

Young Carers and Young Adult Carers Strategy 2021 – 2025

Empowering Young Carers and Young Adult Carers to reach their fullest potential in Bristol

Front cover in development (Creative Youth Network and Young Carers Support Service – due April 2021)

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2 FOREWORD

The strategic view in Bristol for Young carers and young adult carers and comment from Cllr. Godwin.

We want all children to live in safe and healthy families as they grow up in a city that supports parent, carers and family members.

3 OUR VISION

It is our vision through this strategy and partnership working to identify and recognise children and young people who are in caring roles and; to be able to provide practical and culturally appropriate services to minimise the negative effects of caring for others on young people's life outcomes¹.

We wish to enable children to make choices that benefit their health and happiness to ensure they have the best possible start in life. We believe we can achieve this by working towards the priorities outlined below.

4 OUR PRIORITIES

There are four strategic priority areas to develop in Bristol to enable us to reach our vision:

PRIORITY ONE

Early **identification** and **recognition** of all children and young people who are in caring roles

PRIORITY TWO

Timely **assessment** of young carers and young adult carers needs which understands their education, health, social and transition needs

PRIORITY THREE

There is a range of universal, targeted and specialist **services** and **activities** which enable young carers and young adult carers to enjoy their childhood and move into adulthood

PRIORITY FOUR

Young carers and young adult carers have opportunities to **voice** their opinions, **views** and needs on services and policies which affect them

5 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Bristol's Young Carer and Young Adult Carers Strategy 2021-2025 has been developed by young carers, young adult carers and representatives from the voluntary, community, education, health and care sectors.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014ⁱⁱ outline how health and social care services must work together to make sure the needs of the whole family are met and inappropriate or excessive caring by children or young people is prevented or reduced.

The strategy sets out some of the areas for development in Bristol for the next five years and includes an Action Planⁱⁱⁱ outlining the tasks required to enable us to work towards a better offer for young carers and young adult carers in Bristol.

6 OUR DEFINITION OF A YOUNG CARER AND A YOUNG ADULT CARER

Young Carers

The Children and Families Act and the Care Act are the two main pieces of legislation which provide us with a definition of a young carer:

A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (unless under a contract or as voluntary work).

A young carer may care for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction.

Young Adult Carers

The Care Act directs Local Authorities to ensure they consider the support needs of young carers as they approach 18 and to assess if it is likely that caring needs will remain after the child becomes an adult.

