**Project Details**

**Project Name:** Young Carers – East Riding of Yorkshire

**Mentor:** Gail Teasdale

**Start Date:** 1/05/2024

**Summary/Abstract**

**Introduction**

The project aims to better understand and address the significant challenges faced by young carers in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Young carers are individuals under 18 who help look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug/alcohol problem. The impact of being a young carer includes emotional and physical strain, affecting their education, social life, and mental health.

**Central aim of your project**

The primary objective is to improve the identification, support, and lives of young carers in East Riding of Yorkshire. This involves extensive engagement with young carers, their families, and various stakeholders to understand their needs and challenges. The project not only seeks to raise awareness of East Riding young carers but create a baseline assessment of need to better inform strategic decision-making, enhance the future offer, engage stakeholders in a system-wide approach and measure future progress against agreed objectives.

**Methodology, results, conclusion**

The project utilised a comprehensive methodology involving surveys, data analysis, and focus groups with young carers and their families. National research was also examined to provide a broader context and further insight. Central to the success of the project was the active involvement of young carers and the formation of strong system partnerships.

The project concluded that there is a critical need for increased awareness and resources to support young carers in the East Riding. Recommendations include initiating further work to develop the service, improve access to wider services, and fostering a collaborative system approach to better support young carers and their families.

**Purpose and Overview of the Project**

**Problem the idea is seeking to solve or address (if any) and population group**

The primary problem this project seeks to address is the lack of adequate support for young carers in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The project aims to improve the identification, support and lives of young carers in the region through extensive engagement with young carers, their families, and various stakeholders to understand their needs and challenges.

Considering CORE20PLUS5 and the ongoing work to understand the profile of our residents in relation to each of the clinical areas, national research shows that as a many as one in five children may be unpaid carers. National research states:

* Over a quarter of young carers aged 11-15 regularly miss school.
* One in three young carers said that their caring role makes them feel stressed.
* That 23% of young carers in the UK said that their caring role had stopped them making friends.
* Eight out of ten young carers feel lonely during summer holidays.
* Children and young people living with a parent with poor mental health are the most at-risk group of developing mental health problems themselves.

Young carers, both nationally and locally, are still largely invisible and failure to identify and support them can negatively affect their health, educational experience, employability and social inclusion. This negative impact can also have long-lasting negative consequences for society. In addition, many aren't properly supported as they move into adulthood with around 87% not receiving the transition assessment, which is a legal requirement and helps them think about life after caring.

**What is the overall purpose of this project? Aims? Why it needs to be done? / Why it should be done now?**

**Immediate Needs and Challenges**

The 2021 census identified 547 young carers in East Riding, but this number is believed to be an underestimation due to stigma and fear associated with identifying as a young carer. National research suggests that as many as 1 in 5 school-age children are young carers. Addressing this under-identification is crucial to ensure that all young carers receive the support they need. However, many young carers do not recognise themselves as carers or are fearful seeking formal support which can make it difficult to identify local need; 39% of young carers nationally said nobody in their school was even aware of their caring responsibilities.

No single agency can be solely responsible for identifying young carers, as a range of people working and volunteering across health, care, education and VCSE settings might be the first contact for young carers and their families. GPs, teachers, mental health and substance abuse services, adult social care, hospital staff, and children’s social care might all identify hidden young carers during their day-today roles, so it’s important that they are asking the right questions and that the correct pathway is in place, to ensure families get the right support at the right time.

Of the census data for children in the East Riding aged 5-17 who indicated that they provide unpaid care:

* + 75 young people aged 5 to 9 were providing unpaid care
  + Over 20% were providing over 20 hours (119 out of 547)
* 9 carers aged 5-9 provided over 50 hours unpaid care a week.

In January 2024, following a review of the previous Children's Participation and Rights Service, the Voices That Influence team was established and given responsibility for the delivery of a new young carers service. The current East Riding young carers service is limited, with a part-time service manager and one full-time officer, relying on referrals and offering monthly groups and advocacy support.

Young carers face significant challenges, including emotional and physical strain, which affects their education, social life, and mental health. Immediate action is needed to mitigate these impacts and improve their quality of life. The current young carers service is limited in capacity and resources, affecting its ability to reach all young carers. Enhancing the support system now will ensure that young carers receive timely and adequate support.

There is a need for a more integrated and holistic approach to supporting young carers, involving multiple agencies and services. Beginning to scope and develop this approach now will create a sustainable support system that can adapt to the evolving needs of young carers. In addition, establishing sustainable funding streams and partnerships is crucial for long-term success and by acting now, the project can aim to secure the initial buy-in to develop the necessary resources and collaboration and ensure ongoing support for young carers.

