

## **West Dunbartonshire Local Engagement Network**

### **Open Forum Discussion: Young Carers**

**16 May 2017 in Y-Sort It offices, Clydebank**

The session began with an introduction and scene setting by Anne MacDougall, Clydebank LENS Chairperson. The young carers present included both child and young adult carers.

The workshop discussion, chaired by Anne MacDougall highlighted the following key points:

- The group had mixed experiences around accessing information and advice on their respective caring roles
- Strong reliance on Y-Sort It workers to get information needed, including internet searches and supporting engagement and liaison with services
- Perceived gap between the definition of a young carer and how young carers perceive themselves
- Pathways through and across services not clear
- Transition points are problematic – primary to high school, children to adult services etc
- Before Y-Sort It there was nothing for young carers to do
- Raising awareness in schools has been positive but still much to do to identify young carers
- Social networks are useful for information and also getting in touch with workers quickly
- Perceived lack of understanding from teachers around impact of caring on school work/submission of homework
- Two main sources of information and support are Y-Sort It workers and Pastoral care teachers at school
- Perception that social work support is not flexible or consistent enough (infrequent connections and changes in staff)
- Relationship building is important to understand the young carers life – barrier to engagement is having to retell the story to someone new every time

- Every young carer is different – the group agreed that it might be useful to have a similar discussion session directly with social work to talk through how they feel services work for young carers
- Issues can arise when the cared for person needs/receives GP or hospital treatment with the young carers feeling they are not taken seriously or informed appropriately

### **Main Feedback**

Generally participants felt that more could be done to help support understanding of their caring role.

In particular, those attending felt that the focus should be on:

- Increasing awareness in schools – both for teachers and staff and also to help reach more young carers
- Make services more accessible to young carers
- Greater number of young carer activity groups and fun things to do
- Build better relationships between young carers and social work service
- Raise awareness of the carer recognition card
- Better transport to get young carers to and from school
- Better use of social media across all services to share information with young carers