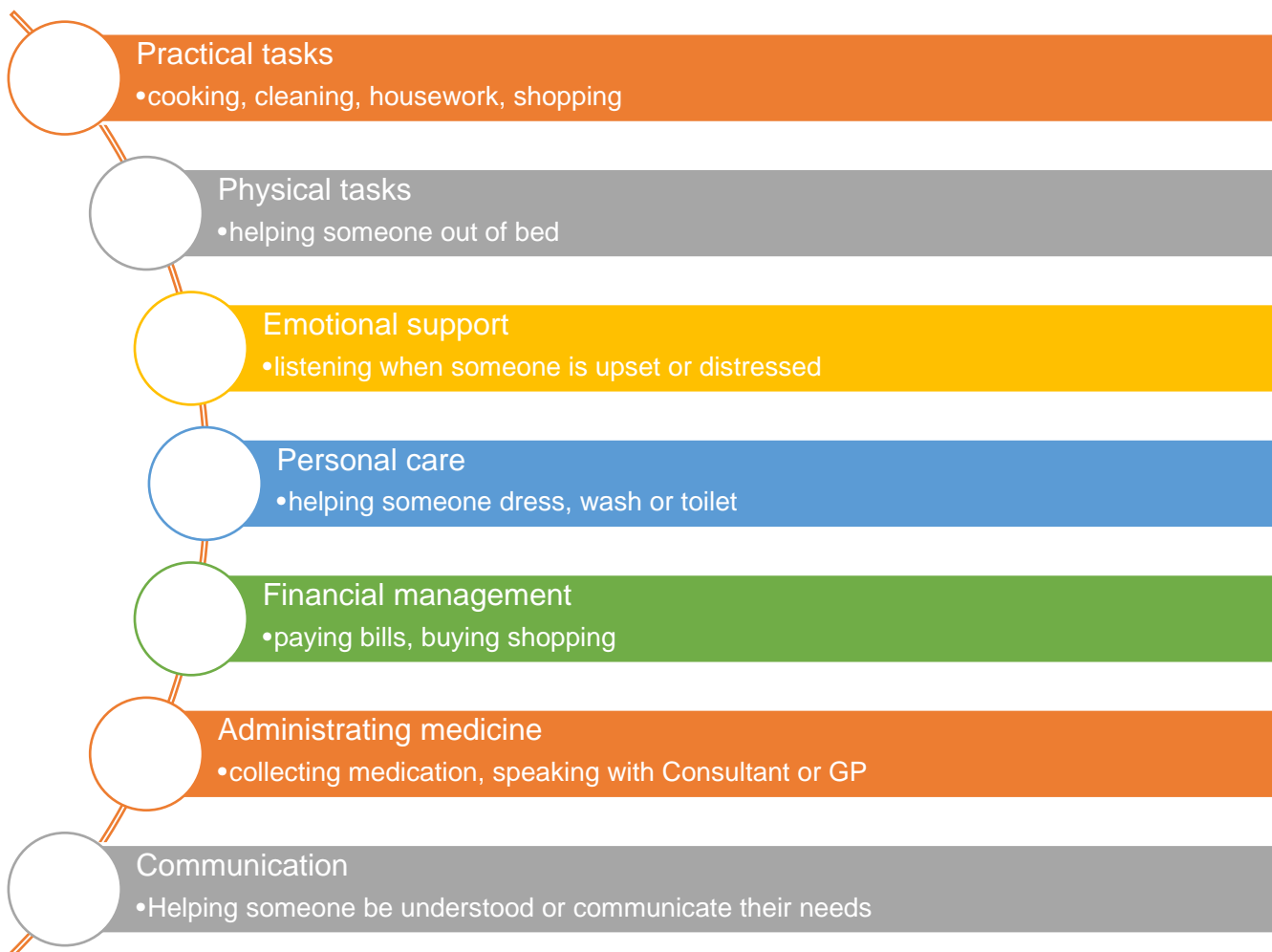
For the purposes of this strategy, the definition for young carers who are reaching important transition stages in their life and requiring a transition needs assessment, are called 'young adult carers' who will typically be aged between 14 and 25.

We recognise that we all grow and develop at different rates. Every family will have their own circumstances and professionals working with families will assess and identify if the young carer is at a stage in their life where a young carers transition assessment is required.

7 RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS OF YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS

7.1 RESPONSIBILITIES

Young carers and young adult carers carry out a range of tasks for the person they care for, including:



Caring can have an adverse impact on a child or young person's development. Young carers in Bristol report^{iv}:

- Feeling isolated and lacking in confidence
- Being unable to spend time socialising with their peers
- Poor physical wellbeing including back issues
- Being unable to keep up in school
- Poor mental wellbeing including feelings of stress, worry, anger and self-harm
- Feeling tired and fed up
- Being bullied

The development of a Bristol Young Carers Pathway to Support tool will aid professionals working with families to notice where young carers are providing age appropriate or unacceptable levels of caring whilst also pointing towards the most appropriate and helpful sources of support.

7.2 RIGHTS

Local Authorities must take reasonable steps to identify young carers in their area. Once a professional working with a family becomes aware of a young carer the Local Authority should be informed and an assessment must be carried out to ascertain their support needs and develop an action plan.

A young carer or their family can also request a needs assessment if they feel support is required.

Young carers and young adult carers can expect to have their assessment reviewed if they feel that their circumstances have changed, otherwise action plans should be reviewed yearly if support is not continuous.

Young carers assessments should ensure that young people in caring roles feel safe and can access support through their action plan. This will reduce the mental and physical effects of their caring role which might enable them to:

- feel less worried, sad or lonely
- improve their physical health
- socialise with friends
- achieve education aspirations in line with their peers
- improve pathways into further education, employment or training
- follow future dreams and aspirations

Young adult carers may also be eligible for help finding work, education or training and some benefits such as the Carers Allowance.

