

# Renfrewshire Council Social Work Children's Services Partnership

## Young Carers' Strategy



Renfrewshire  
Council

# 1. Introduction

Carers of all ages play a vital role in the provision of care to loved ones and make an enormous contribution to Renfrewshire as a whole. Carers generously give their time to those they care for and without them we would all be worse off, both economically and socially. In recognising the role carers play in providing unpaid support to family and friends, we also recognise the impact this caring has upon carers' physical health and wellbeing.

Young carers tell us that they value their caring roles and are proud of the contribution they are able to make to their families. Many young carers report feeling a sense of achievement and purpose and some say that their caring role has helped them to develop greater maturity and responsibility than their peers.

In Renfrewshire we want to support and celebrate the valuable role played by young carers within their families and communities. At the same time, we want young carers to have the same opportunities as their peers and this means ensuring that no child or young person has caring responsibilities inappropriate to their age and stage of development.

The starting point for this strategy is a recognition that young carers are children and young people first and foremost. Accordingly, our approach for young carers is aligned to the Getting It Right For Every Child framework which underpins all of our work with children and young people across Renfrewshire.

## The following GIRFEC principles underpin this strategy:

- » Safeguarding, supporting and promoting wellbeing
- » Keeping the child or young person at the centre
- » Taking an holistic, whole child approach
- » Building on strengths and promoting resilience
- » Promoting opportunities and valuing diversity
- » Providing help that is appropriate, proportionate and timely
- » Supporting informed choice
- » Working in partnership with families

We have consulted with our local young carers and considered national research about children and young people who undertake caring roles. The voice of young carers is reflected within this strategy. The strongest messages were that young carers want help at the earliest possible stage and they want to be supported to get on with their caring with the minimum disruption to their lives, and they want to be able to enjoy everyday activities with their peers.

This strategy sets out how we will work together to deliver these aspirations for our young carers.

## 2. Legislative & Policy Context

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 aims to ensure better and more consistent support for both adult and young carers to enable them to continue to care – if they wish to do so – in better health and to have a life away from their caring role.

The Act, which commences in April 2018, places a number of new duties upon local authorities and health boards which build upon previous carer legislation and national strategy documents such as 'Caring Together: The Caring Strategy for Scotland 2010-2015' and 'Getting It Right for Young Carers' (2010).

### **The new duties as regards young carers are:**

- » Duty to prepare and review Young Carer Statements;
- » Establishment of local eligibility criteria for services for young carers;
- » Duty to provide support
- » Duty to involve carers in carers' services
- » Duty to prepare a carers' strategy
- » Duty for each local authority to establish and maintain an information service for carers and to produce a short breaks service statement.

### **The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 can be found here:**

[www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Unpaid-Carers/Implementation/Carers-scotland-act-2016](http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Unpaid-Carers/Implementation/Carers-scotland-act-2016)

### 3. Our Vision

We have the same aspirations for our young carers as we have for all children and young people in Renfrewshire:

*"By 2023, we will get it right for every child and young person by ensuring that they live in a positive and inclusive environment, have the best start in life, are confident, healthy and free from disadvantage."*

#### **Renfrewshire Community Plan.**

The Children's Services Partnership Plan (2018-2021) sets out how we will get it right for all children and young people. For young carers this means having access to the same opportunities as their peers, being protected from inappropriate or excessive caring, and having access to any additional help they may need to safeguard, support and promote their wellbeing.

We will achieve this through our GIRFEC approach: placing the young carer at the centre; holistic, strengths-based assessment; effective partnership working; and the delivery of timely and high quality services.

