subject to required PVG when working with children and young people in these settings.

It is important to note that the cost of staff training and PVG should not increase the service and activity costs as many young carers and other children and young people can not attend 'Out of School Care' activities and services due to cost of not only attending but for the materials and resources needed.

17. How can we promote working in the out of school sector as a more attractive career choice?

Staff should have options of attending training and have access to take forward relevant qualifications. Salary scales should reflect ongoing CPD.

In addition to offering flexibility in the delivery of activities and services there should also be flexible working patterns available for staff, particularly staff who are unpaid carers.

The National Carer Organisations recommend that all employers in Scotland should undertake the Carer Positive Employer in Scotland award. The Carer

Positive award is presented to employers in Scotland who have a working environment where carers are valued and supported. Carer Positive employers recognise the importance of retaining experienced members of staff, reducing absence, and cutting down on avoidable recruitment costs.

18. How can we increase diversity across the out of school care workforce?

Please see our response to question 17.