

National schools programme leads way in improved attainment for young carers

To mark the first anniversary of the Young Carers in School programme (YCiS), 35 participating schools have provided key data showing dramatic impacts on attendance, achievement and confidence of pupils who care for a loved one following their adoption of the programme.

Launched in April 2015 by Carers Trust and The Children's Society, YCiS aims to enable schools to identify and support young carers more effectively and the survey results show significant improvements in the key areas of identification, punctuality, wellbeing and achievement.

Almost 500 primary- and secondary school-aged young carers who were previously unknown to school staff were discovered in just 35 of the schools taking part in the Young Carers in Schools programme – an average of 15 per school. If these numbers were reflected nationally, there could be thousands, or hundreds of thousands, of young carers hidden within the school system.

More than three quarters of schools surveyed as part of the Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) programme reported a reduction in lateness along with improved attendance. 91% of schools said that the support they now provide has had a positive impact on young carers' achievements at the school. Student well-being also improved for young carers in 95% of schools that had participated in the programme.

A young carer is anyone under 18 who is responsible for emotional, practical or physical care for a parent, sibling or other family member who has a physical disability, chronic illness, mental health issue or substance misuse problems.

The findings build on previous research carried out by Carers Trust and The Children's Society which shows that, on average, young carers miss or cut short 48 school days a year. They often have lower levels of self-confidence, mental wellbeing and significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level.

The 2011 Census statistics revealed that there are just over 166,000 young carers in England, but separate research reveals that this is just the tip of the iceberg. The true figure could be closer to 700,000 young carers in England, equivalent to one in 12 school children many of whom are unrecognised and unsupported.

Helen Leadbitter, programme manager for young carers at The Children's Society, pointed to the large number of young carers identified as evidence of the need for more schools to use the programme's free tools and support and to get recognition for their provision through the national Young Carers in Schools award.

She said: "The Young Carers in Schools programme is currently helping almost a thousand schools to identify and support young carers, with 65 schools gaining a national award to date. The fact that so many additional young carers have been identified in the process, and supported to make the most of their time in school, really shows the value of the programme.

There are a range of actions that our tools help schools focus on, from putting up information about young carers on the noticeboard, to holding an assembly on the issue, to working with other local organisations to build expertise. We are supporting schools to identify these children and make sure they get the most from their time at school.”

Gail Scott-Spicer, Chief Executive of Carers Trust said:

"A young carer's life can be very stressful as they are constantly juggling school work with caring for a parent or sibling. When exam time comes around the pressure can be unbearable.

"We are proud to have joined forces with so many schools across the country who now recognise the importance of caring for carers within their communities. Young carers being understood by those in positions of authority within schools is priceless, as it allows them to feel accepted and to learn and develop at a pace that is manageable for them.

"Progress has been remarkable one year on from the launch of our Young Carers in Schools initiative but there is still a long way to go to ensure there are no longer 'hidden' carers within schools, struggling with education or suffering in isolation, because they don't know where to find support."

General secretary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) Dr Mary Bousted said:

"No one can fail to be moved by the situation that our young carers find themselves in. These young people are some of the most vulnerable in our society and are carrying a tremendous burden of care. This research highlights the importance of identifying young carers, recognising their complex needs and supporting them to achieve their potential.

"ATL supports and promotes the vital work done by the Young Carers in Schools programme as a partner on our Safer Schools Network (www.saferchools.org.uk) and works with education staff to help young carers in our schools."

Ian Irwin, Head Teacher at Stockport High School, said:

"The Young Carers in Schools programme has enabled us at Stockport School to ensure that the right support is in place for young carers. We are now more aware and more able to address their needs.

"Since beginning the programme we have seen many of our young carers adopt an improved attitude to learning and attendance.

"We are immensely proud to be able to say that caring for carers is becoming an embedded practice in our school."

Media enquiries

For more information, high-res images or interviews, please call Patricia Curmi at The Children's Society on 020 7841 4422 or email media@childrenssociety.org.uk. For out-of-hours enquiries please call 07810 796 508.

Notes to editors

A young carer is anyone under 18 who is responsible for emotional, practical or physical care for a parent, sibling or other family member who has a physical disability, chronic illness, mental health issue or substance misuse problems.

Launched in April 2015 by the Carers Trust and The Children's Society – and funded by The Queen's Trust and the Big Lottery Fund, Young Carers in Schools programme offers primary and secondary schools across England free tools, webinars and professional development, and recognition through the Young Carers in Schools Award. **youngcarersinschools.com**

- **Carers Trust** is the UK's largest charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

We do this with our Network Partners - a unique network of 124 independent carers' centres, 73 Crossroads Care schemes and 107 young carers services. Together we work as one organisation united by a shared vision for carers - to make sure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK.

There are seven million carers in the UK. Please visit our website www.carers.org for further information about your nearest service.

- **The Children's Society** is a national charity that runs local services, helping children and young people when they are at their most vulnerable, and have nowhere left to turn. We also campaign for changes to laws affecting children and young people, to stop the mistakes of the past being repeated in the future. Our supporters around the country fund our services and join our campaigns to show children and young people they are on their side.
- **The Queen's Trust** - Formed on the occasion of The Queen's Silver Jubilee, The Queen's Trust supports disadvantaged young people, with a focus on the United Kingdom. It funds a small group of charities that help young people overcome major obstacles to long-term success and has a particular interest in education, personal development, volunteering and supporting vulnerable families.
- The **Big Lottery Fund** supports the aspirations of people who want to make life better for their communities across the UK. The Fund is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised by the National Lottery and invests over £650 million a year in projects big and small in health, education, environment and charitable purposes. Since June 2004 the Big Lottery Fund has awarded over £8 billion to projects that change the lives of millions of people. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/