

Experiences and unmet needs of Walsall young carers

Report
August 2025



healthwatch
Walsall



Engaging
Communities
Solutions

Content

	Page
Contents	2
Introduction	3
Methodology	3
Who took part.....	3
Findings	4 – 11
Focus group findings.....	11 – 13
Conclusion	14 – 15
Recommendations.....	16 – 16

Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall is the independent voice of the public in health and social care in Walsall. We gather feedback from the public through engagement and projects and use that feedback to work with health and social care providers and commissioners to improve service delivery.

Healthwatch Walsall wanted to determine whether young carers, known to the Local Authority, have unmet needs, evaluate their knowledge of existing support and services and to examine any obstacles they encounter in accessing them.

Methodology

This project used a mixed methodology with a survey that was completed with young carers alongside discussion groups with young carers who either attended groups at My Place or were involved with young carers support at their school.

Who took part

There was a total of **42** survey responses. However, not all of the people took part answered all of the questions.

25 of the people who answered the question said that their ethnic background was White British; 6 said they were from an Asian background, 5 were of a mixed ethnic background, and 3 were from a Black background.

33 of the young people who took part in the survey said that they were aged between 12 and 16 years, 3 were aged 8 to 11 years and 2 were aged 17 to 19 years.

32 people said that they did not have a disability or long-term health condition, 1 person said that they had a long-term health condition, and 3 people said that they preferred not to say whether they had a disability or long-term health condition.

24 of the people who took part said that they were female, 15 said that they were male and 1 person said that they preferred to self-describe their gender identity.

Key Headlines

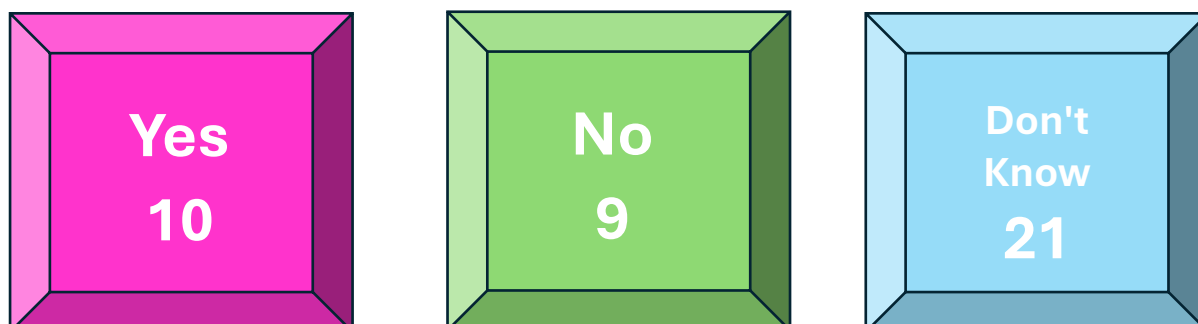
From discussions with young carers, the key headlines they told us about were centred around:

- Collection of medication from pharmacies.
- Mixed level of support received from schools.
- Varying experience of accessing emotional support.
- Transport issues.

Detailed Findings

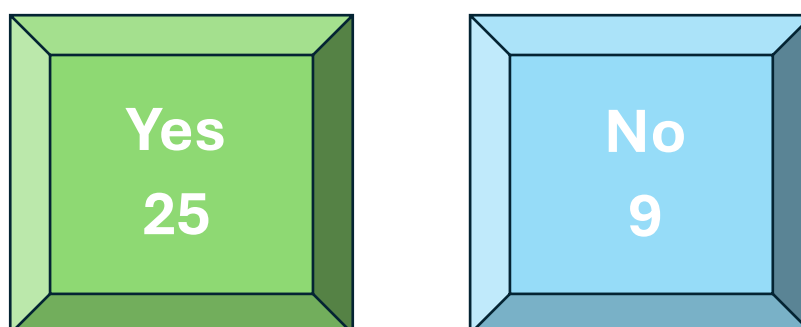
Not all of the people who took part in the survey answered all of the questions and therefore, the findings detail the responses to each individual question.

