

Carers' Services – How you can support Going Higher in Scotland campaign

As part of the Time to be Heard for Young Adult Carer campaign, Carers Trust Scotland is turning our attention to student carers at university. As you are aware, young adult carers face significant challenges in applying for university, reaching their potential whilst studying and maintaining a good level of health and wellbeing.

Carers Trust research – 'Young adult carers' experiences of college and university' revealed that:

- Half the days young adult carers spent at college or university were affected because of caring. This could be coming in late, leaving early or absence for the whole day
- Young adult carers are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than their peers
- 42% had paid employment alongside time spent in education and caring to support them in their studies.

We do not believe this is acceptable. That is why we created Going Higher in Scotland to give young adult carers an equal chance as their peers when they are at university.

We want all universities to:

Identify – what should be done?

- Student carers should become a prioritised group in Widening Access Strategies
- Ask students if they have unpaid caring responsibilities as part of annual admissions processes at universities
- Universities to reach out to young adult carers and promote their institution as a good place to study for carers.

Support – what should be done?

- The Scottish Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) extended the criteria of the Dependents Grant and Lone Parent Grant, which means some student carers may be entitled to additional grants. But many student carers have told us that this hasn't been promoted well to them. Universities and SAAS should promote this better to carers – both prospective and existing students
- Education staff and support staff at universities should undertake carer awareness training as standard or as part of their continued professional development
- Universities should develop their own student carer support policy
- Offer additional support for student carers who may be struggling to keep up with their studies.

Report – what should be done?

- Universities should report on the outcomes of student carers in their institutions
- The Scottish Government should include student carer data in the information collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to report on outcomes and destinations of students carers
- Share good practice with Carers Trust Scotland, so we can share this with young adult carers across Scotland and the UK.

Creating an offer of support

Using the campaign provides an excellent opportunity for you to contact the universities in your area to offer your expert advice and guidance on the steps they should be taking to support the student and young adult carers in their institution. We are asking you to approach the universities in your area to alert them to the Going Higher for Student Carers in Scotland campaign.

To help with this, we have created a draft letter for you to customise to send to the Head of Widening Access/Participation at your local universities.

Through this engagement there also may be opportunities to gain contracts from the university and attract new young adult carers to your service via outreach and development programmes.

If you know any young adult carers who are currently at university please share the student campaigning resource with them. You can read and download it [here](#).

Template letter/email for the Head of Widening Access/Participation

Dear [Name of the Head of Widening Access/Participation]

Introduce yourself, the Service Name and the services you provide

Information about who carers are

- Below is a sample paragraph. You can use this or customise it.

At this university, there will be students who are caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend with a disability, mental illness and/or addiction problem. They can come from any background and be studying for any course. They possess a great number of skills for example budgeting, time management and good organisation.

Statistics

- This strengthens your argument and shows that this is an urgent issue for everyone. The statistics come from this [report](#):
- Add local statistics wherever possible
- Below is a sample paragraph. You can use it or customise it.

This should make them excellent students. However, the results of a survey of young adult carers released by Carers Trust show that they are struggling to fulfil their potential.

- Half the days young adult carers spent at college or university were affected because of caring. This could be coming in late, leaving early or absence for the whole day
- Young adult carers are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than their peers
- 42% juggle paid employment alongside time spent in education and caring responsibilities.

The solution

- This needs to be kept simple and manageable
- Please keep the boxed section as it is so all universities are aiming for the same thing but customise the rest if you like

However, it doesn't have to be like this. Three simple steps can make all the difference for young adult carers' academic attainment, health and wellbeing.

Carers Trust Scotland is asking all universities to:

- Identify the number of student carers attending their university
- Support all student carers throughout their education to ensure they maintain good mental health, complete their course and achieve the best grades possible
- Report on the progress students are making in their university so that they can deliver appropriate support and showcase student carers' achievements.

Agreement

- Below is a suggested ask but if there is anything you feel you could add please include it

We ask that you include student and young adult carers when you think about how you want to change things for the better at your university. It will make a huge difference to a group that needs a little extra support from you to make a huge difference.

Your offer

- Describe the support that you can offer the university
- This could be anything from attending Freshers' Fairs to working alongside the Widening Access/Participation team to create the best support for young adult carers at the university

The ask

- Think about what you would like to happen next. This could be an excellent opportunity for you to make new links with local universities and show what a positive impact carers' services can have for students' attainment
- See if you can arrange a time to meet with the head of Widening Access/Participation to discuss what your service can offer

Signing off

- See if your Manager or CEO would be happy to sign the letter

What else can I do to support Going Higher in Scotland?

Young adult carers and student carers across Scotland and their supporters are our biggest strength to make Going Higher in Scotland a success. Below is a list of options of what you could do to promote and support Going Higher in Scotland.

- Post our campaign message on your social network communities:
"I'm supporting Going Higher in Scotland to unlock student carer potential #TTBH @CarersTrustScot"
- Use our Time to be Heard for Young Adult Carers hashtag **#TTBH** when sharing your campaign work on social media
- Tell you family and friends about Going Higher in Scotland and ask them to show their support too
- Write letters to your local MSP about the campaign, asking them to support Going Higher in Scotland
- Submit blog posts to Carers Trust Scotland about your campaign efforts
- Publicise these campaign efforts to local media sources
- Keep Carers Trust Scotland updated on what you have been doing to promote and support Going Higher in Scotland. The campaign will be stronger if we can share practice and demonstrate widespread support.

Please also read the full [Supporters Campaign Guide](#) for further background about why this is such an important issue.



If you have any questions or concerns about the Going Higher in Scotland campaign or are looking for ideas on what else you could do to promote the campaign then please get in touch with Carers Trust Scotland and we will help you.

Just call 0141 285 7929 and ask for Paul Traynor (Young Adult Carer Policy and Campaigns Officer) or email: ptraynor@carers.org