**Blackpool Carers Centre Young Carers Referral Process**

The Blackpool Children’s Trust defines young carers as:

**“Young Carers are children and young people under the age of 18 years, who provide care to another family member, who has a physical illness or a disability; mental ill health; sensory disability or has a problematic use of drugs or alcohol and the level of care they provide would normally be undertaken by an adult, thus impacting adversely on their childhood.”**

Young carers and their families have varied needs and their contact with Blackpool Carers Centre (BCC) should equip them with coping strategies to enable them to carry out their role in balance with other areas of their lives. Anyone can refer a young carer to our service providing consent has been gained from the young carer and their parent/guardian. The young carer and their parent/guardian will then be visited at home to assess what level of care they are undertaking and what support services can be provided by Blackpool Carers Centre

BCC offer a variety of services and our main purpose is to support the young carers and their families to ensure that young people are not undertaking inappropriate caring roles. We will ensure that we are giving them opportunities to meet with others in similar situations, prepare them for the future, advocate to ensure they receive the services/support needed, signpost them to specialist services where appropriate and provide respite.

We aim to engage the whole family in the work that we do in order to help them to develop appropriate coping strategies, have the right information about their rights and local provision of services.

We aim to support families through a needs led and time limited plan of support. This enables us to identify priorities in helping families to develop independence, good coping skills and better family functioning.

Carers Trust (National) has developed the My Life Now assessment tool and this is used in conjunction with the Manual for Measures of Caring Activities and Outcomes for Children and Young People devised by Becker et al (2009) to identify need. The My Life Now tool identifies need within colour coding and informs individual aims and objectives for the young carers. This system may also be used to categorise young carers within the following tier system:

**Red (High Need)**

* The young carer is the primary or main carer (providing all or the majority of care on a regular or substantial basis) and taking on a caring role normally undertaken by adults.
* The young carer cares for one or both parents, or a parent and sibling(s).
* The person(s) they care for has a significant problem with mental health, substance misuse (including alcohol), chronic or severe ill-health or disability.
* The young carer is experiencing significant problems identified through the assessment process.

**Amber (Medium Need)**

* The young carer cares for either parent, sibling or other person.
* The young carer is a primary carer (as above) and is largely coping well with this role, does not experience any significant problems in any of the My Life Now categories, but is in need of contact and support in relation to their role as a carer.
* Or the young carer is a secondary carer (not the main carer but still carrying out significant roles on a regular or substantial basis) and experiences significant problems in one or more areas of My Life Now assessment as a consequence of their caring role.

**Green (Low Need)**

* The young carer cares for a parent, sibling or other person.
* A primary or secondary carer (see definitions above) who is coping well and does not experience any significant problems in the My Life Now categories outlined above as a consequence of their caring role.
* A young person who is affected by the care needs of a parent, sibling or other family member and is considered to be at risk of becoming a young carer.

It is recognised that family crisis situations arise which may cause a young carer to move from one tier to another very rapidly. It is therefore important that we have some flexibility within the system to accommodate this.

As a service we need to consider each case within the context of moving the young carer through our service so that involvement is a fluid experience rather than one in which they are supported on an ongoing basis. We do not wish to create a dependency on our services and our purpose is to enable the young carers by helping them to develop coping strategies and also build a network of support, including their peers.

Services are allocated on a basis of individual need at individual times. Signposting and information giving would be offered to all young carers whatever tier they fall into. See service flowchart for timescales of work and support offered.

**Reviewing Needs**

The needs of the young carer and their family will be reviewed throughout their support with us.

**Young Carers Who Move on**

Young carers will move on from BCC due to a variety of reasons. In most cases they will leave us equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to access generic youth provision and the ability to engage in everyday activities. Each young carer has different needs and will require an individual transition plan to be designed with them. BCC aims to support young carers through the moving on process towards more appropriate sources of support if this required.

**Conclusion**

For this system to work we need to see the support offered from BCC as a short term intervention which gives the young carer an opportunity to meet with others, gain confidence, information and knowledge. BCC will advocate for the young carers and their families so that other agencies take up their responsibilities and so that the young carer is integrated into other opportunities provided by the local wider community. BCC need to move young carers on in order to be able to provide support to the new young carers being identified.

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