

Children's Prepared Response

1. Difficulties engaging with school

We know that young carers ordinarily face challenges balancing their carer role with good attendance at school and in some cases this has been compounded through Covid-19. The school improvement team is championing the needs of vulnerable groups and the imperative for children in those groups to continue with face-to-face education in schools during the lockdown period, wherever possible. The Department for Education definition of vulnerable groups now highlights young carers and this is assisting in raising the profile in schools. The school improvement team is engaged in quality assurance work, looking at the effectiveness of both face-to-face teaching and remote learning during lockdown, with vulnerable groups being a key focus of this activity in schools. To support engagement further, young carers can be prioritised for digital support to assist any remote learning – see below. Work is also on-going with schools through the DfE 'Well-being for Education Return' initiative and again young carers are highlighted as a priority group to benefit from this work.

- Ensuring families and parents are aware that Young Carers can attend school and where barriers to attendance have occurred, support the family and school as appropriate.
- In some cases (particularly in the 1st lockdown), supported families using COVID legislation to ensure places at education establishments were made available.
- Advocating on the Young Carer's behalf to liaise with school to raise the issue if necessary. Including discussing school place if Young Carer particularly struggling or vulnerable.
- Actively encouraging attendance at school to ensure that Young Carer has respite from caring activities.
- Providing phone/video and face to face support to talk with the Young Carer about school and what would help them engage in their schoolwork.
- Proactively asking all families about concerns with schoolwork and what support may be needed.
- Supporting the Young Carer to ensure that there is time away from their caring role in the home to be able to concentrate on schoolwork.
- Grants and localised funding helped to provide a limited number of laptops/tablets on a loan or, in some cases, permanent basis.
- Further signposting to support schemes for IT equipment and alternative teaching resources.

2. Digital exclusion

Over the last two terms, Hampshire schools have either received or are in the process of receiving in excess of 10,000 digital devices. Young carers who do not have access to technology at home should approach their school and ask whether they can be assigned a laptop so that they can access online learning. If carers' families have no access to the Internet or limited data, there are a number of schemes available where schools can request additional access for families. For

additional data please go to this link: [increase mobile data allowances](#). For access to WiFi dongles go to this link: [request 4G wireless routers](#).

3. An increase in young carers' responsibilities at home

- Offering 1-1 support via phone, text, zoom etc.
- Face to face support in some circumstances, this has been 1-2-1 or in small groups following the [NYA Guidelines](#).
- Talking regularly with parents and signposting to other organisations that may be able to provide additional or focussed support if identified.
- Ongoing work with school and social care, as appropriate, to ensure welfare checks are in place and escalating any major concerns.

4. Financial pressures

Through the COVID Winter Grants funding, the families of many young carers received a £15 per child per week voucher for groceries as a result of being eligible for free school meals and/or being open to early help services and/or having a social worker.

For those young carers who did not receive a voucher via this route, schools and colleges were also provided with a discretionary grant to provide direct financial support to families they identified as in need. This included some young carers and their families.

Any family struggling with energy/fuel bills are able to access financial support through Citizens Advice as a result of grant funding through the Covid Winter Grant Scheme.

Furthermore, and to ensure all young carers were able to benefit from the Winter Grants funding, a grant of £6,000 was made to the Hampshire Young Carers Alliance for them to provide food hampers and support across Hampshire.

5. Breakdown of support networks

- Online activities throughout lock-down have been run by all projects/services which have given Young Carers the chance to see their friends, relax and have some fun doing a mixture of arts and crafts, baking, quizzes, and games.
- Where possible and appropriate, there has been some face-to-face group activity following the [NYA Guidelines](#).

6. Impact on young carers' mental health

- Online workshops delivered to Young Carers and families including mindfulness, mental health and wellbeing, tai chi, dealing with anxiety and stress and supportive coping mechanisms for Young Carers and their families.
- Signposting to support services and online web resources such as CAMHS and mental health/emotional wellbeing services locally and nationally.

Adults Prepared Response

Hampshire County Council recognise the contribution that all Carers have made before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report illustrates some of the ways in which Carers have made sacrifices to protect those they care for. By doing so, they have also helped the wider health and social care system immensely, not just in Hampshire but across the whole country. The continued recognition and support of Carers is fundamental to overcoming the challenges ahead.

In light of the impact national restrictions have had on service provision and informal networks, we understand that many carers may need our support now more than ever. As part of the local emergency response re. COVID-19, Hampshire County Council Adults' Health and Care established a multi-agency Bronze Carers Group. This multi-agency group continues to bring together organisations that represent and support Carers, social care practitioners and operational managers, so that we can continue to work in partnership, in adapting and developing the most effective, locally tailored way of supporting Carers, now and going forward.

We are grateful for those Carers who took time to share their experiences via the Healthwatch Survey and always welcome the opportunity to further understand the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and families. We are keen to ensure that the insights offered from the survey respondents are interconnected with feedback and developments already underway via other local channels such as the Hampshire Carers Partnership and those who are working with a range of Carers on a daily basis.

Hampshire County Council Adults' Health and Care colleagues continue to actively work with other members of the Carers Partnership, to enable developments in the local recognition and support for Carers, including the approach to Carers Assessments and service delivery projects such as those focused on the options available to enable Carers to have a break from their caring role.

Local organisations/providers of support and services, many of which Hampshire County Council fund via grants or directly commission, have shown great creativity and professionalism in adapting service provision during this unprecedented time. The network of carer support organisations offer friendly, expert advice and practical support.

This practical support currently can include a one off payment from a 'Carers Wellbeing Covid Fund'. This is recent funding from Central Government, which Hampshire County Council decided to make available for residents who are Carers. This is recognising the additional impact of caring pressures due to COVID-19, whether that be emotionally, physically or mentally. The fund is being actively promoted and we ask that the information is also included within your Healthwatch website and if possible shared directly with those who took part in the survey. The latest press release and promotional material will be shared with you.

The ‘Carers Wellbeing Covid Fund’, other support and information can be accessed via the contacts listed below:

The Hampshire Coronavirus Support & Helpline - 0333 370 4000 (calls charged at local rate)

Andover MIND - 01264 332297 (select option 3). Monday to Friday: 9am – 5pm.
enquiries@andovermind.org.uk

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers in Hampshire - 01264 835246. Monday to Thursday: 9am - 5pm / Friday: 9am - 4.30pm. info@carercentre.com

Carers Together - 01794 519495. Monday to Friday: 9.30am-1.30pm (answer machine outside these hours). admin@carerstogether.org.uk

For information and general advice visit <http://www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/>

This Healthwatch report will inform our commitment to supporting local Carers and we look forward to working with Healthwatch and other partners as the recommendations are followed-up.