



Young Carer Grant - interim evaluation: qualitative research (Annex A)



EQUALITY AND WELFARE

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Executive summary

Introduction

The Scottish Government has an overall aim that carers are supported on a consistent basis to allow them to continue caring, if that is their wish, in good health and wellbeing, allowing for a life of their own outside of caring¹.

The Young Carer Grant was launched in 2019 with the overall aim of helping young carers to improve their own quality of life by taking part in opportunities which are the norm for their non-caring peers. It is also intended to provide some recognition of their unpaid caring role. It consists of a one-off payment (£305.10 in 2020/21) which can be applied for annually by young carers aged 16, 17 or 18.

This report presents the findings of qualitative research with young carers, and stakeholders who work with young carers, exploring their experiences of Young Carer Grant. It was commissioned by the Scottish Government to inform the interim evaluation of the grant, and carried out by Ipsos MORI Scotland between November 2020 and March 2021.

Aims and methods

The overarching aim of the research was to explore and understand the experience of, and impact of, Young Carer Grant for those who received it in the first 18 months of the benefit.

This project was qualitative in nature and is based on 22 in-depth interviews with young carers (20 of whom were recipients of Young Carer Grant) and six interviews with stakeholders. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and were conducted via telephone or Zoom between 14th December 2020 and 26th February 2021.

Main findings

How young carers used the grant

The young carers we spoke to were generally clear that it was up to them how they spent the money.

They used it in a wide range of ways and in very much the same ways as teenagers in general tend to spend their money: on clothes, socialising with friends, putting it into savings (e.g for driving lessons), on electronic devices, on hobbies and on presents for family. More exceptionally, they spent it on rent or food.

Those who had received the grant after COVID-19 restrictions came into force were less likely to have spent the money on socialising with friends.

¹ Scottish Government (2019) [Carers strategic policy statement: consultation](#)

The impact of the grant

Young Carer Grant had a positive impact on young carers' ability to take part in opportunities that are the norm for their non-caring peers. It enabled them to purchase things and take part in activities (notably socialising with friends) that they would not otherwise have been able to afford.

If they had not received the grant, participants generally indicated that they would have had to go without all or some of the things they purchased and missed out on the activities they had been able to take part in.

Almost all participants reported a positive (albeit not necessarily a very large) impact on their mental wellbeing, mainly by reducing stress and increasing confidence.

The impact on young carers' physical health was somewhat limited but there were examples of participants spending some of their grant on things that would benefit it.

There was evidence of the grant helping to increase young carers' sense of choice and control over their lives. Most immediately, they were generally clear that it was up to them how they spent the grant and that, in the absence of the grant, they would have had to go without all or some of the things they purchased. More broadly, there was also evidence of it increasing young carers' sense of control over their lives, by making them feel more independent, more confident, less anxious and by enabling them to get better at saving.

Young carers had mixed views on whether receiving the grant had helped them feel more recognised. Some felt that it had made no difference but, more commonly, young carers did feel that it had helped, at least a little. There was a sense in which both the introduction and existence of the grant, and the fact that they had been deemed eligible to receive it, provided recognition and validation.

Stakeholders felt that the grant had the potential to open up access to other support (by encouraging people to find out if they were young carers; through sign-posting applicants to other services; and by encouraging applications for other support in the future).

However, there is a limit to what a financial payment can do and the grant had no direct impact on some of the negative aspects of being a young carer that were most commonly mentioned by participants: a lack of free time and anxieties about the health of their cared-for person.

Experiences of the application process

Recipients of the grant generally found the application process to be easy and straightforward. Those who had experience of applying for other financial support felt the process for Young Carer Grant was easier in comparison.

Young carers typically applied online and found this to be convenient and accessible.

When asked if there were any difficult parts of the application process, recipients mentioned that the length of the application could be off-putting and there were some questions where they had to get input from their parents or the person they cared for. However, neither of these were seen as major deterrants to applying by participants.

The extent to which young carers relied on support to apply for the grant was mixed. While there were participants who completed their application independently, it was common for members of young carer organisations to be proactive in offering advice and support. Stakeholders reported a high degree of variability in the amount of support they had to provide to young carers engaging in the application process.

There were mixed experiences among participants who identified as having learning or processing difficulties. One participant with dyslexia found the application easier than they were expecting, while another who said he had difficulty with reading and writing found the idea of applying on his own intimidating. Stakeholders indicated that young carers with learning difficulties often needed extra support.

Barriers to applying for or receiving the grant

Young carers and stakeholders identified a lack of awareness of the grant as a major barrier to those eligible to apply. There was a view that Young Carer Grant was not widely known about, and this would especially affect 'hidden carers' who were not engaged with young carer services.

There was a suggestion that the grant could be advertised more, particularly on social media. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of using inclusive language when promoting the grant, in order to reach eligible young people who may not identify as young carers themselves.

Among recipients, there could be some initial reluctance to take up the grant due to how they perceived themselves and their caring role. For example, a perception that other people needed the money more than they did or not wanting their cared-for person to be seen as a 'burden' they had to be compensated for.

Stakeholders highlighted that a lack of consent from parents or the cared-for person could be a barrier. They thought the main reasons for a lack of consent were a fear that Young Carer Grant would affect other family members' benefit entitlements, a fear of social services becoming involved, or a general lack of acceptance of a young persons' carer status. Stakeholders explained that cultural values may mean some minority ethnic families may be less likely to accept or fully understand the term 'young carer'.

One non-recipient in this study did not complete their application because of difficulties meeting application deadlines. Stakeholders provided further evidence that difficulties with the application process were a barrier to many other young carers, specifically those living in chaotic households where it is difficult for them to find the evidence they need in order to apply.

While there was an acknowledgement that there is a limited amount of money, the rule that only one young carer can apply for Young Carer Grant per cared-for person, known as the 'one carer rule' for the remainder of this report, was generally seen as unfair by stakeholders and young carers. There was a suggestion that younger siblings or less confident young carers, who shared caring responsibilities, would be disproportionately disadvantaged as a result of this rule.

There was also concern among stakeholders that the eligibility criteria for receiving Young Carer Grant was excluding too many young carers with significant caring responsibilities. These concerns centred predominantly on the requirement that the cared-for person be in receipt of particular benefits.

Implications for policy

Young carers and stakeholders welcomed the introduction of Young Carer Grant and were broadly positive about the application process. It appears to be achieving most of its immediate aims for recipients. However, the research identified a number of potential improvements which would increase the impact of the grant:

- **Raising awareness:** Stakeholders highlighted that a lack of awareness of the grant was a particular barrier for 'hidden carers' who are not engaged with support services. Young carers and stakeholders both suggested improved advertising, specifically on social media. There was also a strong appetite for more promotion in schools.
- **Tackling misconceptions and providing reassurance:** There were a number of misconceptions about the grant and the eligibility criteria which might deter some young carers from applying and might deter their parents from assisting or encouraging them. Clarification and reassurance about the following points in promotional materials and on the website could increase uptake: reinforcing the fact that it is entirely up to the young carer how they spend the money and that there is no need to produce receipts or explain and justify how they have spent it; providing reassurances that Young Carer Grant would have no impact on other benefits received by the young carer or their cared-for person; reinforcing the fact that the grant is available to 16, 17 and 18 year olds.

In addition, there were cultural barriers among some minority ethnic communities both in terms of seeing someone as a 'young carer' and accessing support. Stakeholders highlighted a general need to provide culturally sensitive services and information, including on Young Carer Grant.

- **Simplifying the application process:** While the application form itself was seen as relatively straightforward, there was a suggestion that it could be simplified further. It was noted that the current wording is similar to the Carer's Allowance form, but because Young Carer Grant is a different kind of benefit it could be less formal and more 'young person friendly'. Stakeholders highlighted that it was important to make the grant as accessible as possible for those with learning difficulties or those for whom English is not their first language.

There was a view among participants who had applied more than once that subsequent applications were quicker because they could carry over some information from their original application. They felt it would be beneficial to make young carers aware of this, to make them more likely to reapply for Young Carer Grant in future. There was also a suggestion that the process could be streamlined further for subsequent applications, for example, being able to save evidence submitted as part of the initial application.

- **Sensitive handling of unsuccessful applications:** While a successful application made some young carers feel more recognised, there was a concern from a stakeholder that it may have the opposite effect on people who apply but find they are not eligible² - they may feel less recognised than they did before. Moreover, the experience may discourage them for applying for other forms of support in the future. It is therefore very important that unsuccessful applications are handled sensitively and applicants understand that, while they may not (currently) be eligible for Young Carer Grant, there are other services available for young carers, and they should not be deterred from accessing them. This would also be an opportunity to sign-post to other services.
- **Reviewing the ‘one carer rule’:** While there was an acknowledgement that there is a limited amount of money, the ‘one carer rule’ was generally seen as unfair by young carers and stakeholders. There was a suggestion that younger siblings or less confident young carers would be disadvantaged because older and/or more confident siblings would establish a right to the grant first. The young carer who misses out on the grant may feel less valued (possibly less valued than they felt before they were aware of the grant) and this could lead them to believe they are less of a young carer than the person who successfully applied for the grant, or question their young carer status entirely – with reduced confidence in their carer status discouraging them for applying for support as a carer in the future.
- **Reviewing the benefits criteria:** There was concern among stakeholders that the requirement that the cared-for person is in receipt of certain benefits was excluding too many young carers with significant caring responsibilities. Stakeholders highlighted that benefits may not always be a reliable measure of how much somebody relies on support from a young carer. There was a view that the benefits requirement could present a particular barrier to minority ethnic young carers, as people in these communities can be less likely to access this kind of disability support.
- **Reviewing the upper age limit:** Stakeholders were generally supportive of the age criteria. However, there was a suggestion that young adult carers in full-time education would benefit from receiving Young Carer Grant as they would not be eligible for Carer’s Allowance.

² We did not interview any young carers in this position.

Broader implications

One of the main challenges of being a young carer is the lack of time to relax, 'do their own thing' and spend time with friends. Although Young Carer Grant gave recipients the opportunity to take part in some activities with friends that they would not otherwise have been able to afford, and to treat themselves during their limited free time, it could not fundamentally increase the amount of free time they have available. This points to a broader need to provide young carers with regular opportunities for respite – not necessarily for any great length of time – so that they have a chance to 'do their own thing' (which may be at home or outside the home) and relax, knowing that their cared-for person is safe.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This report presents the findings of qualitative research with young carers, and stakeholders who work with young carers, exploring their experiences of the Young Carer Grant. It was commissioned by the Scottish Government to inform the interim evaluation of the grant, and carried out by Ipsos MORI Scotland between November 2020 and March 2021.

Policy background

Section 1(1) of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 defines a carer as an individual who provides or intends to provide what is necessary to a 'cared-for person' in order to support their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This can encompass medical or nursing care, personal care, and practical or emotional support.

The Scottish Government has an overall aim that carers are supported on a consistent basis to allow them to continue caring, if that is their wish, in good health and wellbeing, allowing for a life of their own outside of caring³. Social security delivers one aspect of this overall government approach to supporting carers, including through the provision of Carer's Allowance Supplement (available to carers who receive Carer's Allowance) and Young Carer Grant which is available to carers aged 16, 17 and 18 who do not receive Carer's Allowance.