Q. Does your doctor know you are a young carer?



The young people who took part in the survey were asked if their GP knew that they were young carers. 21 people said that they did not know if their GP was aware that they were a young carer, 10 people said that their GP was aware and 9 people said that their GP was not aware that they were a young carer.

Q. Do you have access to support services for young carers?



25 people said that they had access to support services for young carers and 9 people said that they did not. It should be noted that a number of the surveys were completed with young people who attended My Place or a group for young carers when asked what services they used, the young people mentioned My Place, their schools, support from Children's Services and their parent's support worker.

Those who said that they did not access services were asked what they thought would be useful to them. Suggestions included practical support with household chores, getting a home help to help with personal care, and money management.

Others suggested that befriending groups for their sibling(s), group trips that they could attend and emotional support.

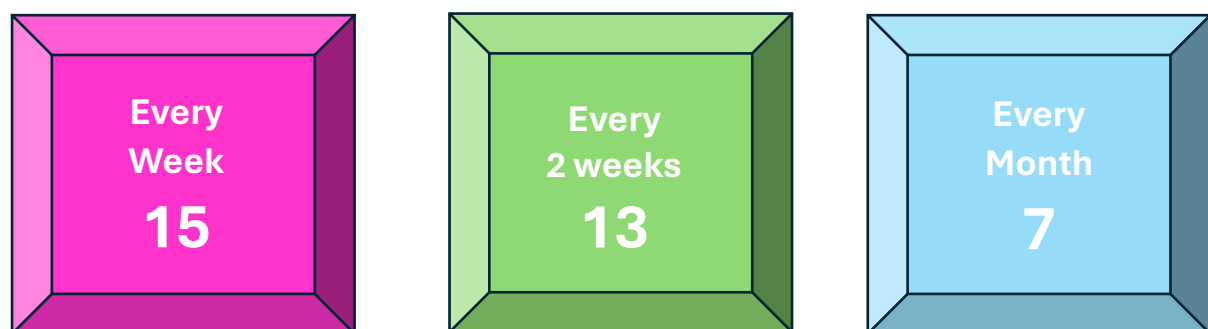
Others were reluctant to have any support, with one saying that they did not like using their card as it was 'embarrassing'. Another said that they would be concerned about the cultural awareness of any paid carers. It was also commented that people did not know what was already available for them to access.

Those that had used groups that they had attended were asked what they liked or disliked about them. Positive comments were that they liked the 'break from home' and 'making new friends.' It was also commented by one person that they enjoyed the arts and crafts activities.

Conversely, it was also commented that there were too many crafts sessions. Another dislike was that the location of My Place was difficult to get to.

Young people were asked how often they thought that groups for young carers should run to be of use to them. 15 people said that they thought that groups should run weekly, 13 people said that they should run every 2 weeks and 7 said that they should run monthly.

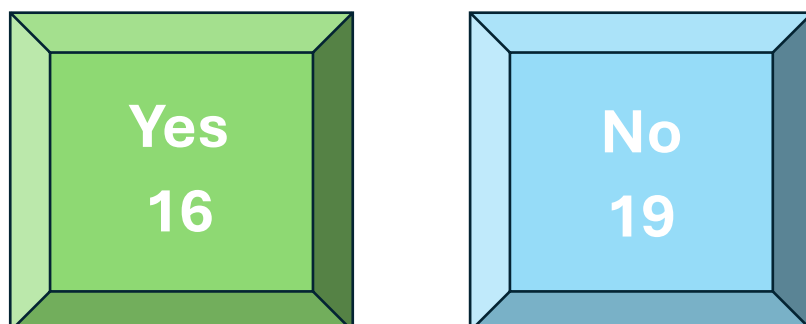
Q. How often do you think groups should run?



Young people were also asked if they had experienced any barriers in getting to the groups. A lack of transport was a common concern as was the location of My Place in light of the lack of transport.

Other barriers included the time of day that the groups take place, having the money to be able to get to the groups, and other priorities such as studying or working.

