

**REPORT TO:** Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 20 February 2012

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT:** Young Carers Scrutiny Topic

**WARDS:** All Wards

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To update the Board on the progress made regarding Young Carers since this topic last came to the Board on 31 October 2011.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) The contents of the report, strategy and action plan are noted;
- (2) The new Young Carers Strategy and action plan are endorsed as a piece of work that reflects the issues raised during the scrutiny process and views of young carers.
- (3) The issue of young carers is brought back to the Board in twelve months to review progress and any further developments

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The topic for young carers was a subject to scrutiny between September 2010 and July 2011. This was because young carers are a vulnerable group given their family circumstances, and they could be defined as 'children in need' as defined within the Children Act 1989, especially when their caring role inhibits the experience and usual development of childhood.

3.2 The scrutiny process consisted of Members and Officers within Children and Families Services. Members were Cllr Mark Dennett; Cllr Kath Loftus; Cllr Margaret Horabin, Cllr Joan Lowe; Cllr Mike Fry; and Cllr Peter Browne. Officers were Nigel Moorhouse (Operational Director); Emma Taylor (Divisional Manager); and Tracey Dean (Principal Manager).

3.3 Findings of the scrutiny process were highlighted within the October 2011 report and included information regarding:

- (i) Current staffing arrangements and structures regarding young carers
- (ii) Commissioned services for young carers
- (iii) Governance arrangements

- (iv) Performance issues
- (v) Partnership arrangements between Children's and Communities' Directorates

3.4 The Scrutiny Group process highlighted a number of positive factors, in particular the work being undertaken regarding young carers and the positive impact this is having on young carers and their families. Increased joint working between Communities and Children and Enterprise was also recognised.

3.5 The process also raised a number of areas for further development:

- (i) **Service provision**- young carers' vulnerability means that early help services need to continue to support them and prevent their needs from escalating;
- (ii) **Strategy**: this needed reviewing due to staff structure changes. Also, the strategy needed to reflect HBC's model of early help;
- (iii) **Participation**: HBC needs to ensure that the systems in place to ensure meaningful participation from young carers, especially regarding effectiveness of services and future delivery. They need to feel they are being listened to and can see change happen.

### **Progress to date**

3.6 Since October 2011, a new Young Carers strategy has been written, along with an action plan to track progress. Whilst this was led by Children and Families Department, it was written in conjunction with colleagues from Communities Directorate; Commissioning; and current providers.

3.7 Most importantly, young carers themselves were fully involved in the strategy. Facilitated by a voluntary organisation, they were supported to study the strategy and comment on the eight key areas of work identified to implement the strategy. Their response to this exercise is attached as an appendix.

3.8 The scrutiny process helped highlight the need for a clearer model and pathway to services. This has now been reviewed and a new pathway to a range of services for young carers will be implemented on 1 April 2012. One key factor includes a single point of entry for young carers to access support and the availability of a continuum of help for them and their families.

3.9 Another key area of progress has been the re-establishment of the '*Memorandum of Understanding*' between Communities and Children and Enterprise Directorates. The memorandum is a regional document, recognising that both Directorates should work closely together when dealing with young carers. A holistic approach is required, whether a professional is working with the adult(s) or children, to ensure young carers' needs are met effectively. The scrutiny process helped to do

this, with representatives from both Directorates working jointly to review current services and work with young carers themselves to help plan services for 2012-2013.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There is a range of legislation that give HBC statutory responsibilities towards young carers and their families, eg Children Act 1989; Carers Equal Opportunities Act 2004; Services for Young Carers: A Framework.
- 4.3 The National Carers strategy (June 2008) highlighted the need for extended planned breaks for carers and the need for greater engagement with carers and more effective joint working between agencies.
- 4.4 Young Carers have a right to an assessment of their own needs as a carer and to have their views taken into account (Carers Recognition and Services act 1995). They are also entitled to assistance and support to engage in education and employment (Carers Equal opportunities Act 2004).
- 4.5 An outcome of this legislation is the new Young Carers strategy. It links strongly with Joint Commissioning Strategy for Carers (2009-2012) within Communities Directorate, whilst highlighting young carers in their own right. The overriding objectives of the strategy is to ensure that young carers are enabled to reach their full potential and access the help they need via appropriate local services.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The key issue at this point is to ensure that the new strategy is implemented with clear arrangements in place to monitor and track progress. The other issue is the development of new service specifications for future services. These need to ensure that services next year fully reflect the views of young carers, as well as being cost effective and deliverable.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

It is the Children's Trust priority that outcomes for children and young people improve via access to early help and support services and effective joint commissioning of services locally. Services need to be targeted effectively to ensure that outcomes improve for the children and families with the greatest need. The strategy for young carers highlights all these priorities and focuses on the need to offer early help for young carers and their families to help prevent their needs escalating and more specialist interventions becoming necessary.

## 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

All young carers have the right to continue their education and access further training or employment when they leave school. Their caring responsibilities should not restrict or prevent them from achieving their full potential. This is a significant element of the new strategy.

## 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Young carers are entitled to enjoy healthy lives, both physically and emotionally. Caring responsibilities can affect a young person's health in many ways. Emotional health and wellbeing is another key element of the strategy, highlighting that HBC needs to work alongside health partners to help prevent long term health problems for young carers.

## 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Young carers need to feel safe and secure whilst undertaking their caring responsibilities. There are potential safeguarding issues- 'hidden harm' is a particular issue. The strategy ensures that clear processes are in place and adhered to; and that potential safeguarding issues are considered jointly by Children and Enterprise and Communities Directorates.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal:** There are no implications here.

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The overriding risk is the risk is that future success of the new strategy will depend on availability of funding both from Communities and Children and Enterprise Directorates. Improving outcomes for young carers will depend on early help services being available in order to help prevent young carers' needs escalating, leaving them more vulnerable to more intrusive interventions (ie statutory services).

## 8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The new Strategy will ensure that the needs of young carers in the Borough will be addressed due to their vulnerability. The strategy recognises this fact and the action plan highlights key areas where agencies need to work together to ensure they are not disadvantaged because of their caring role.

## 9. **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Memorandum of Understanding	Grosvenor House	Emma Taylor Divisional Manager

Joint Commissioning Strategy for Carers 2009-2012	Runcorn Town Hall	Leigh Hammad, Policy Officer
Carer Equal Opportunities Act 2004	<a href="http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/15/contents">http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/15/contents</a>	
National Carers Strategy	<a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2011/07/carers-strategy/">http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2011/07/carers-strategy/</a>	