There can be positive aspects to caring. Some young carers who took part in research to inform development of Young Carer Grant spoke about "learning life skills, interpersonal skills, and becoming responsible and mature at a young age. This included gaining skills through caring, but also learning to care for themselves at a young age and being independent".⁴

However, there are also many challenges – which come at a critical transition point in young peoples' development and which may therefore have a long-term impact on their lives. The negative impacts of caring include poverty (young carers are more likely to live in low income households and are less likely to be able to take on part-time jobs); social isolation (young carers have less opportunity to socialise with peers); poorer physical⁵ and mental health (including worries about the wellbeing of the person they care for); and reduced educational opportunities (for example, by missing classes, having poor concentration due to stress, having less time to study, or not being able to attend college/university away from home).⁶

³ Scottish Government (2019) [Carers strategic policy statement: consultation](#)

⁴ Scottish Government (2018) [Social Security Experience Panels: Young Carer Grant - initial findings](#)

⁵ The GP Patient Survey in England found that, compared with their non-carer peers, and carers over 25, young carers were more likely to report being a regular smoker and those with long-term conditions were also less likely than non-carers their own age or older carers to report that they had enough support and that they felt confident to manage their condition. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/gp-patient-survey-experiences-young-carers>

⁶ Carers Trust Scotland (2015) Time to be Heard for Young Adult Carers; Carers UK (2017) State of Caring 2017; Carers Scotland (2017) State of Caring in Scotland 2017; Carers UK as part of the Jo Cox Loneliness Commission (2017) The world shrinks: Carer loneliness.

In recognition of this, Young Carer Grant was launched in 2019 with the overall aim of helping young carers to improve their own quality of life by taking part in opportunities which are the norm for their non-caring peers. It is also intended to provide some recognition of their unpaid caring role.

The Young Carer Grant

Young Carer Grant consists of a one-off payment (£305.10 in 2020/21) which can be applied for annually by young carers living in Scotland.

It is up to the recipient how they spend the money: the guidance states “How you spend the Young Carer Grant is up to you. You could use it for things like new clothes, driving lessons or a holiday. You do not need to tell us what you spend the money on”⁷.

To be eligible for Young Carer Grant, carers must:

- be aged 16, 17 or 18 (although those who could not apply before their 19th birthday due to the disruption caused by COVID-19 can still apply)
- have been caring for 1, 2 or 3 people for an average of 16 hours or more a week for at least 3 months before applying (if someone cares for more than one person, they can combine the hours of the people they care for to average 16 hours or more a week)
- be caring for someone in receipt of one or more of the following qualifying benefits for at least the last 3 months: the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP); the middle or highest care rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), including Child Disability Living Allowance; Attendance Allowance; Armed Forces Independence Payment; Constant Attendance Allowance
- not be providing care as part of a volunteer scheme or as part of a job (being paid to provide care)
- not be in receipt of the Carers Allowance.

Only one young carer can apply for Young Carer Grant per cared-for person, even if they share caring responsibilities with another young carer. Therefore young carers who share caring responsibility with a young carer who has already received Young Carer Grant will be ineligible to apply in the same year. This is referred to as the “one carer rule” in the remainder of this report.

Young Carer Grant is, of course, only one element of a wider package of support available to young carers which includes support provided through schools, colleges and universities; social services; the Young Carers Package provided by Young Scot; and a range of third sector organisations including local young carers’ groups.

⁷ <https://www.mygov.scot/young-carer-grant/>

The key policy objectives of Young Carer Grant are to provide young carers with financial assistance that can help them to:

- engage in social, leisure, employment/training or education opportunities that are the norm for their non-caring peers and which they might not have been able to do otherwise
- feel a sense of choice and control over their lives
- feel like it has positively impacted their lives
- feel that they have been recognised for the caring role they provide.

This research

Ipsos MORI Scotland was commissioned by the Scottish Government to conduct qualitative research with young carers, and stakeholders that work with them, to explore the experience of, and early impact of, Young Carer Grant on the lives of those that receive it.

The research was developed in partnership with officials at the Scottish Government and key external stakeholders who were part of a wider Research Advisory Group. The findings from this research will feed into a wider interim policy evaluation of Young Carer Grant which will provide evidence on the early delivery and impact of Young Carer Grant and inform ongoing policy development.

A full evaluation of Young Carer Grant is planned for 2023/24 once the benefit has been live for at least three years, by which time eligible carers may have received three separate grants and the full impact of the grant can be better assessed. At this point, we are only reporting on the experience and impact of the initial payments.

Report structure

The next chapter describes the research methods. Chapter 3 discusses the way carers used the grant and the extent to which this was affected by COVID-19. Chapter 4 explores the impact of Young Carer Grant on young carers' quality of life and feelings of recognition. Chapter 5 looks at young carers' experiences of the application process. Chapter 6 outlines barriers young carers may face when applying for Young Carer Grant. The conclusions and implications for policy are discussed in Chapter 7.

Three short pen portraits, illustrating the different experiences of Young Carer Grant recipients, are provided in Annex A and the topic guides used for the interviews are shown at Annex B.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Aims of this research

This qualitative research is one strand of a wider programme of evaluative research to assess the early impact of Young Carer Grant. The overarching aim of this research was to explore and understand the experience of, and impact of, Young Carer Grant for those who received it in the first 18 months of the benefit. However, within this there were additional aims, such as exploring barriers to applying for Young Carer Grant and the impact of the 'one carer rule'.

Specifically, the aims of this research were to gather evidence on:

1. How Young Carer Grant has been spent or how clients intend to spend the payment
2. The impact of Young Carer Grant on the ability of young carers to engage in opportunities that are the norm for their non-caring peers and which they might not have been able to do otherwise
3. The impact of Young Carer Grant on the quality of lives of young carers (focussing on mental health and wellbeing)
4. The impact of Young Carer Grant on carer's sense of choice and control over their lives
5. The impact of Young Carer Grant on carer's feeling of recognition for the role that they provide
6. Key barriers to applying for, or receiving, Young Carer Grant
7. The experience of the policy rule that only one young carer can access Young Carer Grant for a single cared-for person regardless of the fact that multiple carers may share caring responsibilities
8. Any implications of research findings for policy development of Young Carer Grant.

Data collection and analysis

Fieldwork

This research project is qualitative in nature and is based on 22 in-depth interviews with young carers (20 of whom were recipients of Young Carer Grant) and six interviews with stakeholders. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and were conducted via telephone or Zoom between 14th December 2020 and 26th February 2021.

Interviews were semi-structured and based on a discussion guide to allow interviewers to have an open discussion with participants while ensuring they

covered all the key points. The discussion guides used with young carers and with stakeholders are included in Annex B.

Data Analysis

A systematic thematic approach to analysis was used in order to produce findings that are clearly grounded in participants' accounts and are transparent and methodologically robust. This involved the following stages:

- **Initial interviewer observations** – immediately after each interview, researchers completed a proforma outlining their initial impressions of key points emerging from the interview with respect to the core research questions.
- **Early analysis meeting** – the research team held an early analysis meeting during fieldwork to identify early themes and discuss any challenges encountered.
- **Post-fieldwork analysis meeting** – this meeting allowed the research team to discuss the findings from all the interviews and outline key themes and issues in more detail.
- **Systematic summarising of key themes** – each interview was summarised (using notes and transcripts) into an agreed thematic 'framework matrix'.
- **Further systematic analysis of key themes** - summarising and organising the data in the way described above enables it to be systematically interrogated to identify the full range of views and compare experiences of young carers in different circumstances.

Recruitment

The recruitment approach for young carers was an opt-in approach, whereby young carers were sent an invitation with details about the research via gatekeeper organisations. The invitation included email and telephone contact details for a named member of the research team to allow young carers to get in touch on their own terms.

Young carers were offered a £30 'thank you' payment as an incentive to take part.

Young carers who got in touch were then asked to take part in a short 5 minute screener call with a researcher to check that they were eligible to take part. This also gave young carers a chance to ask any questions they had and researchers made sure that young carers were aware of the aims of the research, what taking part involved and how their data would be securely handled to ensure they could give informed consent.

Early on in the fieldwork period, the invitation was also sent to Social Security Scotland's Young Carers Panel, which is made up of young carers who signed up as part of the Social Security Experience Panels research to help shape policy⁸.

⁸ Scottish Government (2019) [Social Security Experience Panels: publications](#)

Therefore, recruitment relied heavily on assistance from gatekeepers. A variety of gatekeepers were approached in an attempt to reach carers in certain minority groups, such as minority ethnic and LGBT young carers. Gatekeeper organisations that helped contact young carers included:

- Carers Trust
- The Scottish Young Carer Services Alliance (SYCSA)
- Young Scot
- Minority and Ethnic Carers of Older People Project (MECOPP)
- LGBT Youth Scotland

Sample

22 interviews were conducted with young carers. Of those:

- 20 were recipients of Young Carer Grant while two were non-recipients⁹.
- 19 cared for a parent or sibling while one cared for a grandparent. The remaining two cared for both parents or a parent and a sibling.
- 12 were in school, five were in higher education/further education, three were in work, and two were neither in education or work.

Table 1 shows a breakdown of other characteristics of the young carer sample.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of 22 young carers interviews

Gender	Number of interviews
Male	7
Female	14
Non-binary	1
Age	Number of interviews
16 years old	5
17 years old	6
18 years old	10
19 years old ¹⁰	1
Ethnicity	Number of interviews
White	18
Minority Ethnic	4

⁹ Both non-recipients were eligible for Young Carer Grant but had not applied.

¹⁰ The participant who was 19 at the time of the interview had received the grant when aged 18.

LGBT	Number of interviews
LGBT	21
Non-LGBT	1

Interviews were conducted with carers across a number of local authorities including West Lothian; Glasgow; North Lanarkshire; Fife; West Dunbartonshire; Falkirk; Edinburgh city; Dundee; Perth and Kinross; and Angus.

Of the 20 carers who received the grant, nine received it after COVID-19 restrictions came into place in March 2020 and 11 received it after the COVID-19 restrictions came into place after March 2020.

Six stakeholder interviews were conducted with:

- Carers Trust
- Representatives from seven different young carers' groups from the SYCSA (this included two group discussions with 3 workers at each)
- Minority and Ethnic Carers of Older People Project (MECOPP)
- Young Scot

Limitations

The purpose of qualitative research is not to assess the prevalence of particular views or experiences, but to reveal the depth and diversity of lived experience. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that the findings from this research do not represent the views of all young carers in Scotland or indicate the wider prevalence of any particular viewpoint. Where prevalence of a particular view is described in this report, using terms such as “some” or “a few”, this relates only to the sample of research participants and not the wider population.

Due to the nature of this research and the timing of the fieldwork period, there were some difficulties during recruitment of young carers:

- Despite gatekeeper organisations sending general reminder emails to young carers they were in touch with, the **opt-in approach** to recruitment (while the most appropriate and ethical approach) reduced the response rate, as young carers were required to actively get in touch with researchers to take part.
- Young carers were likely to be facing extra stress and pressures due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**, for example having to shield alongside their cared-for person. This may have meant fewer young carers were willing to take the time to take part in this research. Furthermore, gatekeepers highlighted that young carers who struggled with applying for Young Carer Grant were typically those in more vulnerable situations or chaotic households, and did not feel it was appropriate to approach them about the research at this time.

