This protocol sets out the key principles, roles and responsibilities in providing a whole partnership approach to support Young Carers and their families in Walsall to ensure we deliver our requirements as outlined by the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families (section 96)

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1. **Key Principles**

Young carers should be identified, assessed and their families supported regardless of which service is contacted in the first place. Children and Adult Social Services therefore commit through this protocol to work together locally, adopting a whole system, whole council, whole family approach to providing support for young carers and their families.

This will be achieved through working across systems, in partnership with health, education, Housing providers and voluntary sector organisations. Children and Adult Social Services will work together to fulfil statutory duties\(^1\) and ensure that the following key principles\(^2\) underpin practice:

- The starting point should be to assess the needs of the adult or child who needs care and support and then determine what remaining needs for support a young carer in the family has.

- The presence of a young carer in the family should always constitute an appearance of need and should trigger either an assessment or the offer of an assessment to the person needing care.

- A whole family approach is key when assessing an adult needing care where there are children in the family providing care to the adult or undertaking wider caring responsibilities. The adult’s assessment and eligibility for support should take into account their parenting responsibilities and the functioning of the family.

- Assessments should ascertain why a child is caring and what needs to change in order to prevent them from undertaking excessive or inappropriate caring responsibilities which could impact adversely on their welfare, education or social development. The views of both adults and children within the family should be sought separately where appropriate.

- Consideration must be given to whether a young carer is a ‘child in need’ under the Children Act 1989, and whether their welfare or development may suffer if support is not provided to them and/or their family.

These principles apply equally to all children up to the age of 18, recognising that young carers may require more focused support during the period they will be making the transition to adulthood. It is also intended that a consistent and coordinated approach is taken to identifying and supporting young adult carers aged 18 to 24.

\(^1\) Responsibilities for identifying and supporting young carers are placed on the local authority as a whole. These responsibilities are set out in the Children’s Act 1989 (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014) and under the Care Act 2014. Section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 introduces new rights for young carers to ensure young carers and their families are identified and their needs for support are assessed. From April 2015 all young carers will be entitled to an assessment of their needs from the local authority. This new provision works alongside measures in the Care Act 2014 for transition assessment for young carers as they approach adulthood, and for assessing adults to enable a “whole family approach” to providing assessment and support. These obligations further explained in The Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015 and in Guidance related to both of these Acts and “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (DfE – 2015).

\(^2\) Joint statement on key principles for supporting young carers made by DH and DfE (updated 2015)
2. A Shared Understanding

The definition of a young carer is as defined in section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014: “...a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work). For the purposes of this protocol, this relates to care for any family member who is physically or mentally ill, frail, elderly, disabled or misuses alcohol or substances. This includes looking after or ‘parenting’ younger siblings. This memorandum also applies to young adult carers aged up to 25 and the transition from children’s services to adult care and support.

3. Identifying Young Carers & Promoting Well Being

At the first point of contact, all those undertaking or receiving referrals or with responsibility for undertaking assessments (Children, Adult Social Care or Health) will have a key role in identifying young carers.

At the point of assessing the cared-for person (this could be by Children, Adult Social Care or Health), it is important to ask whether there are children in the same household as the person they are assessing and, if they do, to establish how much care and support is undertaken by any children through discussions with any adult who is being assessed and other family members, including the child(ren) concerned.

Practitioners responsible for assessing people with care needs should identify how it will be possible to support the person in need of care so that children and young people are not relied on to provide excessive or inappropriate care. It will be essential that the particular vulnerabilities and needs of children and young people are recognised (e.g. mental health, educational achievement and social exclusion).

Practitioners responsible for assessing adults with care needs must be able to recognise and respond to risks to children’s safety and welfare (using the Children’s Safeguarding Thresholds document). They must know how to respond where they have concerns that children are, or may be, suffering significant harm and should make a referral to MASH by completing a MARF.

4. Assessment

Where a young carer is identified, the aim of further assessment should be to reduce children’s caring responsibilities and prevent levels of caring from becoming inappropriate (as defined in the Care Act) and disproportionate to age

4.1 Responsibilities For Assessment Provision

There will be provision for an assessment of needs for support for all young carers under the age of 18 on request from them or their parent or on the identification of need. This assessment will be available regardless of who they care for, what type of care they provide or how often they provide it.

Young carers, the person cared for and, if different, the parents of the young carer will be informed about the assessment process and we will ensure they are able to participate in the process as effectively as possible.

