Time to be Heard Event – Evaluation

Introduction

After talking with 700 young adult carers in 2013/14, it was clear to Carers Trust that young adult carers faced significant barriers in accessing college and university (further and higher education) in comparison to other young people without caring responsibilities.

The barriers they faced were related to:
- Grades
- Confidence
- Caring responsibilities
- Finances
- The distance between where they lived and place of study

As part of the Time to be Heard campaign, Carers Trust organised an event for 200 young adult carers (aged 16-25) and their support workers to get their voices heard by the decision makers who could reduce these barriers. The event also provided information and dispelled myths about access to college and university.

Which young adult carers services came?

We were delighted at the breadth of services and individuals who came to the event.

Young carers and young adult carers aged 16 – 25 years old came from England, Scotland and Wales. Their current experiences varied from being in school, college, university, in work and out of work.

The wide range of attendees gave support workers and young adult carers the chance to share their experiences.

In total, 125 young adult carers came (an extra 64 were unfortunately unable to attend on the day), 44 support workers, 33 Student Ambassadors and 33 decision makers.
Which decision makers came?

We were very pleased to get such a broad scope of people from different professions to talk specifically about helping young adult carers access and thrive in further education. It is a sign that there is a growing awareness of who young adult carers are and an acknowledgement that their issues must be addressed.

In attendance we had:
- 17 Widening Participation leads from Universities
- 2 representatives from the Department of Business Industry and Skills (BIS)
- 3 representatives from the National Union of Students (NUS)
- Leading world experts in research into young adult carers
- 1 representative from UCAS
- 2 representatives from the Open University
- 4 representatives from other charities (NIACE and The Children’s Society)
- Finance advisers
- Careers advisers

Other decision makers who had hoped to attend including health and education, are keen to hear the feedback from young adult carers and engage in this work.

Young adult carers were eager to ask all the decision makers questions and the feedback that we received from decision makers showed that they were keen to listen and had learned a great deal about where their work could be taken next.
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Below is a picture showing the most common words that came out of discussion, highlighting the main themes.

As you can see, young adult carers are predominantly asking for help, support and information on courses, support at home, access to finance and what services are available to them at university and college.
What did we learn?

The main thing that Carers Trust have taken away from the Time to be Heard event is the enthusiasm amongst young adult carers, their support workers and decision makers to improve the lives of young adult carers.

Some key themes emerged:

**Young adult carers need tailored information.**

Particularly around:
- finance
- where they can go for support when at college or university
- the flexibility of courses
- how to complete a UCAS form. The form should give the opportunity for carers to be identified at the application stage

**Young adult carers are concerned about disclosing their caring status.**

This is because they:
- are worried about being judged
- believe staff will not understand or communicate with them effectively
- they may be treated differently
- feel their confidentiality would not be respected

**Young adult carers are worried about going to university.**

Particularly around:
- leaving the person they care for without support (particularly with finance)
- flexibility of the university in relation to deadlines and caring role
- guilt at leaving the person the person they care for

**Young adult carers face distinct barriers to accessing further education.** These are:
- access to finance.
- leaving home and the person they care for

What needs to change?

These themes echoed the research that was launched at the event.

Young Adult Carers Experiences of College and University revealed that
- 16% of those surveyed feel they might have to drop out of further education – more than twice the national dropout rate.
Although more than three quarters of those surveyed had explained their caring role to their college or university, nearly half (45%) of the young adult carers surveyed said there was no one there that helped them.

Despite most young adult carers enjoying college or university, over half of them were experiencing difficulties because of their caring role.

Previous research by Carers Trust and Nottingham University has shown that of those who have been to college or university, 29% of young carers have dropped out because of their caring role – four times the national average. Almost half who had left full time education were unemployed.

These statistics paint a worrying picture of young adult carers’ experiences in further education. However, some small changes can make a huge difference to the opportunities available for young adult carers.

Some examples

**Tailored careers advice and financial support**
- Tailored careers advice at school that informs young adult carers about all of the opportunities available to them and encourages aspiration
- Financial advice and bursaries that account for a young adult carers role

**A supportive environment at college and university**
- An opportunity to declare caring status on application and enrolment forms e.g. UCAS
- Student support services to publicise the help they can offer young adult carers
- An awareness within institutions about who young adult carers are and the steps they should take to support them
- Flexibility around deadlines if caring interrupts study

**Support for the young adult carers family**
- The care and support needs of the person being cared for must be met to ensure that young adult carers can become independent
Involvement of young adult carers

Carers Trust involved young adult carers throughout the planning and during the event itself.

Carers Trust consulted with 25 young adult carers before the event to find out their opinion on:
- Entertainment
- Sleeping arrangements
- Student Ambassador role
- How to manage photo consent
- Terminology
- What young adult carers wanted to ask decision makers
- What extra decision makers young adult carers wanted to come
- What media we should invite
- What roles they wanted to have at the event
- How we should tell everyone about the event

Young Adult Carers attending the event were asked if they would like to get involved across the two days.