- Although the invitations to take part in the research stressed that young carers did not need to have previously received Young Carer Grant to take part, **non-recipients may have been less likely to think that the research was aimed at them** and less likely to read the full invitation.

This meant that fewer young carers (22) took part compared to the initial target of 30. Additionally, only two eligible young carers who had not managed to complete a successful Young Carer Grant application took part and we were not able to reach any young carers who missed out on the grant due to the 'one carer rule' (although one young carer received the grant instead of her brother who also cared).

The implications of this are that, while the experiences of recipients of the grant are well represented within the sample of young carers, the experiences of those who had difficulties applying for the grant or those who were unable to apply due to the 'one carer rule' are represented largely by stakeholders and not first-hand. This is also the case for under-represented groups, for example there were no young carers in the sample from rural areas but the experiences of being a carer in this situation was discussed by young carers' groups based in rural areas.

It is also important to acknowledge that the evidence on the impact of Young Carer Grant is based on young carers' perceptions of the impact rather than on measurable data (such as validated wellbeing scales) collected before and after the implementation of Young Carer Grant.

Chapter 3: How young carers used the grant

Main findings

Young carers used the grant in a wide range of ways and in very much the same ways as teenagers in general tend to spend their money: on clothes, socialising with friends, putting it into savings (e.g for driving lessons), on electronic devices, on hobbies and on presents for family. More exceptionally, they spent it on rent or food.

Those who had received the grant after COVID-19 restrictions came into force were less likely to have spent the money on socialising with friends.

The amount of the grant

In 2020/21, Young Carer Grant was £305.10 and was paid in one instalment. Young Carers made few comments on the amount of the grant although there was a view that it 'could be more'. Stakeholders acknowledged that there were limited funds but some also felt that a larger amount would have more impact (one suggested around £600).

There was a suggestion from young carers that receiving the grant in one instalment made them think more carefully about how to spend it. Stakeholders also felt that receiving a larger amount in one go had more impact.

Understanding that recipients can decide themselves how to spend the grant

The young carers we spoke to were generally clear that it was up to them how they spent the money. One referenced the letter, “it said that it was for us to use how we want”, and another said “I was told I could spend it on whatever I want. That was quite obvious to me, like through the adverts I’ve seen and stuff”. That said, they sometimes sought reassurance from young carers’ group workers and one checked through the Young Carer Grant helpline. Stakeholders reported that the young carers they work with often have to produce receipts for things – so they needed to make it clear that was not necessary for the grant.

The main exception among the young carers we interviewed was someone whose group worker had applied for the grant on her behalf. She indicated that, when she first received the money, she was worried there might be restrictions on how it should be used and that she might have to provide evidence of how she had spent it. Although this was resolved and she did in the end spend the money in the way she wanted, she suggested that more reassurance should be given. It may be that the fact she did not apply for the grant herself meant she missed the reassurances that other recipients picked up through the application process.

How recipients used the grant

The table below shows the wide range of ways in which young carers used the grant. Comparison with findings from a 2019 Teenage Finance report show that young carers spent the grant in very much the same way as teenagers in general tend to spend their money.¹¹

Table 2: How young carers used the grant

Broad category	Examples
Clothes and personal care	Clothes, shoes, getting hair done, buying make-up
Socialising with friends	Going out for something to eat, going to the cinema, going to a concert, a go-karting trip
Putting all or part of the grant into savings	General savings or savings for particular things (specifics mentioned included saving for driving lessons, for a car, for university, for holidays)
Electronic devices	Laptop, tablet, phone
Exercise and health	Gym membership, exercise equipment, a vape kit (as a tobacco alternative)
Hobbies	Dance classes, drawing equipment, a guitar, video games

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/48844431>

Giving to other people	Christmas presents for family, donating 10-15% to charity
Necessities	Rent (a participant who had recently moved into her own flat for university), day-to-day family spending on food (this was exceptional)

In the case of some larger purchases such as a laptop, all (or almost all) the grant was spent in one go on that item. More typically, young carers spent the money on a range of different things over a period of weeks or months:

I kind of kept it, new clothes when I needed it, new shoes, new jacket, new phone, over quite a few weeks.

Aged 17, caring for mother

I got myself a jacket so my mum could save for Christmas [...] the jacket was £60. I've still got some of the money, mum wants me to start driving when I'm 17, so saving £200 for that and I spent the rest on Christmas presents for family.

Aged 16, caring for mother

As noted in the Methodology chapter, we were unable to speak to any young carers from rural areas. However, a stakeholder who worked with young people in a rural area indicated that they tended to use the grant for driving lessons and this was important because it gave them independence.

Whether COVID-19 restrictions affected how the grant was used

Those who received their grant before the COVID-19 restrictions came into force in March 2020 were more likely to have spent some of the money on socialising with friends. Those who received the grant afterwards were split on whether the restrictions had affected how they used it – some indicated that it had not made any difference while others said they would have spent more of it on going out. One participant had bought a laptop to help with homeschooling. He thought he would have otherwise have spent the money on driving lessons. The following young carer suggested that the restrictions had helped her save the money (for driving lessons) because she would otherwise have gone out more with friends and spent it on clothes:

I thought about it more logically because of lockdown.

Aged 16, caring for mother

Chapter 4: The impact of the grant on young carers

Main findings

Young Carer Grant had a positive impact on young carers' ability to take part in opportunities that are the norm for their non-caring peers. They spent the grant in ways that are typical for young people the same age and it enabled them to purchase things and take part in activities (notably socialising with friends) that they would not otherwise have been able to afford.

If they had not received the grant, participants generally indicated that they would have had to go without all or some of the things they purchased and missed out on the activities they had been able to take part in.

Almost all participants reported a positive (albeit not necessarily a very large) impact on their mental wellbeing, mainly by reducing stress and increasing confidence.

The impact on young carers' physical health was somewhat limited but there were examples of participants spending some of their grant on things that would benefit it.

There was evidence of the grant helping to increase young carers' sense of choice and control over their lives. Most immediately, they were generally clear that it was up to them how they spent the grant and that, in the absence of the grant, they would have had to go without all or some of the things they purchased. More broadly, there was also evidence of it increasing young carers' sense of control over their lives, by making them feel more independent, more confident, less anxious and by enabling them to get better at saving.

Young carers had mixed views on whether receiving the grant had helped them feel more recognised. Some felt that it had made no difference but, more commonly, young carers did feel that it had helped at least a little. There was a sense in which both the introduction/existence of the grant, and the fact that they had been deemed eligible to receive it, provided recognition and validation.

Stakeholders felt that the grant had the potential to open up access to other support (by encouraging people to find out if they were young carers; through sign-posting applicants to other services; and by encouraging applications for other support in the future).

However, there is a limit to what a financial payment can do and the grant had no direct impact on some of the negative aspects of being a young carer that were most commonly mentioned by participants: a lack of free time and anxieties about the health of their cared-for person.

Impact on opportunities that are the norm for non-caring peers

One of the main challenges described by participants was a lack of time. This included a lack of time alone to rest, relax and have their 'own space'. Although some identified that doing something meaningful rather than 'wasting time' was one of the positive aspects of being a young carer, others wanted time to just 'do nothing'. It also included a lack of time to spend with friends and do the 'normal' things that their non-caring peers can do such as "being part of a friend group", going shopping, going to the cinema, going for something to eat or drink. Even when they did have the opportunity to go out, some worried about whether their cared-for person was alright: "What if I'm not there when something happens?"

The grant had no impact on the amount of free time young carers had. However, while their ability to spend time with friends remained limited, the grant undoubtedly enabled young people to take part in some social activities (e.g. eating out or going to the cinema) that they would otherwise have missed out on because of lack of money – as young carers' lack of opportunities are often exacerbated by financial constraints.

Caring responsibilities have an impact on young carers' ability to take on part-time jobs while they are in school, college or university and their employment opportunities once they have left education. However, among the 16, 17 and 18 year old recipients of the grant who took part in the research, the amount of money they had to spend was affected more by their parents' financial position. Previous research shows that young carers are more likely to live in a deprived area, have a low socio-economic status and be affected by poverty. This is partly as result of their parents not being in work or being on a low income.¹²

Time constraints and such, that is not something that could be altered with money, all the money in the world, a billion pounds could be put into my bank account and maybe I don't have the time to use it. But it does enable you to go out and do things. Like I got to go to the carnival last year because of my grant, and it was amazing because I had never been before and I had never been to the shows, and I got to go through to Glasgow. I got to go to Primark and get myself a new top. It just enabled me to go out and enjoy myself a little bit. [...] I got the opportunity to go to Manchester with LGBT Youth Scotland and that alone was an amazing experience, completely paid for by the Scottish Government and our funders [not as part of Young Carer Grant]. But when you pay for it yourself it's so rewarding.

Aged 18, caring for mother

When asked what they would have done if they had not received the grant, participants generally indicated that they would have had to go without all or some of the things they purchased and missed out on the activities they had been able to take part in.

¹² Scottish Government (2017) [Young carers: review of research and data](#)

Did it allow you to do things you wouldn't normally do?

Yeah, definitely. I usually wouldn't be able to go out to a big restaurant [with friends] and get my own meal.

Aged 17, caring for siblings

Some said they might still have purchased the items or undertaken the activities but it would have been "harder" and they may have had to do without something else. For example, one carer stated, "I would have had to be more careful with food shopping". Others were unsure what would have happened:

It would have taken a lot longer [to be able to buy a new guitar] and I'd have been less sure about buying it because I'd have had less money and might have been nervous in case I needed to spend it on something else.

Aged 18, caring for sibling

A few indicated that they would have had to ask their mothers for money, but clearly felt uncomfortable doing so because they knew their mothers did not have much money:

It would have been a lot harder, I probably wouldn't have had a laptop by now. I don't even know what I would have done, I really virtually don't have any money, but I think my mum would have tried to help me out, but at the same time I wouldn't have wanted her to help me out. She doesn't really have enough money herself, so I'm grateful for the grant.

Aged 18, caring for mother

Impact on quality of life

The positive aspects of being a young carer

Although there are many challenges, young carers listed many skills and qualities they felt they had developed more than their non-caring peers due to their caring responsibilities, such as:

- becoming more responsible, mature, independent, better able to cope with difficult situations and having a better understanding of the world: "you understand the reality of what can happen"
- enhancing qualities such as compassion, empathy, patience and respect for/ understanding of differences between people: "you know so much about life from different perspectives"
- developing life skills such as time management and organisation, budgeting, cooking, cleaning and looking after a house.

They also talked about feeling good about being able to help and getting a sense of reward and achievement from their caring role. Doing something meaningful rather than 'wasting time' (in comparison to what they might otherwise have been doing or what their peers were doing) was mentioned. Valuing the opportunity to spend time and develop a stronger relationship with the cared-for person were also identified as positive aspects.

People think it is all negative to be a young carer but it is not. It is rewarding to make a difference in someone's life. You learn compassion and patience and meet people through the young carer network. You learn life skills and become more mature and responsible.

Aged 16, caring for mother

Impact on mental health and wellbeing

One of main challenges described by young carers was the mental strain caused by anxieties about the health of their cared-for person. Depending on the condition of the cared-for person, these might include on-going concerns such as whether they might have a seizure, longer-term concerns about their health worsening or simply the difficulty of seeing someone they love being in pain and not being able to do anything about it.

