

Young Carers

Their thoughts on health and social care needs



Survey Report
November 2014

Background

Healthwatch is the independent consumer champion for health and social care. Our job is to promote the consumer interest for everyone who uses health and social care services. We gather the views and experiences of local people through a multitude of methods including surveys, research, and by listening to the concerns, comments and compliments of people we meet at events, drop-in points and workshops, and by monitoring calls to our office.

Healthwatch County Durham wanted to find out the experiences of young carers (aged 5 to 18) and young adult carers (aged 16 to 25) when they accessed local health services, in order to identify whether services and professionals are meeting the needs of young carers. To explore this, Healthwatch County Durham created a survey for young carers which asked what they thought about their local health services based on their own experiences. In total we collected 41 responses from two young carer organisations – Family Action’s The Bridge Young Carers Project and Disc’s Horizon project who support young adult carers. We entered all completed surveys into a prize draw and two young people won a £25 voucher of their choice.

The following report describes what we asked young carers, what we found out and what health services might do better to support young carers in the future.

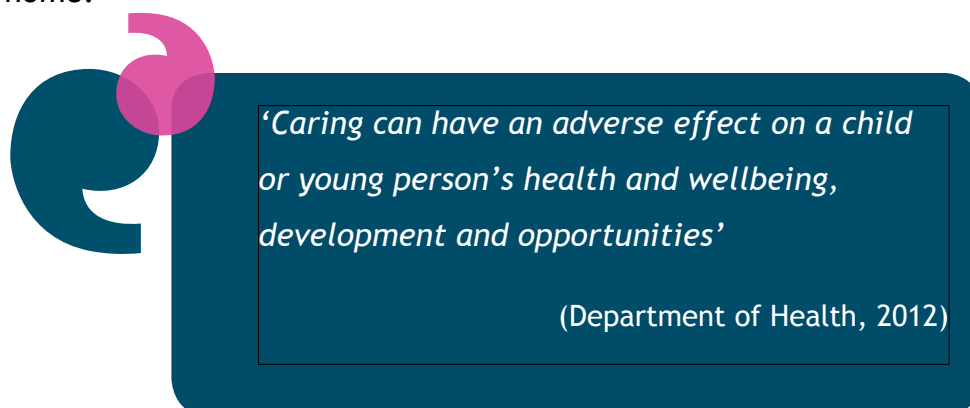


‘Young carers are children and young people who often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult’

(Carers Trust, 2014)

What did we ask?

Healthwatch County Durham wanted to find out what young carers were experiencing when they visited their local health services. Literature suggests that close attention needs to be paid to young people who have caring responsibilities at home:



We asked young carers 20 questions about their caring role and their experience of visiting their GP practice, pharmacist/chemist, hospital, dentist, optician and social services (see survey at Appendix 1).

What did we find out?

We received 41 responses from young carers aged between 7 and 23. Most respondents were aged 10 and 14, were from East and North Durham and were part of The Bridge Young Carers Project. The majority of the young carers who completed the survey care for their mother or their father.

When asked, *'on a scale of 1 to 10, how do you think being a carer has impacted on your life?'* (10 having a huge impact) most respondents circled 6 and 9, highlighting that their caring responsibilities have a large impact on their life. In support of this when respondents were asked, *'how would you feel if this service (young carers) wasn't there?'* Most commented that they would have negative

feelings; *'upset', 'frustrated', 'unsupported, stressed' and 'lonely'*. Only one young carer commented that they would be *'fine'* if the service wasn't there.