Addressing the needs of young carers today will lead to better health, education, and social outcomes for them in the long term. This will also reduce the long-term impact on health and social care services and the system as a whole. Empowering young carers by involving them in the co-production and design of support services ensures that their voices are heard and that the system-wide support provided is truly reflective of their needs and aspirations. This approach may also foster a better sense of ownership and agency among our young carers.

The service has already made progress in identifying and supporting young carers in East Riding. Building on this momentum now will ensure that the team continues to make a positive impact. The Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 require local authorities to adopt a whole system, whole council, whole family approach. Implementing this project now aligns with these legislative requirements and ensures compliance with national policies.

Identifying young carers in our region and working closely with them to understand and deliver the things that would help and support them to pursue their goals and reach their potential would undoubtedly reduce health inequalities. The new CYPSSS Director Merlin Joseph is overseeing a significant programme of transformation and improvement and the offer for Young Carers is part of that.

The overall purpose of the project is to address the significant challenges faced by young carers in the East Riding of Yorkshire; ultimately to improve the identification, support, and lives of young carers by developing a comprehensive and sustainable support system that is responsive to their needs and aspirations. My role in this will be to establish a baseline of the current offer of support and ensure the voices of Young Carers are central to developing the future offer. I will undertake a young carers needs assessment with a view to identify and develop co-produced solutions directly with our young carers.

By addressing these immediate needs and challenges, the project aims to create a more sustainable and effective support system for young carers in the East Riding of Yorkshire, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time, enabling them to thrive and achieve their full potential despite the demands of their caring roles.

**Opportunities and Challenges**

**Opportunities**

* There is an opportunity to significantly improve the identification and awareness of young carers in the East Riding of Yorkshire. By increasing awareness among professionals, communities, and young carers themselves, more young carers can be identified and supported.
* Developing a more integrated and holistic approach to supporting young carers, involving multiple agencies and services, can provide comprehensive support that addresses the diverse needs of young carers and their families.
* Establishing sustainable funding streams and partnerships with internal and external partners can enable long-term planning and support for young carers. This includes exploring financial pathways and sustainable funding streams that enable long-term planning for support.
* Engaging with the community and involving young carers in the co-production and design of support services ensures that their voices are heard and that the support provided is truly reflective of their needs and aspirations.
* Supporting young carers to maintain access to education and have greater aspirations for their future can lead to improved education and employment outcomes. This includes raising education and employment ambitions for young carers from an early age.
* Creating a comprehensive approach to young carers that includes clear governance and procedures can support the Care Act's 'whole family' approach and ensure earlier identification of more young carers and inappropriate caring duties.

**Challenges**

* One of the main challenges is the under-identification of young carers due to stigma and fear associated with identifying as a young carer. Many young carers and their families may not realise that they are young carers or may fear the consequences of identifying themselves.
* The current young carers service is limited in capacity and resources, affecting its ability to reach all young carers. There is a need for additional resources and capacity to provide comprehensive support to all young carers in the region.
* Young carers face barriers in accessing support due to the rural nature of the region, limited resources, and the need for transportation. There is a need for a simplified, digital referral pathway that enables the young carers officer to spend more time with young carers and reduces the significant amount of travel across the county.
* Developing a more holistic and integrated approach that considers the whole family and provides flexible support based on individual needs is a challenge. There is not currently a county-wide support offer, and opportunities have been identified to bolster this.
* Establishing sustainable funding streams and partnerships is crucial for long-term success. There is a significant opportunity to establish financial pathways and sustainable funding streams that enable long-term planning for support.
* Extensive engagement with stakeholders has highlighted the need for a more integrated and holistic approach to supporting young carers, involving multiple agencies and services. Ensuring effective collaboration and coordination among stakeholders is a challenge as system pressure and capacity can limit internal and external partner contributions.

**Theory of Change**

**The desired outcomes of the project are:**

* Empowerment of young carers by involving them in the co-production and design of support.
* Increased identification of young carers and raised awareness among professionals, communities, and young carers themselves about the impact of caring roles on young carers' lives.
* Development of a more integrated and holistic approach to supporting young carers, involving multiple agencies and services.
* Establishment of sustainable funding streams and partnerships to enable longer-term planning and support for young carers.
* Support for young carers to maintain access to education and have greater aspirations for their future.

