

Carers Trust Wales
33 - 35 Cathedral Road
Cardiff
CF11 9HB

18 March 2019

Dear Dai Lloyd AM,

We are writing to you as part of providing evidence to the Health Social Care and Sport Committee's Inquiry into the impact of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 in relation to carers.

Following on from recent oral evidence sessions with the Committee we have written out to members of the Carers Officers Learning and Improvement Network, Wales (COLIN) to gather their views. This exercise has reinforced that Young Carers Services have historically been developed, and continue to be commissioned and maintained, through a mixture of funding streams including:

- Families First
- Adult Social Services
- Children's Services
- Welsh Government Carers Respite Grant
- Youth Services
- Integrated Care Fund
- Regional Funding
- Health Board Funding

To an extent, the diversity of funding has allowed a level of flexibility to the support provided. One Carers Lead Commented:

"The fact that more than one different strand comes in to fund the service provides some flexibility and protection when one or other of the income strands is under threat."

However, piecemeal and sometimes restrictive funding can mean that certain needs of young carers are more difficult to meet and that sustainability of specific services is an on-going concern.

The main and most consistent funding across Local Authorities for Young Carers Services is Families First. In many areas this funding enables the core of a Young Carers Service to exist and operate.

Families First service provision is based on time limited support for each young carer and is tailored to the individual outcome(s) for each young carer. For those young carers who may not reach the Families First threshold the supplementary funding stream(s) allows the Young Carers Service to offer support to them.

Many Young Carers Services could not continue to exist without the co-dependency of varying funding streams. Core Families First funding allows many young carers to have a constant touchstone with their Young Carers Service which may have other non-Families First funded activities and support streams that can benefit young carers. For those young carers who have been supported through the Families First criteria, they can continue to keep in touch with their young carers network which may support them after their Families First funded support has come to an end.

The mixture of funding streams also presents challenges. Different commissioning and reporting requirements for each funding stream can be at odds with each other and can hinder the creation of a seamless and consistent service for young carers.

One Carers Lead comments:

“There is a mismatch with regards to outcomes reporting on the different funding streams. Families First funding provides the core funding in order for the Young Carers Service to operate and provide time limited one to one support for young carers. The Carers Team provides funding for events, young carers’ forum, and activities and to support young carers through ongoing support for all young carers. Without either of these funding streams neither could operate effectively.”

Many Carers Officers within Local Authorities recognise that the provision and investment for Young Carers Services is not proportionally representative of the needs of young carers. There is also agreement that there is disproportionate funding between Young Carers Services and Adult Services.

One Carers Lead commented:

“Young Carers Services historically appear to have suffered from a lack of commitment and value demonstrated towards this group of vulnerable children and young people from the highest level. This is clearly evidenced when considering the clear disproportionate investment into young carers provided from central government across Wales. The funding committed to young carers when compared with that provided to adult carers is significantly less, as is the strategic focus.”

Many young carers continue to be hidden either not recognising themselves as a young carer or being recognised by a range of professionals. A young carer is most likely to attend school and the person they are supporting is likely to come into contact with a health or social care professional. Therefore, it's important that there is an overarching approach to identifying and supporting young carers. To achieve this, more needs to be done to ensure that education, health and social care services work together to improve their identification and support of young carers. To achieve this, services have to be developed and commissioned in a collaborative and sustainable way.

One Carers Lead Officer commented:

“At the moment the different funding streams do not allow for joined up working, and sustainability of Young Carers support.”

Another commented:

“I would like to see specific funding provided from Welsh Government for Young Carers service with a supporting outcomes focused reporting mechanism for Local Authorities and Health Boards to work with.

“I believe our data will demonstrate both the numbers of carers receiving services has continued to rise year on year, whereas resources continue to diminish and budgets available to Local Authorities are limited, hindering their ability to invest in young carers services to deal with the increases in demand and to further develop services to adapt to the changing needs of young carers.”

Evidence shows us that once a young carer is in touch with their young carers service, they value having someone they can talk to about their caring life and being able to have regular opportunities to meet with their young carer peer networks. Beyond this, they often value time away from the caring role to have fun, training to gain skills, and someone to be their advocate when they might need it. Many of the key support mechanisms young carers need are predictable and long-term. Therefore, it would be helpful if funding streams recognised the core services that will always need to be funded to deliver the preventative, information, advice and assistance elements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 for young carers.

It is important that funding streams enable the creation of Young Carers Services that are sustainable and able to meet the needs of young carers without the need for re-referrals or other additional bureaucracy that can come with some elements of Families First Funding. It is our shared view that there needs to be a greater amount and consistency of funding to enable the creation of Young Carers Services without

the need to creatively negotiate between funding pots to deliver the support young carers need.

There are many excellent examples of Local Authorities and Carers Services delivering high quality support to young carers. However, service provision remains inconsistent across Local Authority areas and it continues to be a challenge for Local Authorities to find funding / utilise appropriate funding pots to sustain services that are clearly instrumental to the delivery of the Act.

We believe that there is a need to ensure that young carers have a greater strategic focus, and a consistency of funding investment in order to provide the flexible and responsive support that they need. Without these services young carers will be unable to achieve their full potential.

Yours sincerely,



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