The near-constant caring responsibilities were also cited as a challenge in terms of mental health and wellbeing. Young carers typically helped their cared-for person in a wide range of ways including personal care, taking medications, physically helping them move around the house, accompanying them outside the home (e.g. to medical appointments, to the chemist, to other shops), housework, shopping, cooking, and generally checking in on them to make sure they are ok.

Almost all participants reported a positive (albeit not necessarily a very large) impact on their mental wellbeing of the grant, mainly by reducing stress and increasing confidence. The following examples show the range of ways the grant helped young carers feel better:

- "It did relax me that I had money if I needed it [...] I'm a wee bit more confident about the driving lessons, which has led to me being more confident about school – it's the butterfly effect." (She meant a small change in one thing can have a knock-on effect on something else.)
- "Made me feel a bit more secure and a bit more ready for university and confident." (She had put the grant into savings for university.)
- "Knowing that I can still do school-work at home [having bought a tablet] has brought down my anxiety about school quite a lot – knowing I can keep up with work even during all this. It's my last year – my last chance to do well at school."
- "I felt better - it was a distraction from lockdown". (He had bought drawing equipment and video games.)

- “It felt good being able to get my mum and sister something. It just made me feel that I’ve actually got money.” (He had bought Christmas presents for his mum and sister.)
- “The dance classes are good for my mental health.”
- Another young carer had indicated that she felt self-conscious about wearing old and unfashionable clothes, so the grant was good for her self-esteem because she was able to buy nice clothes. She now feels like she fits in more with her friends now and feels more confident.

A rare exception was a young carer who said that the grant had no impact on his mental wellbeing. However, he was an exception in that he had indicated that he did not find his caring role too stressful, it did not take up too much of his time, and his family were comfortably off financially.

Impact on physical health

The impact on young carers’ physical health was somewhat limited but there were examples of participants spending some of their grant on things that would benefit it – such as exercise equipment, gym membership and dance classes. The biggest impact was for a participant who had used part of the grant to buy a vape kit and said “I really do think the young carers grant aided me to quit smoking”.

Impact on sense of choice and control

One of the aims of Young Carer Grant is to help young carers feel an increased sense of choice and control over their lives.

As discussed in Chapter 3, participants were generally clear that it was up to them how they spent the grant and that, in the absence of the grant, they would have had to go without all or some of the things they purchased and missed out on the activities they had been able to take part in. In that most immediate sense, therefore, the grant increased young carers’ choices.

More broadly, there was also evidence of it increasing young carers’ sense of control over their lives – even if they did not always express it in terms of ‘control’:

In the ‘Impact on mental health and wellbeing’ section towards the start of this chapter, there are examples of the grant helping participants feel more confident and less anxious.

As noted above, if they had not received the grant, a few might have had to ask their mothers for money which they would have felt uncomfortable about. Not having to do so therefore increased their sense of independence. Similarly, the end of the first verbatim quote in this chapter, “But when you pay for it yourself it’s so rewarding”, illustrates the impact of having your own money to spend rather than relying on others’ paying for activities.

The following participant felt that starting to save made her feel more in control:

Interviewer: has it made you feel any more in control of things?

Young Carer: It has yes, I knew I had to be logical and smart about it, it made me good at saving money – I've got a piggy bank in my room now because of that and I've realised I can save. [...] It's good to have that financial support there, it promotes being independent, taking care of yourself and thinking logically

Aged 16, caring for mother

Another participant also mentioned getting better at saving, but also the sense of control she felt from having more choices:

I felt I was in control of being able to do more, with family and also in control of myself and expanding my skill in budgeting [...] I know it will give me the opportunity to go out with friends when we can [after lockdown], otherwise I might not be able to afford it

Aged 18, caring for mother and sibling

This comment also hints at an increased sense of choice and personal freedom:

It is nice to be able to care for myself and not for someone else for a change.

Aged 17, caring for sibling

Impact on feelings of recognition

There were mixed views on the extent to which other people understand what it is like to be a young carer. One perspective was that some people did and some people did not – and there was a suggestion that awareness had increased a little over recent years through more coverage on television and in the papers and during Young Carers Awareness Day.¹³ Others felt there was very little awareness.

There was strong demand for awareness to be raised in schools (for both teachers and pupils) and suggestions that this could be done by young carers talking about their experiences at assemblies and by covering it in Life Skills or Personal and Social Education classes.

However, young carers did tend to feel recognised by their own families, their friends (although their friends may not fully understand what is involved), young carers' groups and the Government (with Young Carer Grant being part of the reason for feeling recognised by the Government). Reports on whether teachers understood were mixed.

When asked how important it was to be recognised more widely as a young carer, there was a gender difference. The male young carers suggested that it was not very important to them (though there was acknowledgment that it might be for others). One indicated that he preferred not to talk about it with friends or peers. Another said:

¹³ Renamed Young Carers Action Day from 2021

I feel like I've just got enough going on. I don't need the attention. I'm happy to just get on with my stuff. I don't need to be told I'm doing a good job all the time.

Aged 18, caring for sibling

While some female young carers also indicated that recognition was not important to them, others thought it would be helpful. There were various reasons given for this: to increase understanding of why young carers may behave in certain ways; to stop people making "mean" comments; and to combat negative views of benefit recipients.

[Recognition would be] good so people know what young carers have to do and why they may act in a certain way if they are busy or worried.

Aged 18, caring for grandmother

Young carers had mixed views on whether receiving the grant had helped them feel more recognised. Some felt that it had made no difference. One of these participants noted that only other young carers and his support group knew about it. More commonly, however, young carers did feel that it had helped at least little. There was a sense in which both the introduction/existence of the grant, and the fact that they had been deemed eligible to receive it, provided recognition and validation.

Yes, that they have allowed me to receive it and that I am eligible is enough recognition.

Aged 18, caring for siblings

Thank you [to the Scottish Government] for appreciating us and taking the time to think about us, given everything else they need to do, especially during COVID [...] It just feels very appreciative, it's a very, very positive feeling.

Aged 18, caring for mother and sibling

A stakeholder suggested there may be knock-on benefits to the recognition provided by a Young Carer Grant award: young carers may feel more able to speak up (for example, if they are at a doctor's appointment with the cared-for person and are being ignored); it may help increase access to other support (discussed in the next section); and they may have more confidence to talk openly about their caring role, including to their cared-for person.

However, he also raised the concern that it may have the opposite effect on people who apply but find they are not eligible¹⁴ – they may feel less recognised than they did before and,

¹⁴ We did not interview any young carers in this position.

...it might make them question their own caring role and not come forward for other support because think they are less of a carer than someone else.

Stakeholder

Other impacts – opening up access to other support

As discussed in the Methodology chapter above, most of the young carers we spoke to were engaged with local young carers' groups and so were receiving support from workers there (who they met at the group and were sometimes in regular contact by phone) and from the other young carers at the group. However, COVID-19 restrictions had limited their ability to meet face-to-face.

Support from other sources was very mixed. Some reported receiving support from other family members, friends, school, university or work. Another participant had support from LGBT Youth Scotland and Youth Scotland who 'always have somebody to talk to'. The type of support varied and included emotional support, practical advice, and sympathy and understanding about deadlines and the need to take time off for caring responsibilities.

Others said that they did not receive support from these sources – though in some cases they did not want it and preferred not to talk about their caring responsibilities with friends or at school because they wanted a space where they could try and forget about being a carer. One participant described school as 'a getaway'.

Stakeholders felt that the grant had the potential to open up access to other support:

- the existence of the grant might spur people on to find out whether or not they were young carers – which in turn could lead to them joining a young carers' group and accessing other support
- contacting Social Security Scotland to apply for the grant provides the opportunity to sign-post people to services and, for example, tell them about the Young Carer Statement.¹⁵ This would be particularly beneficial for those not already engaged with services and for those not eligible for the grant but who may be eligible for other support
- if the process of applying for the grant is a positive experience, this may encourage young carers to apply for other support (such as Carers Allowance) in the future.

We do not have examples of the first two potential benefits, but this may be because almost all the young carers we spoke to were already engaged with young carers' groups. The third potential benefit would take longer to assess than is possible within the timeframe for this research.

Limitations on impact

While there is evidence of Young Carer Grant having a positive impact – on young carers' ability to do things that are the norm for their non-caring peers, on their

¹⁵ Scottish Government (2018) [Carers' charter](#)

mental wellbeing and on their feelings of recognition – there is a limit to what a financial payment can do and it had no direct impact on some of the negative aspects of being a young carer that were most commonly mentioned by participants.

One of the main challenges of being a young carer is the lack of time to relax, ‘do their own thing’ and spend time with friends. As noted at the start of this chapter, although Young Carer Grant gave recipients the opportunity to take part in some activities with friends that they would not otherwise have been able to afford, and to treat themselves during their limited free time, it could not fundamentally increase the amount of free time they have available.

Young carers also had anxieties about the health of their cared-for person. Depending on the condition, these might be on-going concerns such as whether they might have a seizure, longer-term concerns about their health worsening or simply the difficulty of seeing someone they love being in pain and not being able to do anything about it. While, for some young carers, the grant did help reduce other specific stresses or have a positive impact on feelings of wellbeing more generally, it could not be expected to reduce these types of concerns.

A further challenge was a lack of understanding from teachers and college lecturers, which added to the strain of not having as much time to study. One participant described being “shouted at by a teacher for being late” and “harassed by a college lecturer for not keeping up with work” (both knew she was a young carer). While, in theory, the existence of Young Carer Grant may help raise awareness of young carers and the difficulties they may face, there was no evidence from research participants on it having this effect.

Chapter 5: Experiences of the application process

Main findings

Recipients of the grant generally found the application process to be easy and straightforward. Those who had experience of applying for other financial support felt the process for Young Carer Grant was easier in comparison.

Young carers typically applied online and found this to be convenient and accessible.

When asked if there were any difficult parts of the application process, recipients mentioned that the length of the application could be off-putting and there were some questions where they had to get input from their parents or the person they cared for. However, neither of these were seen as major deterrants to applying by participants.

There was a view among participants who had applied more than once that subsequent applications were quicker because they could carry over some information from their original application. However, there was a suggestion among both young carers and stakeholders that this process could be streamlined further, for example, by being able to save evidence submitted as part of the initial application in a portal.

The extent to which young carers relied on support to apply for the grant was mixed. While there were participants who completed their application independently, it was common for members of young carer organisations to be proactive in offering advice and support. Stakeholders reported a high degree of variability in the amount of support they had to provide to young carers engaging in the application process.

There were mixed experiences among participants who identified as having learning or processing difficulties. One participant with dyslexia found the application easier than they were expecting, while another who said he had difficulty with reading and writing found the idea of applying on his own intimidating. Stakeholders indicated that young carers with learning difficulties often needed extra support.

Views on the application process

The application process

Young carers in Scotland can apply for Young Carer Grant online, over the phone or by post. The application asks the young carer for information about themselves including age, address and National Insurance Number. They are also asked to provide information about the person/people they care for including their address, National Insurance Number, hours they are cared for and the benefit they receive.

However, although applicants are asked for the National Insurance Numbers of themselves and the cared-for person, and the qualifying benefit the cared for person receives, it is not necessary to provide this in the application. Social Security Scotland can still verify this information and process the application, but it may increase the time taken.