18 young adult carers volunteered for this and came to one or two preparation days before the event.
During these preparation days, the young adult carers who shaped some of the sessions were briefed on what to expect from the event and given the opportunity to put themselves forward for the tasks that they were especially interested in.

The preparation days gave Carers Trust staff an opportunity to get to know the young adult carers, build confidence and collate questions for decision makers.

At times, involvement was rushed and it had to compete with many other priorities for the team. However, the team feel that meaningful involvement is core to any project and they were keen to ensure that the event had as many opportunities for engagement as possible.

During the event itself, the young adult carers who helped out were brilliant. The preparation time for their roles could have been longer but they did an amazing job in putting across the key messages of the event and presenting themselves clearly, passionately and with warmth to their fellow delegates and the decision makers.

The young adult carers who were not able to help Carers Trust out also had opportunities to get involved throughout the event. During the welcoming speech, the power of social media was emphasised to them and they were encouraged to Tweet, Facebook and post on the Carers Trust website Matter, using the hashtags #ttbh and #myfuture

This meant that everyone at the event had the chance to feel they were part of a bigger movement and make connections with one another during and after the event.
Feedback

We received some excellent, honest feedback from young adult carers, support workers and decision makers.

The food received excellent reviews as did the sessions run by The University of Nottingham lecturers and the wide variety of opportunities that Carers Trust gave young adult carers to get their voices heard.

Overall, we were delighted with the feedback we received. The following pages highlight some areas that we are particularly pleased with.

The percentages below are based on the feedback forms filled in by young adult carers who ticked 3 plus on the scale. (1 being it has not helped me at all, 5 being it has helped me lots).

- 84% said the event had built their self confidence
- 92% felt better about their future
- 95% became aware of new useful information that could help them
- 87% became aware that they could have an impact in their community
- 92% felt they had their voice heard
- 92% had raised aspirations about their future
- 79% felt the event had helped them
- 95% became aware of new opportunities
Young adult carers made some very positive comments about the event.

“(The event) made me more motivated and to be positive about my future”

“At first I didn’t really care about going to university but going on this trip has changed my mind”

“I really needed to be at this event both as a quick break and realising what’s there for me”

“(The event) made me realise it can be done your goals can be achieved no matter who you are, where you are from”

“I liked that so many influential people were here to hear our views”

“It has made me realise I am not on my own and can make a future”
Support workers most enjoyed:

Watching the young carers grow in confidence over the 2 days - seeing them make new friends and have I hope for their futures. I feel very privileged to be part of their lives, especially these last couple of days

More information and knowledge of how Uni can support young carers, Networking, seeing young adult carers change their perceptions, therefore increasing life chances

Stacks of useful info for our young adult carers who attended to take back to share in future delivery.

Bringing together YAC’s from across the country to make new friends and for them to see they are not alone

Decision makers most enjoyed:

Meeting young adult carers and the panel discussion

Hearing directly from young adult carers

Excellent presentations which enabled the young adult carers to get involved

I’m really looking forward to going back to work and trying to implement some of the ideas which I hope will make a difference
One of the big themes to come from the feedback form was that young adult carers, support workers and decision makers were keen to make the event an annual occurrence.

Finding out more

See the pictures from the Time to be Heard event, read the research that was launched and see what’s coming next for colleges and universities in the Time to be Heard campaign by visiting:

www.carers.org/timetobeheard/college-and-university

Time to be Heard is looking at the journey of young adult carers from their time at school into employment. We have released research to compliment the research we launched at the Time to be Heard event.

Find out about young adult carers experiences of school and the work that Carers Trust is doing to support the professionals working with them.

www.carers.org/timetobeheard/schools
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Read how you can ensure that young adult carers are able to access the workplace.

[www.carers.org/timetobeheard/employment](http://www.carers.org/timetobeheard/employment)

We encourage you to use the powerful Time to be Heard video in your work to show your colleges the challenges of being a young adult carer. You can watch the video on the Time to be Heard homepage.

[www.carers.org/timetobeheard](http://www.carers.org/timetobeheard)

Be the first to find out about the work that Carers Trusts is doing for carers of all ages by signing up to our campaign mailing list here: [http://goo.gl/zAh7gO](http://goo.gl/zAh7gO)

Ask all the young adult carers that you work with to sign up to the Matter website, an online space where young adult carers can discuss any challenges they experience safely amongst their peers and trained professionals.

You can have a look yourself here: [https://matter.carers.org/](https://matter.carers.org/)

If you have any further questions about the Time to be Heard campaign or how you can improve on the work you are doing with young adult carers, please contact Sophie Parr – Policy and Campaigns Officer (Young Carers and Young Adult Carers) at [sparr@carers.org](mailto:sparr@carers.org) or telephone 020 7922 7752.

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