

SIBLING CARERS PILOT PROGRAMME Welsh Government Grant Report

The Definition of a Sibling Carer

Sibling Carers are those who help to care for a sibling with additional needs, or who are impacted socially/economically by growing up with a sibling, who has additional needs.

The Background

Through our ongoing work with Young Carers in RCT, it became increasingly apparent that there were many children, who although were not Young Carers, were impacted negatively by the additional needs of their sibling. As a result of this identification of need, Sibling Carers received a limited level of support service, via the Carers Support Project (CSP). It is important to note, this support was limited due to a lack of dedicated funding for Sibling Carers, in relation to both staff and resources. It was felt that an opportunity to deliver a pilot programme, exploring the demand and needs of Sibling Carers, would benefit service delivery moving forward.

The Grant

Funding was secured from the Carers Respite Grant during 2021/2022 (October 21), to carry out a pilot model of service delivery for Sibling Carers, that would look at resilience and wellbeing of the Sibling Carer known to CSP.

The Stats

At the time of the pilot, there were 79 young people registered to receive Sibling Carer support.

There have been 39 sibling referrals made in the year 21/22, with 18 of these being made since October when WG funding was awarded. (Last year 20/21, there were 22 siblings referred in total so there has been a definite increase this year).

The Pathway & Specific Programme

Once a young person is assessed by the Young Carers Assessment Worker, and identified as a Sibling Carer, they are offered the opportunity to engage in a 6-week programme, focusing on the social and emotional aspects of being a Sibling Carer. The key themes of the programme are:

- Raising self-esteem,
- Exploring the feelings (positive and negative) associated with being a sibling carer, coping strategies (to support them in their role as a sibling carer)
- Opportunity to spend time with other young people who understand and are experiencing similar things.

Additional Support Provided

In addition to the specific themes of the 6-week programme, Sibling Carers have been offered the following:

ASD Workshops - a large proportion of the sibling carers registered with the service have brothers/sisters with ASD, so this workshop gave them an opportunity to gain

more knowledge of ASD, and to understand why their siblings present certain behaviours, thus empowering them and increasing their understanding of their sibling's additional needs.

ZAP Workshops - Research has shown that young carers (including sibling carers), are more likely to be bullied* *[Carers Trust, Protecting Young Carers from Bullying](#) RCT Carers Support Project made links with the bullying charity Kidscape, who offered a ZAP workshop to Sibling Carers with the idea that this workshop would help Sibling Carers raise self-esteem, identify bullying and bullying roles, increase assertiveness, identify the impact of positive body language and explore cyber bullying.

Parent/child Activities - an important area of need identified as part of our sibling support, is the lack of opportunity for Sibling Carers to spend quality time with a parent/carer. As part of the WG grant, and with additional funds from a Winter of Well-being Grant, Sibling Carers and their parents were given the opportunity to do a joint cooking workshop and attend Zip World Towers.

Respite - as an escape for Sibling Carers, and a chance to have new experiences, shared with like-minded individuals the programme offered a bushcraft session, ice skating at Winter Wonderland, a cookery workshop, boxing, Mindfulness sessions, a Virtual Escape Room, and a Photography session.

Therapeutic Activities - there was a four-week pottery project called 'expression through art', which gave Sibling Carers an opportunity to express feelings and emotions by creating a piece of artwork with clay.

As a contingency during the pandemic and the difficulties of delivering face to face activities, Sibling Carers have also been given the opportunity to have packs delivered to their home. This included craft packs, outdoor/indoor play packs and cooking packs.

'Sibs Grant' - The 'Sibs Grant' was another support element made possible by the Welsh Government grant during the pilot, and has provided sibling carers an opportunity to apply for something up to the value of £50 which benefits one of the following things:

- Health and wellbeing (e.g., fitness equipment/clothing, membership, beauty treatments),
- Education (e.g., books, stationary, membership schemes),
- Family relationships (e.g., family activities),
- Social isolation (e.g., club membership, transport),
- Respite from caring role (e.g., activity vouchers).

(46 Sibling Carers accessed this element of the funding)

Sibs Fest

The culmination of the grant will be seen during the Easter holidays, as RCT Carers Support Project are hosting an event specifically aimed at celebrating Sibling Carers.

