

Motion: Young Carers

Proposed: Cllr Shan Alexander, Stockport; Cllr Wendy Meikle, Stockport

Conference notes that:

- Young Carers are children and young people in our schools and colleges who provide regular and on-going care to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses substances;
- the tasks and level of caring undertaken by Young Carers can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of care needed and the structure of the family as a whole;
- in Stockport, for example, 375 Young Carers have self-identified but estimates suggest that the true figure is closer to 1,000.

Conference recognises and values the work of Young Carers and understands the impact caring responsibilities can have on a Young Carer's education and well-being. For example, according to a recent analysis:

- 27% of Young Carers of secondary school age experience educational difficulties or miss school;
- Where they are caring for someone who misuses drugs or alcohol, 40% have educational difficulties;
- Young Carers between 16 and 18 are twice as likely to be Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET);
- 68% of Young Carers experience bullying at school and 39% said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring role;
- Young Carers have significantly lower attainment at GCSE level than their peers, equivalent to nine grades lower overall;
- Young Carers are four times more likely to live in households where no adult is in work.

This Conference further notes that:

- the support that Lib Dem led Stockport Council currently offers is through school staff and governors, in close partnership with Signpost for Young Carers;
- most schools have a designated member of staff for Young Carers;
- many Governing Bodies now include the performance and well-being of Young Carers as an agenda item at their meetings, which should be considered "best practice".

This Conference further notes

- that the Pupil Premium is an additional allowance to support certain groups of children and young people at risk of not achieving their potential;

- that children entitled to free school meals are eligible for Pupil Premium of £1,300 a year for primary pupils and £935 a year for secondary pupils;
- that whilst eligibility for free school meals is the main criteria for entitlement to Pupil Premium, other groups are also entitled to Pupil Premium including children in care, adopted children, children in hospital schools and service personnel children;
- that including Young Carers within Pupil Premium eligibility would enable schools and colleges to provide additional support to these young people.

Given the challenges faced by Young Carers, Conference resolves:

- to ask the Chief Executives of relevant Local Authorities to write to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon David Laws MP, the Minister of State for Schools and Dr John Dunford OBE, the national Pupil Premium Champion, noting the content of this motion and asking that consideration be given to widen the eligibility for Pupil Premium to include Young Carers;
- to ask the appropriate officer (in Stockport the Corporate Director, Services to People) to write to the Headteachers of all schools in their jurisdiction, asking them to lend their support to this request and to consider how best to support Young Carers, including identifying a designated member of staff and regularly monitoring the performance and well-being of Young Carers through their Governing Body; providing additional support where needed, and to work with the Young Carers Trust to ensure Young Carers are supported and not disadvantaged because of the voluntary work they undertake looking after others.