



## Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

**Petition Number:** [PE 1470](#)

**Main Petitioner:** Lauren King on behalf of Scottish Youth Parliament

**Subject:** Young Carers Grant

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to establish a Young Carers Grant for carers in full time education or under the age of 18.

### Background

There are different estimates of the number of young carers. The 2001 census identified 16,701 young people in Scotland as providing some unpaid care ([Scottish Government, 2010](#)). The school census identified 441 young carers ([table 1.8, supplementary data](#)). However, the Young Carers Strategy gave a [profile of young carers](#) which estimates that there are around 100,000. Around a third are aged 16 - 17 years old. Half of all young carers care for someone with a physical disability and half of all young carers care for a person for more than 10 hours a week.

In terms of financial support, the household may be in receipt of a variety of benefits perhaps linked to the adult who is in need of care. The following relates to money that a young carer might receive in their own right.

- Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) of £30 per week for those aged 16 to 19 in education. This isn't specific to young carers, but 'vulnerable' young people are entitled to extended support up to age 21
- College and University Discretionary funds for students who need extra support. This isn't specific to young carers, but might include them depending on circumstances and available funds.
- Carers Allowance of £58 if over 16 years and caring for more than 35 hours a week and not in full time education.

Further background on unpaid carers generally is available in this [SPICe briefing](#) (2009). (Note, this predates the current Young Carers Strategy and welfare reform).

The Care 21 project on the future of unpaid care in Scotland was a Scottish Executive-funded study of statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders on how

to meet the future needs of unpaid carers in Scotland. It made 22 recommendations including that benefit entitlements should be reviewed. The then [Scottish Executive responded](#) to the Care 21 Report in 2006, setting out priority actions in areas including respite, young carers needs, carer training and improving carers' health. On benefit provision, the Scottish Executive said they had written to UK Ministers. They also said they would develop a strategy on young carers.

The following looks at more recent policy initiatives.

## **Scottish Government Action**

[Getting it Right for Young Carers](#) is a joint strategy from COSLA and the Scottish Government for 2010-15. It does not have a particular focus on financial payments to young carers. It focuses instead on improved identification of carers, carer assessment, information and advice for carers, carer health and wellbeing, carer support and carer participation. It is supported by a multi-agency Implementation and Monitoring Group. The [2011 annual report](#) on the strategy described progress on all ten 'headline commitments.' The one most relevant to this petition is the [manifesto commitment](#)<sup>1</sup> to ensure that EMA takes account of the needs of young carers.

We will also work to ensure the EMA takes account of the needs of young carers, with more flexibility to recognise the particular pressures that some youngsters face balancing school and caring responsibilities.

## **Education Maintenance Allowance**

The Educational Maintenance Allowance is a devolved benefit for those at school or college aged 16 to 19 and is not taken into account in the calculation of UK benefits. It provides £30 per week for families with incomes under around £20,000.

Vulnerable young people are entitled to up to 4 years (up to age 21) of EMA and there is further flexibility in their attendance pattern and type of course. See [EMA Business Model para 2.1.2](#). While Looked After children and care leavers are automatically provided with this flexibility, local authorities have discretion about who else they define as 'vulnerable'. Guidance does mention those with caring responsibilities. This shows that the principle already exists of adapting EMA criteria to take account of special circumstances. It would not however meet the petitioner's wish to cover those under 18 but not in education or those under school leaving age.

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<sup>1</sup> This is one of a number of commitments to carers made in the 2011 Manifesto

## **Additional Support for Learning and Young Carers Annual Report**

The Scottish Government is required to report annually to Parliament on the implementation of the additional support for learning legislation. Published on 18<sup>th</sup> February, the report highlights a range of actions to support young carers in education including:

- funding the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance to provide 'toolkits' for schools.
- publishing the Young Carers Authorisations Card in six health boards to make it easier to share information with a carer about the person they care for
- funding the College Development Network to identify and support carers in further education
- funding health boards to develop carer information strategies.
- funding the young carers festival

The report highlights good practice in addressing the additional support needs of young carers in schools in five local authorities.

### **[Youth Employment Strategy](#)**.(2012)

The Scottish Government's youth employment strategy includes a focus on young carers. They will,

provide flexible support including incentives to employers to support 16-24 year olds from disadvantaged groups such as care leavers and young carers into jobs including Modern Apprenticeships

As a result, Skills Development Scotland is offering a £1,500 [employer recruitment incentive](#) for certain groups of young people, including young carers.

### **Scottish Parliament Action**

In 2008, the Equal Opportunities Committee held two roundtable meetings on the topic of unpaid carers. This was followed by a chamber debate on 25 February 2009 (S3M-3261).

A [Carers Parliament](#) was held at Holyrood in September 2012. There is a [cross party group](#) on carers which last met on 20th February 2013 where the discussion was on young carers.

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22 February 2013

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