

## **Young Carers in Armed Forces Families Evidencing the Need**

### **Executive summary**

The Children's Society Include Service was awarded funding from NHS England to look at the needs of children in armed forces families who may be undertaking caring responsibilities, which affect their own wellbeing and education; and to identify gaps in accessing support services.

This project ran from October 2016 – March 2017 and looked at the specific needs of young carers from armed forces families across Hampshire and Wiltshire where 29% of the Armed Forces are currently located. Learning from this project is to be shared widely and to inform future opportunities for developments in practice and families access to support services.

The objectives:

- to inform future military welfare and external agency professional development to improve recognition and support for these young people.
- to produce an information resource specifically for young carers in armed forces families signposting them to further information and advice.

### **Who are Young Carers?**

Young carers are: -

- children and young people under 18 who provide, or intend to provide, care for another person who is has a long-term illness, is disabled, has a mental health condition, or addiction problem.
- They may be caring for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other family member.
- Young carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult.

### **Young Carers in Armed Forces Families**

We know that children who are young carers may be caring for: -

- A serving parent who has returned from deployment and is injured physically or suffering from mental ill health or PTSD.
- A non-serving parent remaining at home who has additional needs or is affected by illness or disability.
- Sibling(s) affected by illness, disability or has additional needs.

Currently, young people in armed forces families are less likely to be identified as young carers and therefore may receive less support than their civilian counterparts. Schools and health professionals may not be aware of service children, who are young carers, within their region or their movements.

There are difficulties in identifying young carers in armed forces families, recognising the impacts upon their wellbeing and understanding their needs.

Despite the recent changes in legislation and entitlements for young carers and despite the growing evidence and recognition of young carers in armed forces families the scale of this issue remains unknown and the figures and statistics are piecemeal.

*“Are we asking the right questions? Are we thinking whole family? “*

## **Young Adult Carers**

Young people aged 16 – 25 who are caring for someone are known as Young Adult Carers. Their progress to higher and further education and career choices may be impeded by caring responsibilities. Some serving personnel aged 17 – 25 have been identified as young adult carers caring at a distance and during leave for their parents or siblings at the family home.

## **Impacts**

- Caring can affect a young person’s physical health and emotional wellbeing, education, life chances and socialisation
- Many young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level and more likely not to be in education, employment or training between 16 and 19
- The 2011 census statistics revealed that there are 166,363 young carers in England
- Young carers may find continuity of support for themselves or the person they care for is disrupted as they regularly move on posting. They may feel isolated or find it harder to cope without support from extended family or local community networks
- Deployment of one parent will be an additional impact
- Service children can also be adaptable and resilient with a pride in their families’ way of life

Children and young people who are young carers also can have hidden strengths and resilience but no child should be expected to undertake caring responsibilities which impact on own wellbeing, health or education

## Legislation

Two landmark pieces of legislation, the Children and Families Act, 2014 & Care Act 2014, led to better, more consolidated rights for young carers, young adult carers, and their families.

**The Care Act 2014** requires local authorities to adopt a whole system, whole council, whole-family approach, coordinating services and support around the person and their family and considering the impact of the care needs of an adult on their family, including children. <sup>1</sup>

**The Children and Families Act** Part 5, Section 96 details the rights for young carers including that Local Authorities (LAs) must assess whether young carers in their area have support needs and, if so, what those needs are.

They can carry out this assessment if:

- they think the child has needs (the young carer or their parent doesn't have to ask),
- the child asks them to
- the child's parent asks them to

Both pieces of legislation require a Whole Family Approach to ascertain if any of the young carers' needs for support could be prevented by providing services to the person cared for.

All young carers under the age of 18 have a right to an assessment of their need (no matter who they care for, what type of care they provide, or how often they provide it)

The assessment needs to consider:

- whether it is appropriate for the young carer to provide, or continue to provide, care (for the person needing care)
- the young carer's needs for support alongside their other needs and wishes

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<sup>1</sup> Care Act and Whole Family Approaches - <http://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/care-act-and-whole-family-6e1.pdf>

- LAs must also assess what the young carer needs for their own education, training and recreation; and employment (whether the young carer is in employment or not)

Under the Care Act 2014 young carers, under 18, who are themselves preparing for adulthood have a right to a transition assessment. If a young person or young carer is likely to have needs when they turn 18, the local authority must assess them when it considers there is “**significant benefit**” to the individual in so doing.

Key documents to support assessment and delivery include No Wrong Doors<sup>2</sup> and Young Carers’ Needs Assessment<sup>3</sup>

## The Vision

Children and young people should be protected from inappropriate and excessive caring responsibilities, enjoy their childhoods, thrive and reach their own potential.

Effective support for young carers should aim to prevent them having to take on excessive care by offering the right kind of support to the people they care for.

There is a need for NHS bodies and the local authority to work closely when planning to support the discharge of patients from hospital and this is covered by Schedule 3 of the Care Act 2014. There is a need to improve the registration and assessment of young carers, in primary care, so their needs can be identified quickly and before their own health and wellbeing deteriorates.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, for the armed forces community, the armed forces covenant exists to remove disadvantage to ensure armed forces and their families get the same outcome as the civilian community.<sup>5</sup>

UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2016-2020 has a vision to have resilient, empowered, thriving Service families, who are treated fairly, have increased choice, and who are valued by the Nation<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://adcs.org.uk/early-help/article/no-wrong-doors-working-together-to-support-young-carers-and-their-families>

<sup>3</sup> [http://adcs.happytesting.co.uk/assets/documentation/Young\\_Carers\\_needs\\_assessment\\_supporting\\_information\\_june\\_2015.pdf](http://adcs.happytesting.co.uk/assets/documentation/Young_Carers_needs_assessment_supporting_information_june_2015.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> An integrated approach to identifying and assessing Carer health and wellbeing

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/identifying-assessing-carer-hlth-wellbeing.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/support-and-advice/>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/492121/20160108-UK\\_Armed\\_Forces\\_Families\\_Strategy\\_2016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/492121/20160108-UK_Armed_Forces_Families_Strategy_2016.pdf)

## **Transition to Civilian Life and Veterans**

Consultation with welfare professionals identified a clear need to acknowledge the needs of young carers of veterans during the transition from the services and their initial first year in civilian life.