8 DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

8.1 HIDDEN NEEDS

Priority 1: Early identification and recognition of all children and young people who are in a caring role

We all have a role to play in identifying a young carer. Understanding who a young carer is, the community they live in and who they care for is an important element of being able to offer support and advice at a time that matters most to them.

Schools, colleges, universities, GP's, social care and community based services and activities all provide valuable opportunities to recognise a young carer and signpost them to support.

It is important to understand the situation for young carers and young adult carers will be unique to them and their family. For example, there are over 500,000 BAME carers in the UK yet many people from a BAME background do not recognise the term 'carer'. Different cultures and communities will naturally have different expectations on their children in terms of caring for loved ones.

We recognise the importance of providing support to young carers and young adult carers in a sensitive and culturally appropriate way^v. By working in partnership with the range of agencies in Bristol to ensure early identification of young carers and young adult carers we will collectively be able to reduce the number of children and young people taking on unsuitable levels of care.

The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership has embedded a Trauma Informed approach to working with children most in need in Bristol. Adopting this methodology^{vi} will address the needs of young carers and young adult carers living in poverty, in households affected by substance misuse, parental offending and domestic abuse in a proactive and joined up way.

Locally, there could be between 3,400 and 4,781 young carers and young adult carers living in the Bristol area providing thousands of hours of care to relatives, friends or siblings.

Nationally, there are an estimated 800,000 – 1,000,000 young carers and young adult carers. On average young carers spend 25 hours a week looking after loved ones which potentially saves the Government and Local Authorities around £12,000 a year (based on a part-time carers wage) per cared-for person.^{vii}

Young carers and young adult carers engaging in commissioned services in Bristol report spending on average 62% of their time awake caring for a loved one. According to Bristol City Council's population predictions, the City's population is expected to increase 15% by 2043 meaning the predicted numbers of young carers and young adult carers in Bristol are expected to rise also^{viii}.

The true number of young carers and young adult carers in Bristol is unknown which is why improving our knowledge and identification of children who care is a priority and gap to be addressed as part of the strategy.

A young carer may not be identified for a range of reasons and we can support them to be seen by:

- Raising knowledge and understanding of young carers and young adult carers throughout Bristol

- Diagnosing the needs of the cared-for person before caring by a child becomes unsuitable
- Recognising the cultural or community expectations on a young person to care for a family member
- Recognising the cultural barriers to accessing services
- Improving public knowledge of statutory support services and lower level commissioned support that is available
- Highlighting the range of support and services available to young carers and young adult carers and their families from a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations in Bristol

We want all services and organisations in Bristol to be young carer friendly. We will do this by raising awareness of hidden young carers and by developing the training offer available in Bristol.

8.2 YOUNG CARERS IN SCHOOLS

Identifying a young carer is part of the safeguarding responsibility for all professionals and organisations who come into contact with children and young people. We know that most young people in Bristol attend school therefore young carers are likely to encounter education services at some point in their life.

This provides an ideal opportunity to identify young carers and offer support if required at an early stage. Supporting young carers early is important because some young carers have been found to consistently underachieve at GCSE level compared with classmates of similar ability who do not have a caring role^{ix}.