Once an application has been received the young carer is then asked to provide evidence of their address. This can be posted to Social Security Scotland or uploaded to them online.

Social Security Scotland will write to the cared-for person informing them that someone has applied for Young Carer Grant citing them as their cared-for person. The cared-for person does not need to reply to this letter if they believe everything is correct as Social Security Scotland does not ask for any proof that the care is taking place. If no care is being provided they can contact Social Security Scotland and let them know.

Young carers with a genuine and sufficient link to Scotland living outside the UK in the European Economic Area and Switzerland can also apply for Young Carer

Grant over the phone or by post. They are required to provide more evidence to show that they are eligible for a Scottish benefit and to confirm their identity.

All applicants can also ask for a reminder to be sent after 12 months reminding them that they may be able to apply for the next year's payment. This is optional so only young carers who think they will be eligible for Young Carer Grant in 12 months receive this reminder.

Experiences of the application process

Young carers generally felt the application process was straightforward¹⁶. The questions were described as quick and simple to answer, and seemed relevant and appropriate.

There wasn't anything hard about it, I think I just did it on the go, like I didn't have to waste a lot of time thinking about it.

Aged 18, caring for mother

Young carers with experience of applying for other financial support tended to evaluate Young Carer Grant positively in comparison. For example, the process for receiving Young Carer Grant was described as easier than applying for Educational Maintenance Allowance, Student Awards Agency Scotland funding (SAAS) and other benefits.

It wasn't anything like the DWP or like the DVLA, like och, God, or SAAS [...] getting your tax credits and that is not easy.

Aged 18, caring for mother

Young carers typically applied online and found this to be convenient and easy to access. There was one recipient, however, who accidentally applied for Carer's Allowance instead of Young Carer Grant at first, as the two webpages were perceived to be similar. She suggested that a clarification on this could be helpful to others, for example stating clearly 'this is NOT the application page for the Young Carer Grant' at the beginning on the Carer's Allowance webpage.

There were no concerns about sharing information online and there was a general sense of trust that the online form was secure.

There was a perception among stakeholders that, since the COVID-19 pandemic, young carers and their families seemed more comfortable communicating online and the process had become easier.

Those who did not apply online were either unaware that this was an option or expressed a preference for applying by phone due to experiencing difficulties with reading and writing.

¹⁶ Note that the sample was predominantly made up of young carers who had received the grant and who were therefore less likely to have experienced problems with the application process, or at least only problems that proved to be surmountable.

When asked if there were any difficult aspects of the application process, young carers mentioned that there were some questions that they did not know the answer to at first. For example, one participant explained that her mother could not remember her National Insurance Number, and this made the application process longer.

Young carers typically had to ask the cared-for person for help to answer the questions on which benefits they received, although this was not described as a significant problem among participants. However, stakeholders mentioned that this would be more difficult for young carers living in chaotic households or with parents who were less able or willing to help.

I think the verification process was literally just like my mum had to confirm something, so that was easy because she's obviously got email, just emailed it, bang, done.

Aged 18, caring for mother

There was a view that the application form is long and the process can be time-consuming, particularly when locating and submitting evidence. Recipients did not describe this as a major issue, but this point was reinforced by stakeholders who were aware of young carers for whom this had been a barrier to applying.

Experiences of second or third applications

Those who had applied more than once felt that the second time they applied was much quicker, as they were able to reuse evidence and information from their previous application. One young carer described how she had not been looking forward to applying a second time for Young Carer Grant but was pleasantly surprised at how much quicker the process was the second time around. She felt it would be beneficial to make young carers aware of this, to make them more likely to reapply for Young Carer Grant in future.

There was a perception that having to apply separately every year was burdensome. One young carer said they nearly forgot to reapply and suggested that it would be helpful if there was an option to request a reminder one year after submitting an application. Note that there is currently an option to request a reminder but it was clearly not obvious to this applicant.

There was a view among stakeholders that the process for submitting second or third applications could be streamlined further, for example saving information from the first application form and simply asking young carers to confirm that the information is still correct rather than actively filling in the form a second time. One stakeholder felt a portal would be well suited to this, since it would allow young carers to easily save their evidence and information from their initial application and make it readily available to use again in any subsequent applications.

Support with the application process

While there were young carers who completed the application form independently, it was common for young carers to receive support from family members or workers from young carer services to complete their application.

The support young carers described varied from general advice and encouragement, to having somebody go through the form step-by-step with them or even completing the form on their behalf. The verification process in relation to benefits was mentioned as the main element with which recipients sought support.

Recipients commonly indicated that young carer organisations provided support in a proactive way, so it was not necessarily the case that they would not have been able to complete the application form independently. However, there were recipients who felt that they would have been unable to apply on their own.

Stakeholders described a high degree of variability when it came to how much support they had to provide. They were aware of young carers who had applied independently but had also spent a significant amount of time with young carers who struggled to fill out the form and needed step-by-step guidance. It was highlighted that form-filling is a skill which not all young carers will have, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with low levels of literacy. Young carers are also less likely to have previous experience of applying for financial support due to their age.

There were mixed experiences among participants who identified as having learning or processing difficulties. One young carer with dyslexia found the application easier than they were expecting, whereas others felt they needed extra support. One participant who said he had difficulty with reading and writing found the idea of applying on his own “intimidating”.

Young carers who had used the telephone helpline for support with their application were very positive about this experience and said the people on the phone were helpful and friendly.

...the guy that spoke to me was really helpful, he told me then that there was an error on the system [...] he promised to ring me back the next day after he'd investigated it, he did and I'd got a text, before that even, to say that he resolved it on the same day for me, so they were very, very quick, got to the point, it was very helpful.

Aged 18, caring for mother and sibling

There was a view that it would be good to receive more communication or information after completing the application process. For example, one young carer suggested it could be good to receive reassurances after a successful application that there are no rules about how the money can be spent.

Chapter 6: Barriers to applying for or receiving the grant

Main findings

Young carers and stakeholders identified a lack of awareness of the grant as a major barrier to those eligible to apply. There was a view that Young Carer Grant was not widely known about, and this would especially affect 'hidden carers' who were not engaged with young carer services.

There was a suggestion that the grant could be advertised more, particularly on social media. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of using inclusive language when promoting the grant, in order to reach eligible young people who may not identify as young carers themselves.

Among recipients, there could be some initial reluctance to take up the grant due to how they perceived themselves and their caring role. For example, a perception that other people needed the money more than they did or not wanting their cared-for person to be seen as a 'burden' they had to be compensated for.

Stakeholders highlighted that a lack of consent from parents or the cared-for person could be a barrier. They thought the main reasons for a lack of consent were a fear that Young Carer Grant would affect other family members' benefit entitlements, a fear of social services becoming involved, or a general lack of acceptance of a young persons' carer status. Stakeholders explained that cultural values may mean some minority ethnic families may be less likely to accept or fully understand the term 'young carer' because the word 'carer' does not exist in many community languages.

One non-recipient in this study did not complete their application because of difficulties meeting application deadlines. Stakeholders provided further evidence that difficulties with the application process were a barrier to many other young carers, specifically those living in chaotic households where it is difficult for them to find the evidence they need.

While there was an acknowledgement that there is a limited amount of money, the 'one carer rule' was generally seen as unfair by stakeholders and young carers. There was a suggestion that younger siblings or less confident young carers would be disproportionately disadvantaged as a result of this rule.

There was concern among stakeholders that the eligibility criteria for receiving Young Carer Grant was excluding too many young carers with significant caring responsibilities. These concerns centred predominantly on the requirement that the cared-for person be in receipt of particular benefits.

It is important to note that the young carers who took part in this research were mainly recipients of Young Carer Grant so had either not faced any significant

barriers or had overcome them. Therefore, much of the following evidence is based on feedback from stakeholders who work with young carers.

Awareness of the grant

Young carers and stakeholders identified a lack of awareness of the grant as a major barrier to those eligible to apply. There was a view that Young Carer Grant was not widely known or generally discussed, which would cause young carers to miss out.

I could have applied for it when I was 16 but I had no clue about it, I had no clue that I was a young carer.

Aged 18, caring for sibling

Stakeholders highlighted that a lack of awareness was a particular barrier for 'hidden carers' who are not engaged with support services, as they are much less likely to find out about the grant. The importance of young carer services in informing young carers about the grant was supported in evidence from young carers, the majority of which had found out about the grant in this way¹⁷.

There was also a view among stakeholders that 'hidden carers' were less likely to identify as young carers and therefore less likely to apply for Young Carer Grant, even if they heard about it. There was some acknowledgement of this among young carers too:

I feel like a lot of people that I know wouldn't think that they're a young carer but they do more work than some of the people that [use my young carer support service] and they had no clue that they're a young carer.

Aged 17, caring for sibling

When asked what would help to raise awareness of the grant, young carers and stakeholders both mentioned improved advertising, specifically on social media, as there was a perception that young people spend a lot of time on social media platforms. There was also a strong appetite for more promotion in schools.

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of choosing inclusive language while promoting Young Carer Grant to ensure it reached as many eligible carers as possible. They indicated that there will be eligible young carers who do not identify with this label, meaning it may be more effective to use more general terms when promoting the grant such as focusing on the sort of tasks young carers might carry out.

Even when they were aware of the grant, a lack of awareness of the details could lead to young carers making false assumptions about whether or not

¹⁷ Note that participants were recruited through gatekeepers which meant that almost all participants were engaged with young carer services. This increases the likelihood that they found out about the Young Carer Grant from such services.

they would be eligible, which could be a barrier to applying. For example, occasionally there was an assumption that 18 year olds would not be eligible.

I think at first it was mostly my age that put me off, because at the time I was 17 when I applied. So, I got it when I was 17 and I'm now 18, and sometimes I feel like once you're 18 it's kind of like [...] you're on your own now.

Aged 18, caring for mother

How Young Carer Grant fits with young carers' identity

Among recipients, there could be some initial reluctance to take up the grant due to how they perceived themselves and their caring role and how the grant fits into this.

One view expressed by some young carers was that they were not the kind of person who needed or deserved the money. For example, one participant explained that she originally did not want Young Carer Grant because she did not want to receive 'charity' (before she was later persuaded to apply by a young carer service worker). There was also an assumption that other people would be worse off and in more need of the grant:

I thought I was just like a usual person who wouldn't need it, I thought it was for more severe situations.

Aged 18, caring for siblings

There was little evidence of stigma as a barrier to applying for Young Carer Grant. One participant pointed out that this was partly because the grant is paid discreetly and directly into a nominated bank account, so only her and her mother (who she cared for) knew she had applied for it. However, one recipient believed other people may judge her negatively for applying for the grant, because she was not struggling significantly financially.

There was also a (more exceptional) view that receiving Young Carer Grant would impact on how recipients saw themselves and their relationship with the person they cared for. For example, one participant was initially uncomfortable with receiving compensation for caring for her brother because it undermined the fact that she was happy to do it regardless. Furthermore, she was worried about how receiving the grant would change her brother's perception of her and that it would make him feel like more of a burden if he knew she was being 'paid' to look after him (although this did not end up being the case).

I felt like if he knew that I was taking money for pretty much being his big sister, he'd kind of feel a bit rubbish.

Aged 18, caring for sibling

Lack of parental support

Another barrier to applying for Young Carer Grant discussed by stakeholders was the need for the cared-for person to be involved in the application process. This

means eligible young carers are dependent on adult support to apply for Young Carer Grant which is not always given.