Sibling carers often describe themselves as feeling invisible, and that they don't like making a fuss as they feel that those close to them have enough to deal with without them and their problems. 'Sibs Fest' is aimed at putting sibling carers in the spotlight, making them mini-VIPs for the day. A mini festival taking place at Dare Valley Country Park, Sibling Carers and their families can take part in a number of things from circus workshops, live music, sports taster sessions, live fire breathing shows and fairground stalls. but also have access to information and advice from a range of organisations such as Papyrus, Kidscape, Meic, Challenging behaviour support, Resilient families service and much more. Through advertising this event, there has been an increased interest in the Sibling support service, with schools and agencies making enquiries about how to refer to the service for support.

With the remaining funding from the grant, there was a trip organised during the Easter holidays.

The Future

The Welsh Government Grant has been instrumental in allowing us to increase the support we offer Sibling Carers in RCT. Support prior to the grant being awarded was quite limited, and the offer to Sibling Carers had been basic in its provision. This, as mentioned above, was owing to a lack of resources and staffing dedicated specifically to Sibling Carers.

Sibling Carers are often placed in the same category as Young Carers, however, we feel that this often does them a disservice, as their needs are very different. The main concerns, now the grant has come to an end, is that support will return to the limited level offered prior to the grant award.

What this pilot has shown is that with a small increased grant, (a total of £15,000 combining WG and YEPS funding) has enabled additional dedicated staffing hours and our Sibling Carers were offered a broader, more holistic, and targeted support. Not only were we able to offer support that was a better fit for their needs, but we were also able to increase the number of Sibling Carers we worked with.

Owing to the feedback from parents, and the increased working with partner agencies, there has been an increased interest regarding the Sibling Support Service, with referrals increasing since October 2021 (when the grant was awarded). Providing a targeted support Service, ensures these young people are provided with the support needed in order for them to feel listened to, valued and for them to thrive as young people. It would be a fantastic opportunity if we could continue to support Sibling Carers in RCT and continue with the momentum this grant has started.

Feedback/Evaluation

Feedback from parents:

"Thank you so much Axx really enjoyed the experience, and we were blown away by the cooking bundle! Such a positive experience, we are very lucky"

"Thank you he really enjoyed it, he loved the boxing"

“BXXX (sibling carer) really has a problem with talking about Jxxx (sibling with additional needs) behaviour. I think he feels that he is going to get Jxxx in trouble or something. So it was so good for him to hear others talking about their siblings. He kept saying to me ‘that’s just like Jxxx’. I think it really helped him so thank you”.

“We had lots of fun. Thank you again so much.”

“Thank you very much for the opportunity to do the zip wire, we both really enjoyed”

“Thank you so much for this day, it was amazing, we are going to go back and do the roller coaster so our other son can join us, thank you xxx”

Feedback from young people:

“The cooking zoom was lovely, thank you for the opportunity to do it”.

“This is the first time I have ever been to the fair as my brother doesn’t like the noise and lights” (sibling carer aged 15)

“We loved it, such an amazing experience to share thank you so much and getting over the grief of my gran passing away the scream while sliding down a mountain was the perfect release”

Feedback from ‘Sibs Grants’ (and uses)

“I would like it (the grant) to pay for a family activity, giving me a chance to make memories with everyone outside the house. I would like it for cantref farm park as I love animals and so do all my family it will be a great shared enjoyment. It would give me a chance to be a child and not just a sibling carer and to spend time with all my family at one time”

“I would like to go for afternoon tea with my mam. We would like to have the traditional afternoon tea. It would be really lovely to spend time on my own with my mam because she spends a lot of time looking after my sister”

“Items for my bedroom, cushions, photo frames, throw for bed etc. “X’s home has been adapted for her brother and she has moved into a different bedroom. FXXX is asking for items for her bedroom to decorate it and make it her own.

“I would like a pair of football boots from sports direct. I want to play football on the grass with my daddy while my mammy looks after my brother. I play for a local team and I can practise with daddy on the field by our house so we are not too far away in-case mammy needs us”