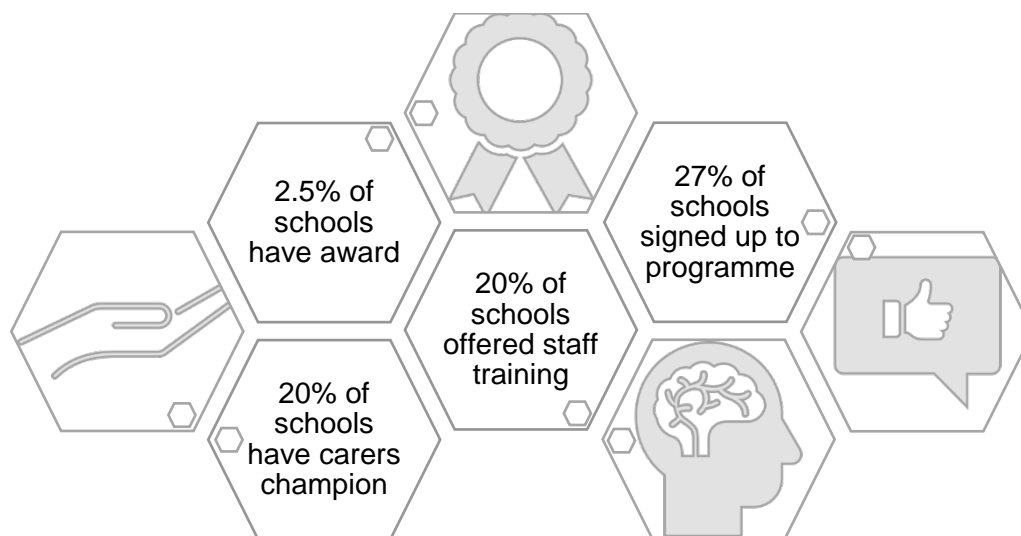
Findings from a 2013 Children's Society report highlighted^x:

- Around one in twenty young carers miss school because of their caring responsibilities
- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level - the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers
- Young carers are more likely than the national average to be 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) between the ages of 16 and 19

However not all young carers will require additional support in their education.

Professional's awareness and understanding of young carers in their setting can provide a natural opportunity to offer support earlier, assess any additional needs and make reasonable adjustments to their learning plan to ensure they are not left behind in class.

Over the last five years, there has been positive movement towards improving awareness and understanding of young carers in Bristol schools. However, this remains an area for future development as data from Bristol's Pupil Voice Survey (2020) and Carers Support Centre shows:



Data on uptake of Children's Society Young Carers in Schools award

Strengthening the offer from schools and education settings to identify more young carers will allow a timely assessment of need and an offer of support which can nurture positive education and life outcomes for these young people.

To minimise education inequalities faced by children and young people in caring roles, we want to enable all schools and education settings in Bristol to identify students who have may be providing care at home. To do this we need to address any perceived barriers which may be preventing school staff from identifying young carers in their setting. Working out the best way to deliver this aim will be covered in the strategy action plan.

8.3 ASSESSING NEED – A THINK FAMILY APPROACH

Priority 2: Timely assessments of young carers and young adult carers needs which understands their education, health, social and transition needs

Bristol's Young Carers Voice have highlighted that caring can bring a range of emotional and psychological benefits. However, often young carers and young adult carers may have reduced positive outcomes as they frequently miss out on regular childhood experiences. This can negatively impact their mental health, physical health and emotional wellbeing.

Young carers and young adult carers can be at greater risk of becoming vulnerable when the level of caregiving to the cared-for person becomes unsuitable.

Some young carers will need support to help them to separate their role in the family as a child to that of taking on the role as a young carer.

These risks can be mitigated by having a proactive, holistic and family centred approach to assessing the needs of a young carer.

Statutory guidance from the Care Act 2014 notes:

“Some carers may need support in recognising issues around sustainability, and in recognising their own needs. This will allow local authorities to make a realistic evaluation of the carer’s present and future needs for support and whether the caring relationship is sustainable. Where appropriate these views should be sought in a separate conversation independent from the adult’s needs assessment.”

We wish to use this strategy to expand the good practice guidance in the multi-agency document ‘Think Family Approach to Supporting and Safeguarding Children whose Parents have Support Needs’^{xi} and statutory guidance under the Care Act 2014.

There are three possible types of needs assessments which must be offered by Local Authorities to young carers and young adult carers:

For	Name	Reference
Children in caring roles up to 18	Young Carers Needs Assessment	Section 17ZA, Children and Families Act 2014
Young people reaching transition, c. 14 - 25	Young Adult Carer Transition Assessment	Chapter 16 (statutory guidance) and Section 60, Care Act 2014
Adults over 18 year olds	Care Act Carers Assessment	Section 10, Care Act 2014

The Young Carers’ (Needs Assessment) Regulations 2015^{xii} require local authorities to look at the needs of the whole family when carrying out a young carer’s needs assessment. Young carer assessments can be combined with assessments of adults in the household, which is explained to the family so that they will be a part of the process continuously.