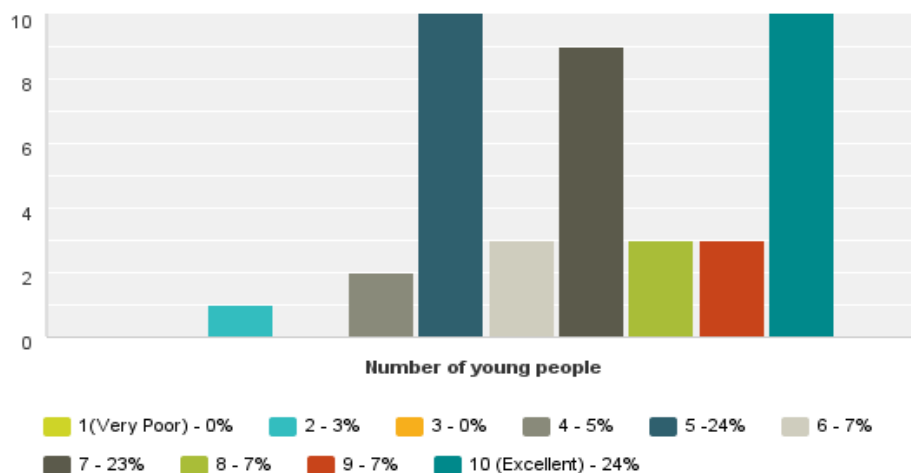
About their GP Surgery

We asked respondents 6 questions about their experiences of visiting their GP surgery, and we found out the following;

- 39% of young carers are not keen on calling their GP
- 44% of young carers are happy to speak to a receptionist
- 46% of young carers are happy to speak to their GP
- Nearly half of the respondents said their surgery was aware that they were a young carer (47%)
- Most young carers rated their GP surgery 5 or above (91%). (See graph below).
- 10 young carers said that 'nothing' would make their GP experience better. Other responses were, 'to understand more and not feel abandoned', 'more helpful on the phone', 'kinder staff' and 'more relaxed GPs' and 'more appointments'.

Q11 On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very poor and 10 being excellent, how would you rate your surgery?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 0

