REBIAS II RESEARCH FINDINGS

What works well in assessment and support planning for young carers and their families

Key Findings

1. **Understanding the whole picture** about the family's range of needs, strengths, and what can be realistically addressed.
2. **Assessment and implementation over time** where needed, as relationships are built and to enable planning of support in manageable ways.
3. **Active support planning:** working alongside, advocating and accompanying in people's interactions with services.
4. **Check-ins and follow-ups:** did planned support happen, was it a good fit, what else is needed?
5. **Planning for endings from the beginning:** aiming for shared understanding about how and when to get future support.



WHO ARE YOUNG CARERS?

A young or young adult carer is someone aged under 25 who provides unpaid help for someone who is disabled, has a long-term physical or mental health condition, or substance misuse issue.

LSE CPEC CARE POLICY & EVALUATION CENTRE

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Overview

Background

Who are young carers?

- A young or young adult carer is a child or young person who helps look after someone with a long-term mental or physical health condition, addiction, disability, or other care need.
- At high levels providing unpaid care can have negative impacts on young carers' employment, education, social participation, and mental health. Preventative and mitigating support is therefore needed.
- In England, young and young adult carers have legal rights to an assessment of their needs and, if eligible, a support plan.

Methods

In our study we looked at how appropriate, acceptable, and 'whole family' support packages for young carers and their families can be identified, developed and implemented.

To find out, we carried out:

- in-depth interviews with families where there was a young carer and adult care recipient at two or three points in time. We spoke to 37 young carers and 22 adult care recipients from 25 families in total.
- a website scoping of current tools and approaches used in assessment and support planning available on LA, NHS and voluntary and community sector websites in England.
- a survey with 20 practitioners and other conversations with key stakeholders about current assessment and support planning tools and approaches in England.
- a literature review of assessment tools and approaches.
- focus groups with practitioners to explore their views on the usefulness of existing tools, the extent to which assessment approaches facilitate context-specific and 'whole family' support, and barriers and facilitators to assessing and reviewing support needs.

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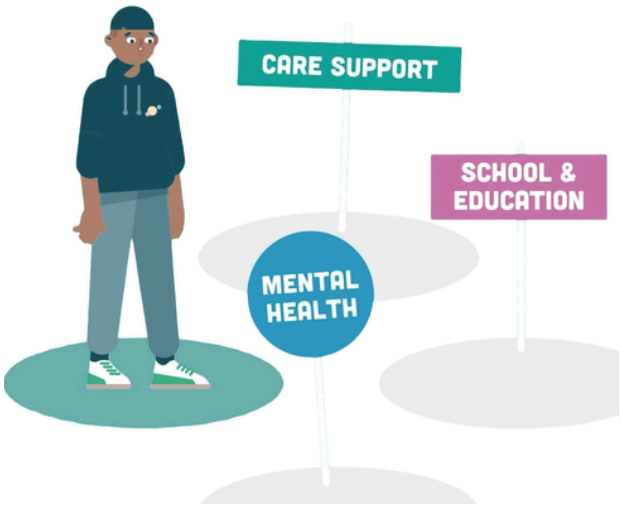
Understanding the whole picture about range of needs, strengths, and what can be realistically addressed.

- When practitioners carrying out assessment and support plans seek to understand the wider issues facing families they can aim to address contextual factors that impact on families' wellbeing.

- Understanding the context can lead to suggesting a range of possible supports – people do not always know what is out there and what they might be entitled to. This includes for the adults with care needs and all possible young carers.

- A key way to make the assessment and support plan whole family aware and proactive was the assessor asking about or suggesting support for the care recipient and signposting to and/or actively trying to get support for them.

- Asking about or suggesting support for the adult care recipient in a young carer assessment may help expand the focus of support options being considered.



> *I think if more services did look at people as a unit, it would be more helpful because when you have need here, you have a need here, but when they meet, it can produce something different and deeper. I understand why you do assessments separately, but then when you have various needs, they often produce something bigger?*

Care recipient parent

> *The social worker [who carried out the adult care need assessment] arranged a meeting with social care. [We discussed] whether it's still meeting my needs. They asked what responsibilities I have with the children and am I having help now, the carer that I have is also allowed now to support me with the children.*

Care recipient parent

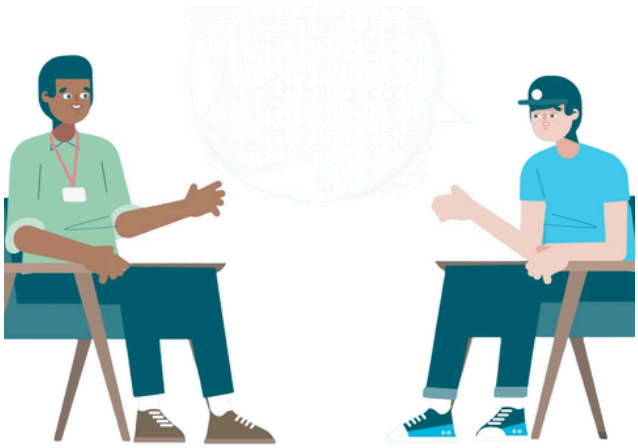
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Assessment and implementation over time where needed, as relationships are built and to plan support in manageable ways.

- Relationship building can help in carrying out assessments based on understanding the range of needs of young people and their family, for example by helping with fuller disclosure of everyone's needs.

- Having the assessment and support planning over several sessions can help with relationship building, although not all families wanted or needed multiple point assessment.

- Assessment and support planning over several sessions can facilitate planning for, a range of needs, and recognising families' and individual's strengths, in a more manageable, less overwhelming way, that takes account of families' priorities.



