

Professor Jo Aldridge

THE LIVES OF YOUNG CARERS IN ENGLAND: FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL SURVEY

The Lives of Young Carers in England:

- 18 month, two-phase study
- First phase – qualitative study of 22 ‘hidden’ and known young carers aged 6-17
- Second phase – quantitative study (published January, 2017) to provide numbers of young carers in England aged 5-17 (current estimates: 166,000; ONS, 2011)
- Final estimates based also on questions on CSEW

Study background

- Study funded by DfE, and conducted in partnership with TNS-BMRB (now Kantar Public):
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-lives-of-young-carers-in-england>
- Main qualitative report and summary:
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-lives-of-young-carers-in-england>
- Quantitative report and appendices:
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582575/Lives_of_young_carers_in_England_Omnibus_research_report.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582602/Lives_of_young_carers_in_England_Appendices.pdf
- DfE intention was to arrive at a definitive figure of young carers and understand more about impact of caring

Main findings: Qualitative study

- ***Profile of young carers:***
- More likely to care for mothers and caring more likely in lone parent families (LPF)
- Parental mental health most challenging – unpredictability; lack of timely and flexible services
- Older children (16-17) took on more responsibilities, especially in LPF and likely to have higher needs; also more likely to disclose caring.

Experiences and impact of young caring

Caring a positive experience –
rewarding

Negative – increased stress,
fatigue, strain on family
relationships, education and
social life

Parents concerned about
impacts but little opportunities
for long-term planning

- Those young carers known to services identified with term ‘young carer’; but also recognised negative connotations
- ‘Hidden’ young carers did not identify with ‘young carer’ and both they and their parents concern about being ‘labelled’ young carer

Needs assessments and services

- Fear of disclosure of young caring among children and families
- Confusion among families about whether children received needs assessment
- More timely assessments needed following disclosure and at a time and place dictated by children
- Greater clarity about outcomes of assessments needed
- Referrals typically to YC projects via health and social care services and schools
- Early, effective communication between professionals and families can help to allay fears
- Young carers projects valued highly – help with disclosure, provide good and effective services, contact with other YCs and whole family support, which was valued highly

Support propositions

- YCs and parents identified factors that would promote access to support: increasing availability of young carer services; better communication from professionals about the kinds of support available; standardising age appropriate activities across young carer services; improving support for the family member with care needs
- Young carers said they need: someone to talk to – shared understanding; practical support (including aids and equipment for person with care needs); information about illness/disability and on managing finances and life planning (transitions to FE, HE, training, employment – ‘young adult carers’); help from teachers and schools – better understanding of YC needs and stressful times (eg exams).

Omnibus survey (background):

- July 2015 and February 2016.
A further week of fieldwork conducted June 2016
- Face to Face Omnibus survey.
A general survey which uses a quota sampling methodology to interview over 3,400 adults aged 16+ living in private households in England each week. Total families accessed: 79,629.
- cannot calculate any margins of error around any estimate of the number of young carers and the socio-demographic characteristics of their families. This objective instead being addressed by the introduction of a question on both the adult and young person's interview on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) which uses a random probability sampling methodology.

Results:

- Asked whether the household contained a young carer in over 79,629 households – 420 contained at least one young carer. This included children and young people caring for relatives or others outside the home as well as those caring within the household. For the ‘comparison survey,’ ran part of the questionnaire with 304 parents of young people aged 5 to 17 or who were not young carers.
- 0.52% young carers from general population

Caring tasks:

- Over half (55%) caring for parent (mother);
 - 78% carrying out practical tasks – cooking, cleaning etc;
 - 26% providing nursing care;
 - and 57% providing emotional support.
- (53%) reported that their child was providing up to an hour or so of care a day during the school or college week, around one in seven (14%) reported four or more hours caring each day rising to over one in four (26%) at the weekends.

Assessments:

- ‘Fewer than one in five (19%) parents of young carers helping within the household reported that their child had received an assessment of the child’s needs by the local authority, falling to 13% among those caring outside the household. Nearly two thirds (64%) were receiving no support, whether formal or informal. Of those receiving help, the most common source was a young carers’ project, followed by their school or college’ (p. 8).

- Similar to Children's Commission lightning review: Young carers: The support provided to young carers in England (2016):
<http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Young%20Carers%20report%20December%202016.pdf>
- 4 out of 5 YCs not receiving support; only 20% receive support from LAs.

- Issue of funding is significant: cuts in youth services spending since 2010 have amounted to £387m putting more pressure on YC services and more referrals that may not always be appropriate. Some contracts ‘do not cover the cost of providing support...’ (Children’s Commission, 2016, p. 21)

Implications for policy and practice

- Prevention through early intervention – children who have been caring for longer experience greater need
- We need to be careful about assuming ‘hidden’ means in most need; and cautious about assuming (and identifying) children who live in families with parental/sibling illness/disability are young carers (and the numbers of these), they are *children* first.

Resources

- Children and families first – children in need? Whole family working (legislative framework – 2014)
- Importance of screening when identifying young carers: screening tools; MASC (note, screening is *not* measuring)
- Mental health – the family model
- YCRG screening tool (and explanatory model)
- <http://www.ycrg.org.uk/youngCarersDownload/YCRG%20questionnaire.pdf>
- See: <http://www.ycrg.org.uk/resources.html>
- Mental health – The Family Model Handbook: <https://www.pavpub.com/the-family-model-handbook/>

Thank you!

Jo Aldridge

J.Aldridge@lboro.ac.uk

www.ycrg.org.uk



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