



Supporting young carers: The provision of county-wide support for young carers

Summary Findings and Recommendations

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1. Summary Findings

1.1 Young carers' needs

- Reflecting previous research, young carers reported a **wide range of different needs** which are likely to reflect the individual circumstances of young carers, including their age and their different caring responsibilities.

These included:

- Support with their caring role
- Emotional support
- To understand their family circumstances better
- To make friends, meet other young carers and understand other young people are in similar situations to themselves
- Free time to relax, socialise and experience new activities
- Being able to manage their caring roles alongside their education
- Life skills, including skills for dealing with money

1.2 Families' needs

- Families also had a diverse range of needs.

These included:

- A wider support network for them as a family
- Signposting to support and
- Information about the support available locally
- Improved family relations
- Emotional support and *knowing* that someone was there for their family
- A better understanding of their own family situation
- Parents knowing their children were receiving support, meeting other young carers and being given opportunities to 'be children'

1.3 What HYCA services do for young carers

- Support came about through individual support and group work.

Services provided:

- A 'package of support' and preventative working
- A break from caring
- Opportunities for activities
- Support at school
- Opportunities to meet and be with others in similar situations
- Information for young carers

1.4 What HYCA services do for families

Services supported families through a number of different approaches, with the overarching aim of supporting the whole family to improve the situation for the young carers.

Services:

- Provided support for the whole family
- Initiated and developed wider support for families
- Provided support through a Family Support Worker
- Supported families with their home or accommodation
- Supported families with finances
- Provided activities for the whole family
- Facilitated mutual support for parents

1.5 What HYCA services do for other stakeholders

Services:

- Supported and complemented the work of other services
- Trained staff and raised awareness of young carers locally
- Worked at a strategic level

1.6 What projects have changed for young carers

Projects have helped:

- Bring about a diverse range of impacts for young carers
- Young carers relax and reduce their stress
- Improve how young carers feel
- Young carers feel more confident
- Young carers make friends
- Young carers gain understanding and new perspectives about their situation and themselves as carers
- Young carers know they are not alone in being a young carer
- Young carers feel it is 'OK' to be a young carer
- Young carers gain a greater understanding and confidence about their caring role and what to expect
- Young carers develop social skills
- Bring about improvements in school for young carers

1.7 What projects have changed for parents and families

Projects have helped:

- Bring about a diverse range of impacts for parents and families
- Initiate support from other services
- Parents by providing support for their children
- Improve family relations
- Families have fun together
- Parents know there is support for them to turn to

1.8 What projects have changed for other stakeholders

Projects have:

- Supported and complemented the work of other services
- Increased the collective resource of an area
- Been a 'catalyst to support': Improving engagement of young carers and families with other services
- Bridged the support gap for young carers
- Increased the awareness and understanding of young carers

1.9 Important features of the young carer services for facilitating change

- Staff play an important role
- Skills, knowledge and experience of staff
- Projects provide specialist support for young carers
- Projects understand young carers and families
- Projects tailor support for young carers based on needs
- Projects provide consistent support for young carers and families
- Projects provide a range of support
- Clubs are 'not forced' and have a balance of structure and freedom
- Projects are relational
- Young carers feel safe, accepted and supported
- Guidelines are in place and there is no bullying
- Young carers are with other young people who understand them
- Services build trust with young carers and families
- Projects intervene early to prevent negative impacts escalating

1.10 HYCA services help facilitate change for young carers by:

- Providing opportunities for young carers to talk
- Providing opportunities for mutual support
- Enabling young carers to have fun
- Enabling young carers to be children or young people
- Giving young carers something to look forward to

1.11 Findings related to the collaboration between HYCA services

The collaboration:

- Increases provision for young carers
- Provides mutual support for services
- Brings consistency of practice and therefore:
 - Directly benefits young carers
- Enables services to share knowledge and resources

1.12 What is important for the development and success of the HYCA collaboration

A range of different areas for development was suggested by staff:

