



The Big Conversation with Young Carers
Paul Blomfield MP in partnership with
Sheffield Young Carers
19th September 2016

Introduction:

We are Sheffield Young Carers Action Group and we are also really happy to welcome some young adult carers from the University of Sheffield here too.

Our Action Group is for young carers who have been getting support through SYC in the two last years and now want to help run SYC and make the lives of young carers better.

Some of us were in the Action Group last year and now we are helping to lead the group. The rest of us just joined a couple of months ago.

At our last group, we thought about the things that are difficult in our lives as young carers and thought about ideas for what might make things easier. We wanted to share these with you so you can understand more about our lives and to find out if there is anything you could do to help.

We also wondered if we could contact you in three months' time to see if you have any updates on the things we speak about tonight.

Education

Lots of us find school really difficult. Some schools are helping but lots aren't - it depends where you live, which school you go to and even which teacher you speak to.

Examples of things that make school harder:

- *Teachers expect us to prioritise homework and school over caring*
- *We explain being late is due to our caring roles but teachers don't listen or understand*
- *Lots of us get bullied*

What could help:

- Zero tolerance for bullying- actually make it work!
- Extra guidance given to young carers
- Training around young carers for ALL teachers
- Teachers that listen to our voices
- Less time spent in school or time out passes for when we are worrying about our families or there are emergencies)
- Carers for our families while we're at school -reassurance they are safe
- Homework support for young carers and extensions / exam provision

Health

We are living with the people we care for every day but we often get left out by health services.

What could help:

- Doctors surgeries / medical professionals need **training** so they support young carers better and understand the responsibilities that we have
- We should be able to collect **medication** for our families if our families have consented to this
- We are with them every day - we need more **information** about their illness and their medication
- They should **help us too** - ask how we are and how caring is affecting us
- Mental health is a massive issue for our families but also for us. There needs to be **shorter waiting lists** for mental illness services for parents and young carers and a shorter diagnosis. Doctors should also try to look at the root of the problem (sometimes it is the pressure of our caring that is making us ill too!).

Transport

- We have to go on lots of appointments or do errands for the people we care for. This is expensive already and child bus fares are about to go up AGAIN.
- Some of us have family who use wheelchairs. Often buses drive past us or prioritize pushchairs, when those people can take their babies out and fold the chairs up. Sometimes 3 buses will go by before one stops and we miss our hospital or doctors' appointments because of it.
- It is difficult having to change buses when we are with someone with mobility issues
- Buses are very unreliable in some areas, making us even more isolated and late for appointments.

What could help:

- A free pass for young carers (this happens in other cities e.g. Kent, Doncaster)
- A driving lesson scheme - discounted rates for carers
- Training bus drivers to prioritize wheelchairs over pushchairs or make bigger spaces available
- Improve the reliability of buses / public transport, especially in areas further out of the city

Finances

- We have to spend a lot on travel and things to help or families
- Forms for benefits and finance are very difficult and use big words that don't make sense and the process can be stressful
- Some of us had to lose our internet at home because our parents had to choose gas/electric and food over that. (But then our schools expect us to do our homework online!)

What could help:

- Carers allowance for young carers as well as adult carers (we are saving the government lots of money by providing care!)
- Free bus passes for young carers
- More funding for organisations that support for young carers and their families
- Freebies and discounts (for example, leisure and health activities or clothing)
- Explanations/ simple language on bills and benefits forms.

Social Isolation / Respite

- It is hard to get out for young carers
- We feel very isolated
- We feel anxious leaving the person we care for

What could help:

We need respite for the carer and support for the cared-for person. This could be:

- Free time for us as carers to access activities/ a social life
- More funding for organisations like Sheffield Young Carers to help with this
- More funding for the people we care for ie: respite/home help or care centres for adults so we feel safe to leave them.
- We also need help financially as lots of our families struggle with money - access to free or discounted activities would really help