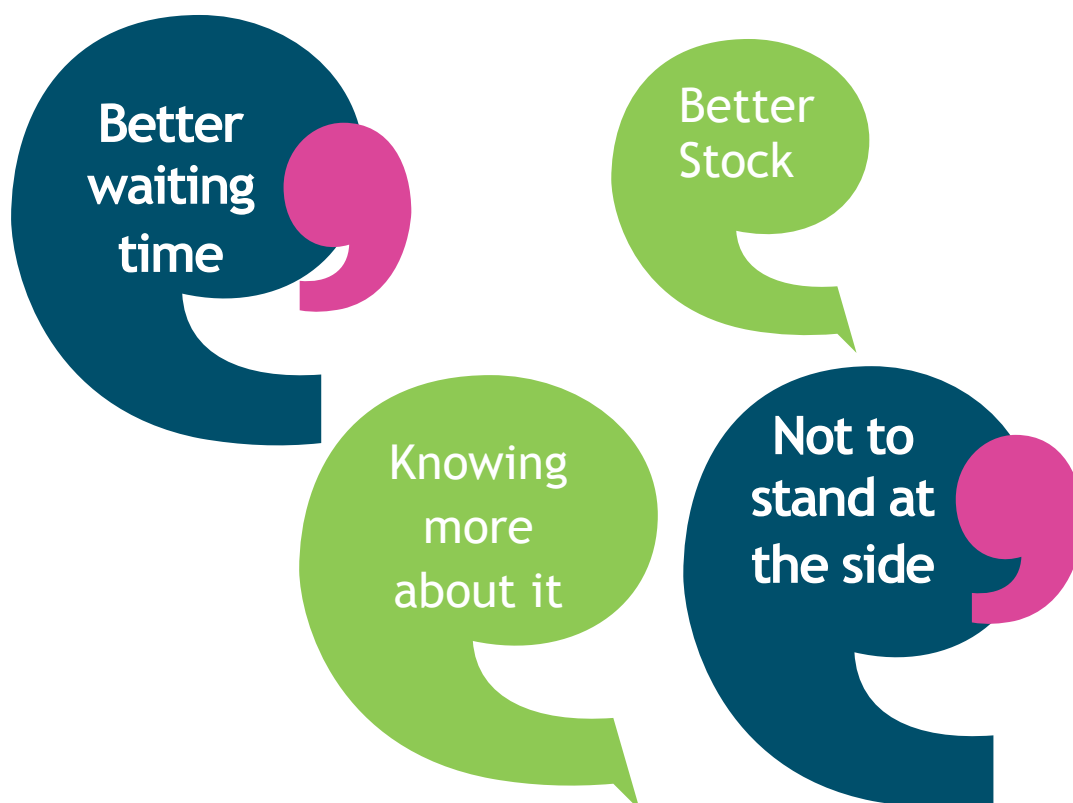


About their pharmacy/chemist

We asked respondents 4 questions about their experience of visiting their local pharmacy or chemist. We found out the following:

- Most young carers (75%) do use their local pharmacy/chemist
- 45% of young carers are happy to pick up prescriptions
- 45% of young carers are happy to speak to pharmacy staff
- Most young carers rated their chemist a 7 or above (68%)
- To make their experience of visiting their pharmacy/chemist better, 8 young people commented that there should be a 'better waiting time'.

Other suggestions included:




Using other health and social care services

We asked young carers to rate their experience of other health and social care services on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being excellent). We also asked them to state if there was a particular reason attached to their rating. We found the following:

Hospital

10 young carers rated their experience of visiting hospital as 'excellent'. All but 2 of the 41 respondents rated their experience of hospital as above 5. These were some of the responses collected:



'Misdiagnosis, lack of care' (rated 3, unknown hospital)

'Some of the staff are unprofessional' (rated 5, Bishop Auckland)

'Staff were lazy, not on time' (rated 7, Victoria Royal)


'Slow to come and see you and don't know what the pain you and your family are going through' (rated 9, Bishop Auckland)

'Kind and experienced staff' (rated 10, Peterlee)

'Short waiting time when there' (rated 7, Chester-le-Street)

Dentist

11 young carers rated their experience of visiting the dentist as 9 out of 10. All but 3 of the 41 responses were rated above 7; these were some of the responses collected:



'They understand you and your family, and talk to you not your mum and dad' (rated 10, Darlington)

'Made me feel comfortable' (rated 10, Peterlee)

'Friendly, they try to tell you all the information and options possible' (rated 10, Framwellgate Moor)

'Scared of dentists' (rated 8, Seaham Smile)

'I hate dentists' (rated 1, unknown)

'Nice and clean' (rated 9, Consett)

Optician

12 out of the 41 respondents did not answer the survey question about their experience of opticians. This may be because they had not yet visited an optician for a check-up. However, out of the 29 responses received most young carers rated their experience of visiting the optician as 10 (11 ratings). All but 2 responses were rated above 5, however 2 responses rated their opticians 1. One negative response from a young carer was collected:



'One of the opticians treated people disrespectfully' (rated 1, Village Optician in Newton Hall)

Those who did rate their optician fed back mainly positive comments, Specsavers in particular received good feedback:

'Excellent service' (rated 10, Specsavers Peterlee)

'Skilled and comfortable environment' (rated 10, Specsavers Peterlee)

'Fixed my eye sight' (rated 10, Specsavers Consett)

'Friendly, short waiting time' (rated 8, Framwellgate Moor)

'They talk to you and feel welcome to come again' (rated 10, Darlington)

'Staff are friendly' (rated 8, Shewans Optician)

Social Services

24 out of the 41 respondents did not answer the survey questions about their experiences of social services. This may be because they have no past experience with social services or because they were not familiar with the terminology. 17 young carers rated their experience of social services and there was no strong pattern to the results.