- Services living up to the initial agreement set out in the collaborative bid to the Big Lottery
- All services contributing to the development of the collaboration
- Consistency with recording data and developing more standardised guidelines and processes
- Ensuring efficient communication between services

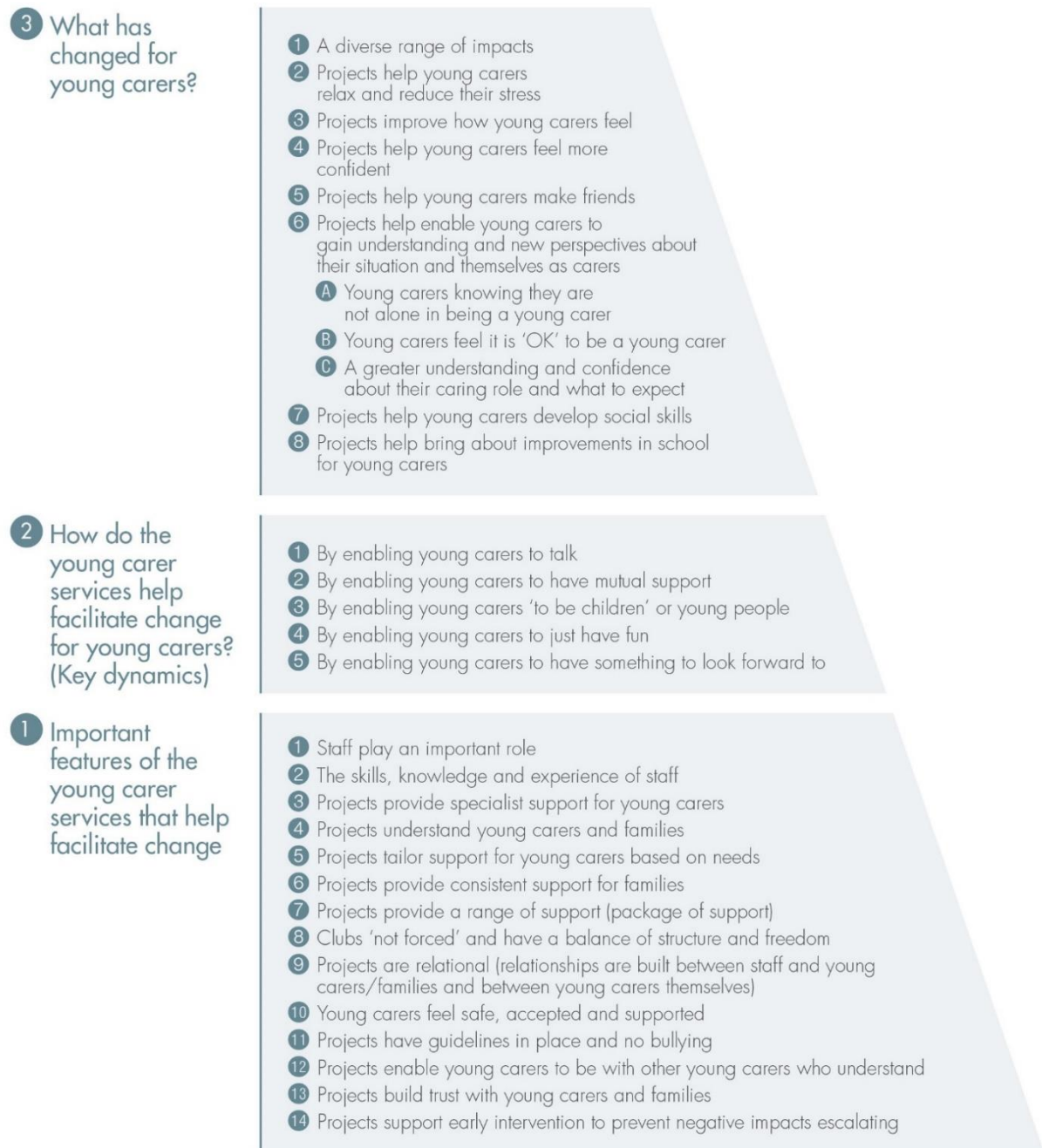
1.13 Concerns and challenges related to the HYCA collaboration

