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Nadhim Zahawi MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Ann Coffey MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Ann,

Thank you for your letter of 15 March, addressed to the former Minister for Children and Families, about young carers in Stockport. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

I was very interested to read about the valuable work of Signpost Young Carers, and the achievements of the nine schools in Stockport for their Young Carers in School Awards. Young carers do an invaluable job in providing essential care for a family member or relative. It is important that they are provided with support to ensure that they are able to enjoy their childhood and are protected from excessive or inappropriate caring responsibilities that could impact on their education, development and opportunities.

We understand that schools play a very important part in identifying pupils who are young carers. We have worked with the Children's Society and the Carers Trust since 2011 to share existing tools and good practice with local authorities, and develop models of assessment and support which specifically address young carers' needs. The Carers Trust also host a wealth of resources to enable local authorities and voluntary sector partners to adopt effective approaches to identify and support young carers.

The government changed the law to improve how young carers and their families are identified and supported. Changes to s17 of The Children Act 1989, makes it clear to local authorities that they must carry out an assessment of a young carer's needs for support on request, or on the appearance of need.

Consistent identification of young carers, however, remains challenging and this is why we invested £250,000 to commission research in partnership with Loughborough University to improve our understanding of the numbers and needs of young carers and their families. This large scale study gathered data on experiences of young carers in England, provides demographic information about young carers and their families, and information about the scale and nature of the care they provide and the issues they face.