Stakeholders had experience working with families who refused to allow young carers to apply for the grant because they were fearful that it would prevent them from receiving other benefits, or even accessing foodbanks. There was a view among stakeholders that greater reassurances were needed to make it clear that Young Carer Grant would not impact on eligibility for other benefits.

Similarly, stakeholders were aware of families who had a fear of social services in general and thought that applying for Young Carer Grant might lead to social services involvement. It was suggested that this was more common in minority ethnic communities and thus a greater barrier to minority ethnic young carers.

Stakeholders mentioned that an alternative reason that parents or guardians refuse to accept a young person's carer status is because they believe providing this level of support to family members is normal and expected. This can be a sensitive and personal issue, as viewing a young person as a carer may make the cared-for person feel like a burden.

Stakeholders explained that cultural values play an important role here, and some minority ethnic young carers may feel a moral obligation to look after family members. In addition, some minority ethnic families may be less likely to accept or fully understand the term 'young carer' because the word 'carer' does not exist in many community languages. Further, there can be a stigma attached to someone needing to be a young carer.

This was supported by the experiences of a Scottish Asian recipient who felt that identifying as a young carer could be a particular issue among the Asian community. She believed there was a degree of stigma surrounding seeking help from outside the family because there is an expectation that family members will look after each other. This can make young people feel guilty for applying for the grant.

Stakeholders highlighted a general need to provide culturally sensitive services and information, including on Young Carer Grant.

Application process

The young carers who took part in this study were predominantly recipients of the grant and had experienced few difficulties with the application process. However, one non-recipient explained that the reason they had not completed their application was because of not being able to provide the required evidence on time. He needed a copy of his bank statement, but by the time he received this in the post, it was past the deadline. He suggested that had he had a bit more time to submit the evidence, he would have done so.

Another non-recipient explained that she had not yet applied for the grant because she was waiting for her mother to be well enough to provide her with support and help her complete the application process.

While there was a view among stakeholders that the application form itself was straightforward to understand, there was a suggestion that it could be simplified further. It was noted that the current wording is similar to the Carers Allowance form, but Young Carer Grant is a different kind of benefit and could be less formal and more 'young person friendly'. Stakeholders highlighted that it was important to make the grant as accessible as possible for those with learning difficulties or those for whom English is not their first language.

There was also some concern that the wording and layout of the form could lead to a misconception that young carers have to provide information that is actually optional, such as their national insurance number. As this information can be difficult for young carers to find, it may put them off completing their application. This would especially affect those living in a chaotic household where parents may not be able to help them. There was a suggestion that it should be emphasised more in the application from which information is optional.

Stakeholders were aware of young carers who had not successfully completed their applications for the grant due to finding the form too long and difficult. They referenced feedback from young carer coordinators in schools that the form "looked like a big job" and felt that if it could be made any shorter that would make it easier for young carers to apply.

There was a perception that the fear of being turned down and having their carer status undermined may put off some young carers from applying.

'One carer rule'

One of the requirements of the Young Carer Grant is that only one young carer can receive the grant in respect of any one cared-for person, referred to as the 'one carer rule'. Although none of the participants in this study had missed out on the grant due to this rule, they raised concerns that it was unfair to carers who may still have a demanding care role, despite sharing responsibility with another young carer.

One recipient explained that the 'one carer rule' would have been a barrier for her, had her brother not agreed to let her apply instead of him because he had a job and more money than she did. Although she believed that he did not harbour any resentment because of this, she still felt that it was not fair for her brother to be excluded from the grant, as he had caring responsibilities too.

[My brother] was okay with it, he didn't really mind to be honest, he knew I didn't have any money and I needed it [...] It's not affected me, but my brother probably, it's not really fair, because he has got to take on responsibilities as well.

Aged 18, caring for mother

There was a view that the 'one carer rule' may disproportionately disadvantage younger carers who may have less confidence or experience in applying for financial support than their older counterparts, or whose older siblings have already established a claim to the grant.

I don't think it is fair that only [my friend] should get the grant, because his sister [aged 16] does a lot of work too herself, and it's almost discriminatory because she doesn't get anything and she is working her butt off, and she is just a little kid [...] it is easier for us [as older carers] to go through an application because we have applied to college or applied for funding, but like, you know, it is a bit of a barrier for the younger ones.

Aged 18, caring for mother

This view was backed up by stakeholders, who highlighted that this rule favours older or more confident young carers and this does not always correlate with those who are most impacted by their caring role or those who take on the majority of caring responsibilities. In fact, stakeholders mentioned that younger siblings may spend more time caring, as older siblings begin to gain more independence and potentially spend more time out of the house.

That's basically whoever gets there first. We've had incidences where the more confident or dominant sibling has gone for it. In an ideal world they would share but it doesn't always work that way. It's too restrictive.

Stakeholder

Stakeholders also described ways in which the 'one carer rule' could have a negative affect on those who were deemed ineligible for Young Carer Grant because of it.

There was a concern that the 'one carer rule' could affect the relationship between young carers who were affected by it, and that this had to be handled carefully in order to avoid causing resentment.

It's a tricky one. We've got two brothers. One provides more support than the other. One is 17 and a bit and the other is coming up for 16. They know the older brother gets it. We've suggested splitting it between them."

Stakeholder

There was some evidence that unequal treatment of young carers sharing caring responsibilities could be a prohibitive factor in itself. One young carer explained that one of the main reasons she hadn't already applied for the grant was that she felt uncomfortable about the idea of receiving money if her sister was unable to. Although, in this case, her sister was ineligible because she was too young rather than because of the 'one carer rule', it does point to a concern that would also apply to that rule.

Interviewer: What's the main reason that you haven't applied for the Young Carer Grant so far?¹⁸

Young carer: Well my sister's also a young carer so I was kind of

¹⁸ Note that this participant had expressed an intention to apply for the Young Carer Grant in the near future.

thinking about that. She's younger and she has to be like a certain age or something. So I thought it was a bit unfair, because she does the same amount of jobs.

Aged 17, caring for mother

There was a view among stakeholders that the 'one carer rule' can negatively affect young carers' sense of recognition or their perception of their identity as a young carer. For example, a young carer who misses out on the grant for this reason may feel less valued (possibly less valued than they felt before they were aware of the grant) as a result. This could lead them to believe they are less of a young carer than the person who successfully applied for the grant, or question their young carer status entirely. Reduced confidence in their carer status can have negative consequences for young carers such as discouraging them for applying for support as a carer in the future.

By contrast, the 'one carer rule' may indirectly put more pressure on the recipient of the grant. For example, they may feel they are now perceived as the 'main carer' and that they have to do more or take on the majority of caring responsibilities to justify the fact that they received money for their caring role. While there was an acknowledgement by some stakeholders that there are cases where one young carer is clearly the 'main carer' in a shared caring role, it was felt that this was not enough to justify the negative impacts of the 'one carer rule'.

There was a view that the time young carers spend caring is enough to determine their eligibility and there should be more of a focus on this instead of how many young carers are sharing responsibility to distribute the grant in a more equitable way.

Overall, there was a sense among stakeholders that 'one carer rule' limited the impact of the grant in achieving its aims, particularly that of greater recognition for young carers, and that all young carers providing 16+ hours of care should receive the grant.

Eligibility

There was concern among stakeholders that the eligibility criteria for receiving Young Carer Grant was excluding too many young carers with significant caring responsibilities. The number of successful applications stakeholders were aware of varied, with one stakeholder reporting that none of the young carers on their caseload had been eligible.

Overall we've only had one successful application. That speaks volumes to the success of this grant.

Stakeholder

These concerns centred predominantly on the requirement that the cared-for person be in receipt of particular benefits. Stakeholders highlighted that benefits may not always be a reliable measure of how much somebody relies on support from a young carer. Young carers who are typically excluded because the cared-for person is not on qualifying benefits include those caring for:

- people with mental health issues but ineligible for benefits
- people with undiagnosed mental health issues
- people with substance misuse issues
- or people who require high levels of emotional support

There was a view that the benefits requirement could present a particular barrier to minority ethnic young carers, as people in these communities can be less likely to access this kind of disability support. There was a suggestion that more culturally appropriate and targeted services would help tackle some of these underlying barriers.

Even in cases where the cared-for person is in receipt of qualifying benefits, there was a concern among stakeholders that this requirement could feel to the young person that they were having to prove they were a young carer, which can be frustrating, particularly if they have already had their caring status verified by young carer organisations in order to access other support.

...having to prove their carer status [...] is in some ways demeaning. This is their lived, daily experience. All young people who access our respite service are assessed for their entitlement, therefore their carer status has already been verified but this is an extra level where they have to prove themselves and some just don't have the self-belief, the time or the support to do this.

Stakeholder

Stakeholders were generally supportive of the age criteria. However, there was a suggestion that young adult carers in full-time education would benefit from receiving Young Carer Grant as they would not be eligible for Carer's Allowance. This was echoed by a recipient who had just started university and felt it was unfair that when she was 19 she would not qualify as she would be in just as much (if not more) need of it. There was a view that it is particularly important to support young adult carers in this situation to encourage young carers to go onto further education and take up opportunities which are the norm for their non-caring peers.

Stakeholders were typically supportive of the criteria that requires young carers to be providing 16 hours or more of care a week on average, while acknowledging that it is not a perfect measure of how impacted a young person may be as a result of caring responsibilities.

There was a suggestion among stakeholders that it may be beneficial for young carer services to have more of a role in determining eligibility for Young Carer Grant, as they will have a better understanding of which young carers take on the most responsibility and who would benefit the most from this financial support.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and implications

The impact of Young Carer Grant

Among recipients, Young Carer Grant appears to be achieving most of its immediate aims:

- it is enabling young carers to engage in social, leisure, employment/training or education opportunities they might not have been able to do otherwise.
- it has positively impacted young carers' lives. It has a positive (albeit not necessarily a very large) impact on their mental wellbeing mainly through reducing stress and increasing confidence.
- it has helped some young carers feel at least a little more recognised. Both the introduction and existence of the grant, and the fact that they had been deemed eligible to receive it, provided recognition and validation.

In addition, stakeholders felt that the grant had the potential to open up access to other support (by encouraging people to find out if they were young carers; through sign-posting applicants to other services; and by encouraging applications for other support in the future).

However, there is a limit to what a financial payment can do and the grant had no direct impact on some of the negative aspects of being a young carer that were most commonly mentioned by participants: a lack of free time and anxieties about the health of their cared-for person.

Implications for policy

Young carers and stakeholders welcomed the introduction of Young Carer Grant and were broadly positive about the application process. As discussed above, it appears to be achieving most of its immediate aims for recipients. However, the research identified a number of potential improvements which would increase the impact of the grant. These are set out below.

Raising awareness of Young Carer Grant

Stakeholders highlighted that a lack of awareness of the grant was a particular barrier for 'hidden carers' who are not engaged with support services. When asked what would help to raise awareness of the grant, young carers and stakeholders both mentioned advertising, specifically on social media. There was also a strong appetite for more promotion in schools.

There was a view among stakeholders that 'hidden carers' were less likely to identify as a young carer and so less likely to apply for Young Carer Grant, even if they heard about it. Stakeholders therefore emphasised the importance of choosing inclusive language while promoting Young Carer Grant to ensure it reached as many eligible claimants as possible. It may be more effective to use more general terms when promoting the grant such as focusing on the sort of tasks young carers might carry out.