## 4. Strategic Priorities

Our strategy for supporting young carers covers six key priorities:

1. Early identification and early intervention
2. Safeguarding, supporting and promoting wellbeing
3. Preventing and protecting young carers from excessive and inappropriate caring
4. Building resilience and preparation for the future
5. Improving outcomes and measuring impact
6. Rights based approach

## 5. Delivery Model

**The new Act creates an opportunity for Renfrewshire and our planning partners to refresh and consolidate our support to young carers.**

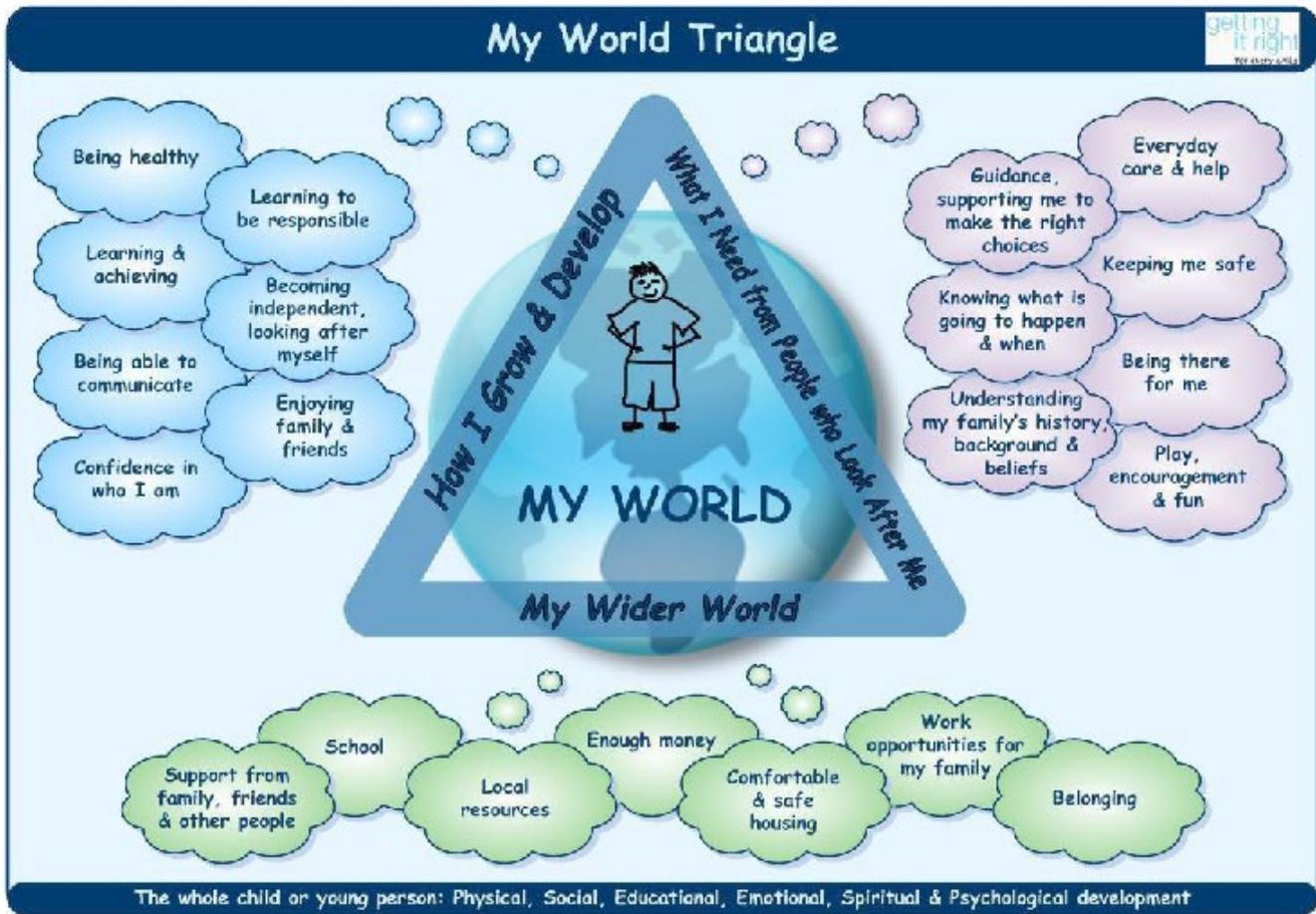
Our new 'Young Carer Pathway' will ensure that young carers are identified at the earliest opportunity and are signposted to a single point of contact for advice and support. We have developed a mobile app for young carers which brings together information about their rights and explains Renfrewshire's 'offer' to young carers in an accessible, multi-media format. The new pathway will mean that young carers are offered a Young Carer Statement and can access information and support regardless of which service identifies their caring role.

