

Joint Protocol for Young Carers and their Families

Issue Date	26 th August 2016
Review Date	26 th August 2019
Document Owner	Stuart Collins, Head of 0-25 Early Help and Preventative Services (North Kent)

1. Key principles

Young carers themselves, have identified that there should be “no wrong doors” for young carers and their families, when attempting to access support. Young carers should be identified, assessed and along with their families supported regardless of which service makes the initial referral.

1.1 In Kent, Adult Social Care, Public Health, Education and Young People’s Services and Specialist Children’s Services commit, through this protocol, to work together, adopting a whole system, whole council, whole family approach, to providing support for young carers and their families. We will achieve this through seamless working across directorates, and effective partnerships with health, schools and commissioned services.

1.2 Adult Social Care, Public Health, Education and Young People’s Services, Specialist Children’s Services and commissioned services will work together to fulfil their duties in law¹ and ensure that the following key principles¹ underpin practice.

- 1.2.1 *The starting point should be to assess the needs of the adult or child who needs care and support and then see what remaining needs for support a young carer in the family has.*
- 1.2.2 *The presence of a young carer in the family should always constitute an appearance of need and should trigger either an assessment or the offer of an assessment to the person needing care.*
- 1.2.3 *A whole family approach is key when assessing an adult needing care where there are children in the family providing care to the adult or undertaking wider caring responsibilities. The adult’s assessment and eligibility for support should take into account their parenting responsibilities and the functioning of the family.*
- 1.2.4 *Assessments should ascertain why a child is caring and what needs to change in order to prevent them from undertaking excessive or inappropriate caring responsibilities which could impact adversely on their wellbeing, education, or social development. It will be good practice to seek the views of children and adults separately, as it may be very difficult for children to say how they really feel in the presence of an adult who may also be the*

¹ Joint statement on key principles for supporting young carers made by DH and DfE (updated 2015)

person they care for.

1.2.5 *Consideration must be given to whether a young carer is a 'child in need' under s.17 of the Children Act 1989. The assessment must establish if they are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services and whether their health or development may be impaired if they or their family are not provided with support.*

1.3 These principles apply equally to all children up to the age of 18, recognising that young carers may require more focused support during the period they will be making the transition to adulthood. It is also intended that a consistent and coordinated approach is taken to identifying and supporting young adult carers aged 18 to 25.

1.4 Kent County Council's ["Supporting Carer" Policy and Practice Guidance](#) (April 2015) covers all aspects of carer assessments, eligibility criteria, support planning, personal budget, direct payments and reviews. The key messages of the "Supporting Carers" Policy supports the principles of this protocol. This protocol should be read in conjunction with the "Supporting Carers" Policy.

2. Our Understanding of a young carer

Our definition of a young carer is taken from section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014; "...a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work). For the purposes of this Protocol, this relates to care for any family member who is physically or mentally ill, frail elderly, disabled or misuses alcohol or substances. This protocol also applies to young adult carers aged up to 25 and the transition from children's services to adult care and support.

3. Identifying young carers and promoting well being

3.1 When assessing any family in which an adult or disabled child has needs that potentially could be supported by social care or health provision it will be the responsibility of the practitioners to identify the caring responsibilities of any (other) child or young person in that family.

3.2 To achieve this it will be important for practitioners to ask whether there are children in the same household as the person they are assessing and, if there are, to establish how much care and support is undertaken by them. This should be ascertained through discussions with any adult who is being assessed, other family members, including the child(ren) concerned.

3.3 Practitioners responsible for assessing people with care needs should identify how it will be possible to support the person in need of care so that children and young people are not relied on to provide excessive or inappropriate care.

3.4 It will be essential that the particular vulnerabilities and needs of children and young people are recognised. Practitioners responsible for assessing adults with care needs must be able to recognise and respond to risks to children's safety and welfare. They must know how to respond where they have concerns that children are, or may subsequently suffer significant harm.

4. Assessment

4.1 On the appearance of need, on request from them or their parent, all young carers under the age of 18 will receive an assessment of their needs for support. (Subject to the definition above) This will take place, regardless of who they care for, what type of care they provide or how often they provide it. Young carers, the person cared for and, if different, the parents of the young carer will be informed about the assessment process and we will ensure they are able to participate in the process as effectively as possible.

4.2 The primary responsibility for responding to the needs of young carers and young adult carers and ensuring an appropriate assessment rests with the service responsible for assessing the person they support, rather than the age of the carer. This means that:

4.2.1 Children's Services identifying young carers and young adult carers in households or family networks where a child or young person is being assessed for services must ensure that children and young people are not expected to undertake excessive and inappropriate levels of caring responsibilities that risks them becoming vulnerable.

