

## Young People not just Young Carers

Healthwatch Derbyshire wanted to help identify, support and recognise the role of carers in the community.

To do this we released a discussion paper in September 2014. This paper looked at the experiences of 100+ carers in Derbyshire from August 2013 - August 2014.

The aim of the paper was to start a discussion about the needs of carers, and work with service providers and commissioners to determine how best those needs could be met.

There were 8 categories in the report, and one of these was 'Support for Young Carers'.

When the report was presented at the Health and Wellbeing Board on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015, Prem Singh, Chairman of Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Trust (DCHS), expressed his concern at the experiences of young carers outlined in the paper, and was keen that these experiences should be used as a catalyst for change.

Following on from this Tanya Nolan, Engagement Officer at Healthwatch Derbyshire, was contacted by DCHS with the view to jointly co-ordinating a series of Young Carers' Summit Meetings to examine in more detail the issues that 1,600+ young carers in the County were facing.

The first Young Carers' Summit Meeting was organised for the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2015.

It brought together key agencies from health and social care, local authorities and public health, NHS commissioning and the voluntary sector.

The aim was to kick-start greater awareness of the plight of young carers.

Prem Singh, who opened the event, said, "One of the priorities is to ensure that young carers' voices are heard because people just don't know some of the challenges they face. We owe a debt to all the inspiring young people who show great strength in their informal role as carers."

"We know they can miss out on lots of things, like being able to develop friendships, and feeling isolated. We need to be able to spot the needs of young carers early and to find ways to support them. It doesn't always require money, sometimes it's just about how we work."

All participants committed themselves to raise awareness within their own organisations, and to look for opportunities to extend the support available to young carers. There was a request that each representative at the meeting makes a pledge to improve the lives of young carers. This was a realistic pledge, i.e. one that could be implemented under the current austerity measures. The hope being that each individual pledge would come together to create one big step forward in improving young carers' lives. All attendees were remarkably positive about making their pledge. Below are some of the pledges made:-

"To put the needs of young carers at the heart of the Derbyshire Community Health Services Family Centred Care project."  
(Mary Heritage, Assistant Director of Quality and Professional Lead for Allied Health Professions).

"DCC Adult Care and CAYA commissioning will create a relevant service specification that addresses need for young adult carers aged 17 to 25 years of age."  
(Susanna Williams, Commissioning Manager Young People).

“To make Derbyshire Young Carers ‘Chill Out Days’ massive and to create more publicity around young carers to raise awareness.”  
(Jane Sheppard, Public Health Development Worker, Bolsover Healthy Neighbourhoods Team).

“To develop a local awareness campaign for young carers within primary and secondary care.”  
(Louise Swain, Head of Patient Experience North Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group).

“Build young carers into the carers pledge with GPs.”  
(Narinder Sharma, CEO Derbyshire Carers Association).

“Derbyshire Youth Council will send a paper to cabinet to secure a young carer’s seat on the youth council.”

Joint event organiser, Mary Heritage, Assistant Director of Quality for DCHS, said following the event, “We all have a lot more understanding about the needs of our young carers as a result of bringing everyone together for the summit. We now have three months before we come back to hold everyone to account for how they have honoured their pledges.”

The date for the next meeting was set for 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015. At this meeting agencies from across Derbyshire met again and key people from health and social care gave updates as to how they were carrying their pledge forward.

More professionals joined us at this event and there was a real sense that people were committed to their pledges. People valued the networking opportunity and the chance to improve their knowledge and understanding of young carers issues.

“A very good networking event and the opportunity to dove-tail with others to ensure better services for young carers.”

“Excellent diversity of partner agencies.”

“A great way to find out about the support that young carers can access.”

Young carers also attended the event, and Katy spoke to the audience about how it felt to be a young carer and the issues that she had experienced.

Further pledges were made at this event, including Rachel White from NHS England who made a ‘personal’ pledge to pay for ice creams for every young carer that went on a planned trip to Skegness.

To conclude this piece of work a ‘Young Carer Celebration Event’ has been scheduled to take place on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2016, to celebrate the success of the partnership, and award certificates of recognition to those you have brought their pledge to life.

We hope that the momentum of enthusiasm continues to perpetuate to improve the lives of young carers. There are many unidentified young carers living in Derbyshire that come into contact with health and social care services, some of which may not want to be identified as a young carer, others may not even be aware that they are classed as young carers, they are just doing what they think they have to do. But if we keep raising the awareness of the difficulties that young carers face, then we can make a big difference to how they are supported.