

Meeting	Trustee Board meeting
Date	20 June 2024
Title	Social Finance Young Carers strategic grant
Agenda item	9
Paper by	Victoria Southwell

1.0 Purpose of paper

To provide Trustees with information to enable them to approve the proposed grant application from Social Finance (Appendix 1). A more detailed application can be found on Salesforce.

2.0 Background information

Trustees will recall that in March 2023 we launched a new strategy that solely focused on supporting young people either already in contact with the criminal justice system or highly vulnerable to being caught up in it. This meant we would no longer fund work with young carers and as part of the strategy it was agreed that we would make a series of strategic grants that would support our exit from the sector.

To date we have funded Place2Be to co-create a resource, aimed at teachers, highlighting the needs of young carers as part of their online learning platform. We have also supported Kinship to deliver a project that aims to build on the recommendations of the Care Review that specifically linked to kinship carers.

The issue of accurate statistics linked to the actual number of young carers in the UK has been problematic for many years. The 2021 census said that there were approximately 120,000 young carers aged between 5 and 17 years in England and Wales. However, research shows that as many in one in five children and young people are young carers and Action for Children estimate that there are around 800,000 young carers aged 11-16 in England alone. When numbers for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are factored in this number rises to around 1 million. Yet they remain hidden with 79% of schools reporting no young carers in their school as part of a recently imposed census.

Much of the young carer research still cited is from the early 2000's, and sometimes even earlier, so the young carers sector, as well as associated sectors and agencies, are crying out for more up to date information and a coordinated focus around the issue.

Social Finance have identified young carers as a key group of concern as part of their Early Inclusion Collective work that focuses on Invisible Children. This wider project, which is a significant programme for Social Finance, places young carers front and centre of a piece of work that is seeking to achieve system level outcomes that go beyond the individual young person level. The whole programme of work is driven by the principle of invisible children being seen and kept safe.

3.0 Suggested way forward

The paper in Appendix 1 sets out a proposal of support from Social Finance to help them move forwards with their work highlighting the needs of young carers and shining a spotlight on some of the gaps that currently exist in their support and their identification and recognition. The breadth of the work focused on young carers goes beyond the specific elements that we are being asked to support, but this other work adds additional value to our contribution. The wider project also recognises the work we have done in this area over the past years and seeks to capitalise on this knowledge and inform the ongoing direction of the project.

This proposal is a good fit for a legacy strategic grant that impacts the young carers sector. Social Finance has seen success historically across a number of different sectors with work that they have developed and convened and the ambitions for both the wider Early Inclusion Collective and the young carer elements are both pioneering and bold. They have already managed to get some of the leading charities in the sector, who have resisted working together in the past, to discuss collaborating on some areas of work in an attempt to facilitate the adoption of a shared view and strategy for change. And their plan for data collection and use not only fills a key gap but will underpin all of the work that follows and start to help build a body of evidence that could bring about significant long-term change.

Rarely do we get a chance to support a piece of work led by an organisation as strategic and experienced as Social Finance that aligns with our own strategic aims so closely. We have been discussing this proposal with Social Finance for a number of months and over that time have seen the scale of the Early Inclusion Collective grow as it gains pace and traction. The young carer work has benefited from this and has become much more finessed and focused. And by sitting within this wider piece of work and being linked to the Invisible Children theme, the profile of young carers as an issue definitely benefits and is given significant prominence.

This feels like a timely piece of work to support and tackling these issues for young carers at this system change level is long overdue. It will be the final piece of the jigsaw of our strategic grants for young carers and cement our support for this disadvantaged and invisible group.

4.0 Recommendation

A grant of £50,000 over one year is awarded as per the request in the proposal in Appendix 1.