'Wasn't comfortable, not enough info' (rated 4, unknown)

'Deceitful and talk a load of rubbish' (rated 1, CIN)

'Poor relationships with child services, don't believe children should care for parents' (rated 3, unknown)

'Poor communication with GP and with organization which affected their agreement to keep my service with them confidential' (rated 4, Mental Health Talking Changes)

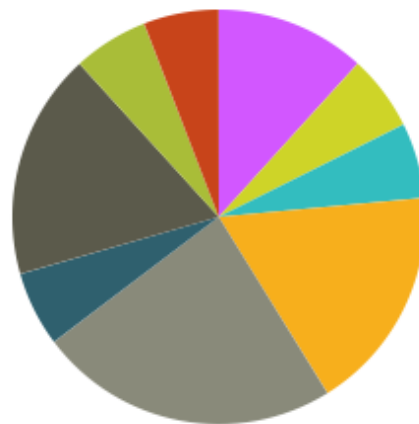
'Poor communication between settings' (rated 4, unknown)

'I can't get access to social services help, even though I need their help' (no rating)

The chart shows that what young carers rated their experience of social services. 6 comments were collected which were all negative:

Q20 Please rate your experience from 1 to 10, with 1 being a very poor experience and 10 being an excellent experience.

Answered: 17 Skipped: 24

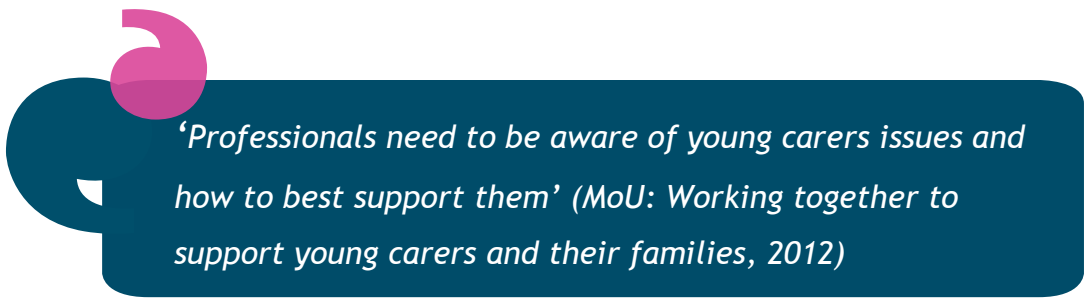


1 (Very Poor) - 6% 2 - 6% 3 - 6% 4 - 18% 5 - 24% 6 - 6%
7 - 0% 8 - 18% 9 - 6% 10 (Excellent) - 6%

Conclusion

From our 2014 young carers survey, these were our main findings and suggestions as to how young carers could be better supported in County Durham:


- Young carers do not like telephoning their GP practice; therefore another form of contact for young people, such as text messaging or social media may be more suitable and well used.
- GP practices should be aware if a young person has a caring responsibility at home. This is supported by a report by directors of children's and adult's services for a local Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for young carers which states how:



'Professionals need to be aware of young carers issues and how to best support them' (MoU: Working together to support young carers and their families, 2012)

- If GPs are aware of a young carer's responsibilities, they can inform young carers of what further support is available in their community and to offer regular check-ups for young carers to prevent any mental or physical illnesses occurring. Healthwatch is able to help with signposting to community services and support.
- Having a named member of staff as the point of contact for young carers information (for colleagues and service users) should be put in place throughout all GP practices.

- Young people should be better informed about the roles of hospitals, opticians, pharmacists/chemists and GP surgeries, and at an early age. Some young carers in the survey were unaware of what the terms ‘opticians’, ‘chemist’ or ‘GP’ meant, and where their local service was. This is something that could be rolled out in schools; a ‘health information’ event.
- Young carers identified that there should be a better waiting time in pharmacies, and that it would be better if they didn’t have to stand to the side.
- There were mixed responses of hospitals, but it was commented that staff can be unprofessional and had lack of care.
- Dentists -It is important for children and young people to be made to feel comfortable when visiting dental practices, and to be given information to put them at ease prior to their visit.
- Most young carers who responded to the survey did not feedback a response about their experience of visiting an optician. This may be because they are yet to have an eye test, they are unsure the name of their optician or that they can’t remember. From this study Healthwatch is keen to explore what the average age is for young people to visit an optician and whether eye checks are carried out in schools at a particular age to prevent later eye problems. As highlighted by the NHS:



‘Routine eye tests are necessary because children with vision problems may not realise it themselves and any problems are often much easier to treat if detected while a child’s vision is still developing (usually up to about seven years of age)’

(NHS Choices, 2014)

- The most negative feedback reported in the survey was around young carers' experiences of social services. There needs to be better communication between services and more information for young people about what services of support are available in County Durham.