**The key inputs required for the project include:**

* Engagement with young carers, their families, professionals, and community organisations to gather insights and feedback.
* Collection and analysis of data from surveys, assessments, and stakeholder feedback to inform decision-making and measure progress.
* Strong project management, governance and leadership to oversee the delivery of the project and ensure alignment with strategic goals.

**The key activities in the project include:**

* Conducting surveys, assessments, and stakeholder engagement to gather data and insights on the needs and challenges of young carers.
* Involving young carers in the co-production and design of support services to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met.
* Scoping a more integrated and holistic approach to supporting young carers in future
* Engaging with stakeholders to gather feedback, build partnerships, and ensure a collaborative approach to supporting young carers.

**The expected impact of the project includes:**

* Improved health, education, and social outcomes for young carers, reducing the long-term impact on health and social care services.
* Establishment of a sustainable support system that can adapt to the evolving needs of young carers.
* Empowered young carers who have greater aspirations for their future and are better able to manage the demands of their caring roles.
* A clearer and more accessible future offer with streamlined processes, a holistic system-wide approach and maximised capacity within the Voices That Influence team.

**The key outputs of the project include:**

* A comprehensive baseline assessment report that provides data and insights on the needs and challenges of young carers.
* Regular stakeholder engagement events to gather feedback, build partnerships, and ensure a collaborative approach.
* Commitment to develop integrated and holistic to supporting young carers, involving multiple agencies and services.

**Desired results of the project**

This project was initiated in response to the Health Equity fellowship, alongside the Voices that Influence service as they began to scope out their new service offering. The project is led by me and the Voices That Influence Service Manager, supported by the wider team and with additional capacity provided by the Healthwatch Youth Engagement Project Officer. I will work with the Voices That Influence team to undertake a baseline assessment and begin developing a new offer which will:

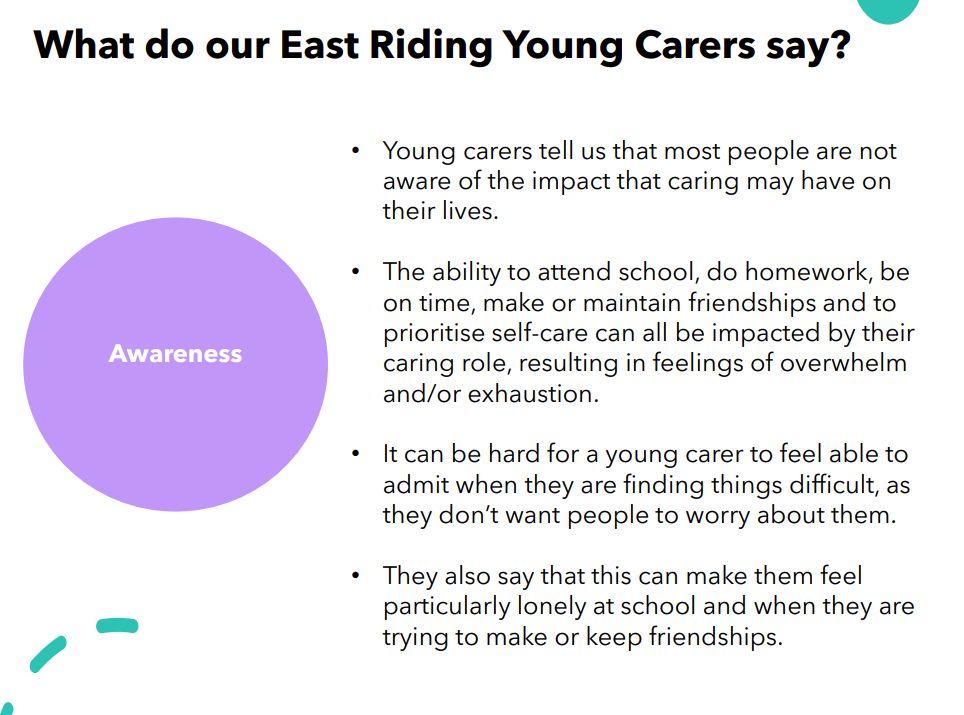
* Increase identification of young carers in the region.
* Raise awareness to reduce the stigma of being a young carer.
* Initiate development of a holistic and integrated support system involving multiple agencies.
* Improve service accessibility through digital opportunities and streamlined processes.
* Initiate the establishment of sustainable funding and partnerships for long-term support.
* Empower young carers by involving them in service design.
* Support young carers in maintaining education and raising future aspirations.
* Initiate a call to action for a comprehensive young carers strategy
* Achieve better health, education, and social outcomes for young carers.
* Establish a sustainable support system adaptable to evolving needs.