Q. If you have accessed mental health or emotional services, did they work for you?

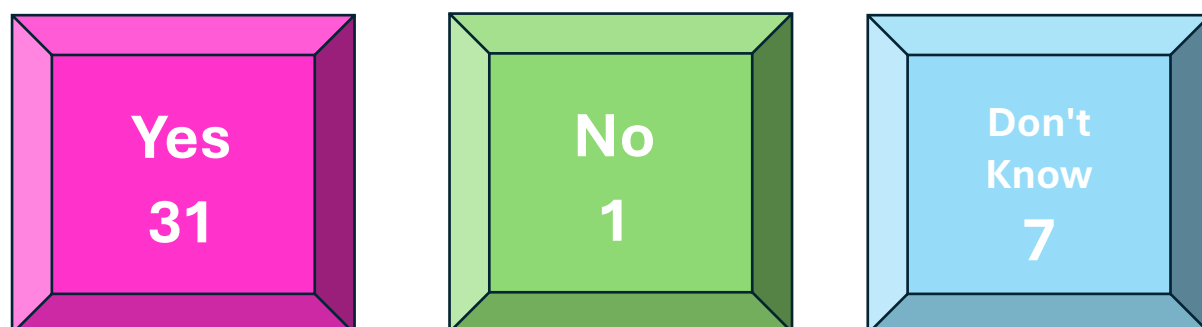


When asked if emotional support services that they had accessed had worked for them, 19 people said that they had not and 16 people said that they had worked for them.

There were comments about the length of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) counselling being too short with it being limited to 6 weeks meaning that they could not build trust with the counsellor.

The length of time that they had to wait to access emotional support services was also commented on. There was a view that there needed to be ongoing support that was accessible when they needed someone to talk to.

Q. Does your school know you are a carer?



People were asked if their school knew that they were a young carer. 31 people said that their school were aware, 7 said that they did not know, and 1 person said that their school was not aware.

One young person said that they did not know why their school was not aware that they were a younger carer.

The young people were asked what support would help them to pursue their education, career or life goals whilst being a carer.

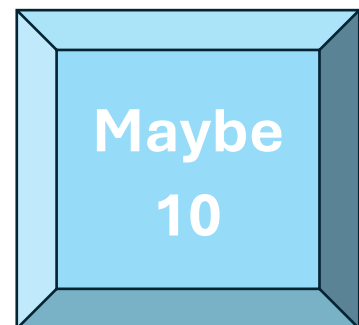
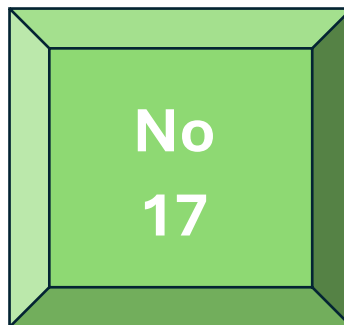
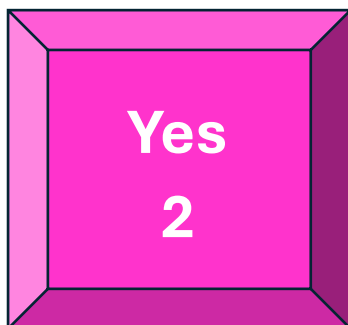
People said that they felt that school did not always make any adjustments for them as carers, but it was suggested that having the ability to have time out of lessons when needed would be helpful as would more support in class and easier access to the school counsellor.

Another suggestion was being able to access a helpline for young carers. One person said that it would be useful if they got more support from their wider family.

For one person there was a reluctance to accept external help as they did not trust others to care for their family member.

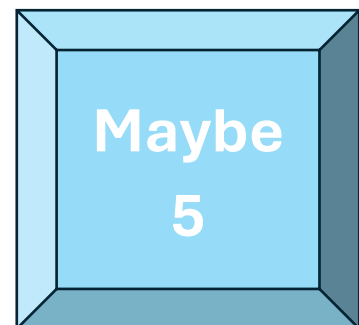
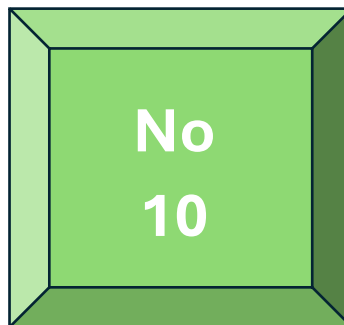
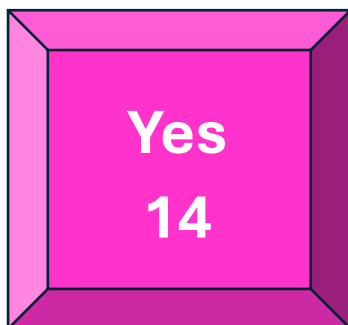
Q. What types of support do you feel you would benefit from?