- The variations in the size and capacity of services
- Smaller projects might need to develop significantly more than others
- Services needed to understand the position of smaller projects and that it would take time for some services to build up their provision to the expected level
- The additional workload as a result of the collaboration
- Financial sustainability

2. Supporting Change in Young Carers: A model

The findings of this study have led to the following model (in development), that proposes a hierarchical structure for how change for young carers may be facilitated by the young carer services.

Figure 1: Supporting change in young carers: Model in development



Model in development,¹ by Daniel Phelps, University of Winchester:
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¹ Although this proposed model is focussed on changes for young carers, there may be some parallels to a corresponding model for changes connected to families. Several of the important

3. General recommendations for services

(For HYCA young carer services, but also relevant to young carer services in general).

3.1 Services and the workforce

- Develop service provision and criteria for accessing services that promote preventative working with young carers and families.
- Recognise the value of services having both specialist knowledge of young carers, and providing specialist support for young carers. Maintain these specialisms when developing services.
- Recognise the value of the character and skills of staff. Invest in regular training and development opportunities for staff.
- Recognise the value of providing a consistent service and aim to maintain a consistent workforce with a stable workforce.
- Continue to recognise the value of working in schools and develop collaborative models of practice that reach all schools in an area - both primary and secondary.
- Maintain or develop a strong presence in local schools to improve the awareness and understanding of school staff and pupils of young carers and the young carer service.

3.2 Supporting young carers

- Consult and listen to young carers regularly to understand their individual needs. Be responsive to those needs through targeted interventions for individuals and groups of young carers with common needs.
- Recognise the value of providing a diverse range of activities and opportunities for young carers.
- Aim to create a balance of structure and freedom within young carer clubs through a combination of regular structured activities and times and a comfortable space for young carers to 'chill out' with peers and 'be children'.
- Recognise the value of and provide regular and a range of opportunities for young carers to talk with adults and share experiences with peers.

features of the young carer service, for example, relate to both young carers and families (parents).

- Recognise the value of and provide regular and a range of opportunities for young carers to find mutual support with other young carers.
- Recognise the value of having a high staff/volunteer to young carer ratio to allow staff and volunteers to spend quality time talking and interacting with young carers within the groups.
- Recognise the value of and provide opportunities for young carers to take part in activities appropriate to their age and to have fun.
- Recognise the value of young carers gaining an improved understanding of their situation and develop different ways of facilitating this for example through information giving and discussion groups.
- Develop support for and improve ways to engage young carers with disabilities.
- Consider expanding support for younger carers under eight years old.
- Recognise the value of 'home-visits' for young carers and maintain or develop these as part of the service provision.

3.3 Supporting families

- Recognise the value of supporting families and maintain or develop further family support.
- Develop ways of reporting and measuring the level of support for families and measuring the impacts of supporting families.
- Recognise the value of the relational aspect of the HYCA service and maintain or develop ways that strengthen the relations between services and young carers and their families.
- Recognise the value of and maintain or develop opportunities for parents to meet with others and find mutual support.
- Recognise the value of and provide activities that enable families to have fun together.

3.4 Young carer clubs and activities

- Provide young carers and families with a programme of activities that gives them things to look forward to.

- Recognise the value of establishing clear and consistent guidelines for behaviour at clubs and in group work that young carers can sign up to.
- Recognise the value of staff interacting with young carers at clubs and activities and plan and develop the capacity of the project to enable staff do this.
- Recognise the value of regular club and activities for young carers and maintain or develop more regular clubs and activities.

3.5 Promotion of service

- Young carer services should develop more consistent and focussed messaging about its aims and its services, based on the research findings about what is important about the services and its benefits for young carers and families.
- Young carer services should strengthen its promotion of its services to young carers, families and professionals to ensure that that all stakeholders are aware and are clear about what the services offer, for example using leaflets, services' websites and service 'Open Days'.