**Brief description of methodology used**

The Young Carers project employed a comprehensive and participatory methodology to gather data, insights, and feedback from young carers, stakeholders, and existing services.

Central to the ongoing discussions around Young Carers and the future offer, **is the inclusion of young carers themselves.** Extensive engagement with stakeholders, including young carers, their families, professionals, and community organisations, was conducted to gather feedback and insights. The project team collected qualitative data through focus groups and sessions with young carers. This provided valuable insights into their experiences, needs, and aspirations. Their voices and experiences were central to shaping the project offer and ensuring that the future support provided is truly reflective of their needs. Young carers told us that they often face significant challenges, including:

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* The project team conducted surveys to gather data on the needs and challenges of young carers. This included a Healthwatch survey, and subsequent Healthwatch report which then informed the overall Young Carers baseline assessment to establish a starting point for understanding the current context and support available to young carers.
* The project team collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders, including health, education, social care, and voluntary sector organisations. This involved stakeholder engagement events and the Healthwatch surveys. A robust feedback loop was established to continuously gather insights and feedback from young carers and stakeholders. This ensured that the project remained responsive to the evolving needs of young carers and allowed for continuous improvement. As part of this, we asked East Riding young carers what it is like to be a young carer and what could we do to make things better. Both videos below were developed and created by young carers at the East Riding young carers support groups, with support from the Voices That Influence team, in their own words. The first (A day in the life) is from the older group and the second (Thor the Cat) was made by the younger children:  
    
  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y39TERf0u9g> – A day in the life of a Young Carer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83bN1PkYBrM> – Thor the Cat

A screenshot of a web page

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* The project applied population health principles and East Riding Health and Wellbeing Board Conditions of Living model to ensure a holistic approach to meeting the needs of young carers. This focussed stakeholders on the wider determinants of health by considering various factors influencing health and wellbeing, including social networks, socioeconomic status, education and transport.
* The project employed the IPC commissioning cycle and Integrated Commissioning for Better Outcomes framework to ensure a strategic commissioning approach. This structured process identified needs, planned services, and reviewed outcomes, promoting effective resource allocation and collaboration between agencies for a holistic support system.

**Body of the report**

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The 2021 census reported 547 young carers in East Riding, with varying levels of care provided. The census data for young carers in the UK may be underreporting the true number of young carers for several reasons, including stigma and fear associated with identifying as a young carer. The data shows that more than half of young carers provide less than 9 hours of care per week, while over 20% provide more than 20 hours of care per week. The number of hours of care provided increases with age, with older children reporting higher proportions of unpaid care.

There is not currently a county-wide support offer and young carers face barriers in accessing support due to the rural nature of the region, limited resources, and the need for transportation. There is a need for a more holistic and integrated approach that considers the whole family and provides flexible support based on individual needs.

I have now conducted and created a comprehensive baseline assessment, gathering data and insights on the needs and challenges of East Riding young carers. The baseline assessment provides an overview of the current context and needs of young carers in East Riding. It includes feedback from stakeholders and survey results, identifying gaps in provision and highlighting the need for better support, training, and data sharing. The assessment outlines commitments to act on feedback and provides a solid foundation of data and insight to inform system-wide decision-making and strategic planning for young carers' support.

Young carers in East Riding have highlighted four common themes: awareness, identification, access, and education. They feel that most people are unaware of the impact of their caring roles, face challenges in identifying themselves due to stigma, struggle to access the right support, and experience negative impacts on their education. Young carers have shared their experiences and insights, which are invaluable in shaping a more effective support system.

Feedback from stakeholders highlights the need for better data sharing, training for professionals, and improved support for young carers. Stakeholders have identified several challenges and gaps in the current provision and have also made pledges to young carers and identified existing services or offers of support beyond the young carers service.

The project has highlighted the need for a more efficient and holistic referral and assessment process. The team has started to scope, re-design, and develop a comprehensive support offer that focuses not only on reactive services but also on prevention and early intervention across the whole system. Work is underway to develop a more integrated and holistic approach to supporting young carers, involving multiple agencies and services, which will streamline the referral and assessment pathway to reduce duplication. The project has also highlighted the importance of raising education and employment ambitions for young carers from an early age and has established a more sustainable support system that can adapt to the evolving needs of young carers as they age.

The project has also highlighted the need for increased awareness among professionals, communities, and young carers themselves about the impact of caring roles on young carers' lives. The project team engaged with over 200 professionals and stakeholders, including young carers, their families, and service providers. This engagement has been crucial in gathering feedback, building partnerships, and ensuring a collaborative approach to supporting young carers. It has also raised awareness among professionals, communities, and young carers themselves about the impact of caring roles on young carers' lives. This will hopefully contribute to increased awareness and identification of young carers in our region.