Household Chores



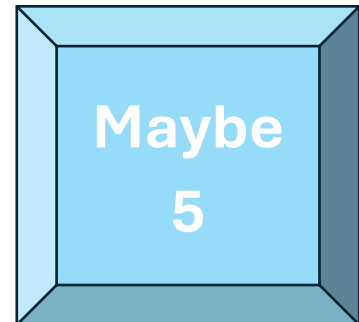
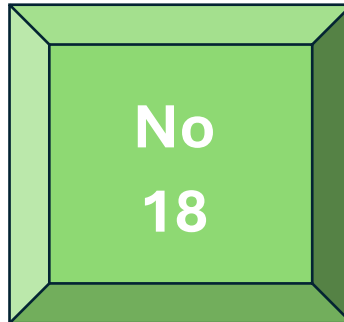
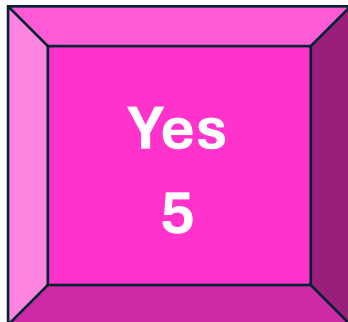
2 people said that they would welcome help with **household chores** and 10 said that they may benefit from support with household chores. 17 people said that they would not benefit from support with household chores.

Transport



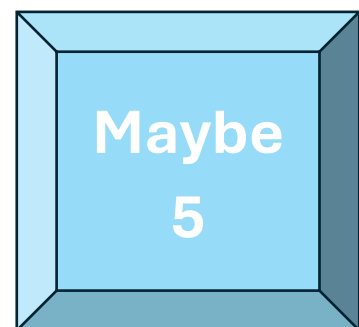
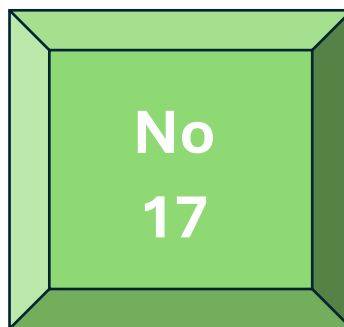
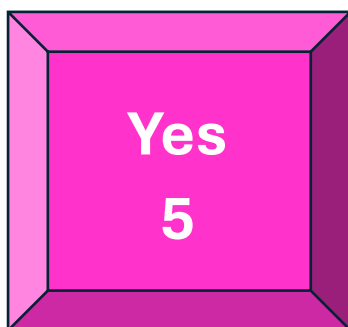
14 people said they would benefit from support with **transportation**, and 5 people said that they may benefit from support with transportation. 10 people said that they would not benefit from support with transportation.

Medication Management



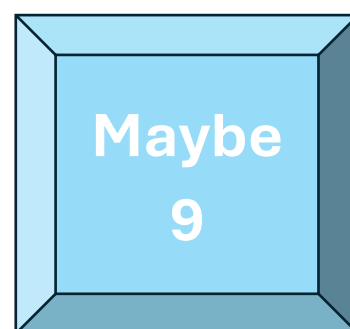
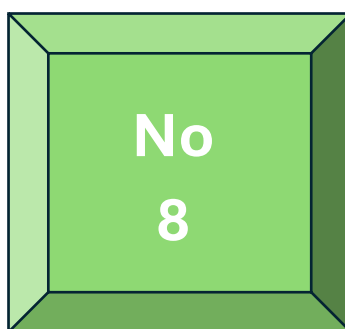
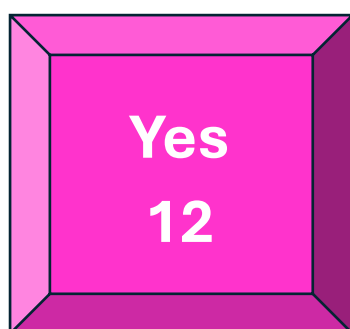
5 people said that they would benefit from support with **medication management** and 5 people said that they may benefit from support with medication management. 18 people said that they would not benefit from support with medication management.

