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East Lothian Council

Additional information:

The Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee sought local authority views on aspects of a petition to establish a Young Carer's Grant for carers in full-time education or under the age of 18. This letter is the response.

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4 April 2013

By email: petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

Stuart Todd
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Todd

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1470

Thank you for your letter of 13 March asking for views on aspects of Petition PE1470, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to establish a Young Carer's Grant for carers in full-time education or under the age of 18. Please see below for answers to the points you raised.

What are your views / experience on the issues raised in the petition?

It is likely that many young carers will be further negatively impacted on by losing out on financial assistance such as Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or being able to stay in full time education due to losing their carers' allowance. The reasons for this include:

- Many young carers have difficulties with school attendance due to the practical and emotional impact of caring. This may well lead to young carers being unable to meet the attendance criteria for EMA.
- Many young carers still do not know that they *are* young carers, due to a lack of input/education and therefore if there was a change to the attendance criteria it still would not support 'hidden' young carers.
- We also know that many young carers do not come forward for support due to the reasons listed in the young carers strategy and again would not benefit from alterations to EMA criteria.
- As is stated in the literature many young carers will not be able to go on to further education without the ability to claim carers allowance but will be likely to still be carrying out a carers' role which could still be significant over and above undertaking their studies.

How well do the policies aimed at supporting the needs of young carers work in practice?

The situation in Scotland in relation to how policies are implemented to support young carers is very patchy. Some voluntary and statutory organisations are very proactive at trying to

implement policies. Others are finding this difficult with very few policies being put into practice.

- The numbers of young carers that we know about is still very low as is the number of young carers assessments being carried out and procedures in place to take this forward. There needs to be a mechanism in place to inspect local authority roll-out of policies included in the young carers strategy.
- Information about incentives such as the employer recruitment incentive is not being filtered down to Skills Development Scotland (SDS) staff on the ground and the criteria for this are unclear. Again this can only be accessed if we know who our young carers are - and we don't. SDS have told us that they have had no referrals for young carers which means that schools and young carers services are either not passing on this information, don't have this information or are not referring young carers for this kind of support.
- Education, Health and Social Work need to prioritise young carers starting by implementing the policies within the young carers strategy. The young carers strategy also needs to be reviewed and evaluated to include issues including young carers assessments, greater focus on young carers identification including the role of education within this and implementation issues.
- *Getting it Right For Young Carers: The National Strategy* is a well-put together document containing helpful recommendations. Section 8 focussed on young adult carers and provides useful ways of ensuring their needs, including financial, are better met. We need a coordinated approach to implementing the recommendations in the strategy, with representation from the key services, including education, SDS, the voluntary sector and children's wellbeing.

I hope the Committee finds this response helpful.

Yours sincerely

Sharon Saunders
Head of Children's Wellbeing
Services for People