> *They basically just assessed what support we needed, with her mobility and then they also... helped with some financial stuff, but it's like a process, so we kind of did one thing, well a few things per visit.*

Young carer

> *She took [young carer] out, because he was really anxious, he was like "I'm not going nowhere" but once he went out with her, he was happy, he said that she was really fun as well. She got to know him as a person. They found something they enjoyed together and I think she asked him some questions while they were playing the game, but she made it in a fun way.*

Care recipient parent



3

Active support planning: working alongside, advocating and accompanying in people's interactions with services.

- For some families, suggesting options through the support planning was enough. For others, advocating, accompanying, and/or supporting the family in other ways to get the range of support they need in place was a key aspect of holistic support planning.

- This might include:
  - help to get financial support, e.g. through calling welfare rights organisations, helping or linking to people to help with disability benefit forms, help to get grants.
  - support with housing, e.g. writing letters or liaising with housing support organisations.
  - attending meetings with or talking directly to schools to get support in place.
  - referring, attending meetings, chasing or facilitating support for the adult with care needs such as care workers, aids and adaptions, support from extended family and/or local groups.

- Active support planning might require a particularly flexible approach for families where the care recipient has fluctuating conditions such as fibromyalgia or certain mental illnesses.

- Doing this type of in-depth assessment and support planning requires any wider support planned for to be available and accessible to families – it is unhelpful for both families and practitioners if not.

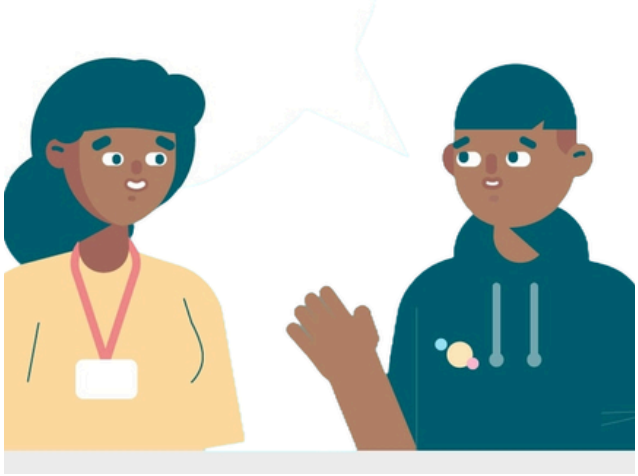
> *[Young carer worker who carried out the assessment] was making sure we got the right financial support. She filled [the PIP form] out for us. She was asking my mum what other support and my mum mentioned about the house, so getting up and down the stairs and the fact she can't really use a walker anywhere so we've been put down and they're coming here to do an assessment, to see if they can get a stairlift and some ramps put in.*
>
> **Young carer**

> *Then she's [young carer worker who carried out the assessment] applied for a grant from somewhere for me towards my gas and electric, for heating. And towards [young carer's] school shoes and coat.*
>
> **Care recipient parent**

4

Check-ins and follow-ups: did planned support happen, was it a good fit, what else is needed?

- Helpful support-planning also involves checking back to see if things were being implemented as planned, whether anyone has changed their mind, for example, about declining support.
- Checking back to see if planned support is in place, working as intended, and whether alternative or additional help was needed.
- Check-ins might also explore initial hurdles, both emotional and practical, to taking part, and where possible help overcome barriers such as transport.
- Timescales for some types of support can be longer than the time the service is involved (e.g. housing, mental health services) hampering ability of services to check in.

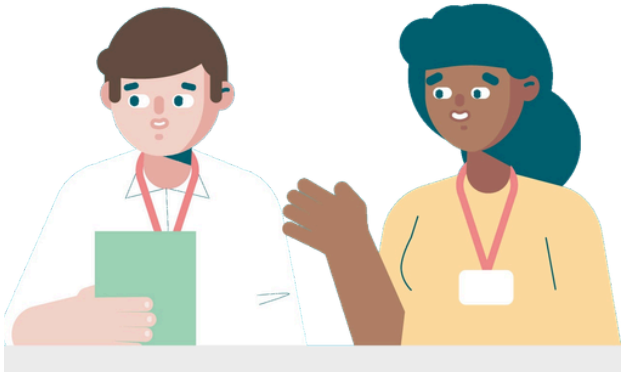


She checks in....she comes to my home and asks how things are going, how can they improve their service, is there anything else that she can do, am I requiring any letters, anything.

Care recipient parent

For each review, you're documenting the progress you've made. There might be actions that actually we've made no progress and you think, I need to rethink this. Let's revisit with the family and think about maybe an alternative option. So it's a very working document, it's not a stagnant document.

Practitioner



5 **Planning for endings from the beginning:** aiming for shared understanding about how and when to get future support

- Intensive relationship-based support was highly appreciated but when relationships have been built, it can be challenging when they end.

- It is important to include endings with families in support plans from the beginning, including for endings to be tapered where needed and possible, aiming to build on strengths, and setting things in place for the future.

- Examples of setting things in place for the future are
  - identifying ongoing sources of support e.g.in schools and communities.
  - having sensitive conversations regarding external support for the care recipient such as adult social care or mental health support.
  - discussions with family members about when and how they could find support in the future.

- Service-level plans for re-contacting young people when they approach age 18 to offer a young carer transition assessment if they are still providing care and are no longer in contact with the assessing service.



> *We're coordinating that ending with other services, particularly school or anyone else. We're building towards that, whether it is getting them involved in a club or something that they can carry on with, or applying for a grant...something that's just positive that they can take forward afterwards.*

Practitioner

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