

Cyflwynwyd yr ymateb i ymgynghoriad y [Pwyllgor Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol](#) ar [Gwella mynediad at gymorth i ofalwyr di-dâl](#)

This response was submitted to the [Health and Social Care Committee](#) consultation on [Improving access to support for unpaid carers.](#)

UC38: Ymateb gan: Gweithredu dros Blant | Response from: Action for Children





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Peter Fox MS
Chair
Health and Social Care Committee

via e-mail

19 September 2025

Dear Peter and Members of the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee,

Here at Action for Children we want every child and young person to have a safe and happy childhood, and the foundations they need to thrive. We offer practical and emotional support to families and we're working with decision-makers to make sure government policies protect and support children, now and in the future.

We became aware of your inquiry into improving access to support for unpaid carers in Wales and wanted to ensure that the voices of the children and young people we support – particularly Young Carers – fed into the work of the Committee. The young carers we spoke to varied in experiences of caring and age and currently access support from our Young Carers services in different parts of Wales.

The following topics, experiences and ideas reflect the views of young carers we support as well as the experiences of our practitioners who support our children, young people and families.

Improving support for young carers

Educational support was overwhelmingly identified as an area that needs improvement. Young carers and their practitioners told us that school is a significant aspect of their daily lives outside of their caring responsibilities and is therefore also significantly impacted when caring needs arise.

Concerns are often raised by our young carers about the lack of understanding and support from their peers and school staff, which impacts on their experiences of education. This can often lead to young carers feeling isolated and disconnected from education, with feelings of anxiety and fear of being “othered” due to their caring responsibilities.

It is not always felt that the pressures and impact of caring for loved ones are understood, particularly when it manifests into behaviours such as a lack of concentration in class, forgetting equipment, checking phones or being late / absent from lessons. Recognising that at times caring responsibilities can impact educational



progress, our young carers also cited the need for additional support outside of the classroom in order for them to catch up and remain on top of their studies.

Our young carers and their families felt that a better understanding and awareness of the role of unpaid carers is needed in school, as well as spaces for young carers to connect with one another and share experiences as peers. This support within educational settings would benefit young carers in terms of both their educational outcomes, and their overall wellbeing. Creating a space for children to come together, share experiences and meet others with caring responsibilities creates a sense of inclusion and 'normalcy' for children who often feel excluded as a result of their caring roles.

Based on our experiences and engagement with families we would suggest:

- Further training is needed for school-based staff to help identify and support young carers in schools
- Spaces are created within school settings for young carers to receive support from trained staff members and have opportunities to speak to others with similar experiences.
- Out of school 'catch up sessions' for young carers whose education is impacted as a result of their caring responsibilities.

Outside of education a range of improvements were suggested from ensuring better signposting of the support services available, as well as a wider knowledge of the services to ensure sufficient awareness and promotion of them.

The young carers we spoke to also referenced the benefits of receiving support on a one-to-basis, as well as being able to spend time with their families, participating in activities which they may sometimes miss out on due to caring needs. The role of practitioners in enabling these family activities, group activities with other young carers and one-to-one support, is immensely valued by our young carers and our families, however there is always more which can be done.

We know from the young carers service which we deliver across Wales that there is a real need for practitioners to be experienced in supporting young carers and their families, with knowledge of the challenges they likely face and the skillset to support them through this. Therefore investment in the frontline workforce is also vital to delivering effective support to young carers.

Respite and time away

We know that our young carers care deeply for their loved ones and more often than not, focus their entire energy on providing care which at times, can be at a detriment to their own wellbeing and development. Whilst there are no complaints of the role they play, there is still a definite need to create space for our young carers to have time to themselves, and with family members, to decompress.

Unfortunately, through our responses from young carers and their families, as well as our practitioners understanding of the situation through their working relationships, not many were aware of available respite support. Those who were aware of available respite – mainly the Amser grant – had either received support or were on a waiting list.

With young carers projects spanning Wales we do unfortunately see a “postcode” lottery of support with availability of respite often varying the most. This tends to be due to the number of individuals and families in need of respite and on waiting lists, with demand outstretching the availability. We have also seen the complexity of needs within families grow in recent years, with the needs of both our young carers but also the cared for increasing, posing challenges around matching and respite opportunities.

We have heard experiences where due to the cost of some respite services – for example a sit in service for the cared for reaching £25,000 per annum – that families can often face challenges in meeting tight eligibility requirements for respite services due to stretched resources and growing costs.

In response to this we have, where possible, created respite opportunities or planned whole family activities in order to still provide both a break and enjoyment for our young carers and their families.

We have utilised the Amser grant to directly support our young carers, but also to create safe spaces for families to come together through hiring venues such as cinemas and soft play centres. Through this use of the grant, as well as allocating a sum directly to each young carer to personalise their own activity, we have been able to create the physical and mental space for our young carers to receive respite from their caring responsibilities.

In our experience of working with the Amser grant, whilst it is very much welcome and useful for our families, due to it being time limited on a year-by-year basis, it is often difficult to plan our services and opportunities around the resource.

Without multiyear funding commitments and the financial pressures on local authorities who commission support services for young carers, we have seen challenges and reductions within these vital services. We are concerned that without multiyear funding commitments we risk a growing detrimental impact on young carers’ wellbeing and opportunities, as well as a risk of losing dedicated and experienced practitioners.

We believe that there is a need for:

- Increased investment to enable Local Authorities to properly resource services for young carers
- Longer term funding to enable better planning and delivery of sustainable support services
- Recognition of the importance of short breaks for young carers and their families, with the opportunities to do so provided consistently across Wales.

Conclusions

Through the relationships our practitioners develop with our young carers and their families, we are aware of the varying levels of direct and indirect support for unpaid carers across Wales. We do however do our best to advocate for our young carers and their families, where appropriate, and to signpost them to other support which may be available.

Unfortunately, we have not seen the necessary investment into support for unpaid carers in order to meet rising demand and costs, stretching already well utilised services and therefore impacting on the availability of support – though never at a detriment to the quality of services provided.

We hope this information on behalf of some of our young carers, families, and practitioners is helpful, as the Committee considers the future of general practice services and your recommendations to the Welsh Government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ryall', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Laurie Ryall

National Director for Wales
Cyfarwyddwr Cenedlaethol - Cymru