The Bristol Think Family guidance along with the Working Together statutory guidance^{xiii} states that every assessment carried out should draw together relevant information gathered from the child, their family and from relevant practitioners including teachers, school staff, early years workers, health practitioners, the police and adult social care as required.

Assessments for young carers in Bristol are currently provided through several providers including the Young Carers Support Service, Bristol City Council’s Families in Focus Teams (FiF) and the Target Youth Service.

Through this strategy we will seek to strengthen knowledge and understanding of the Think Family approach, which will ensure more young carers and young adult carers:

- will be identified

- will receive timely assessment of need, and
- receive appropriate support.

8.4 TRANSITION TO ADULthood

Like other children and young people, young carers have goals and aspirations for their future. Young carers often feel they cannot go to university or seek employment because of their caring responsibilities^{xiv}.

“Young Adult Carers often fall through the gaps in support and are hidden from services designed to support them. They tell us that they often have to choose between their own future aspirations or caring for their family, with significant impacts leaving them vulnerable to risks related to their safety, health and future opportunities and well-being later in life.”

Improving Assessment and Support for Young Carers Transition to Adulthood, The Children’s Society, 2018

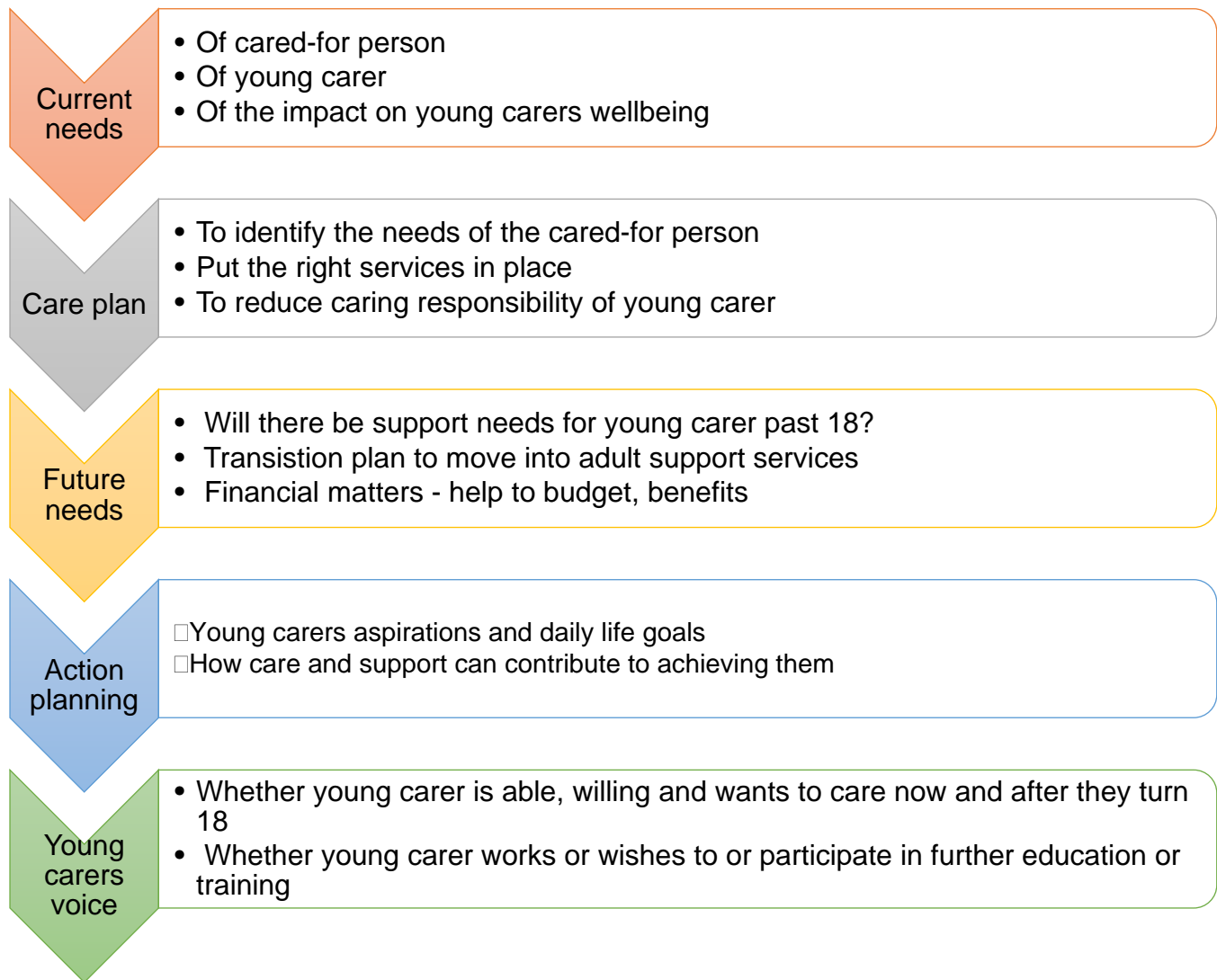
Transition assessments are an important tool to support young carers to prepare for adulthood and Local Authorities have a legal requirement to assess their needs.