The project has empowered young carers by involving them in the co-production and design of support services. This ensures that their voices are heard and that the support provided is truly reflective of their needs and aspirations. This has helped to build their confidence and resilience, enabling them to thrive and achieve their full potential despite the demands of their caring roles. By addressing the needs and challenges of young carers, the project has created a more sustainable and effective support system for young carers in the East Riding of Yorkshire, ensuring they receive the right support at the right time and enabling them to thrive and achieve their full potential despite the demands of their caring roles.

Although the long-term impact of the project is yet to be seen or measured, it is hoped that ultimately it will have a positive impact on the health, education, and social outcomes for young carers. In addition, by improving the identification and support for young carers, it hoped that the project will also help to reduce the long-term impact on health and social care services.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings and insights, here are several recommendations to improve the identification, support, and lives of young carers in the region taken from the baseline assessment:

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**Conclusion**

The project has been a significant initiative aimed at addressing the challenges faced by young carers in the region. The original ambition of the project was to improve the identification, support, and lives of young carers by establishing a baseline so that a comprehensive and sustainable support system that is responsive to their needs and aspirations could be developed.

The young carers project team, alongside system partners and young carers, have made significant strides in beginning to develop an integrated approach to deliver a comprehensive, effective and holistic offer for young carers. Engagement with young carers and stakeholders has been pivotal, ensuring that the voices of those directly impacted by this unique, and often hidden, role are leading at the forefront of this project.

The baseline assessment will enable informed, data-driven decisions to be made which will utilise budget and resources more efficiently across the system and improve the wellbeing and outcomes for young carers. Discussions around the development of a new delivery model have begun and a scoping exercise has already commenced.

It is expected that this work will be handed over to a project lead by April 2025, when my involvement in the project is due to end upon completion of the fellowship. Resource to lead the project from April onwards will be identified and a governance route established via the Early Help Partnership Board in the coming months, as the project enters its next phase and development the new operating model begins. Whilst it is not yet clear what the new delivery model will look like, it is very clear from the work undertaken so far that some key areas to be addressed through its development are:

* Whether the service is in the right place and how this work links with the ongoing transformation programme in Early Help.
* The need for a simplified, referral pathway that enables the young carers officer to spend more time with young carers and reduces the significant amount of travel across the county, enabling the officer to spend time linking with schools and other agencies, raising awareness and delivering groups in more locations.
* Development of a county and system wide offer of support that is on a level with other areas e.g. a system-wide carers strategy, short breaks, discounted activities and young carers grants.
* A county wide approach to supporting young carers in education settings e.g. a school mentor or link role
* Transition pathways and further collaboration with the ASCH Carers Support Service e.g. co-location or co-working cases.
* Financial pathways and sustainable funding streams that enable long-term planning for support which goes beyond the current offer and is accessible by other agencies e.g. VCSE partners could bid for funding that is not available to local authorities’ and administer and deliver elements of support to East Riding young carers.

Stakeholder insight and feedback found evidence of some incredible achievements, highlighting that there are partners who have a lot to offer and share both in terms of knowledge and good practice. It is evident from the feedback received so far that those attending engagement events are moved and inspired by East Riding young carers and the work undertaken through the project so far. More importantly, there is a strong desire from stakeholders to improve and increase identification, awareness and support

To build on the success of the project, maintaining the collaborative spirit and willingness from all stakeholders to respond and adapt, as well the establishment of longer-term project management and governance resource, will be essential for achieving good, sustainable outcomes for East Riding Young Carers.

The resilience, strength, and determination of East Riding young carers is substantial and awe-inspiring. They are not only enduring personal challenges with remarkable fortitude but are pivotal in shaping a future support system that meets their unique needs. The involvement of young carers in the co-production and design of support services has been particularly impactful; their input has been invaluable in guiding efforts towards the creation of a system that is both relevant and responsive and in shaping a future offer that better reflects their needs and aspirations.

The messaging surrounding young carers is beginning to ripple through the system and is creating wider awareness, evidencing some progress in elevating their voices and needs in a short period of time. Further planned activity will build on this momentum and hopefully sustain the shared commitment to young carers as the project evolves into its next phase.

The success of the future offer relies on all partners not just simply hearing the voices of young carers but actively responding to their insights and acting on what they tell us. It is through this collaborative and responsive approach that we can ensure the continuation of a comprehensive and effective support network for young carers, both now and in the future.