

# 1 in 10 young people will be in a caring role (Carers Trust, UK)

## *Young people first; carers second*

### **Who is a young adult carer?**

A young adult carer is aged 16-25 and provides unpaid care/support to someone important in their life due to illness, disability, mental health difficulties or addiction. For some this may be a short term arrangement; for others this help and support may be long term. Every young adult carer is different. They may provide help with personal care such as washing, going to the toilet or administering medication. They may be keeping an eye on someone so their condition does not deteriorate or to reduce the risk of injury. They may be helping with younger siblings, or they may be helping with day to day tasks – grocery shopping, cleaning, cooking, filling in forms and managing money.

### **Why do young adult carers need support?**

Young adult carers face specific challenges. The impact of a disrupted education and high levels of social isolation may mean that young adult carers do not have either the confidence or skill set necessary to achieve their goals. The Scottish Government (2010) Young Carers Strategy 'Getting It Right For Young Carers' reflected its concern to address the high levels of social exclusion experienced by young people in caring roles. The Young Carers Strategy was also aligned with its 'More Choice, More Chances' Strategy that was closely associated with the principles of GIRFEC. According to the wellbeing indicator 'Achieving' we must support and guide young adult carers in their learning and in the development of their skills, confidence and self-esteem. While the service is very much user led, it is essential that we prepare our young adult carers for the next phase of their adult life.

### **What support is on offer?**

PKAVS Young Adult Carers (YAC) Service (launched April 2014) supports young adult carers to reduce their level of caring, transition from children's services to adult services and make decisions about education, employment and their future. This is achieved through 1-1 support, group work, advocacy, respite breaks, guidance, partnership work and signposting. The primary focus of the service is supporting young adult carers in making the transition to an independent adult life. The needs of P&K young adult carers were not being fully met by the configuration of services prior to April 2014.

### **What has the service achieved so far?**

Since the launch **44** young adult carers have accessed our service for support. We have provided **166** 1-1 sessions, ran **36** fortnightly respite groups, with an additional **35** groups focusing on cooking skills, employability, personal development, photography and research. **5** external agencies including NHS, RASAC, PKC Housing Advice Centre, Perth & District

YMCA, The University of Abertay Dundee and The Web Project have provided our carers with thought provoking workshops/sessions. We have provided **8** day/evening trips and **3** residential breaks. **19** young adult carers have been signposted onto **11** local services to widen their support circle. The service has attended **17** Personal and Social Education classes and assemblies in **5** P&K High Schools, and **4** classes within Perth College UHI.

One of our top achievements of 2015 includes a particularly challenging walk up Schiehallion, led by our walk leader volunteer. This was a joint effort by young carers, young adult carers and clients from PKAVS Mental Health and Wellbeing Hub. Altogether **13** (including one brave dog) tackled the mountain. A fantastic day had by all. Here's what some Munro 'baggers' had to say –

*"The trip was great. I liked it because it was fun and energetic and I honestly did more than I thought I was way capable of. It just shows that you can do things you don't think you can do." (Young carer aged 15)*

*"It helped me because I managed to get away from things that were going on at home. I also got to meet people that I had never met before." (Young adult carer aged 16)*

*"It was good for them to experience an activity where strangers treated them with respect, were friendly and chatty. It was a good overall morale and confidence booster for them." (Marie, PKAVS Volunteer)*



A further great achievement of 2015 was supporting one of our former young adult carers, Amy (19 years) to raise money for our charity. Amy courageously decided to shave her head in November, with all donations going towards our YAC Service. Amy also kindly donated her 7 inch locks to the Little Princess Trust – a charity that provides real hair wigs for children and young people suffering hair loss. This charitable act has seen Amy raise £301.14 so far, with her JustGiving page total continuing to increase. Here's what Amy has to say –

*"The head shave went well, I wasn't nervous at all! It was important to me because it was a kind thing to do and I wanted to give something back to the Young Adult Carers Service for helping me out"*



Photos courtesy of Fraser Band Photography

### **What feedback have we received from our carers?**

Thanks to a self-evaluation process which Sophie, our social work student launched, we have been able to establish what our carers think of their service. Carers scored *residential breaks from caring, knowing the service is there and meeting other young adult carers* as the most enjoyable aspects of YAC. When asked how supported they feel, here is what some of them had to say –

*“You guys are incredible people that supply endless help and support!”*

*“Keep it up!”*

*“You are doing a perfect job”*

*“The Young Adult Carers Service is very supportive”*

### **Edith’s story – young adult carer aged 19**

Edith joined our service in June 2014 at the age of 17. Initially Edith’s caring role was for her Father who suffered a stroke and consequently mobility difficulties. However, since this date Edith’s caring role has expanded and she now cares for her Father, her Mother and at times her Grandmother. To gain a break Edith has attended our residential holidays and has enjoyed meeting new people and making friends. She gained her first ever qualification in April 2015, when we ran a PX2 – Developing Effective Thinking Skills programme (National 5 qualification); facilitated by Perth & District YMCA. Her connection with the YMCA was timed well for their upcoming 11<sup>th</sup> Princes Trust Programme. Edith successfully completed this 12 week programme in November and from doing so has developed a keen interest in youth work. Edith has also been in receipt of literacy support from our former and current social work students. Edith’s literacy skills have improved greatly; we are very proud of her.

Best Wishes,

Sarah Kidd - *Young Adult Carers Service*