Nationally, data shows over 45% of young adult carers have a mental health support need, with many young adult carers saying they struggle to manage their education, working life and their caring role. Young adult carers who were no longer in education had maximum qualifications of GCSE grades 3-1 (previously grades D-G), and 29% of young adult carers had dropped out of college or university for reasons relating to their caring role^{xv}.

The poorer outcomes facing some young carers can be avoided by good planning and assessment underpinned by a regularly reviewed action plan. Young adult carers have a legal right to be offered a Young Adult Carer Transition Assessment and support, if required via the Care Act 2014.

The transition assessment should support the young person and their family to plan for the future, by providing them with information and advice about what they can expect.

All transition assessments must consider and include:



Offering a Transition Assessment to young adult carers at the right time will reduce the risk of lower exam results and will support aspirations for their future education, employment or training. An action plan developed with the young carer will make them feel valued and in turn build their confidence because they were included in what is happening in their life.

In Bristol, we want to focus our young adult carers assessments on their preparing for adulthood outcomes and future aspirations from the age of 14 onwards. Assessments up until this point tend to focus on support required by the young carers immediately, the here and now.

We can enable young adult carers to reach for their goals and aspirations for adulthood by refocussing the Young Adult Carer Transition Assessment to consider a young person's needs in a timely and planned way. We don't want to leave this until they are 17 or 18 years old as this is often too late for the young adult carers to put in place arrangements which suit their caring situation amongst other barriers and issues young people in caring roles face.

As a minimum, any assessment (regardless of if they are education, health or care assessments) conducted with a family, should identify and record if there is a young carer in the family and what support can be given.

Within the family focused assessment and plan it may be possible to address the needs of the young carer. However, if the young carer feels they require a standalone Young Carers Assessment or Young Adult Carers Transition Assessment then they will be referred directly to the most appropriate service.

Developing the approach above as part of the strategy will ensure young adult carers are getting the right support at the right time which will affect positive change for young people in caring roles.

8.5 RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS

Priority 3: There is a range of universal, targeted and specialist services and activities which enable young carers and young adult carers to enjoy their childhood and move into adulthood

Currently, support for young carers and young adult carers in Bristol is provided through a range of services and settings¹ in the voluntary, community and statutory sector, and includes:

- Information, advice and guidance online and in libraries
- Young Carer's groups delivered by the Young Carers Support Service, Targeted Youth Service, schools and education settings
- Informal group activities, clubs and community-based sessions
- Targeted one to one support and mentoring
- Targeted positive activities including informal education courses, leisure activities, trips and hobby clubs
- Specialist support and guidance via Bristol City Council's First Response pathway and Families in Focus Teams
- Some commissioned services in Bristol also offer need assessments for young carers

It is likely more young carers are supported through other settings such as schools, colleges, GP practices and community organisations.

Through this priority, we aim to develop the offer to young carers and young adult carers by utilising existing resources which include the Young Carers Support Service (to be recommissioning in 2021) and championing the range of diverse services offered in communities across the city.