Thank you

Healthwatch County Durham would like to thank Family Action's The Bridge Young Carers Service and Disc's Horizon Young Adult Carers Project for participating in this research.

Healthwatch will continue collecting feedback from young carers groups in County Durham, and hopes to conduct another survey in the future to identify whether there have been any changes to health services to improve the experience for young carers and their families.

References

- Carers Trust (2014) 'What is a young carer?'
<https://www.carers.org/what-young-carer>
- Department for Health (2012)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/299270/Young_Carers_pathway_Interactive_FIN_AL.pdf
- Working together to support young carers and their families (2012) MoU
http://www.youngcarer.com/sites/default/files/imce_user_files/PTP/mou_young_carers_2012.pdf
- NHS Choices (2014) 'Why hearing and vision tests for children are needed' <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hearing-and-vision-tests-for-children/pages/why-it-is-necessary.aspx>

Appendix 1

Healthwatch County Durham wants to know what you think about your local GP, pharmacy and other health services.

Please answer these questions from your own experience – whether you were using these services for yourself or for the person you care for.

Return the completed questionnaire in the envelope provided - no stamp needed. We must receive your entry by Friday 5 September 2014.



About you

1. How old are you?
2. Who are you the carer for?
3. Why does this person need your help?
4. Are you the only carer for this person, or does someone else help?
5. For how long (number of years or months) have you been a carer?
6. Roughly how many hours of care do you give?
..... hours per day or hours per week
7. Which GP surgery are you registered with?
8. Are you a *registered* carer?
9. On a scale of 1 to 10, how do you think being a carer has impacted on your life?
no impact > > > > > > > > > huge impact
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

About your GP surgery:

- | | Happy to | Neutral | Not keen |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 10. How do you feel about calling your GP surgery? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. How do you feel about speaking to a receptionist to arrange an appointment? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. How comfortable are you in speaking to your GP? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 13. Does your surgery know that you are a young carer? | Yes <input type="radio"/> | | No <input type="radio"/> |
| 14. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your GP surgery?
very poor > > > > > > > > excellent
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 | | | |
| 15. What would make your experience of visiting the GP better? | | | |

About your pharmacy/chemist

16. Do you use your local pharmacy/chemist (either a separate shop or at the GP surgery)? Yes No

17. How do you feel about picking up prescriptions from your local pharmacy? Happy to Neutral Not keen

Are you comfortable speaking to the pharmacy staff?

18. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your pharmacy/chemist?
 very poor > > > > > > > > excellent
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. What would make your experience of visiting the pharmacy better?

.....

Using other health and social care services

In the last year which of the following have you been to (either on your own or with the person you care for)? Please rate your experience from 1 to 10, with 1 being a poor experience and 10 being an excellent experience.

20. Hospital (which one?)

very poor > > > > > > > > excellent
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Any particular reason?

21. Dentist (which one?)

very poor > > > > > > > > excellent
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Any particular reason?

22. Optician (which one?)

very poor > > > > > > > > excellent
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Any particular reason?

23. Social Services (which department?)

very poor > > > > > > > > excellent
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Any particular reason?

Finally

How can we contact you if you win the prize draw?

Email: Tel.

Healthwatch County Durham
The Work Place
Heighington Lane
Aycliffe Business Park
Newton Aycliffe
County Durham
DL5 6AH

Telephone: 01325 375967
Freephone: 0808 8010384

Email: info@healthwatchcountydurham.co.uk
Website: www.healthwatchcoudydurham.co.uk