Personal Care



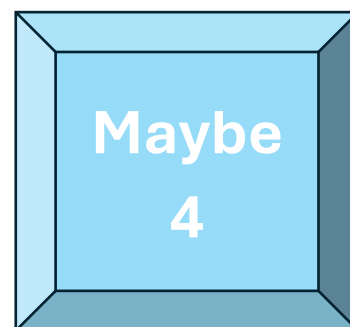
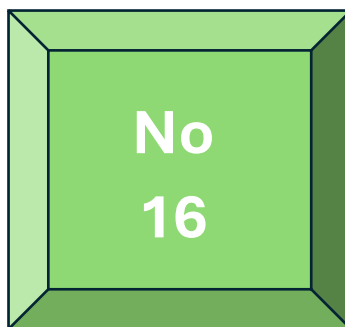
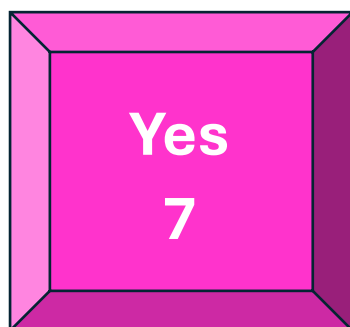
5 people said that they would benefit from support with **personal care** for the person that they care for, and 5 said that they may benefit from that support. 17 people said that they would not benefit from support with carrying out personal care for the person that they care for.

Companionship



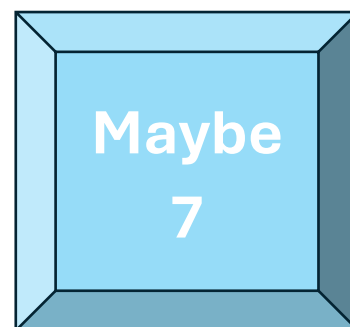
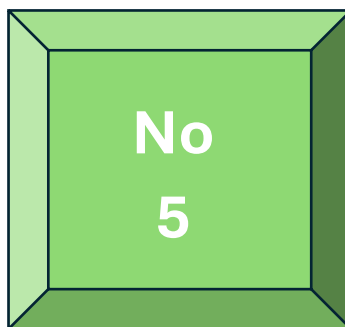
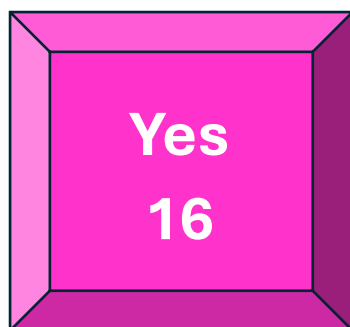
12 people said they would benefit from support to provide **companionship** for the person that they care for and 9 people said that they may benefit from this type of support. 8 people said that they would not benefit from support in providing companionship for the person that they care for.

Finances



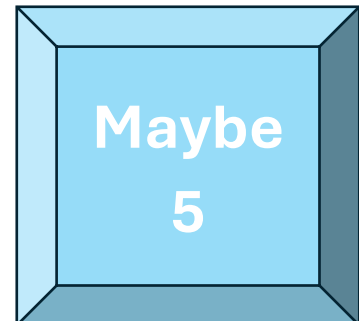
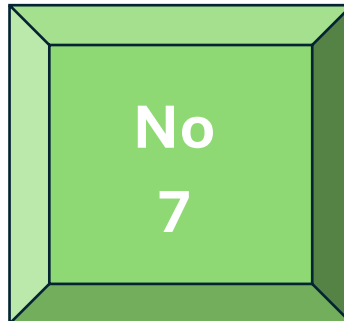
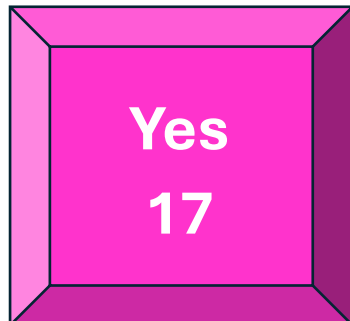
7 people said they would benefit from support in **dealing with finances** and 4 people said that they may benefit from support in this area. 16 people said that they would not benefit from support with dealing with finances.