We have created a new post of Young Carer Social Worker who will be the co-ordinate all Young Carer Statements. The Social Worker will work in partnership with our commissioned service at Renfrewshire Carers' Centre to deliver a suite of high quality interventions to progress young carers' personal outcomes. The Social Worker will also support partner agencies to improve their awareness of young carers and develop preventative approaches to minimise the impact of caring responsibilities upon children and young people.

**The GIRFEC national practice model is embedded across Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership. It is used on a single and multi-agency basis and provides a consistent, common language approach for the assessment, planning and meeting of children and young people's wellbeing needs.**

Our Young Carer Statements use the 'My World' assessment tool and assess individual young carer's needs in terms of SHANARRI indicators. By aligning our Young Carer Statements with Children's Services single child's plan framework, we can ensure that young carers receive the same high quality assessment and support as is provided to all children and young people with wellbeing needs across Renfrewshire.

The GIRFEC approach facilitates measurement of both the level of caring activity and the impact of caring upon the child or young person's wellbeing. In so doing, it enables a timely safeguarding response to those children and young people who are undertaking excessive or inappropriate care.



The development of our new approach to young carers also presents an opportunity to strengthen the working relationship between children's and adults' services and to develop a shared protocol to ensure smooth pathways to information, advice and support for young carers and their families.

## 6. Who are our young carers?

The Act defines "carer" as an individual who provides or intends to provide care for another individual (section 1)

### A "young carer" is defined as a carer who:

- A. is under 18 years old, or
- B. has attained the age of 18 years while a pupil at a school, and has since attaining that age remained a pupil at that or another school.

(section 2)

Every caring situation is unique and every young carer has different needs, experiences and priorities. Any child can potentially become a young carer at any time as a result of an accident or sudden illness of someone in their family. It may be a gradual process or a sudden change in circumstances. Caring responsibilities may be for short periods of time or for many years. The wellbeing of the person needing care and support might change on a daily basis.

Care may include advocacy, regularly helping with or supervising of daily activities such as washing, cooking, shopping, personal care, giving medication and emotional support and companionship.

The term does not apply to the everyday and occasional help around the home that may often be expected of or given by children in families and is part of community and family cohesion.

### Young Carers in Renfrewshire

The children's wellbeing survey, undertaken in Renfrewshire in late 2016/early 2017 found that there are 227 children and young people aged nine to 15 years who identified themselves as young carers. We estimate that there are another 237 young carers aged 16 to 19 years living in Renfrewshire.

### A study undertaken by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health on behalf of the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board in 2017 found that young carers were:

- » more likely to receive free school meals, and live with just one parent
- » twice as likely to report having a limiting illness or disability themselves when compared with non-carers
- » have poorer physical and mental health outcomes, particularly among those caring for someone with mental health or addictions issues
- » less likely to see themselves entering further or higher education, even when taking into account background factors and the presence of household illness.

The study concluded that the factors most commonly associated with children and young people undertaking caring roles include higher levels of deprivation, adults with long-term health conditions (including substance misuse) and lone parent households. Renfrewshire has disproportionately high population of residents affected by these issues.

In the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board area, almost 1-in-8 secondary pupils surveyed reported that they provide care to a loved one. A third of those providing care said no one knew about it.

## Hidden Carers

It is well established in national and local research across Scotland and the United Kingdom that a large number of young carers are 'hidden' from services. The recent study by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health found that almost one third of young carers conceal their status as carer. There are many reasons for the under-identification of young carers. From a young carer's point of view the reasons may include: fear of unwanted intervention within their family; fear of being 'different' and bullying; unhelpful previous experiences of seeking or receiving help; as well as a degree of reluctance on behalf of the cared-for person to seek help. Sometimes young carers simply might not be 'heard' by professionals who fail to see the signals.

In many cases, young carers do not seek help because they do not identify as 'carers'. They see their role as 'normal' and feel there is nothing special or unusual about helping a loved one. It is just a part of being a son, a daughter, a sister or brother or grandchild.