Tackling misconceptions and providing reassurance

There were a number of misconceptions about the grant and the eligibility criteria which might deter some young carers from applying and might deter their parents from assisting or encouraging them. Clarification and reassurance about the following points in promotional materials and on the website could increase uptake:

- reinforcing the fact that it is entirely up to the young carer how they spend the money and that there is no need to produce receipts or explain/justify how they have spent it
- providing reassurances that Young Carer Grant would have no impact on other benefits received by the young carer or their cared-for person
- reinforcing the fact that the grant is available to 16, 17 and 18 year olds. (Occasionally, there was an assumption that 18 year olds would not be eligible because 18 was seen as 'adult'.)

In addition, there were cultural barriers among some minority ethnic communities both in terms of seeing someone as a 'young carer' and accessing support. Stakeholders highlighted a general need to provide culturally sensitive services and information, including on Young Carer Grant.

Simplifying the application process

While the application form itself was seen as relatively straightforward, there also a suggestion that it could be simplified further. It was noted that the current wording is similar to the Carer's Allowance form, but because Young Carer Grant is a different kind of benefit it could be less formal and more 'young person friendly'. Stakeholders highlighted that it was important to make the grant as accessible as possible for those with learning difficulties or those for whom English is not their first language.

One young carer said they nearly forgot to reapply and suggested that it would be helpful if there was an option to request a reminder email a year after applying. Although there is currently such an option, it was clearly not obvious to this applicant so could perhaps be made clearer.

There was a view among participants who had applied more than once that subsequent applications were quicker because they could carry over some information from their original application. They felt it would be beneficial to make young carers aware of this, to make them more likely to reapply for Young Carer Grant in future. There was also a suggestion that the process could be streamlined further for subsequent applications, for example being able to save evidence submitted as part of the initial application.

Sensitive handling of unsuccessful applications

While a successful application made some young carers feel more recognised, there was a concern from a stakeholder that it may have the opposite effect on

people who apply but find they are not eligible¹⁹ — they may feel less recognised than they did before. Moreover, the experience may discourage them for applying for other forms of support in the future. It is therefore very important that unsuccessful applications are handled sensitively and applicants understand that, while they may not (currently) be eligible for Young Carer Grant, there are other services available for young carers and they should not be deterred from accessing them. This would also be an opportunity to sign-post to other services.

Reviewing the ‘one carer rule’

While there was an acknowledgement that there is a limited amount of money, the ‘one carer rule’ was generally seen as unfair by young carers and stakeholders. There was a suggestion that younger siblings or less confident young carers would be disadvantaged (because older and/or more confident siblings would establish a right to the grant first). The young carer who misses out on the grant may feel less valued (possibly less valued than they felt before they were aware of the grant) and this could lead them to believe they are less of a young carer than the person who successfully applied for the grant, or question their young carer status entirely – with reduced confidence in their carer status discouraging them for applying for support as a carer in the future.

There was also a concern among stakeholders that the ‘one carer rule’ may indirectly put more pressure on the recipient of the grant. For example, they may feel they are now perceived as the ‘main carer’ and that they have to do more or take on the majority of caring responsibilities to justify the fact that they received money for their caring role.

Reviewing the benefits criteria

There was concern among stakeholders that the requirement that the cared-for person is in receipt of certain benefits was excluding too many young carers with significant caring responsibilities. Stakeholders highlighted that benefits may not always be a reliable measure of how much somebody relies on support from a young carer. There was a view that the benefits requirement could present a particular barrier to minority ethnic young carers, as people in these communities can be less likely to access this kind of disability support.

Reviewing the upper age limit

Stakeholders were generally supportive of the age criteria. However, there was a suggestion that young adult carers in full-time education would benefit from receiving Young Carer Grant as they would not be eligible for Carer’s Allowance. This was echoed by an 18 year old recipient who felt she would be in just as much need of the grant when she was 19 (as she would still be at university, not earning, and still have the expense of travelling home frequently to provide care).

¹⁹ We did not interview any young carers in this position.

Broader implications

In assessing the impact of Young Carer Grant, we noted that there are limitations to what a financial payment can achieve. One of the main challenges of being a young carer is the lack of time to relax, 'do their own thing' and spend time with friends. Although Young Carer Grant gave recipients the opportunity to take part in some activities with friends that they would not otherwise have been able to afford, and to treat themselves during their limited free time, it could not fundamentally increase the amount of free time they have available. This points to a broader need to provide young carers with regular opportunities for respite – not necessarily for any great length of time – so that they have a chance to 'do their own thing' (which may be at home or outside the home) and relax, knowing that their cared-for person is safe.

Annex A: Pen portraits

The following pen portraits of three young carers are designed to provide a richer picture of some young carers' lives and their experiences of Young Carer Grant. They have been selected to show a range of different impacts and should not be seen as representative. Names and some personal details have been amended to ensure anonymity.

Ella's experience of Young Carer Grant

Ella is 18 and lives with her mother and her younger brother. She is a registered carer for her brother who has autism and dyslexia. In her free time she likes to socialise with friends and family and go to the gym.

When her mother is at work, Ella takes on full responsibility for looking after her brother as he can't be left alone for long. Ella helps her brother with everyday tasks, makes him dinner, helps with his school work and helps to calm him down when he gets anxious or angry.

At the same time, Ella is studying at university. At the moment, classes are online which helps her to fit it around her caring role, although sometimes she has to catch up late at night. She also works shifts a few times a week at a shop.

Juggling so many responsibilities can take a toll on Ella's mental health, and sometimes she feels 'pushed to the side' because her parents need to focus more on her brother. Being a young carer can feel lonely, although joining a young carers' group has helped with that. It was a worker at the group who told her about Young Carer Grant and encouraged her to apply.

Initially, Ella had some reservations about applying for Young Carer Grant because she was happy to look after her brother and didn't want to make him feel "as though he was a charity".

"I don't really want to be [my brother's] young carer, I want to be his sister. I don't think he would want that either."

However, Ella was persuaded to apply because the support worker explained that it was not a payment, and she deserved it.

Ella applied for Young Carer Grant in early 2020 and found the application process easy and straightforward. She put the money into a savings account so that she would have an emergency fund to use in case she needed it. This gave her "peace of mind" and made her feel more in control of her financial situation. It also made her feel more recognised and appreciated as a young carer.

"[Young Carer Grant] made me feel a lot more financially stable, self-dependent and self-sufficient [...] it's just that idea that if I do need it it's gonna be there, so it's like security."

Toby's experience of Young Carer Grant

Toby is 16 and lives with his mother and his younger sister. He cares for his mother who has fibromyalgia and needs help with personal care such as getting dressed, as well as needing extra help with housework and shopping. When he gets some free time, he likes to draw or play video games, although his caring role is a "full time responsibility".

"It's not just I'm gonna get up and do this today, it's I need to get up and do this today."

The most difficult part of being a young carer for Toby is seeing his mother struggle with her illness which can make him feel bad, and he worries about his mother if she has to be left on her own. Another difficulty is being unable to drive and help out his mum by driving to pick things up, like her medication.

His school is understanding, but he mainly gets support from his local young carers' group which is where he first heard about the grant. A member of staff offered to complete the online application form with him, as he found the idea of applying himself a bit intimidating. This was mainly because he has some difficulty with reading and writing – he didn't have any problems finding the evidence he needed.

Toby understood that he could use the money from the grant however he liked. He spent around a third of the money on drawing equipment and videogames, and put the rest towards his savings for driving lessons.

Being able to spend money on his hobbies made him feel better as it provided a distraction from the COVID-19 pandemic. If he hadn't received the grant, he would have had to be more careful with his money and probably wouldn't have done this.

The main benefit of Young Carer Grant for Toby was the feeling of being recognised for his caring role, because he doesn't think young carers are recognised to the extent that they should be – he was caring for three years before realising that he was a young carer.

"It gave me like a...oh we've noticed that you've been doing this...a reward."

The grant will also help him achieve his goal of learning to drive, which will enable him to do more for his mother.

Sofia's experience of Young Carer Grant

Sofia is 17 and lives with her parents and her younger sisters. Since she was around 8, she has been helping her parents look after her sisters who both have autism. When she has time, she likes to go for walks to give herself some space, listen to music and hang out with her friends but

“... other teenagers have freedom – lack of freedom is a big thing for me, because I always have responsibilities, time boundaries.”

She usually gets up at 6.30 to get herself ready for school before helping get her sisters washed and dressed and giving them breakfast. She leaves school a little early so that she is back home when her sisters get home (her parents are still at work). She gets them changed, helps her mum feed them, then washes and irons their clothes because they tend to make a mess of their clothes every day.

When Sofia first heard about the grant she thought **“Oh wow! What a great opportunity, it's a huge amount of money. It was a really good thing to my ears.”** She found the application process “fairly easy” and just needed a little help from her mum to answer some questions about her sisters.

She is very organised and careful with money so when she received the grant she put most of it into her savings (for a house and for driving lessons), gave 10-15% to charity (which she explained as “Muslim requirement”), and put the remaining £40 into her day-to-day account which she uses for family food and her own clothes and make-up. She says it had a very positive impact:

“when I'm able to buy the things I want, like clothes, it can make me feel good about myself. It's a distraction from all the problems, you feel more secure that you're able to pay for your own things.” She added that she **“felt good being able to provide for my family”**.

In the absence of the grant, she would have had to rely on money from her Education Maintenance Allowance and from her parents.

Her only concern about the grant is that

“people who aren't recognised as young carers, who aren't in the system wouldn't get it. Loads of parents don't speak up if child is a young carer, especially Asian parents as there is a stigma [...] So Asian kids don't speak up in case the parent says 'you think I'm a burden' – some Asian parents like to guilt trip you”.

Annex B: Discussion guides

Young Carer Discussion Guide

Introduction (3 minutes)

[Ask All]

- Introduce self and Ipsos MORI
- Introduce the research: The Scottish Government has commissioned Ipsos MORI to talk to young carers, to ask about their experiences as carers and their views on the Young Carer Grant. The findings will be published as part of an evaluation of Young Carer Grant, which will help the Scottish Government make sure the grant is working as well as it can for young carers like you.
- Explain that the interview will last about 45 minutes. Remind them that they will get £30 as a 'thank you'.
- Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be passed on to anyone outwith the Ipsos MORI research team, so it will not be possible for the Scottish Government or anyone else to identify individuals in any reports that Ipsos MORI produce.
- Remind participant that they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to answer, and that they are welcome to stop the interview at any time.
- Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription and analysis purposes and that recordings will not be shared outside the research team at Ipsos MORI.

Participant's background (5 minutes)

[Ask All]

Firstly, it would be great if we could get some background on your life as a carer.

Could you tell me a bit about your caring responsibilities?

Who do you care for?

How much time do you spend caring in a normal week?

How long have you been a carer?

How did you become a carer?

What's a typical day like for you?

Prompt

- What sort of things do you help [cared-for person] with?

- Prompt if necessary: Getting dressed, taking medicines, shopping, cooking, cleaning, housework, emotional support,
- Other caring responsibilities
- Studying
- Working

What do you enjoy doing outside of your caring responsibilities when you get the chance?

