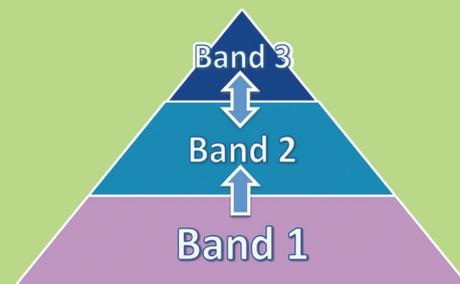


Tiered support service for young carers



What is the initiative?

A three tier service for young carers

Who runs it?

Salford Young Carers Service

Who does it benefit?

Young carers aged 17 and under, living in the Salford area, with a wide range of support needs.

What does it do?

Salford Young Carers Service operates on a three tier system. Young carers are assessed upon referral and then initially placed in band one with the intention of reducing their level of caring and their need for support. Intensive support is given to a young carer at the beginning, which then decreases as they move through the tiers.

When did it start?

2012.

Why was it started?

Prior to the tiered system, Salford Young Carers Service had a flat system whereby young people were assessed as carers and then placed on a personal support package made up of a combination of family, individual and group work. Although targeted work was delivered, it had no structure and it offered little progression for young people as carers or their families and the people they care for.

The development of Salford City Council's Young Carers Strategy led Salford Young Carers Service to change its approach. It moved from a service that merely supported young carers and offered them breaks, to a service that actively works with young carers and their families to reduce their level of caring, while developing strong, appropriate support systems for young people likely to be long-term carers.

What are the aims and objectives?

Aims:

- To offer young carers appropriate support that is targeted to their needs through a three-tiered system.
- To be proactive in tailoring support at the point of contact and assessment.
- To reduce levels of inappropriate and harmful caring.
- To reduce young carers' needs for interventions.

Objectives:

- To provide all young carers with individual Support Worker sessions.
- To provide more frequent individual Support Worker sessions to those in band one and band two and to focus on appropriate subjects within the different groups.
- To run special projects, such as a photographic exhibition, which both allow young carers to address emotional issues and raise awareness of young carers in the local community.
- To provide age-appropriate group support, if needed, on issues such as health.
- To identify what other services could be activated to reduce or remove caring pressures at the point of assessment.
- To make referrals to adult social care, family support services and other agencies where appropriate.
- To further develop relationships with schools to address any educational issues.

How is it funded?

The service is mostly funded via a contract with Salford City Council. Various donations and grants from other sources for specific projects also fund the work of Salford Young Carers Service.

What has it achieved?

“I don't need you anymore! OK on my own now, can deal with it now ... will contact you if I need you – thanks.”

Young carer who has been discharged from the tiered service

“We believe Young Carers has helped [our son] grow, helped him socially, supported him with acceptance of his caring/family home situation but also provided him a space to be himself and not just a carer.”

Parent

The transformation of Salford Young Carers Service is still a work in progress but it has had several successes so far. Attitudes towards supporting young carers are

changing, the service is more integrated with local authority provided support and young carers are better supported, making progress and often moving on from specialist provision. A review of all open cases to place them appropriately within the new system led to the reassessment of some long-standing cases and 65 cases were closed where it was evident that caring had been reduced or circumstances had changed.

From June 2012, all *new* cases were placed in band one and as of February 2013 over 25% of all new cases are on target to be closed within the initial six month intervention. As of February 2013 there were 46 cases in band one, 60 young carers on band two and 49 on band three with 29 cases still going through the reassessment process.

The switch to a tiered service has made the staff at Salford Young Carers Service refocus on their tasks. All team members are now trained in carrying out Family Group Conferences and are able to take a more family-focussed approach. Extended team members, or sessional staff, are now used in quite a different way and run groups and take responsibility for individual work. This has prompted the service to change how it recruits staff and review the level of experience and knowledge it requires from employees.

The service has developed better links with children's services and the early intervention teams at Salford City Council. Staff are now more active within Team Around the Child (TAC), Child in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) meetings, delivering more focussed partnership work with the individuals they support. In addition, there has been an increase in referrals to other agencies, such as to adult social care for the assessment of the disabled adults who the young carers look after.

The move to a tiered service has also encouraged the forging of new initiatives in partnership with other organisations. For example, Salford Young Carers Service currently works with **Start in Salford**, an arts centre specialising in services for people with mental health difficulties, to provide art groups for young carers and the people they care for. Creative, focussed group work has resulted in the production of a film by young carers with the Lowry Theatre and a three month photography exhibition called Homing In. Both of these creative efforts have raised awareness of the lives of young carers and achieved national recognition, with the film drama, **We are Not Different, We Just Do Different Things**, shown at a national young carers conference and in the House of Lords.

How have carers been involved in planning and delivering this work?

The Young Carers Forum was engaged with Salford Childrens Services to help them develop the overall Young Carers Strategy, which kick-started the transformation of Salford Young Carers Service. Recently, the members of the Forum also met with the Children's Trust Board to evaluate the implementation of the Young Carers Strategy.

In the operation of the new system, young carers are regularly consulted. They are involved in the development of their own individual plans and the groups they attend are only planned and operated after consultation with young carers. For example, for a recent film project, young carers wrote the script, chose the film crew, director and cast and catered for the premiere. Feedback is asked for when the group projects come to an end, by questionnaires and group discussions.

How is the initiative run?

Salford Young Carers Service is part of the Salford Carers Centre managed by The Gaddum Centre, an independent health and social care charity. The Service is based at the Salford Carers Centre and uses other venues when appropriate for certain sessions.

