

PE1470/W

Aberdeen City Council Letter of 25 June 2013

Local authorities:

- **What are your views / experience on the issues raised in the petition?**

Aberdeen City Council commissions Voluntary Services Aberdeen (VSA) to provide support to young carers via the Young Carers Project. VSA Young Carers Project currently provides a number of services for Young Carers from across Aberdeen City, working with Young Carers from the ages of 5 to 18, and between 60 and 80 clients at any one time.

The services which are provided by VSA Young Carers Project include:

- One to one support, regular after school and weekend respite opportunities and groups, activities during the school holiday. They also provide one to one and group education support for Young Carers, working with them to study for exams, catch up with school work and get a quiet place in which to do homework.
- Information and advice which is tailored to each individual's needs, including support for Young Carers and their families to access health and social care support – which can alleviate the child or young person's caring role.
- If VSA Young Carers Project thought that a Young Carer could qualify for help in getting a school uniform or EMA then they would provide their family with information on this and sign post them where necessary.
- They also provide a "transitions" service, which works with Young Carers from the age of 16 to 25. The aims of this service are to support these young people with issues such as going to college, university, applying for jobs, accessing training and more.

VSA Young Carers Project have responded to the petition as part of the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance, however they advise that:

- Young Carers in Aberdeen can be absent from school due to their caring role. For example, if they have to visit someone in hospital or stay at home to make sure someone is okay. This can mean missing out on EMA payments.
- Many of the Young Carers that VSA Young Carers Project work with come from families and backgrounds where finances can be very limited. The EMA payment is often the only way that Young Carers can get any financial assistance.

Whilst the comments from VSA Young Carers Project are noted, Aberdeen City Education, Culture and Sport service are unclear as to whether there is firm evidence that young carers are missing out from EMA payments. This may be anecdotal from the Carers project itself as they have not raised this with Education, Culture and Sport as a service or through the Achieving Our Potential Outcome Group. However, this is an issue that Aberdeen City Council will highlight with our EMA administrator.

- **How well do the policies aimed at supporting the needs of young carers work in practice?**

Children's needs are assessed In Aberdeen City using the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) Wellbeing Indicators, My World Triangle and Resilience Matrix to consider all aspects of their wellbeing and contribute to ensuring that every child is safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. A number of Young Carers will be identified and their needs assessed and met through these processes.

Within Aberdeen City the Integrated Children's Services Partnership has made improving the support and outcomes for young carers a priority. It works across agencies and services to promote activity that will fulfil that joint ambition.

In addition to services already highlighted the VSA Young Carers Project works with the school service to promote the needs of young carers to staff, identify young carers and provide individual and group work support.

Our Education, Culture and Sport Service have agreed a number of short term actions to improve the understanding of and communication with young carers. These include:

- Updating our *Supporting Learners in Aberdeen: A-Z Directory* with links to websites and resources suggested by VSA
- Hosting a seminar / workshop at a forthcoming 'Learning Festival' for VSA to do awareness raising and orientation on the issues and needs of Young Carers with school staff
- Identifying named individuals in each primary and secondary school to act in an interim period as point of contact for VSA, point of referral for school staff with concerns, and point of distribution for key resources and guidance
- Establishing a blog on Glow to share developments and discussion in working with Young Carers for school professionals

The longer term aims are to support schools to develop the necessary systems and structures to ensure support for the majority of Young Carers in their schools through a whole-school approach (universal service).

The role of the Young Carers Project will be more targeted (specialist service), looking to (a) add-value to school-based activity (i.e. through CPD, resource development, M&E), and (b) work with those 'high-tariff' Young

Carers the school refers on (following their own identification and assessment processes).

Finally, in consideration of the above it is felt that we should be supportive of this petition for the following reasons:

- Aberdeen City Council aim to promote, support and maintain Young Carers ability to access education.
- Young Carers can miss out on EMA payments, as there attendance can be poor due to caring responsibilities.
- There is evidence that identifies that some Young Carers experience economic deprivation as a result of their caring responsibilities and circumstances. The EMA payment is often the only way that Young Carers can get any financial assistance.

However, we trust that any further action to introduce a Young Carers grant is considered within the context of current economic climate and recent welfare reforms. This petition should be accompanied by adequate funding to ensure that local authorities are not obliged to remove funding from other services, many of which are already under pressure due to financial constraints, otherwise local authorities are unlikely to identify funding for such a grant.