

PE1470/G

Your Ref:

Our Ref: JAL/LH

3rd April 2013

Mr Stuart Todd
Assistant Clerk, Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Social Work Services

Woodbank,
30 Edinburgh Road,
Dumfries,
DG1 1NW

Any enquiries please contact
John Alexander
Direct Dial : 01387 260451
Fax : 01387 260453
E-mail : John.Alexander@dumgal.gov.uk

Dear Mr Todd

PETITION PE1470: ESTABLISHMENT OF A YOUNG CARERS GRANT

Thank you for your emailed letter of 13 March 2013 advising of the receipt by the Public Petitions Committee of this Petition, urging Scottish Government to establish a Young Carers Grant for carers in full time education, or who are under the age of 18.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is entirely supportive of the aims of this Petition. We have a very active Young Carers project in partnership with Princesses Royal Trust for Carers throughout Dumfries and Galloway and many young carers have raised this matter within our local Young Carers support groups. This issue was also raised by a number of Young Carers at the national Young Carers Festival held in 2012. There is no doubt that they feel disadvantaged with regards the limited financial support they are entitled to despite undertaking a great deal of care for a family member.

I note the point raised in the petition with reference to the Educational Maintenance Award being removed from some Young Carers due to their non attendance at school as a result of carrying out caring tasks and while I am not aware that this is an issue in Dumfries and Galloway this will be raised at our next multi agency Young Carers meeting to explore further. Please be assured if this is a recurring feature in our locality we will address this directly.

With reference to the matter of Young Carers grants to enable Young Carers to participate in full time education I do believe that this would be of great assistance to them. Many of our Young Adult Carers tell us that they have not been able to fully participate in further education due to the limited financial support they receive to enable them to do this. As a result many are unable to complete their first year of college due to trying to juggle their caring tasks with the demands of further education. Some Young Adult Carers also tell us that the travelling costs alone to return to family and friends can be significant but many remind us that it is essential for their peace of mind to maintain regular contact in order that they can concentrate on their studies. The conflicting tension of leaving loved ones to focus on their studies creates many dilemmas and the added complication of limited financial support only adds to this burden. In our discussions with Young Adult Carers many do not complete their further

educational studies but return to their caring tasks within Dumfries and Galloway. While this may not be their wish this is the reality within which they find themselves. Due to the identified unmet needs of Young Adult Carers we have in Dumfries and Galloway established Young Adult Carers support groups in the East and West of the region as Young Carers have told us there is nowhere to go for support post 18 years of age. Topics for discussions at their support groups primarily focus on social isolation, employment, further education, finances and their future.

Within Dumfries and Galloway we do have a Young Carers Strategy in which we are taking forward the national and local agenda to improve the outcomes for all Young Carers but this is a challenge in the current financial climate and it is felt that the impact of the welfare reform will only compound this for many Young Carers.

There is no doubt that Young Carers should be given every chance to participate in educational and employment opportunities in order to support them as individuals with their own dreams and aspirations for the future. The challenge to balance this pressure with their caring responsibilities is one that cannot be underestimated therefore any support which could be provided to help minimise this would be most welcome.

I trust these comments will be of assistance in considering the way forward.

Yours sincerely

John Alexander
Director of Social Work