

## COUNTY COUNCIL

26 OCTOBER 2016

### QUESTIONS FROM AREA ACTION PARTNERSHIPS

#### QUESTION FROM BASH AAP

The Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP has been working on a number of priorities including Children and Young People and Crime and Community Safety. One concerning and recurring theme through our work has been the health and wellbeing of children and young People and we have been concerned to hear about the number of young people with caring responsibilities in the area. We were pleased to support the Bridge Young Carers Project with an Area Budget allocation in 2015/16 and we continue to support them as a partnership. What else is Durham County Council doing to support young carers in County Durham and could this work be affected by the ongoing budgetary savings?

#### RESPONSE

I would like to thank the Bishop Auckland and Shildon AAP for their question.

The needs of young people who have caring responsibilities is a high priority for Durham County Council. The Council funds the Bridge Young Carers Project to:-

“Ensure children and young people are protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve their potential”.

The service works to achieve the following key objectives:-

- Raise awareness in relation to the service and young carer issues.
- Children and young people with caring responsibilities access opportunities that are open to their peers.
- Existing and new services work more closely together to provide effective services to young carers and their families.
- Effective consultation and participation with young carers and their families to identify their needs.

Awareness raising with a range of partners of the needs of children and young people who have caring responsibilities is a key priority so that partners have a shared responsibility and work closely together to provide effective services to young carers and their families. The Children and Families Partnership has worked in collaboration with The Bridge, part of Family Action and were successful in being awarded the County Durham Young Carers Charter. The Children and Families Partnership pledges to support young carers needs, and to encourage member organisations to sign up to the charter within their own organisations.

There are a range of initiatives that enhance support to young carers which includes:

- The Carers Card scheme which is free to any registered young carer living in County Durham which promotes healthy lifestyles by entitling young carers to discounts from identified local culture and leisure venues.

- The Carer Breaks scheme is a fund which is used to find practical solutions that may help reduce the impact of caregiving on young carers. Young carers and their practitioner explore the possible solutions and applications are made to a quarterly panel meeting with payments being made for items such as reading books, gym memberships and equipment for hobbies or clubs.
- There is a Carers Emergency Support Service in place which young carers can register with and, in the event of an emergency, this service can provide the care and support that the young carer usually provides.
- The implementation of the Young Carers Charter into schools, One Point Hubs and other settings is also a key priority. This ensures staff working with young people are supported to identify young people who have caring responsibilities and respond appropriately and effectively to them. To achieve charter status, settings must demonstrate they understand the issues young carers face and ensure they have an inclusive approach to supporting young carers access provision that is available to their peers and that they are effectively able to identify young carers and their needs.

Children's Services works closely with The Bridge Young Carers Project to ensure there are close and effective working relationships which support young people with caring responsibilities and their carers.

Provision developed by the Council, the Bridge Young Carers Project and Macmillan has achieved national recognition and has been shortlisted for an LGA award for its ground-breaking work with young carers who have a cancer-caring role supporting cancer sufferers.

A Young Carers Steering Group meets regularly and is attended by Children's Services Staff. The purpose of the group is to ensure the key objectives are delivered and that young carers are identified and their needs are being effectively met through full multi-agency support and engagement.

The financial circumstances of the Council are well known, however, the needs of young carers remains a high priority.

## QUESTION FROM SPENNYMOOR AAP

A continuing area of discussion within the Spennymoor AAP Task & Finish Groups has been the increase in mental health issues faced by society. Mental health, as we are aware, can affect people of all ages. Within the Spennymoor AAP locality there are number of projects that are being delivered that help towards combatting mental health issues, some of which have received financial support from the AAP. Discussions within our Task & Finish Groups are now moving towards mental health initiatives that are more of an 'intergenerational' nature. Taking these discussions into consideration, the Spennymoor AAP would like to know how best we could complement the overall strategic vision of Durham County Council in battling mental health issues at a local level?

## RESPONSE

Mental health is a key priority for the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board and is one of the strategic objectives within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy as follows:

“To improve the mental and physical wellbeing of the population”

We know that being lonely and socially isolated can have a detrimental impact on mental health especially in older people.

Taking action to reduce social isolation and loneliness in our communities can reduce the impact and cost on local health and care services, whilst improving the health and wellbeing of people in the County. Area Action Partnerships undertake valuable work to promote mental wellbeing in their communities and could build on these to prevent loneliness by developing intergenerational programmes.

The focus of these programmes could include:

- Group interventions with an educational focus
- Targeted support activities which could include arts and crafts and getting active, for example walking activities
- Befriending schemes to provide additional social support for isolated people in communities

We would also suggest that AAPs could promote the Five Ways to Well Being to improve mental wellbeing.

Adults and Health are currently working together with Public Health and the 2 CCGs to improve Mental Health and Wellbeing Services across County Durham. There will be further opportunities for AAPs to discuss these issues in more detail during 2017 as part of that consultation and engagement process.