*[Glasgow Centre for Population Health, August 2017, Young carers in Glasgow: health, wellbeing and future expectations, Robison, O., Egan, J., & Inglis, G.]*

## 7. What is the impact of being a young carer?

Caring for a loved one is a demanding role for any carer, but especially so for young carers. Young carers' physical health and emotional wellbeing can be adversely affected by their caring role and they tend to experience poorer outcomes in terms of education and employment. Many young carers report feelings of isolation arising from their inability to join their peers in extra-curricular and leisure activities.

### **A Scottish Government commissioned review of young carer research and data found that:**

- » More young carers have worse self-reported health than non-carers and fewer have 'very good health'.
- » A long term health condition or disability is more common amongst young carers and young adult carers. It is unknown if and how this may be related to their caring role.
- » Tiredness and feeling 'run-down' is a physical impact that many young carers have reported in various studies.
- » Young carers and young adult carers are twice as likely as young people generally to report a mental health condition (2011 Census).
- » There is considerable evidence to say that young carers are more likely to suffer from anxiety, stress and depression.
- » Young carers may find it harder to participate in social activities which may contribute towards feelings of isolation.
- » Studies have also shown that young people often find benefit in their care-giving experience.
- » Caring may adversely affect a young person's education but there is inconsistent evidence on the extent of the impact. This may be due to school attendance issues, or experiencing tiredness or bullying.

## 8. What do young carers want?

In the course of developing this strategy, we have undertaken extensive consultation with our local young carers who receive support at Renfrewshire Carers' Centre. The over-riding message from our young carers was that they want to be able to enjoy the same activities and have the same experiences as their peers with our caring responsibilities. Our young carers wanted professionals to see beyond their caring role and to understand their lives as children and young people first. Many carers spoke about the sense of pride they feel in their caring role and a desire to be acknowledged and respected by adults for the contribution they make to families and communities. However, another group of young carers spoke about feelings of embarrassment and unease about identifying themselves as young carers because they feared stigmatisation and ridicule.

In terms of what would help them to better balance their caring role with their desire to be 'a normal young person', our young carers told us that they would like more opportunities to take a break from their caring role. Most young people simply wanted to be able to spend a few hours a week with friends and taking part in local clubs and sporting activities, or visiting Braehead shopping centre.

Our young carers felt that to be able to participate in these social activities, they would require support with the cared for person and to overcome barriers such as travel and financial restraints. It is also important to the young people that they are able to continue to attend residential trips with other young carers as they felt that this is a good support and a welcome break.

## 9. Achieving the Vision

To achieve our vision, the following actions will be delivered during 2018-2021 through the Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership:

### Priority 1: Early Identification, Recognition and Early Intervention

**We want to get it right for all children and young people with caring responsibilities and this means that we must be able to identify these children and young people at the earliest possible opportunity in order to provide the right help and support.**

#### We will meet this priority by:

- » Agreeing a working definition of young carer which sees young carers as children and young people first and foremost.
- » Delivering training to all partner agencies to ensure staff understand the requirements of the new Act and have the skills they need to identify and support young carers.
- » Ensuring all frontline staff understand that many young carers are hidden from view and training staff to see the signs and ask the right questions
- » Appointing a 'young carer champion' in partner agencies who has responsibility for raising awareness and maintaining young carer issues as a priority within frontline service delivery
- » Providing accessible information for children, young people and families about services that support parenting capacity, independence and wellbeing
- » Establishing procedures which enable young carers to be identified at the earliest opportunity (whether by their school teacher, family GP, health visitor, a social worker or someone else) and signposted to a single point of contact for preparation of a Young Carer Statement
- » Working with our partners at Renfrewshire Carers' Centre to ensure timeous provision of personalised support to young carers

#### Timely and effective support for young carers and their families can make a real difference to their lives by:

- » Reducing isolation, marginalisation and anxiety
- » Building resilience
- » Managing feelings of stigma and shame
- » Keeping families together
- » Maintaining school attendance and promoting attainment
- » Enabling continuing education and training and employment
- » Helping to prepare for the future
- » Ensuring that caring responsibilities are appropriate to individual's age and developmental stage

### Key messages from research and consultation with local young carers suggests that:

- » Without early identification, young carers' disclosure tends to happen at crisis points
- » Young people appreciate professionals who give them space to build trust as well as the choice to talk, what to tell and at what pace
- » Young people want consistent relationships with professionals – they want to get to know someone and feel able to call on them for help and support when needed

## Priority 2: Safeguarding, Supporting and Promoting Wellbeing

### Why is this a priority?

Our consultation with young carers highlights the significant impact caring has upon the individual's ability to share the experiences enjoyed by their non-carer peers. Our young carers told us that they want to simply have fun and have time away from their responsibilities doing the kinds of things their non-carer peers do, like going to the shopping centre or to the local pool.