School Work



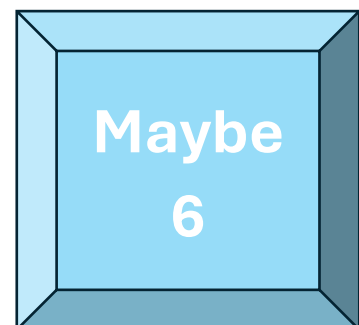
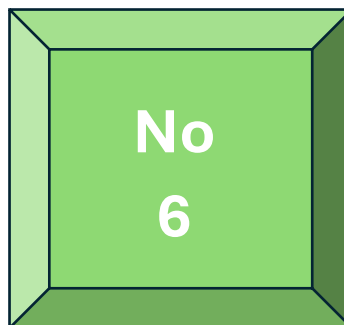
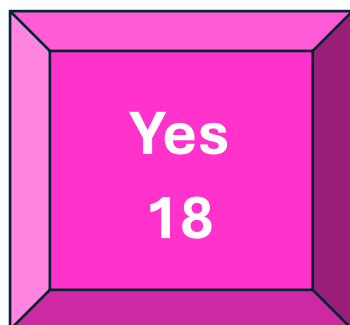
16 people said that they would benefit from support with **school work** and homework, and 7 people said that they may benefit from support in this area. 5 people said they would not benefit from support with schoolwork and homework.

Emotional Wellbeing



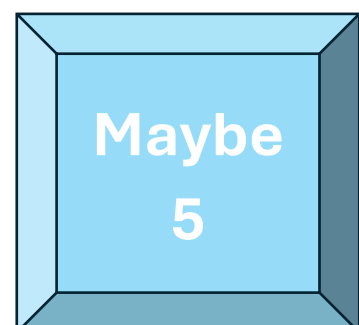
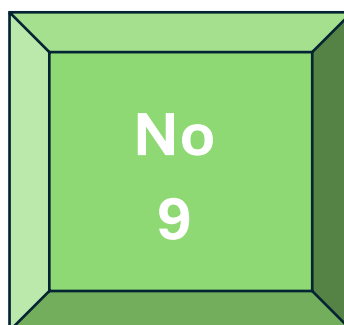
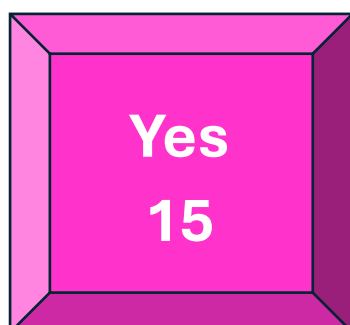
17 people said that they would benefit from support with their **emotional wellbeing**, and 5 people said that they may benefit from support in this area. 7 people said that they would not benefit from support with their emotional wellbeing.

Socialising



18 people said that they would benefit from support to get out and **socialise**, and 6 people said that they may benefit from this support. 6 people said that they would not benefit from support to get out and socialise.

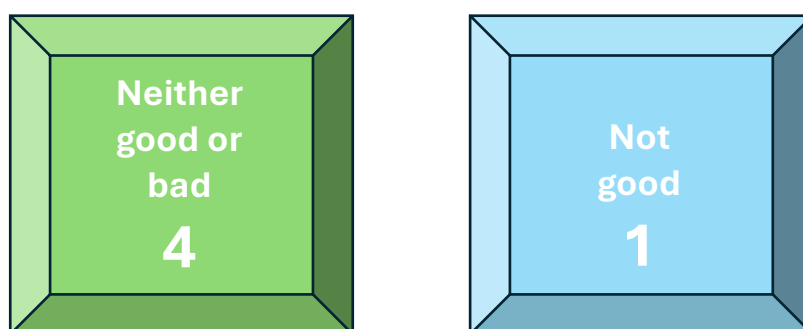
Time to Themselves



15 people said that they would benefit from support to **have time to themselves**, and 5 people said that they may benefit from this support. 9 people said that they would not benefit from support to have more time to their self.

