

**To: Petitions Board**

**On: 30 August 2017**

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**Report by: Director of Finance and Resources**

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**Heading: Petition: Carers' Transport Costs**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1 A petition comprising 1491 online signatures was received from Ms Amanda Macdonald in the undernoted terms and was considered at the meeting of the Board held on 7 June 2017:

“Transport costs are a massive issue that affects so many carers of all ages, from as young as they start school till older adulthood. Many carers face huge financial difficulty and as a result are unable to have much of a social life of their own as they cannot afford to get around by public transport. The simple task of getting to shops, collecting medication from the chemist or doing many other things that come as part of the daily routine that carers face on a day to day basis.

Alongside a caring role it's important for carers to be able to attend support groups and meet with friends in order to have a healthy social life which many cannot do due to lack of money for buses or even trains depending on where you stay. As a result of being able to get out and about it allows the carer to be less stressed and lowers the chances of developing a mental health issue due to the many pressures of the caring role.

The cost of travel may not seem a lot of money to many however £4.00 per adult a day adds up to £28.00 a week (varies dependent on where you are for bus fares) which is a huge amount of the income a carer receives. Having concessionary travel or even a discount on travel for carers would be huge

benefit to so many as many people say companion card is enough. However, people do not realise the cared for has to be present to allow card to be used, a carer is 9 out of 10 times on their own while traveling so as you see companion card is useless at this point.

45% of young adult carers (18-25) have reported that they have mental health problems due to their caring role and the struggles they face because of it.

68.8% of older carers say that being a carer has an adverse effect on their mental health. This could be lessened by such a small change like concessionary or discounted travel. For young people aged 16-19 or in full time education who have a young Scot card you are entitled to a discounted rate of travel however, this discount is only valid on single journeys. In most cases this is no use to a carer as they are making return journeys especially if they are in further education and have a long distance to travel every day or do not live with the person that you provide care for. Some carers have to travel many miles just to visit the person they care for if they are in specialised hospitals or care homes.

Being a carer is not all bad it has many positive aspects such as learning crucial skills such as observation skills, listening skills, budgeting skills, organisation skills, being trustworthy and so many more. These skills would be of so much use to the employment field but unfortunately not many employers see this. Carers do this on a daily basis because they care even when the cared for could end up in a hospital, care home or in a looked after residential setting. When this happens the carer will do whatever they can to get to the cared for even if it results in at times not eating or walking miles due to not having money for transport.

This is why I feel so strongly about getting support for carers when it comes to transport. I hope that carers and decision makers will get behind this campaign and help to change so many people's lives for the better.

Is free concessionary transport for carers really too much to ask for when carers dedicate their lives to provide care to others?"

- 1.2 The report to the meeting on 7 June advised that the Council took a decision on 1 May 2014 on a similar matter, following a notice of motion, that

"Council supports the Scottish Youth Parliament's campaign for young carers.

The cost of travel to school, work and to attend social activities can be prohibitive for young carers and to alleviate that Council calls on the Scottish Government to introduce and fund a scheme of concessionary travel for young people who have caring responsibilities.

Council also calls for the Student Awards Agency for Scotland to recognise young carers as a vulnerable group and be given access to additional bursaries to allow them to fully take up educational opportunities.

Council finally instructs officers within the Education department to review its policy on the payments of the Educational Maintenance Allowance in order to provide clear and flexible guidance for schools when dealing with pupils whose attendance may be affected by caring responsibilities. This review to be reported back to a future meeting of the Education Policy Board”.

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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Board resumes consideration of the petition.
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## **3 Background**

- 3.1 The report to the meeting held on 7 June also intimated that the Head of Early Years and Inclusion advised that there were new responsibilities for the Council and health in addressing the needs of carers.
- 3.2 Similarly, the Head of Adult Services advised that Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership would jointly produce a Local Carer Strategy to coincide with the implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Carers and carer organisations would be involved in planning, shaping and reviewing services for carers through the Partnership’s Strategic Planning Group.
- 3.3 The report also advised that the Regional Child Care Commissioning Co-ordinator indicated that she was leading on the development of a Young Carers Strategy and anticipated that the draft would be ready for consultation in October 2017. She also advised that engagement activities with young carers had commenced via the Carers' Centre and the issue of transport had already arisen with young people saying that the cost of travel impeded their ability to have respite/breaks from caring. In addition the Regional Child Care Commissioning Co-ordinator advised that she would ensure that the issue of transport was explicitly addressed in the next sessions with young carers.
- 3.4 At the meeting of this Board held on 7 June 2017, having heard from Ms Macdonald and Ms Lochhead, Members sought clarification on the numbers of young carers in Renfrewshire and agreed that consideration of the Petition be continued. The Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice advises that the precise number is not known, although she estimates it to be between 100 and 150. She has information that 120 young people between the ages of 9

and 16 have identified themselves as young carers and there are 50 involved with the Carers Centre. The Head of Child Care and Criminal Justice and the Integrated Children's Services Officer have indicated that they are willing to meet with the petitioner. The Integrated Children's services Officer is a member of the working group of the Carers Steering Group looking at carers issues for young people.

- 3.5 The principal petitioner, together with one supporter has been invited to attend the meeting.
- 3.6 The role of the Board is to consider the petition, hear and ask questions of the petitioner and take the appropriate action in respect of the petition which will be one of the following: (a) no action is taken, in which case the reasons will be specified and intimated to the petitioner; (b) that the petition be referred to the relevant director/and or policy board for further investigation with or without any specific recommendation; or (c) refer the petition to another organisation if the petition relates to that organisation.

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## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – none
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community Planning** – none
4. **Legal** – none
5. **Property/Assets** – none
6. **Information Technology** - none
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website
8. **Health & Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – none

- 10. **Risk** – none
- 11. **Privacy Impact** – none
- 12. **Cosla Policy Position** - none

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#### **List of Background Papers – petition form**

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