We know that caring responsibilities can get in the way of young carers' wellbeing. Local and national research shows that many young carers experience considerable stress and poorer physical emotional wellbeing than their non-carer peers. The impact of caring can inhibit young carers' ability to do well at school, maintain friendships and join extra-curricular activities.

### What will be achieved?

**We will assess young carers' wellbeing needs separate from their caring role and we will take an holistic approach to safeguarding, supporting and promoting their wellbeing.**

### We will meet this priority by:

- » Using GIRFEC assessment tools and practice model to underpin our Young Carer Statements.
- » Enabling young carers to have a life outside of caring by supporting them to join activities, sports clubs and leisure pursuits with their peers.
- » Working in partnership with Health and other agencies to deliver interventions which promote emotional wellbeing and develop social functioning.
- » Supporting families to have positive, nurturing relationships with their children and young people as sons, daughters, siblings, grandchildren first and as carers second.
- » Collaborating with community-based resources to promote access for young carers.
- » Working with partners in schools, college and university to strengthen the framework for supporting young carers.
- » Developing a menu of 'short breaks' for young carers which meets with their age-appropriate interests and aspirations.
- » Ensuring our involvement in a young carer's life is proportionate to their level of need and sensitive to their preferences.
- » Establishing a clear 'young carer pathway' through which young carers are identified at the earliest stage, advised of their rights and signposted for further help as appropriate
- » Evaluating the impact of services through the measurement of individual outcomes for young carers. We will use the young carer mobile app to track the progress of personal outcomes and aggregate the data for continuous improvement purposes.

## Priority 3: Prevent and protect children and young people from undertaking excessive or inappropriate caring

### Why is this a priority?

**A young carer can become vulnerable when the level or nature of care they provide to a loved one is excessive or inappropriate to their age, stage of development or contrary to their wishes.**

Every situation is different, but for many children and young people it will be considered excessive or inappropriate if they are undertaking bathing or toileting, strenuous physical tasks, administering medication, maintaining the family budget or providing emotional support to the adult.

We understand that excessive or inappropriate caring roles can develop in an unplanned or unintended way and are often a reflection of a whole family struggling to cope. It is also acknowledged that many young carers in these circumstances are hidden from view because of fears about social work intervention or feelings of shame and stigma.

### What will be achieved?

**Children and young people who are undertaking caring roles inappropriate to their age and stage of development will be identified at the earliest opportunity and supported to enjoy their right to a childhood. A collaborative approach with adult services will strengthen family functioning and support cared-for adults to fulfil their parenting responsibilities.**

### We will meet this priority by:

- » Ensuring all partner agencies and frontline professionals have a shared understanding of 'young carer' and clarity about caring responsibilities which are excessive or inappropriate.
- » Ensuring that all professionals who may come into contact with young carers have a good awareness and understanding of issues faced by young carers and know how to refer them for a Young Carer Statement.
- » Assessing young carers' needs in an holistic manner which takes into account the type of care they provide and whether or not they are comfortable carrying on.
- » Recognising that young carers have a right to a childhood and assessing their caring roles in terms of impact upon their development and enjoyment of age appropriate activities.
- » Working with schools to raise awareness of young carer issues and to break down the stigma associated with caring for a parent, relative or friend.
- » Raising awareness of children's rights and statutory entitlements for young carers.

## Priority 4: Building resilience and preparation for the future

### Why is this a priority?

Many young carers tell us that they're proud of the ways in which they help their loved ones but they also tell us that caring can be an isolating experience. Caring can get in the way of young carers making friends and developing social networks in their local communities. Strong social skills, along with interests outside of the home are vital to supporting young carers' emotional wellbeing, personal resilience and capacity to cope into the future.