### **Summary of data available**

No statistical evidence could be found to ascertain the numbers of young carers within armed forces families. In 2015 – 2016 there were 68,896 service children in England taking up service pupil premium<sup>7</sup> (this does not take account of any families serving overseas many of who will be returning in next 12 -18months.) No data is held on how many of these children are caring

### **Veterans**

There are an estimated 1.4 million veteran/ ex-service dependent children and young people in the UK.

### **Young carers**

The 2011 Census recorded 200,000 young carers in the UK. This has increased since the previous census by 25,000. In England, 166,363 young carers were recorded.

Note: A request to the Office National Statistics (ONS) has been submitted to correlate census data of the number of families or individuals who stated they were serving in the British Armed Forces against those who also said a child under 18 was caring for someone in the family. We are currently waiting for the results from ONS.

## **Conclusions:**

### **Acknowledgement of need:**

- amongst all agencies and across the armed forces tri-services there was underlying awareness and acknowledgment of need to identify and support young carers.
- consultations and discussions with professionals revealed that many were already working with families who have children caring but had not fully recognised their role or how and where to access support for them.
- discussions also highlighted the fact that some serving personnel aged 17 – 25 have been identified as young adult carers caring at a distance and during leave for parents or siblings at family home.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-2015-to-2016-allocations>

### **Policies and processes:**

- There are comprehensive single and tri service welfare policies and processes in place but there was no evidence of structured policies or specific provision for identifying families where children may be caring or at risk of caring at levels which could impact on their own wellbeing.
- Although there are single service assessment processes in place for family members with additional needs, these did not include any processes for identifying young carers
- Apart from a section in the SSAFA FANDF handbook<sup>8</sup>, there is no specific information for families or young people.
- At both strategic level and in welfare provision, young carers in armed forces families are a hidden group of children and young people.

### **Questions to address:**

- How can we work together to better identify and support Young Carers in Armed Forces Families?
- What is needed to enable young carers and their families to feel able to ask for help for themselves and for the person they are caring for
- Ask not just what are they doing but ask “Why?” and what needs to change to reduce the negative impacts upon the child.

### **Summary of Actions and Recommendations:**

- Family members’ support needs should be considered alongside those of the person who needs care whether they are the Wounded Injured or Sick (WIS) service personnel or a dependent family member.
- Develop effective information materials for young carers and their families sharing rights and guidance to support. Ensure all relevant web portals can signpost families and young people
- Develop a common issue ‘Infographic’ for all relevant agencies
- Be mindful that mobility and deployment can have additional impacts for families where there are additional needs, illness or disability.
- Identify what is needed to promote a ‘cultural shift’ to change the image/mind set of the welfare issues to individuals and reduce stigma of asking for support
- Chain of Command, health agencies, schools and welfare services all need to be “young carer aware” and have a role to play in awareness raising, identification and support.

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<sup>8</sup> file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/and\_guide\_2017%20(1).pdf

- Ensure Unit Welfare Staff, Families Federations, Community Services and Tri-Service HIVES have information on identification and support needs for young carers
- Identify any training and development needs for Armed Forces welfare personnel regarding young carers.
- Ensure tri-service welfare assessments consider the needs of the whole family, including carers and young carers. Is a whole family approach being adopted?
- Develop effective information materials for young carers and their families
- Ensure all service children's schools are aware of the Young Carers in Schools programme (YCIS)<sup>9</sup> via the Service Children in State Schools (SCISS) networks and the Service Children Progression Alliance (SCIP)
- Make use of Pupil Information Profile (PIP) to identify any young carers
- Consider what additional assessment or support is needed during transition to new postings and to civilian life for any young carers
- Identify any further research or data collection that might be required.

## **Building pathways to identification and support**

### Ensure

- Tri service welfare assessments consider the needs of the whole family, including carers and young carers and whenever possible ensure a whole family approach being adopted.
- Young carers in armed forces families can access mainstream young carers projects if needed.
- All SCISS schools are offered training opportunities and chance to engage with the YCIS award
- Health services are young carer aware.

### Develop

- An awareness-raising programme and training for all welfare staff and community support staff via online training and webinars.
- information sharing protocols
- young carers resilience and wellbeing workshops

### Transitions

- Consider what additional assessment or support is needed when planning for and taking up new postings (make use of PIP)
- consider what additional assessment or support is needed during transition to civilian life for any young carers
- Ensure Families Federations' and transitions officers are young carer aware

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<sup>9</sup> <https://youngcarersinschools.com/>

#### Engagement and consultation

- Consider Engagement days with families and young carers linking with families' Federations, SSAFA & FANDF
- Engage with Foreign and commonwealth families and agencies that support them

#### Review:

- information sharing between NHS, Local Authorities and services support e.g. British Forces Social Work, Welfare Services Defence Medical services should include the needs of the whole family and young carers.
- what further consultations and research is required to identify further qualitative and quantitative data across UK

#### **Further information**

A full report is available on request

Information for professionals and information for families and young people can be found at:

[www.youngcarer.com/youngcarersarmedforces](http://www.youngcarer.com/youngcarersarmedforces).