The Young Carers Service is overseen by a manager who also manages the Young Adult Carers Service. Altogether the core staff team at Salford Young Carers Service consists of:

- One Manager
- One full-time Support Worker
- One term-time only Support Worker
- One full-time Support Worker for young carers aged 16 and over
- Six extended team members (up to six hours a week, dependent on role and funding).

Referrals can be made by professionals, families and also in schools by the young carers themselves. Salford Young Carers Service runs awareness sessions in 14 schools. At the end of these sessions pupils fill in an evaluation form. It is common for 10% of the pupils to have some support needs and refer themselves, with 15% of these pupils being further assessed as a young carer which Salford Young Carers Service can support. Assessments are carried out through a series of sessions with the young person and then with the young person and their family. A plan is then agreed with the family and referrals are made to other agencies if appropriate.

Support for the young carer can be provided in their home, in school, in the community and at the carers centre. Targeted group support, such as the work with the Lowry Theatre, is also provided at venues across the city. Phone support can be provided at times of acute need; however, the service tries to ensure that all registered young carers are seen in person according to their plan.

Under the previous system in Salford, some young carers would be involved with the service for a number of years, sometimes inappropriately as their caring roles and the impact of caring on their lives changed. The aim of the new system is to not let this happen – now new cases are taken on for an initial intervention of six months maximum, before being moved to a more suitable service if they need it.

Initially, all young carers begin on band one of the tiered service. On this tier the young carer's plan will involve liaison with other agencies, and family and individual work, with group work only if deemed necessary. The aim is to swiftly reduce or eradicate their caring responsibilities.

Following the six month review, the Young Carers Service will only place a young carer onto the higher band two if it feels there is a need to continue to offer support to the young carer and their family. Therefore, the majority on band two are long-term young carers looking after adults with mental health or addiction problems, or they are the primary carer.

On band two, young carers are allocated a key worker and given a detailed support plan. There is regular individual and family work, with group work and joint work with other agencies if appropriate. Cases are subject to six monthly reviews, upon which young carers can move to band three but not back to band one.

Cases on band three may be long-term young carers who need minimum support, or cases waiting their final review. They are given an individual or family session every six months and a support package with other providers which is monitored each quarter. The aim is to give the young carer enough help to be able to cope without support and close the case within 12 months. Young carers can move back to band two if they need more support but they cannot move back to band one.

In addition to the tiered support, there are also a number of groups which young carers may join if they wish. Salford Young Carers Service is aware that not all young carers enjoy or benefit from groups, so it offers focussed ones which are optional. Currently there are four main areas of groups in operation.

Young carers aged 13 and under have access to activity and discussion sessions to put caring into context, and deal with anxieties and also have some fun. This includes a special session which runs for young carers aged ten and under.

For those aged 14 and over, there is a Health Group which looks at the physical and emotional health of young carers. The Economic Wellbeing group helps young carers develop and achieve their aspirations for the future. Finally, there is a Participation and Ownership Group, where young carers run their own newsletter and operate the Young Carers Forum.

Feedback from young carers is collected at group and individual sessions; this is used to develop the groups and strategies. All group sessions are also recorded for internal review. Details and contacts for individual and family work are recorded on the computer system Cardbox.

The service is marketed with a flyer circulated across Salford schools, youth centres and clinics. Awareness sessions are also put on by Salford Young Carers Service for all staff in childrens services, mental health services, adult social care, nursing students at Salford and Manchester universities, and with community groups.

What methods have been particularly effective?

Introducing a comprehensive referral process revived the image of the Salford Young Carers Service. The expectations from young carers and their families have changed as they do not get caught up in the old image of young carers services just providing activities and entertainment.

Fun activities are still provided but all have a focus – for instance to introduce a new young carer to a group. The fun element of these experiences can ease anxieties.

This fundamental change is seeing ramifications across Salford in professionals' approaches to working with young carers. Due in part to the efforts of the new service, there is now a city-wide Young Carers Strategy and representatives from the Young Carers and the Young Adult Carers Forums of Salford Young Carers Service now meet with the Strategic Executive Director of Children's Services at the local authority.

Have there been any challenges along the way?

Making the initial changes was difficult. The service is still in the process of putting all its ideas into practice due to the scope of the changes and the fact that staff are sometimes dealing with case loads of 50 young carers each. It is imperative to make changes manageable.

It was a challenge to ensure that all new cases were dealt with in accordance with the new structure, while at the same time allowing for the old approach to continue with established cases. Young carers who were on the existing structure were either placed into band two or band three. Cases where it was not immediately clear which band was appropriate, were flagged up for review and immediate action. It was a lot of work, but now all young carers are appropriately placed.

What hints and tips might help me get started?

- Work with your main commissioners. If it is with children's services, ask if they have a Young Carers Strategy. Ask what expectations they have of you. Make sure you establish yourselves within their overall Children's Plan.
- Don't just tinker, go for a total change. The changes implemented by Salford Young Carers Service were about the whole service, not just a part of it. Evolution may be better than revolution, but within the present climate getting from A to B quickly is vital.
- Ensure that all staff are supported through the process of change. This includes giving them appropriate training, such as family work and Family Group Conferencing. Extended team members, such as those from health improvement teams and early intervention teams can also bring a vital knowledge base to your organisation which all staff can draw upon.

Are there any useful documents or resources that could assist me?

- Watch the film made by young carers **We're not different, we just do different things.**
- Read the **Interagency Strategy for Young Carers in Salford.**

You can request from Salford Young Carers Service:

- A PowerPoint presentation explaining the tiered service bands.
- Its Referral Form and Assessment Form.

Where can I get further information?

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