

PKAVS Young Carers Project Annual Consultation Report March 2013



Introduction

PKAVS Young Carers Project holds an annual consultation event each year with a view to seeking feedback on how best we can structure the project going forward in the next 12 months that will best help address the needs of the young carers we support. This year's event was held at the Society for the Blind, New Row, Perth on the 28th March 2013.

This event looks to involve everyone either directly or indirectly involved at the project. This includes, most importantly, the young carers and their parents and/or guardians, the project staff and volunteers, outside professionals involved with the children we support, fundraisers, local councillors and politicians all being invited to attend.

Although part of the evening involves a retrospective look back on the past 12 months it is predominately aimed at structuring the year ahead. Previous consultation events have seen ideas such as the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award group, the Young Carers Mind and Body group, a quarterly newsletter and a Facebook page all adopted at the project as the young carers have told us this is something that would benefit them.

The main highlight of this year's event was a play called A Young Carers Life which was performed by some of the children we support. The play was written by one of our volunteers and a lot of hard work was put in by all concerned to make it the success it was.

This report outlines the objectives and outcomes of the event and will summarise our findings and the possible action points that we will implement to turn any ideas offered into reality.



The Nights Agenda

The night was opened by Raymond Jamieson, PKAVS Young Carers Coordinator, who welcomed everyone to the event and then introduced a 5 minute power point presentation that was a look back on what the project has achieved in the past year.

There then followed a 15 minute presentation by Raymond Jamieson on the project and the challenges it faces going forward. Key points raised during this presentation were

- The differentiation between PKAVS and Perth & Kinross council and how both are entirely different organisations.
- The challenges faced by the project in acquiring funding that enables us to retain our existing staff resource and to continue with our current level of service provision.
- The challenges faced by the project in identifying and raising awareness of young carers at certain schools within Perth and Kinross.
- How the project intends to develop in the 12 months ahead.

This presentation was followed by a game of 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' with the questions all being based on young carers issues. One of the young carers receiving support from the project, Stephanie Allan, kindly volunteered to be the contestant and successfully reached the final question.

After the break the play entitled A Young Carers Life was performed. This play was written by Anna Moon who has been a long term volunteer at the project. The play concentrated on some of the challenges faced by young carers but it was done in a light hearted manner. Preparations for this play had been on-going for nearly 12 months and a lot of hard work and dedication was shown by everyone involved none more so than the young carers performing. The play proved to be a resounding success on the night and was very well received by everyone in attendance and the young carers excelled themselves in how they

delivered the show. A special thank you to Anna for all the hard work involved not only in writing the play but for the main role she took in its successful delivery.

In terms of numbers attending this was undoubtedly the largest Consultation event this project has delivered. These numbers are indicative of the increase in awareness of young carers and the issues they face within Perth and Kinross. It was particularly pleasing to see so many young carers in attendance at the event because when all is said and done the project belongs to them and how the project develops in the future will be driven by them telling us how we can best meet their needs as young carers.

Feedback

Prior to this year's Consultation event we sent out Parental Questionnaires. Clearly it is important for this project to understand how the parents feel we can best support their children in their young carer's role. This questionnaire contained 10 key questions that allowed us to gather the parent's feedback. The questions asked were as follows

1. Describe how the weekly groups help my child have a life outside their caring role?
2. Do the groups help my child better sustain their caring role?
3. Is it good for my child to get away from their caring role and spend time with other Young Carers?
4. I feel my child benefits from attending the groups?
5. Has your child's confidence and self-esteem increased since attending the project?
6. Do the groups allow your child time and support to complete homework or revision tasks?
7. What do you believe are the main benefits for your child's health and well-being from attending the groups?
8. What do you believe has changed for your child through attending the weekly respite groups?
9. Please tell us one thing we could do to improve the support we provide?
10. Is there any other feedback you would like to give the project?

