

Young Carers in Schools

Building, sharing and recognising young carers support in schools



“ ‘I care for my 14-year-old sister who has cerebral palsy and learning difficulties. Sometimes she can wake up several times in the night, which means I lose out on sleep, and that makes me very tired for school. I’ve been a young carer since I was eight.’ ”

Ruth, 16



How many young carers are there in school?

Young carers are children and young people under 18 who provide or intend to provide care for another person. They often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult.

It is likely that there will be many young carers at every school.

There are over 177,000 children in England and Wales taking on huge caring responsibilities at home, often for several hours each day, before and after school (UK Census, 2011).

In reality, this shocking figure is likely to be just the tip of the iceberg. Further research (BBC, 2010) suggests there could be 700,000 young carers in the UK. That means about one in 12 secondary aged pupils have caring responsibilities. Often, these children are caring for relatives without their teachers' knowledge and are slipping through the net.

This can have a significant impact on their attendance, attainment and wellbeing at school. Young carers have told us how it affects them, and research highlights the extent of the problem.

How will supporting young carers raise attendance, attainment and wellbeing?

Young carers experience particular challenges and demands that impact on their capacity to enjoy and achieve at school. Research shows that:

- 27% of young carers (aged 11–15) miss school or experience educational difficulties (40% where children care for a relative with drug or alcohol problems) (Dearden, C, Becker, S, 2004).
- A quarter of young carers said they were bullied at school because of their caring role (Carers Trust, 2013).
- They are more likely than the national average not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) between 16 and 19 (The Children's Society, 2013).
- Although young carers need extra support, they are no more likely to find it from statutory agencies than other children (The Children's Society, 2013).
- They have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the difference between nine Bs and nine Cs (The Children's Society, 2013).

“Young Carers in Schools is an exciting England-wide initiative that equips schools to support young carers and awards effective practice.”

Young Carers
School Lead

What can your school do?

By taking part in the Young Carers in Schools programme, schools will be able to show that they are meeting the needs of a particularly vulnerable group of pupils (specifically mentioned in Ofsted's School Inspection Handbook).

Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society Young Carers in Focus partners, we are working to improve the identification and support of young carers in schools across England. This initiative is funded by The Queen's Trust and Big Lottery Fund.

“As a young carer you often have many worries which can limit concentration.”

Young Carer

for you to identify and support young carers, this resource helps you step-by-step and includes templates, tools and guidance.

A termly newsletter – highlighting relevant policy developments, spotlighting good practice and giving updates on the Young Carers in Schools programme's successes.

“Schools are perfectly placed to offer the support these children and young people need. ...Young Carers in Schools will act as an invaluable resource for schools in providing the right assistance to pupils as and when they need it.”

Children and Families Minister, Edward Timpson, and Schools Minister, David Laws

How does the programme equip schools to meet young carers' needs?

Through the programme, schools will have access to:

Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Step-by-step Guide for Leaders, Teachers and Non-teaching Staff – making it as easy as possible

Expert regional networks – bringing together schools, young carer services, and health and social care professionals for peer-to-peer learning and training. Opportunities will be available online and face-to-face to make sure everyone can get the best from these networks.

Young Carers in Schools Award – enabling your school to gain recognition from several leading charities for effective practice.

What does Young Carers in Schools aim to achieve?

- Young carers attend and enjoy school and reach their full potential.
- Schools are enabled to identify and support young carers.
- Young carers have improved wellbeing and are better prepared for independent lives.
- Parents and carers are supported to enable their children to attend school.
- A school culture is created which is fully accessible, and understands and respects disability and caring.
- Young carers have the same life opportunities as other children.

How was Young Carers in Schools developed?

Following extensive consultation, expert young carer contributions and an initial pilot of the Award, the programme was rolled out in 16 Early Implementation Sites across England in autumn 2014.

Each site led work in at least five schools or academies, including one trailblazer school committed to gathering and showcasing vital evidence to demonstrate the programme's impact on outcomes for young carers.

More about the partners

Carers Trust is funded by The Queen's Trust to achieve greater and more consistent identification and support for young carers in schools across England. It also provides an online service where young carers can chat, share their experiences and access information and advice through <https://babble.carers.org/>.

Young Carers in Focus is funded by Big Lottery Fund and led by The Children's Society in partnership with Rethink Mental Illness, YMCA Fairthorne Group, Digital Me and The Fatherhood Institute. It also hosts a safe national social network for young carers via www.makewaves.es/ycif.

How to get involved

Find out more and get involved by visiting <https://youngcarersinschools.wordpress.com/>.

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