¹ Access to some services may be subject to referral or certain eligibility criteria.

8.6 MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Unaddressed mental health support needs can have a devastating effect on young people's lives, with the 2020 Pandemic compounding the situation for many young carers and young adult carers in Bristol.

A July 2020 Carers Trust report into the effects of the Pandemic on young carers highlighted increased levels of anxiety and mental health support needs. The impact is expected to be felt for some time especially on employment rates, homelessness, food and digital poverty and long-term health implications^{xvi}.

It is hoped and expected with the advancement of medical treatments for the Covid-19 virus that this will not be a lasting crisis. However, the emotional toll caring has taken on many young carers and their families, before and since the Pandemic, cannot be ignored and the knock-on effects of caring must be reflected in the strategy priorities and action plan.

Young carers and young adult carers have made it clear that they would like to be able to access more timely mental health and emotional wellbeing support in Bristol.

As part of the strategy action plan, we will:

- encourage partners to adopt the Five Ways to Wellbeing model when delivering services to young carers^{xvii}
- scope how we can work better with Bristol's Wellbeing Board
- ensure future services commissioned for young carers and young adult carers will have a focus on mental health and emotional wellbeing

8.7 LISTENING TO YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS

Priority 4: Young carers and young adult carers have opportunities to voice their opinions, views and needs on services and policies which affect them

In Bristol, the voice of young carers is heard through the forum Young Carer Voice (YCV). They meet regularly to share views and issues that face young carers raised from their experiences and contribute to service development and planning activities.

Young Carers Voice are a group of young carers and young adult carers, aged 12 -17, who want to influence the improvement and design of services they are involved in.

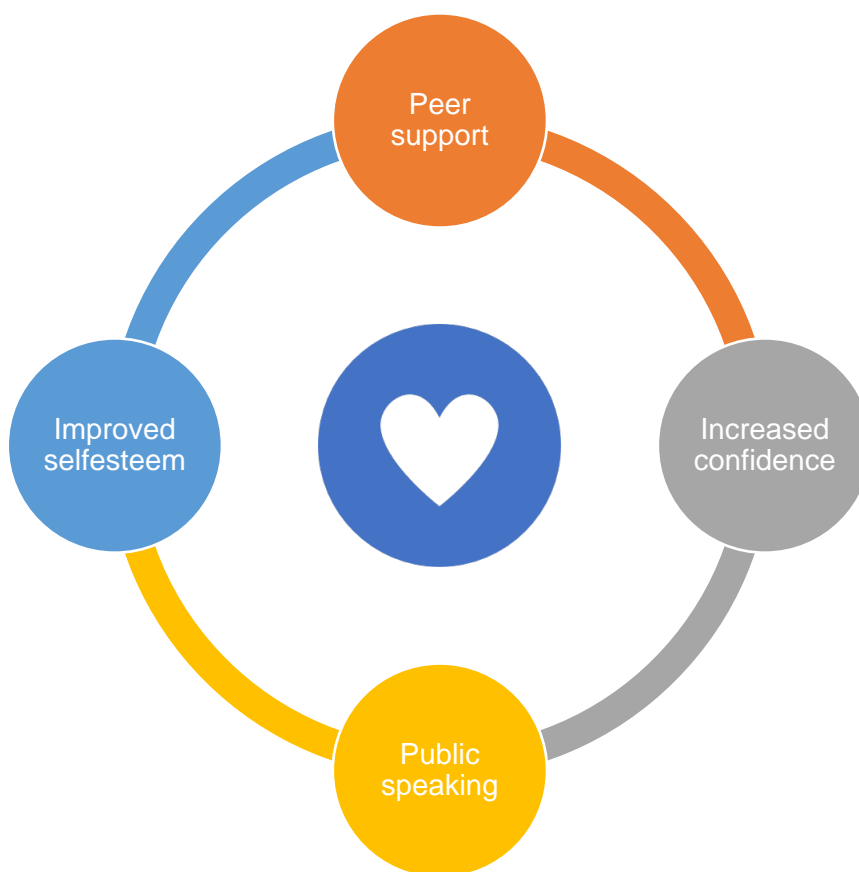
Since the last Young Carers Strategy was produced, Young Carers Voice have:

- Helped shape support for young carers and young adult carers in education, training or employment
- Produced the 'My mental Health' DVD
- Co-produced Young Carers Awareness Day with Carers Trust
- Presented to professionals on a range of issues facing young carers in Bristol

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant effect on Young Carers Voice activity and support generally for young carers and young adult carers during this time has become one of their key issues. Other future priorities identified by Young Carers Voice include:

- Recovering from the impact of the 2020 Pandemic
- Services and support specifically for young adult carers
- Mental Health and wellbeing support for young carers
- Support for young carers and young adult carers in school and education settings

As well as providing essential input for service planning, the young people involved in Young Carers Voice benefit individually from increasing their personal and social skills through their participation and volunteering in this informal learning setting and can experience:



It is our intention through this strategy priority to continue to develop engagement opportunities for young carers and young adult carers in Bristol to have their voices heard on matter that are important to them.

9 IMPROVING THE OFFER TO YOUNG CARERS AND YOUNG ADULT CARERS

The activities listed in the Young Carers Strategy Action Plan highlight work that is required to ensure we are able to meet our vision and priorities.

Progress towards the actions will be monitored via the establishment of a multi-agency Young Carers Strategy Implementation Group which will include a parallel group of young people with lived caring experience.

Strategic buy-in and reporting on progress will be via Bristol's Children and Young People's Board

10 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Further Reading

Belonging Strategy – BCC (December 2020) In development (expected Jan 2021)

Children & Young People JSNA – BCC – (November 2020) [children-and-young-people-jsna](#)

One City Plan – BCC – (December 2020) [the-one-city-plan/](#)

ⁱ Bristol Children’s Charter Bristol’s Children & Families Partnership (2018) [The Children's Charter](#)

ⁱⁱ The Care Act 2014 HM Government (November 2020) [The-care-act-section/63/enacted](#)

Children and Families Act 2014 HM Government (November 2020) [young-carers-and-parent-carers](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ Young Carers Strategy Action Plan (2021-2025) Multi agency December 2020 Appendix one of Young Carers Strategy 2021-2025

^{iv} Bristol’s Young Carers Support Service monitoring report (April to September 2020) Carers Support Centre (November 2020)

^v Bristol Black Carers – About Bristol Black Carers (December 2020) <https://www.bristolblackcarers.org.uk/about-us-1>

^{vi} Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Practice in Bristol Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (December 2020) [adverse-childhood-experiences-and-trauma-informed-practice-in-bristol](#)

^{vii} BBC Victoria Derbyshire programme BBC (September 2020) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51496095>

^{viii} Bristol Pupil Voice Survey (2019) Bristol City Council (November 2020) [Bristol+Pupil+Voice+Report+2019.pdf](#)

Census population projections Office for National Statistics (September 2020) [Population Projections](#)

^{ix} Young Carers in School (2018) Children’s Society (September 2020) [young-carers-and-school.pdf](#)

^xHidden From View (2013) Children’s Society [Hidden from view final.pdf](#)

^{xi} Think Family Bristol City Council (October 2020) [The-troubled-families-scheme](#)

^{xii} Young Carer Needs Assessment Regulations HM Government (November 2020) [The Young Carers \(Needs Assessments\) Regulations 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

^{xiii} Working Together to Safeguard Children HM Government (October 2020) [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

^{xiv} About Young Carers Carers Trust (October 2020) [About young adult carers - Carers Trust](#)

^{xv} Mental Health of young carers and young adult carers Carers Trust (October 2020) [Steep decline in mental health of young carers and young adult carers following Coronavirus outbreak - News - Carers Trust](#)

^{xvi} Mental Health of young carers and young adult carers Carers Trust (October 2020) [Steep decline in mental health of young carers and young adult carers following Coronavirus outbreak - News - Carers Trust](#)

^{xvii} Five Ways to Wellbeing, Mind (December 2020) [Bristol Mind - Five Ways to Wellbeing \(free to use\)](#)

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