Life as a carer (5 minutes)

[Ask All]

I'd like to ask a few more questions about what life is like for you as a young carer.

First of all can I ask, what do you think are the positive aspects of being a young carer?

Do you think you have skills/experience other people your age don't have through being a young carer?

What are the negatives aspects?

Is there anything that your friends or other people your age do that you can't do due to your caring responsibilities?

What is the biggest thing you think you miss out on?

Does it have an effect on your health and wellbeing?

What do you find most difficult?

What help and support, if any, do you get with your caring responsibilities?

Probes:

- Family/friends
- Young carer orgs
- School/college
- Mental health support

Awareness of Young Carer Grant (4 minutes)

[Ask relevant section]

I'd now like to ask some questions about the Young Carer Grant.

For those who have received Young Carer Grant:

Can you tell me about how you first became aware of the Young Carer Grant?

What did you think about it when you first heard about it?

Probe for any positives or negatives

For those who have not applied/another carer received Young Carer Grant:

What do you know about the Young Carer Grant?

Where/when did you hear about it?

What would you say is the main purpose of the Young Carer Grant?

Do you know what makes a person eligible for the Young Carer Grant?

Do you know how much the payment is?

And how it is paid/where the money comes from?

What do they think of the grant? Probe for positives or negatives

Applying for the grant (7 minutes)

[Ask relevant section]

I now have a few questions about applying for the grant.

For those who have received Young Carer Grant:

Overall, how did you find the application process?

Did you have any concerns about applying for the grant when you first applied?

Prompts:

- Difficulty to apply/complicated
- Privacy concerns
- Worries about what other people might think/stigma

Take me through your experience of applying for the grant.

What were the hardest bits?

What were the easy bits?

Did you get any help or support from anyone to apply?

What, if anything, would make it easier to apply for the Young Carer grant?

For all:

One of the rules for applying for the grant is that only one young carer can apply for the grant for a cared-for person, even though more than one young carer may

share the caring responsibilities. So, if more than one young carer cares for someone, only one of these young carers can apply for the grant.

Is this something that has affected you?

Did they receive it instead of somebody else?

Did somebody else receive it instead of them?

For those who have not yet applied for Young Carer Grant:

Did you ever consider applying for the grant?

If Yes: How far did you get? Did you start an application? When?

If Yes: Was there anything that you didn't like about the application process?

Did you get any support or advice from anyone about applying?

If Yes: From who?

If Yes: Would you have liked to have had more support? From who?

What were the main reasons that you didn't apply for the Young Carer grant?

What would have helped you to apply/finish your application?

For those where no other young carer received the grant for the cared-for person

You mentioned that another young carer received the grant for the person you look after. If it's alright, I'd like to ask you a few questions about this. Remember that it's absolutely fine if you don't want to answer any of these questions, just let me know and we can move on. You mentioned that another young carer received the grant for the person you look after. Would you mind telling me who that was?

Did this have an impact on your relationship with the other young carer?

Did you have any influence over how the money was spent?

What do you think about the rule that only one young carer can apply for Young Carer Grant

Probe for positives/negatives

Finances (10 minutes)

[Ask relevant section]

I'd now like to move on to ask some questions about money and any financial impact of the Young Carer Grant. To be clear, there are no right or wrong answers, and all your responses will be kept anonymous. Just let me know if there is a question you would rather not answer.

So, I'd like to start with some general questions about money if that's okay.

For all:

How do you feel about your current financial situation?

Does money ever worry you?

Are there things you would like to buy or do that you currently cannot afford?

Do you think that being a carer has had any financial impact on you?

Prompts: unable to get a job/additional costs

For those who have received Young Carer Grant:

Now I'd like to ask more specifically about the financial impact of the Young Carer grant.

Do you remember when you last received The Young Carer Grant? How much money was the payment?

When you received the money, did you think you were supposed to spend the money in a particular way?

What did you decide to do with the money from the grant? Just to reassure you, The Young Carer Grant is not intended to be spent in any specific way and it's completely up to you how you choose to spend it.

If necessary, probe:

- Day-to-day expenses e.g. groceries
- Clothes
- Holidays
- Savings

Why did you decide to spend it on that? [If appropriate]

What impact did that have on you? How did it make you feel?

What would have happened if you hadn't received the grant? Would you still have [done whatever they did with the money]?

If not yet spent the payment: How do they intend to spend money from the grant?

Has the Young Carer Grant allowed you to do things you normally wouldn't be able to (e.g. hobbies, socialising, getting support with your caring role)?

Did the COVID-19 restrictions affect how you spent the money?

What do you think you would have done with the money in more 'normal times'?

Impact of the grant (5 minutes)

[Ask only those who have received Young Carer Grant]

The next questions are about any other impacts that Young Carer Grant might have had.

Would you say that the grant has had any impact on your physical health?

Prompts:

- Being able to buy healthier food
- Being more active

Would you say that the grant has had any impact on your mental health and general wellbeing?

Prompts:

- Reduced worries about money
- Being able to do things couldn't previously afford
- Participation in social activities
- Increased self-confidence
- Reduced isolation

Refer back to any other negative impacts of caring that they mentioned at the start and ask if Young Carer Grant has had any impact.

How would things have been different if you hadn't received the grant?

What do you think the main benefit of the grant has been for you?

Has the grant made you feel any more in control of things?

Any negative aspects?

Will you apply for the grant again in the future?

If Yes: Have you thought about what they will do with the next payment?

If No: Why not? Any barriers to doing so?

What do you think about the way it's paid?

Feelings of recognition (5 minutes)

I'd like to move on and talk about something else now.

Would you say that you feel that people are generally aware of the work that young carers do and the contribution they make?

If Not: What do you think could help change that?

Would you say that you personally feel recognised as a young carer? By that I mean recognised by society.

If they feel recognised: What/who is it that makes you feel recognised?

Prompts:

- Government
- People you care for
- Friends/family
- Wider society

If they don't feel recognised: What do you think would make you feel recognised?

Is it important to you to feel recognised as a young carer?

Do you feel that the Young Carer Grant has made any difference to how valued or recognised you feel as a carer?

In which ways?

By whom?

Do you feel that the Young Carer Grant helps to raise the profile of young carers in Scotland more widely?

What do you think could help make more young carers become aware of the grant?

Wrap Up (3 minutes)

We're nearing the end of the discussion now; I just have a few final questions to wrap up.

[Ask only those who have received Young Carer Grant]

If you were to try and sum up the impact of the Young Carer Grant on your life, what would you say?

[Ask All]

Is there anything you would like to feed back to the Scottish Government about your experience of the Young Carer Grant?

Thanks and check incentive details.

Finally, is there anything else you would like to say about the Young Carer Grant that we haven't already covered?

And, would you be happy to be recontacted about potential follow up research for the Scottish Government? (You would be free to say no if it's something you're not interested in)

Ask for email if we do not have it (to send a support information leaflet).

Stakeholder Discussion Guide

Introduction (3 minutes)

- Remind participant of the aims of the research:
The Scottish Government has commissioned Ipsos MORI to gather feedback on the on the Young Carer Grant. We are speaking to 30 young carers as well as 6 people working with organisations who provide support to carers or young people such as yourself. The findings will be published as part of an evaluation of Young Carer Grant later this year.
- Remind participant that the interview will last about 45 minutes.
- Remind participant that they don't have to answer any questions they don't want to answer. Provide reassurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Explain that no identifying information about individuals will be passed on to anyone outwith the Ipsos MORI research team, so it will not be possible for the Scottish Government or anyone else to identify individuals in any reports that Ipsos MORI produce. If there are comments which are potentially identifiable (e.g. because they are about the particular group of carers that the organisation advocates for), then we will check that you are happy for them to be reported.
- Request permission to record interview. Explain that this is for transcription and analysis purposes and that recordings will not be shared outside the research team at Ipsos MORI.

Background (3 minutes)

Firstly, it would be great if we could get some background on [organisation] and your role within it.

So, could you tell me a bit about your role and what it is that [organisation] does?

Probe where relevant:

- Who do you work mainly work with?
- What kind of support do you provide to young people?
- Any specific support offered to young carers?

Views on the Young Carer Grant (10 minutes)

Now I'd like to move onto some questions about the Young Carer Grant.

Were you involved in the development of the grant at all?

What do you see as the overall aim of the Young Carers Grant?

If necessary: The aim of Grant is to help young carers improve their own quality of life by taking part in opportunities which are the norm for their non-caring peers. It is also intended to provide some recognition of their unpaid caring role.

Does your organisation provide young carers with any specific support or advice about the Young Carer Grant?

Overall, what do you think about the Grant and how it's working?

Probe on positives/negatives

What do you think are the main benefits of the Young Carer Grant for young carers?

Probe on:

- What they said earlier was the aim
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Physical health
- Financial wellbeing
- Being able to take part more actively in society
- Sense of recognition/raising the profile of young carers more widely

What evidence of these benefits have they seen among young people they/their organisation work with?

In general, do you think that the Grant meets its aim of improving young carers' quality of life and providing recognition of their unpaid caring role?

How could the impact of the Grant be increased?

Probe on:

- Wellbeing
- Participation in social and leisure activities
- Increased control and empowerment for young carers
- Recognition of young carers' role

What's your view of the amount of the grant (currently £305.10 p.a.)?

Views on applying and eligibility for Young Carer Grant (10 minutes)

As you may know, to be eligible for the Grant, carers must be 16, 17 or 18 years old. They also must be providing care for an average of 16 hours a week, and the cared-for-person has to be in receipt of certain benefits, such as the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment or the middle or highest rate of daily living allowance.

What do you think of the eligibility criteria?

Do you know any young carers who had hoped to apply but were ineligible – what was the impact?

In addition to those rules, if a young carer shares their caring responsibilities with another young carer, only one young carer can claim the young carer grant for the cared-for person.

What do you think about this rule?

Do you know any young carers who have been affected by this? What was the impact?

Are you aware of any other barriers which may cause eligible young carers not to apply for the grant?

Probe on:

- Lack of parental consent
- Lack of engagement with services

I'd now like to ask a few questions about the process of applying for the Young Carer Grant.

What do you think about the application process for the grant?

If necessary: Currently young carers have to apply for the Grant online and have to provide proof of their address, and if possible, the National Insurance Numbers of the young carer and the cared for person and details of the benefits received by the cared-for-person.

What works well?

What does not work so well?

In your experience, what (if anything) have young carers struggled with when applying for the grant?

Probe on:

- Lack of access
- Difficulty in accessing evidence (like proof of address or ID etc.)

Are there any young carers in particular who may have more issues than others?

Is there anything you think could be improved?

Once the young carer's application has been approved, the money is paid into their nominated bank account as a one-off lump sum payment. What do you think about the way it's paid?

Probe: Any experience of issues with payment of the grant?

Awareness of Young Carer Grant (3 mins)

We know that there are still young carers who are unaware of the Young Carer Grant.

What do you think could help make more young carers become aware of the grant?

Where relevant: Is there anything that could be done to help you/your organisation better support young carers to apply for the grant?

And finally, is there anything else you think could be improved about the provision of the Young Carer Grant and how would you like to see it develop in the future?

Wrap up (3 minutes)

We're nearing the end of the discussion now, but before we do, can I just ask- is there anything else you would like to feedback about the Young Carer Grant that we haven't already touched on?



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