4. Recommendations for the HYCA collaboration and its development

(Relevant to the HYCA Alliance specifically and those interested in the development of similar collaborations of services).

4.1 Strategic

- All services should prioritise the core areas for the development of HYCA that are required and/or set out in the collaborative bid to the Big Lottery:
 - HYCA as a collaboration and as individual services should prioritise the development and implementation of consistent and accurate data collection.
 - HYCA as a collaboration and as individual services should prioritise the provision of the 'Three-pronged approach': providing respite for young carers, support in schools and support for the family.
- Ensure the partnership agreement is sufficiently robust by including timescales for example and consider what actions should be taken where services are not hitting agreed targets.

- Re-evaluate and modify as appropriate, the HYCA partnership agreement on an annual basis.
- Develop an action plan, divide up tasks and assign different HYCA services with lead roles based on strengths and interests.
- Where possible, align the development of specific areas of work within individual services with other HYCA services.
- Agree on, and embed within HYCA's annual monitoring and review processes, a set of measures for how well HYCA is 1. Delivering a preventative whole family approach 2. Impacting individual young carers.
- HYCA should consider how best to support the development of those HYCA services with less infrastructure than the larger services. This might be achieved through a buddy system.
- HYCA needs to acknowledge the infrastructures of individual HYCA services and consider how best to allocate any future joint funding across services.
- Plan timescales for the development of HYCA that accommodate all HYCA services.
- Continue monthly HYCA meetings and consider establishing an annual 'HYCA away day' with focussed workshops for reviewing and planning purposes and targeted staff training.
- Using the HYCA audit undertaken as part of the study as a guide, agree on metrics for an annual audit and embed this within HYCA's annual monitoring and review processes.
- Develop ways to spread well-developed practice of individual HYCA projects across the other HYCA services. An audit of project strengths may be a useful initial phase.
- Develop a sustainability plan for the HYCA collaboration and identify opportunities for further joint funding bids at an early point.

4.2 Development of a consistent approach

- Carry out an audit of individual service processes and consider which of these should be standardised across HYCA services.

- Develop, implement and promote with stakeholders, standardised criteria for young carers and families to be supported by HYCA services.
- Develop a more standardised referral and assessment process across HYCA services: Implement and promote with stakeholders, standardised referral processes, guidelines and forms.
- Ensure there is consistency with defining and recording data across services.

4.3 Sharing practice and mutual support

- Consider new, creative ways to further develop opportunities for mutual support among HYCA staff.
- Seek collaborative ways of raising awareness of young carers across the county and sharing resources.
- Recognise the value of the character and skills of staff. Seek ways of undertaking joint staff training and development.
- Develop a shared HYCA knowledge bank of resources, tools and forms.
- Consider new, creative ways to further transfer practice between HYCA services, utilising the strengths of services in different domains.
- Capitalise on greater buying power when purchasing resources.
- Develop a joint HYCA county wide awareness raising strategy and action plan

4.4 Developing activities collaboratively

- Develop a shared bank of resources for activities and clubs and a shared contact list for activity providers.
- Plan and run more joint activities between HYCA services to enable young carers to meet other from different groups.
- Capitalise on greater buying power when booking activities and trips

4.5 Strengthening communication

- To improve communication and reduce workload, HYCA services should develop and implement an email protocol which includes timescales for responses

4.6 Promotion of service

- HYCA as a collaboration should develop more consistent and focussed messaging about its aims, its criteria for support and its services, based on the research findings about what is important about the services and its benefits for young carers and families.
- Further develop joint HYCA promotional literature for stakeholders.
- HYCA should strengthen its promotion of its services to young carers, families and professionals to ensure that that all stakeholders are aware and are clear about what the services offer, for example using leaflets, the HYCA and individual service websites and perhaps an annual HYCA 'Open Day'.



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