The primary responsibility for responding to the needs of young carers and young adult carers and ensuring an appropriate assessment rests with the service responsible for assessing the person they support, not the age of the carer. This means that:
Adult Services will (Social Care/Health):

- Identify children in the household/ family network and complete a young carers screening tool to help inform what action/support can be put in place (single agency) to ensure that young carers are not left with excessive and inappropriate levels of caring responsibilities that risks them becoming vulnerable. This could include the offer of universally available information, advice, and signposting to targeted Support groups.

- Adult workers will seek to identify the type of care provided and the impact this is having on the young carer. They will identify areas of excessive and inappropriate levels of caring responsibilities that can be reduced through increasing provision of support to the person they care for.

- If, following the completion of the young carers screening tool risk and vulnerabilities are identified that need support from a range of agencies or raises concern that the child/young person may suffer harm then a referral will be made through completion of a MARF and send to MASH for consideration of an appropriate support through a Early Help Assessment or a Child and Family Assessment. As part of the MASH the referring agency will be expected to provide evidence of actions and interventions they have put in place to reduce the caring responsibilities.

Children’s Services will:

- Young carers of disabled children are the responsibility of the Children’s Service which will also need to undertake carers’ assessments for any young adult carers who look after disabled children.

- Where needs cannot be met through single agency action or where additional risk and vulnerabilities have been identified MASH will undertake a comprehensive screening of the child’s needs and vulnerabilities to inform the completion of a Early help Assessment or a Child and Family Assessment.

- Ensure that there is a comprehensive Early Help Offer across the 0-19 locality teams for children who are identified as young carers including the provision of a Targeted Young Carers Support group, one to one support and lead professional support for young carers.
4.2 Whole Family Approach To Assessment

A whole family approach will be embedded into all assessments. This means making sure any assessment takes into account and evaluates how the needs of the person being cared for impacts on the needs of the child who is identified as a possible young carer, or on any other child or on other members of the household. A thorough assessment centred on the family should result in appropriate support being provided for the person in need of care and support. This may result in the young carer being relieved of part or all of his or her caring role. Any remaining unmet support needs for the young carer should then be considered and responded to.

Further information and practice guidance is available in the Guide on the Care Act and Whole Family Approaches. This was published by ADASS February 2015 in association with several partners and was commissioned by the Department of Health.

The Care Act and whole family approaches

4.3 Principles of Practice In Undertaking A Young Carers Needs Assessment

No care or support package for a parent, other adult or sibling should rely on excessive or inappropriate caring by a young carer to make it sustainable.

When carrying out a young carer’s needs assessment we will work to determine:

- The capacity of their parents to offer a level of care necessary to respond appropriate to the child’s needs. Parenting Capacity will need to be assessed in the context of the family structure.
- the amount, nature and type of care which the young carer provides;
- the impact of the caring role on the young carer’s wellbeing, welfare, education and development;
- whether any of the caring tasks the young carer is performing are excessive or inappropriate for the young carer to perform having regard to all the circumstances
- where the person cared for is a child, whether an assessment of their needs for support has been carried out, and if not, to request one;
- where the person cared for is an adult, whether an assessment of their needs for support has been carried out, and if not, to offer one.
- whether any of the young carer’s needs for support could be met by providing support or services to:
  - the person cared for [by the young carer]; or
  - another member of the young carer’s family.
- what the young carer’s needs for support would be likely to be if he or she were relieved of part or all of his or her caring role and whether the young carer has any remaining unmet

When carrying out a young carer’s needs assessment, we will:

- adopt a whole family approach;
- ensure that the assessment is carried out in a manner which is considered to be appropriate and proportionate (in the light of the young carer’s age, needs and circumstances);
- ensure that any person who is to carry out a young carer’s needs assessment has sufficient competence, knowledge, skills and training to be able to carry out that
assessment and be an appropriate person to carry out the assessment in the light of the young carer’s age, circumstances and sex.

- where considered appropriate or necessary to do so, consult and involve experts from other disciplines in the carrying out of the assessment;
- ensure that the young carer, the person cared for and, if different, the parents of the young carer are informed about the assessment process and are able to participate in the process as effectively as possible.
- We will provide young carers, their parents and any person at the request of the young carer or their parent with a copy of the assessment with information about the actions to be taken including whether the young carer has been assessed as a “child in need” and confirming arrangements for review.
- Ensure we consider any diversity needs – especially around barriers some groups or communities may face in assessing and engaging with support (e.g. BME young people)
- Ensure, where possible we support families to plan ahead for potential change e.g. transition for young carers into adulthood.