The main findings from the completed questionnaires were as follows:

- Parents feel the groups and activities give their children respite from caring and a chance to meet other young carers.
- Groups and activities allow their children a chance to 'take their minds off things' and not spend their time 'worrying about us'. It was also mentioned that attendance at the project 'removes some of the stresses' and gives their child 'something to look forward to'.
- Increased confidence is a recurring theme in many of the questionnaires returned. Examples of some responses are

'Confidence, confidence and more confidence' when asked 'What do you believe has changed for your child through attending the project'. Other answers to the same question include

'Confidence and happiness'

'Her confidence etc. has grown and she now goes out and meets her friends more'

'Confidence, breathing space and something to look forward to'.

Areas of improvement mentioned by the parents on the questionnaires were as follows:

- Would it be possible to have the groups out with Perth in places such as Blairgowrie, Pitlochry or Crieff?
- Would we be able to inform the parents of any staff changes at the project?
- Could there be integration from the children moving from the Primary to the Secondary school aged groups. This would make those changing more aware of what to expect at the new group and hopefully make them feel more comfortable about the change.

This feedback has now been taken on board and we will endeavour to try and make these suggestions part of the project going forward.

Further feedback was sourced from the young carers in attendance through a question and answer session that was recorded courtesy of members of the Perth Camera club. The young carers were encouraged to visit a quiet room at the venue where their responses to 4 key questions were recorded. The young carer's responses were then transferred to a DVD and given to the project to review. Clearly we were looking at recurring themes that came to light from the young carers interviewed that may help us structure the project going forward. The 4 key questions we asked were

1. What do you enjoy most about the young carers project?
2. What could the project do to make things easier for you as a young carer?
3. If there was question/comment you could ask any external supports service about how they could further support you as a young carer what would that question be?
4. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us/ask us?

The main findings highlighted by the young carers interviewed were as follows:

For question 1 the young carers mentioned –

- Making new friends was what they enjoy most about attending the project.
- Getting out of the house was the second best thing followed by the activities offered.
- Other things mentioned were having fun, the support received, can help get qualifications like Duke of Edinburgh or ASDAN awards, one to one support, see their

friends, meeting people in the same situation, they get an opportunity to act as children and be themselves.

For question 2 the key things the project could do to make things easier were –

- More group nights.
- More one to one support

However the majority of answers given by the young carers was 'Perfect the way it is'. 😊

For question 3 about 'one question for another support service' the feedback was as follows:

- Not to get hassled about attendance and not getting hassled about getting homework done on time.
- Can the project go in and do more talks at school
- Why do you not have a teacher who specifically supports young carers at the school?
- There's need to be more awareness at schools so unidentified young carers can get support.

Finally when asked if there were any other comments they'd like to make the young carers said –

- Big Thanks to all the staff at the project.
- They trust the staff to talk to.

Clearly some of the feedback given by the young carer's ties in with some of the objectives set by the project in the next 12 months, especially those relating to issues at school. This will give us and added incentive to try and achieve these objectives going forward.

Conclusion

PKAVS Young Carers project continues to grow apace. From supporting 131 young carers in March 2012 this figure has now risen to 181 young carers at the time of this consultation event. In fact in the past 30 months the project has seen a 163% increase in young carers receiving support at the project. On average the project is assessing and then supporting 4 new young carers every month.

Much of the reason for these increased numbers is the partnership working that continues to flourish between the project and with NHS Tayside and Perth & Kinross Education department in particular. It is our intention that these relationships will continue to develop in the years and months ahead so many more young carers can be identified and supported.

As mentioned during my presentation the project is not alone and receives fantastic support from many local and national organisations. Without this support the project would not be

able to sustain its current level of staff or service provision and on behalf of everyone involved at the project **thank you** to everyone involved for your invaluable support.

I hope that for everyone who attended you had a fun and informative evening. We really appreciate the effort you made to come along. The event continues to be one of, if not the most important source of information, for the services we provide.

In these hard economic times the project certainly has some challenges ahead but with the support of the team, volunteers and from the local and national organisations mentioned above I feel we are in a strong position to face these challenges.

If you would like to discuss anything further or find out more about the project please contact me on the details below.

Raymond.Jamieson@pkavs.org.uk or telephone 01738 567076.

Thank you

Raymond Jamieson

PKAVS Young Carers Coordinator

