

Organisation Name	Reference	2022-05-YC08
Carers Trust Tyne and Wear		

Visit Date	Visited By
20 May 2024	Doreen Foster

Grant Summary

To address the impact of caring on education by providing a dedicated worker to develop partnerships with young carers and within education environments. This will build on existing services being offered, track record and expertise.

Visit Details (People met, premises visited etc.)

Met with three members of staff Carol Watson (Young Carers Support Lead), recently appointed Education Support Worker (started April 2024) and x who has worked for the organisation for over 20 years.

Visited the organisations base 10 miles outside Newcastle. The Old School building is in a rural suburb at the edge of the borough. Activities take place in the building and surrounding green spaces. The organisation supports a diverse population of young carers throughout Gateshead. In discussion they spoke of increasing numbers of young people from south asian and jewish backgrounds noting how cultural perceptions and norms informed access to their services.

Whereas in the past the centre was the meeting point for all its activities, the cost of coach hire (they used to hire coaches picking up from and to The Old School) and distance from the city centre now means that the organisation has a few meeting points including rooms within host organisations closer to/in the city centre.

The centre seems to be a well-used community hub.

This feels like a hugely impactful organisation delivering a service that is providing benefit to young carers, families and schools. The depth of need makes you question why this is not a statutory responsibility as is the case with adult care.

An Education Support Worker was appointed at the start of the project however, they then left to return to teaching in schools. The team continued to deliver the project as set out in the application by absorbing as many of the tasks as they could within the hours available. Most activities were delivered as set out and achieved the targets they set, many overachieving, except for the Homework Club. The Homework Club was put on hold and remains on hold until they can recruit a new volunteer tutor – the previous tutor left because they were returning to their home country. However, the team have been successful in securing small grants which pay for 1:1 tuition for some young people.

The team were very proud of their Expert Panel who have been advising the council on what from their perspectives must be included in the tender documents/scope of services as the local authority prepares to put the provision of care services out to tender.

The recently appointed Education Support Worker is a former teacher who has worked in Alternative School Provision (pupil referral units) and schools for children with special needs. Her comment was that one of the great things about working for this organisation and the young people is that the young people want to come to CTTW and to learn unlike those who are sent to the PRU.

Information about the Organisation

Carers Trust Tyne & Wear (CTTW) is a Registered Charity that was established in 1990 and for many years operated as Gateshead Crossroads. It is a network partner of Carers Trust. CTTW employs 48 staff and has 11 current volunteers. A board of Trustees support the CEO and they meet six times a year. Trustees have a wide range of skills that include Local Authority commissioning, legal services, HR, business development and fundraising. A high percentage of Trustees have personal experience of being carers and one Trustee was a young carer who has been supported by CTTW. There are two sub-committees; a finance committee that meets every 6 months and an HR Sub Committee that meets as necessary.

Issues and Comments

Legacy

The local authority is putting the contract for delivery of carers services out to tender. It is unclear whether the tender will be limited to young carers or whether they will wrap young carers and adults into the same package. This is an issue for two reasons: the care needs of young people are substantially different to the care needs of adults. This is an oversimplification but coffee mornings and knitting circles are not especially appealing to young people, yet apparently this is what is provided when these services are merged.

Secondly, competition from the larger national organisations is increased when the care packages are generalised. They are also able to absorb costs that are not covered by the tender.

If CCTW is successful all core staff will be Tupe'd across however the Education Support Worker will not be included so will be put at risk.

Keeping staff

The organisation is not overly concerned about the risk to funding as in common with most voluntary sector/charity organisations they are well versed in cutting their cloth. In the period between the departure of the first Education Support Worker and the appointment of the second, the team rallied and delivered almost all of the project only putting one activity on hold and over delivering on a number of the outcomes.

I asked why the previous postholder had left and why they thought it was difficult to recruit. They all agreed that there are many good people out there but firstly, the salary was too low and did not match going rates – Carol said that she would have increased the salary had she submitted the application. However, as we all know increasing one salary would require regrading across the organisation. And, finding good people who have good chemistry with the young people can be difficult.

The question is how long will the new Education Support Worker remain in post despite her enthusiasm for the young people.

Other Feedback