

Full Council – 19 September 2024

2nd Labour Group Motion

End the 21-hour rule for young adult carers

This Council notes:

Young adult carers aged 16-24 provide unpaid care to someone, usually a family member, on a regular basis. The 2021 Census identified 272,731 young adult carers in England and Wales – at least 171 of whom live in Brent. Around 37,000 young people provide over 50 hours of care each week. That's over £3.5bn of unpaid care per year.

Young adult carers often give up their childhoods to care for others. Yet, through no fault of their own, they consistently miss out on opportunities in learning and work (29)

- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE, the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers.
- 24% of young carers in school say they cannot afford to go to college or university.
- Young carers are three times as likely to be NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- Young carers are four times more likely to drop out of college and university than non-carers.
- Young carers are 38% less likely to gain a degree qualification than non-carers. This is magnified for those providing high levels of care, with those caring for 35+ hours per week 86% less likely to gain a degree.

This Council further notes:

Current rules mean young carers cannot claim Carer's Allowance if they study for more than 21 hours per week. This limits their ability to study 'gold standard' qualifications, like A-levels and T-levels, risks limiting their chances to progress to higher education; and could harm their long-term employment prospects and financial independence.

No young adult carer should miss out on learning because they care for their families. The Scottish Government has recently announced that this change will be implemented from 2024. Urgent action should be taken to ensure that young adult carers in England and Wales are not left behind.

The Learning and Work Institute estimates that the cost of providing Carer's Allowance to all eligible young carers in further education would be £54m per year. To extend this to all young carers, studying at any level, would be £85m per year.

Therefore this Council resolves:

- (1) To write to the Secretary of State, calling on the Government to exempt young adult carers from the 21-hour rule; to ensure that young carers' educational outcomes are being regularly reviewed alongside other vulnerable groups; and to ask that ambitious social care reform becomes a priority from day one.
- (2) To support the Carer's Trust and the Learning and Work Institute in their provision for young carers across the board, regardless of employment or education status.
- (3) To continue supporting the crucial work of Brent Carers Centre, who deliver a holistic range of support services to address the social, emotional and financial issues that carers experience; our Early Help service; and the Brent Gateway Services, who offer guidance on benefit eligibility to our carers.
- (4) To support a holistic place-based approach to healthcare and social care, where integrated services will improve the care patients receive and will be rooted in communities.

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