companionship themselves
medications school
have chores care
to household with
transportation
management socialise
time personal work
dealing wellbeing
finances
emotional

Q. If you are 18 or over, how did you find the transition from being a young carer to an adult carer?



Most people were not aged over 18 and were unable to answer the question about support that they received to transition from young carer to adult carer. However, 5 people answered the question with 4 people giving a neutral answer and 1 person said that they felt there was no support at this point.

Focus group findings

The feedback from discussions with young carers have been analysed using thematic analysis which means that common themes have been identified within the feedback.

Pharmacies

The young people commented on their experiences with pharmacies when they have tried to collect medication for the person that they care for. The young people told how they struggled to get the medication sometimes due to the reluctance of the pharmacy staff to allow them to collect it.

'They won't let me collect the prescription sometimes, tell me I am not old enough. If someone else could collect, I wouldn't be there.'

'The pharmacy I use always say you aren't down to collect this medication, even though they see me each time I go there, they recognise me and end up giving me the prescription anyway – every time I go.'

Schools

Feedback on schools was mixed with some young people feeling that their school or particular teachers were not supportive.

'They forget I am a carer. In lesson they say things and expect things of me that I cannot do.'

'They need to be nicer. We have enough going on at home without them going on at us.'

Others commented on the support that they had from particular teachers that made a difference to them, but that this was not the case from all teachers.

'Some teachers are good. I don't have to do the same amount of maths as the others because remembers I am a carer and so I get a smaller amount of maths, which means I can actually finish it.'

It was also commented on that adjustments to timetables, such as reduced hours and one to one teaching were useful support for some young carers.

'I have had 121 lessons, and my grades have got better. I find in a big classroom I worry about home but when a teacher explains to me 121, I can concentrate on them.'

'Recently had a reduced timetable and now I am a lot better.'

Emotional Support

The young carers commented on their experiences of accessing and using emotional support services. For some emotional support had been useful and easy to access.

'I accessed help and it was good.'

'I know my school are there to support me and I can go to the counsellor. There is always someone to talk to.'

Others felt that the length of time for sessions limits their effectiveness.

'Absolutely pointless, by the time you have got to know the person your sessions have ended, got to wait 6 months or more for some more. Back to square one.'

Waiting times for access to services was a barrier for some to be able get any emotional support.

'Why bother? They just fob you off. Say you are on the waiting list, no-one does anything, no-one calls and then it's just forgot about.'

Transport

Transport to groups was discussed within the context of My Place recently losing the minibus that they had utilised for picking up young carers to attend groups. The loss of the minibus was an issue for a number of young people.

'No one to take me to groups, no car in my house and I don't know anyone with a car.'

'I have to catch the bus and go through Walsall which I don't like.'

'Don't like getting there through Walsall. Walsall is scary.'

'My Mom and Dad bring me, if they can't then I can't come because the bus was stopped that used to pick us up.'

Conclusion

The young carers who took part in the project were mainly those who were known to the Local Authority or their school as young carers.

The experiences of young carers who took part in the project is variable with some having positive experiences of services that are designed to support them but others feeling that services were not accessible and did not meet their needs.

Access to healthcare was mainly concerned with their experiences of collecting medication from pharmacies on behalf of their family members and difficulties that this caused because of their age group or because they were not named as a carer.

Some said that they were not registered as a carer with their GP practice and others that they did not know if they were known to be carers at their GP practice.

Most young people said that they had access to support in their caring role with that support coming from My Place, schools and children's services in the main.

It should be noted though that the young people who took part were recruited largely through groups and schools that they attend.

When specifically asked about the groups that they attended at My Place young people were concerned about their ability to get to My Place with the removal of the minibus that used to pick them up.

The location meant that for some there was a need to travel through areas of Walsall that they were not comfortable in, as well as a reliance on getting dropped off by parents or other family members meaning it was not always possible for them to access the groups.