4.2.2 Adult Services identifying young carers and young adult carers in households or family networks where an adult is being assessed for services must ensure that children and young people are not expected to undertake excessive and inappropriate levels of caring responsibilities that risks them becoming vulnerable.

4.2.3 If the assessing practitioner, from either Adults or Children's Services, identifies that the young carer may be in need of early help support, may be a "child in need" under the Children Act 1989 or there are safeguarding concerns practitioners must refer young carers to Early Help and Preventative Services or Specialist Children's Services in line with KCC agreed thresholds.

5. Whole family approach to assessment

5.1 A whole family approach will be the focus of the assessments. Every assessment will take into account and evaluate how the needs of the person being cared for impacts on the needs of the child who is identified as a possible young carer, or on any other child or on other members of the household. A thorough assessment centred on the family should result in appropriate support being provided for the person in need of care and support. This may result in the young carer being relieved of part or all of his or her caring role. Any remaining unmet support needs for the young carer should then be considered and responded to as appropriate.ⁱⁱ

6. Young carers needs assessment

6.1 No care or support package for a parent, other adult or sibling should rely on excessive or inappropriate caring by a young carer to make it sustainable.

6.2 When carrying out a young carer's needs assessment we will work to determine:

- the amount, nature and type of care which the young carer provides;

- the impact of the caring role on the young carer’s wellbeing, education and personal and emotional development;
- whether any of the caring tasks the young carer is performing are excessive or inappropriate having regard to all the circumstances
- whether a needs assessment of the cared for person (be they a child or adult) has been carried out, and if not, to request one;
- whether any of the young carer’s needs for support could be met by providing support or services to:
 - the person cared for [by the young carer]; or
 - another member of the young carer’s family.
- what the young carer’s needs for support would be likely to be if s/he were relieved of part or all of his or her caring role and whether the young carer has any remaining unmet needs.

6.3 When carrying out a young carer’s needs assessment, we will:

- ensure that the young carer or young adult carers voice is heard throughout the assessment
- ensure that the assessment is carried out in a manner which is appropriate and proportionate;
- adopt a whole family approach;
- ensure that any person who is to carry out a young carer’s needs assessment has sufficient competence, knowledge, skills and training to be able to carry out that assessment and be an appropriate person to carry out the assessment in the light of the young carer’s age, sex and understanding
- where considered appropriate or necessary to do so, consult persons with expertise and knowledge relevant to the young carer; and also to consult any person the young carer or their parent wishes to involve
- ensure that the young carer, the person cared for and, if different, the parents of the young carer are informed about the assessment process, usually prior to the assessment, and are helped to be able to participate in the process as effectively as possible.
- We will provide young carers, their parents and any person at the request of the young carer or their parent with a copy of the assessment with information about the actions to be taken including whether the young carer has been assessed as a “child in need” and confirming arrangements for review.

6.4 Where a young carer is thought to be in need of early help support, may be a “child in need” under the Children Act 1989, needing protection and support or needs, adult workers will discuss the case with Early Help or Specialist Children’s Services the Children’s Services to decide if further action is needed. Further action might include:

- a referral to a commissioned Young Carers’ service;
- accessing early help and preventative support.
- a joint assessment where appropriate (there is provision in the Care and Support Statutory Guidance and in Section 17 of the Children Act to combine a young carers assessment with that of the adult); or
- further investigation by Specialist Children’s Services about safeguarding concerns if there is a likelihood of significant harm to the child.

6.5 Where there are any aspects of a situation that indicates there are concerns about children’s and/or vulnerable adults’ safety and they require protection from harm these will be responded to

swiftly and in line with local safeguarding procedures. Typically, specialist children's services will undertake the provision of services or support to children in need and adult social care will undertake services and support to the adult. These may be directly provided or commissioned from other providers.

7. Information, advice and advocacy

7.1 Together with our partners, we will work towards a position where services are available to all young carers and their families offering information, advice, advocacy, representation and support. We will work with partners in the local community to ensure that information and advice for young carers is available in a range of appropriate settings and formats that are accessible by children and young people.

8. Transition to Adulthood

8.1 We will assess the needs of young carers as they approach adulthood wherever it appears that there may be 'significant benefit' to the individual in doing so or they or their parents/carers request this.

8.2 Young adult carers often find their education, training and employment prospects are challenged by their caring role. We will, therefore, consider how to support young carers to prepare for adulthood and to raise and fulfil their aspirations. This is regardless of whether the young carer currently receives any services and includes young carers whose parents have needs below the local authority's eligibility threshold.²

8.3 Where young carers are not eligible for services, the transition assessment will be followed up with good information and advice about support in the community.