Where the identification of a young carer, through the assessment process determines the individual is thought to be a “Child in Need” or needs Early Help support, practitioners will immediately make a referral to Children’s Services through the completion of a MARF and send this to MASH (as per our normal safeguarding Children’s procedures) to determine what action is required.

5. Information, Advice & Advocacy

Together with our partners, we will make sure services are available to all young carers and their families offering information, advice, advocacy, representation and support. We will work with partners in the local community to ensure that information and advice for young carers is available in a range of appropriate settings and formats that are accessible by children and young people.

6. Transition to Adulthood

A whole family approach to promote wellbeing will include helping families to plan ahead for change including transition for young carers into adulthood.

We will assess the needs of young carers as they approach adulthood wherever it appears that there may be ‘significant benefit’ to the individual in doing so. We will consider how to support them to prepare for adulthood and to raise and fulfill their aspirations. This is regardless of whether the young carer currently receives any services and includes young carers whose parents have needs below the local authority’s eligibility threshold but may nevertheless require advice or support to fulfill their potential.3

Where young carers are not eligible for services, the transition assessment will be followed up with good information and advice about support in the community.

We will take a joined up approach, both internally between adult and children’s services and externally with health services (including mental health), educational institutions and other relevant organisations, in order to achieve the best outcomes for the young person and their family. We will ensure that those working directly with young people and their families understand referral processes/pathways and the requirement to work cooperatively together.

We recognise that the power to join up assessments can be important at transition and where appropriate we will consider combining any existing Education Health and Care (EHC) plans with transition plans and plans for the adult carer. When assessments are combined, we will

3 Paragraph 16.18 Care and Support Statutory Guidance. Issued under the Care Act. DH 2014
designate a named person to coordinate transition assessment and planning across agencies.

7. **Information Sharing**

Effective and timely information sharing between our agencies and with our partners, including health, is critical to empowerment, the provision of early intervention and preventative work, supporting transitions, ensure children and young people are safe and promoting the welfare of young carers. Within the framework of existing local information sharing protocols our aim is to ensure specific recognition of the position of young carers..

8. **Safeguarding**

8.1 **Joint Responsibility**

Our children and adult workforce strategy will help ensure that all practitioners are aware of safeguarding policy and practice and accept a joint responsibility to work in partnership to identify and respond to any young carers who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Early sharing of information is critical if there are emerging concerns. No professional should assume that someone else will pass information on that they think maybe critical to the safety or well being of any child or adult. If a professional has concern about a child’s or adult’s welfare and believes they are suffering or likely to suffer harm or neglect then they should share the information with the local authority and, or, the police, if they believe or suspect a crime has been committed. Information sharing should be in line with local agreements and Caldicott principles.

8.2 **Local Safeguarding Boards**

Local Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards will be made aware of issues surrounding young carers and of this Protocol. This has been done to ensure consistency with local multi-agency policies and procedures. It is also intended to raise awareness of the way in which safeguarding work forms part of a continuum of person-centred and proportionate risk-based responses. We can all use these to ensure that those adults and children at risk of harm are kept safe and their welfare is promoted.

9. **Putting these Intentions Into action**

Actions arising from this protocol will form our young carers strategy and related action plan. We will put in place arrangements for periodic audit and the provision of reasonable assurance to the Council, partners, young carers, their families and the community on how this protocol works in specific areas or as a whole. Feedback from young carers and their families will be an essential element of audit. Information arising will be used to inform performance priorities for development and delivery of the key processes and outcomes.

Programmes for learning and development will be put in place to raise awareness and understanding of young carers and their families, increase skills and underpin the organisational, policy and practice principles for working with young carers and their families. This will include ensuring that practitioners in the local authority and partner agencies are aware of the specific requirements of the Care Act and amendments to the Children Act and accompanying Guidance and Regulations.
The Council has invested in an e-learning tool called, Young Carer Aware. This tool helps to provide everyone with a practical understanding of young carers and their needs. More importantly, it can signpost to sources of support that are available to help them enjoy a happy, fulfilling childhood locally.

10. **Local Partnerships**

There should be no “wrong doors” for young carers and their families. Young carers should be identified, assessed and their families supported in ways that prevent excessive or inappropriate caring and support parenting roles regardless of which service is contacted first. Partnership working is key to providing joined up seamless services.

This will include working with the NHS, voluntary organisations, education, public health, housing and local communities and other agencies that are able to support young carers.

Work through the local Health and Wellbeing Board, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), will include identification of the needs of young carers and young adult carers in the local area. The local Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) will include shared strategies for meeting these identified needs, setting out arrangements for working together and the actions that each partner will take individually and collectively.