The types of support that were seen as being most helpful for young carers included access to transport to get to groups, help with schoolwork and emotional support.

Young carers also said that they would find it helpful to have companionship for the person that they care for, support to get out and socialise and time for themselves. These aspects combined would enable young carers to have timeout from their caring roles without worrying about the person that they care for.

Accessing emotional support was problematic for some with long waiting times meaning that some young carers did not see the point in it. Likewise, the time limited nature of support meant that for some there was not enough time for them to develop a trust relationship and so they felt it was of limited use to them.

Young carers felt that support from school was variable with some having positive experiences of individual teachers making adjustments for them and some having timetable changes to support their caring role.

Others felt that even though schools were aware that they were young carers this was not taken into account and that they were penalised for issues that were out of their control.

One person commented that they felt embarrassed about using their card denoting that they were a young carer and so did use it to remind staff when they appeared to be unaware of their young carer status.

Overall, the feedback from young carers suggests that the support that they are able to access is variable with some schools providing good support and some young carers being able to access My Place and emotional support, but this was not uniformly the case.

Not all young carers welcomed the idea of having more support and intervention and therefore, there is a need to consider the preferences of the young people and understand what support would be most helpful to them as well as addressing their distrust of interventions from agencies and others.

Recommendations

1.	As a number of young carers were not registered as carers with their GP or were not sure if they were, it is recommended that GP practices ensure that when an adult is recognised as having a disability or long-term condition and there are children in the household those children are registered as young carers.
2.	Issues with medication collection by young carers mean that it is recommended that when GP practices prescribe medication, they ensure that information is included with the prescription that informs the pharmacy that a young carer is likely to collect the medication.
3.	The loss of the transport provided for young carers to access My Place was raised as an issue by young people. Therefore, it is recommended that transport options are reviewed to ensure that all young carers who wish to attend groups are able to do so without feeling unsafe using public transport.
4.	The range of activities offered in groups was largely appreciated but not all young people want to take part in craft activities. It is recommended that My Place considers ways of involving young people in the design of a range of activities.
5.	Young people indicated that their preferences for additional support were related to being enabled to access time away from their caring responsibilities. It is recommended that the local authority considers ways to provide companionship for people who are being cared for to enable young carers to be able to have time to pursue their own interests without concern or guilt.
6.	The provision of support for young carers at school was variable with some being clear that it was dependent upon individual teachers remembering that they are a young carer. It is recommended that when schools are aware that a student is a young carer a plan is put together that sets out what reasonable adjustments should be made for them that is communicated to each teacher that has contact with them.
7.	Young people told us that teachers understanding and support was variable. It is recommended that schools put in place additional training for all school staff in relation to how young carers are impacted by their responsibilities and what they can do to support any students who are known to be young carers.
8.	Access to emotional support was appreciated by young people who had been able to access it, but the length of counselling was seen to be too short to develop trust relationships. It is recommended that provision of long term and ongoing counselling access is made available to young carers.
9.	Young carers told us that the waiting lists to access emotional support were long and they got lost in the system. It is recommended that emotional support provision should be made available to young people at the point where they need it, such as through a helpline that they can access without the need to access support through CAMHS and removing lengthy waiting lists.

healthwatch

Walsall

Share your Walsall Health and Social Care services experiences by getting in touch by using our services review platform "Have Your Say" on our website. Link: <https://tinyurl.com/3778j3ps>

Find us and our reports on our Social Media platforms



Facebook: @HealthwatchWSL

X (Twitter): @HWWalsall

Instagram: healthwatchwsl

YouTube: Healthwatch Walsall 2020



Committed to quality

We are committed to the quality of our information. Every three years we perform an in depth audit so that we can be certain of this.

How to contact us

Office:

Blakenall Village Centre

79 Thames Road

Blakenall

Walsall

WS3 1LZ

Tel: 0800 470 1660

Email: info@healthwatchwalsall.co.uk



Engaging
Communities
Solutions

The contract to provide Healthwatch Walsall is held by Engaging Communities Solutions C.I.C.
www.weareecs.co.uk Tel: 01785 887809 Email: contactus@weareecs.co.uk