For young people approaching adulthood, the challenge of leaving school, entering further education or employment, leaving home and planning for their adult lives can be a challenge. These challenges are compounded for young carers who can feel torn between their responsibilities to their loved ones and their own aspirations.

### What will be achieved?

Young carers will be emotionally resilient and feel able to cope with the challenges of their caring role now and into the future. Young carers will have the skills and necessary support to pursue their aspirations for further education and employment.

### We will meet this priority by:

- » Including future planning and transitions in every Young Carer Statement
- » Developing a protocol with adult services which clearly describes what will happen for young carers and what they can expect when they turn 18.
- » Working with partners at Renfrewshire Carers' Centre to develop a suite of training, group and individual interventions which support emotional and social skills development
- » Developing partnerships with community-based organisations to increase accessibility for young carers
- » Developing a peer mentoring approach to support young carers with social skills development.
- » Ensuring careers advice within schools is sensitive to the unique challenges faced by young carers.
- » Developing a young carer protocol with University Of West Scotland and West College which encourages young carer identification and describes supportive adaptations.

## Priority 5: Improving Outcomes

### Why is this a priority?

National and local research shows that young carers experience poorer outcomes in terms of physical and emotional wellbeing as well as attainment at school and engagement within further education and employment.

We will support young carers to identify their personal outcomes and evaluate the attainment of these outcomes in the Young Carer Statement review process. We will evaluate the effectiveness of our services and interventions in terms of the progress of young carers' outcomes.

### What will be achieved?

We will get it right for all young carers by measuring the impact of our services and use the data to inform continuous improvement activity.

### We will achieve this priority by:

- » Having the same aspirations for young carers' outcomes as we have for all children and young people in Renfrewshire.
- » Assessing young carers' needs using the holistic 'My World' triangle and setting outcomes in terms of the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators
- » Ensuring that personal outcomes are attuned to a young carer's needs outwith their caring role
- » Using a self-assessment approach to the measurement of personal outcomes via the young carers mobile app, and aggregating this data to inform service evaluation.
- » Involving young carers and their families as key strategic partners in service evaluation and improvement activities.
- » Collating outcomes measurement data annually as part of the annual review of the impact of this strategy.

## Priority 6: Rights-based Approach

### Why is this a priority?

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 seeks to assert and protect the rights of all carers. It introduces new rights for young carers and duties upon local authorities and health boards. In addition to these rights as young carers, all children and young people have rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Renfrewshire is committed to respecting the rights of children and young people, as expressed in our 'Participation and Children's Rights' plan which is contained within the Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership Plan. It can be accessed here [web link to be inserted](#)

*Every child and young person in Renfrewshire will have the opportunity to express their views, be listened to and have their opinions respected. All of our services will listen and respond to what children and young people say.*

**Renfrewshire Child's Rights and Participation Strategy 2018-2021**

### What will be achieved?

We will ensure that young carers are aware of their rights and are able to access their entitlements in ways that meet with their individual circumstances and preferences. In line with our overall approach to children and young people in Renfrewshire, we will put young carers at the centre and uphold their right to be involved in decisions which affect their lives.

### We will achieve this priority by:

- » Establishment of the 'young carer pathway' which includes advice to young carers about their rights and entitlement to a Young Carer Statement.
- » Training of front-line across agencies about young carers' rights.
- » Awareness raising within schools and further education colleges about young carers' rights.
- » Use of a self-assessment approach to identify and review personal outcomes.
- » Having a clear and consistent process for young carers to complain about services.
- » Continued involvement of young carers and their representatives with service review and planning activity.
- » Provision of advocacy services via Renfrewshire Carers' Centre.
- » Support for young carers to participate in local and national young carer forums.

## 10. Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy

The progress of this strategy will be monitored via the Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership which meets six weekly.

The impact of the strategy will be reported on annually alongside the wider Children's Services Partnership Plan.

The feedback of young carers will be integral to the evaluation of the strategy and we will use creative and flexible methods to ensure all carers who wish to have their say are able to do so.

**The strategy is due for renewal by 1 April 2021.**

