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Young carers

Thank you for your letter of 15 May about the Care Bill and the prevention of inappropriate caring by children. I am pleased that the National Young Carers Coalition welcomes the steps that Government is taking to improve the lives of young carers by legislative and non-legislative means. Edward Timpson and I met last week and were in total agreement that the joint aim for DfE and DH is to protect children from excessive and inappropriate caring roles.

As you know the Care Bill already requires the Secretary of State to make regulations about how adult assessments should be carried out to ensure consistent practice in key elements of assessment. The Bill itself is not the place to go into detail of how assessments should be conducted and it has always been our intention to set this out in regulations and statutory guidance, including more detail on when and how a whole family approach to assessment is likely to be appropriate and beneficial. While such an approach will undoubtedly benefit families in which children are caring for an adult, I am keen that it is not restricted only to families with children but encompasses other significant family relationships as well.

You will be aware that during the Report Stage on the Children and Families Bill on 10 June, Edward Timpson announced that he has asked his officials to see what more DfE can do to remove any barriers that may be preventing young people from getting the support they need. He is keen that his officials work with DH officials and other bodies over the summer in order to inform debate on the Children and Families Bill in the House of Lords in the autumn. I would welcome this too.

We have identified the following principles for this joint work over the summer, building on the excellent guidance and other resources that the voluntary sector and other key stakeholders have produced in recent years:

- The starting point should be assessing the needs of the adult or child who needs care and support and then see what remaining needs for support a young carer in the family has.
- The presence of a young carer within a family should always constitute an appearance of need and should trigger either an assessment or the offer of an assessment to the person needing care
- A whole family assessment process is key when assessing an adult needing care where there are children in the family providing care to the adult or undertaking wider family responsibilities. The adult's assessment and eligibility for support should take into account their parenting responsibilities and the functioning of the family.
- Assessments should ascertain why a child is caring and what needs to change in order to prevent the child from undertaking excessive or inappropriate caring responsibilities which could impact adversely on their education, social activities, emotional development or health (so the views of both adults and children within the family should be sought separately where appropriate).
- Consideration must be given to whether a young carer is a 'child in need' under the Children Act 1989, and whether their welfare or development may suffer if support is not provided to them and/or their family.

Both Edward Timpson and I would like to meet with you and representatives of the National Young Carers Coalition during the next few weeks so that we can set the scene for the joint working we plan to do over the summer. My office will be in touch shortly to arrange a convenient time.

Yours sincerely,



NORMAN LAMB