8.4 We recognise that the power to join up assessments can be important at transition and where appropriate we will consider combining any existing Education Health and Care plans with transition plans and plans for the adult carer. When assessments are combined, we will as appropriate designate a named person to coordinate transition assessment and planning across agencies.

9. Information Sharing

9.1 Effective and timely information sharing between agencies, including health, is critical to empowerment, preventative work, supporting transitions and promoting the welfare of young carers. Within the framework of existing local information sharing protocols our aim is to ensure specific recognition of the position of young carers and their identification and support.

10. Safeguarding

Joint responsibility

² Paragraph 16.18 Care and Support Statutory Guidance; Issued under the Care Act. DH 2014

All practitioners are aware of local safeguarding policy and practice and accept a joint responsibility to work in partnership to identify and respond to any young carers who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

10.1 Early sharing of information is key if there are emerging concerns. No professional should assume that someone else will pass information on that they think maybe critical to the safety or wellbeing of any child or adult. If a professional has concerns about a child's or adult's welfare and believes they are suffering or likely to suffer harm or neglect then they should share the information with the local authority and, or, the police if they believe or suspect a crime has been committed. Information sharing should be in line with local agreements and Caldicott principles.

Local Safeguarding Boards

10.2 Local Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards will be made aware of issues surrounding young carers and of this Protocol. This is to ensure consistency with local multi-agency policies and procedures. This will also raise awareness of the way in which safeguarding work forms part of a continuum of person-centred and proportionate risk-based responses. We can all use these to ensure that those adults and children at risk of harm are kept safe and their welfare is promoted.

11. Putting these intentions into action.

11.1 Actions arising from this joint protocol will form part of our commissioning plan for carers and of a more detailed action plan. We will put in place arrangements for periodic audit and the provision of reasonable assurance to the Council, partners, young carers, their families and the community on how this protocol is being implemented. Feedback from young carers and their families will be an essential element of audits.

11.2 Programmes for learning and development will be put in place to raise awareness and understanding of young carers and their families. Training will be designed to support those undertaking young carers' assessments to have the necessary knowledge and skills. This should include ensuring that practitioners in the local authority and partner agencies are aware of the specific requirements concerning young carers of the Care Act and amendments to the Children Act and accompanying Guidance and Regulations.

12. Local Partnerships

There should be no "wrong doors" for young carers and their families. Young carers should be identified, assessed and their families supported in ways that prevent excessive or inappropriate caring and support parenting roles regardless of which service or agency is contacted first. Partnership working is key to providing joined up seamless services. This will include working with the NHS, voluntary organisations, schools, education providers (including further education), public health, housing and local communities to support young carers.

12.1 Work through the Local Health and Wellbeing Board and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which includes identification of the needs of young carers and young adult carers in the local area will inform the development of this work. The local Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy will include shared strategies for meeting these identified needs, setting out arrangements for working

together and the actions that each partner will take individually and collectively.

Andrew Ireland

.....

Corporate Director
Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

Patrick Leeson

.....

Corporate Director
Education and Young Peoples Services

This protocol has been ratified by the Appropriate Officers Group August 2016

The Health and Wellbeing Board August 2016

The Safeguarding Children Board August 2016

The Safeguarding Adults Board August 2016

Commencement Date: August 2016 Review Date: August 2019
(Review Date: normally 3 years from the date of commencement)

Note: Variations may be agreed to reflect changing legislative, policy and local evidence of what works best for young carers and their families.

Publication: This document will be placed on the Council’s website as part of our commitment to work together on these issues. It may be reproduced and used freely subject to acknowledgement. The logos used remain in the copyright of the organisations concerned. They may only be used where the document is reproduced as a whole but not in an edited or alternative form or within other materials.

Further information: can be obtained from the background notes for this paper and also from “The Care Act and Whole Family Approaches” 2015. . (See link to LGA website [Needs assessments and carers’ assessments](#))

^{i i} Responsibilities for identifying and supporting young carers are placed on the local authority as a whole. These responsibilities are set out in the Children’s Act 1989 (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014) and under the Care Act 2014. Section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 introduces new rights for young carers to ensure young carers and their families are identified and their needs for support are assessed. From April 2015 all young carers will be entitled to an assessment of their needs from the local authority. This new provision works alongside measures in the Care Act 2014 for transition assessment for young carers as they approach adulthood, and for assessing adults to enable a “whole family approach” to providing assessment and support. These obligations further explained in The Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015 and in Guidance related to both of these Acts and “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (DfE – 2015).

ⁱⁱ Further information and practice guidance is available in “The Care Act and Whole Family Approaches”. This was published by ADASS March 2015 in association with several partners and was commissioned by the Department of Health. (See link to LGA website [Needs assessments and carers’ assessments](#))