Introduction to Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Step-by-step Guide for Leaders, Teachers and Non-teaching Staff

This resource has been designed with teachers and school staff to help make the identification and support of young carers in schools as easy as possible. It is for use in secondary and primary schools in England but could be easily adapted for use in the rest of the UK.

Who are young carers?

A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person.

As many as one in 12 pupils in the UK could be a young carer.

Often, these children are caring for relatives without their teachers’ knowledge, slipping through the net, undetected by support services. The caring role they carry out means they have unique experiences and demands that impact on their capacity to enjoy and achieve at school.

What are the potential impacts of caring on pupil attainment, achievement and wellbeing?

Young carers are a vulnerable and disadvantaged group specifically mentioned in Ofsted’s School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted, 2014).

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).

- They have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the difference between nine Bs and nine Cs (The Children’s Society, 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).

- A quarter of young carers said they were bullied at school because of their caring role (Carers Trust, 2013).
Identifying early means an improvement in achievement, attainment and wellbeing if the right support is offered.

Young Carers School Operational Lead

What does Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Step-by-step Guide for Leaders, Teachers and Non-teaching Staff offer your school?

Many schools are delivering exceptional practice, making a real and positive difference to the young carers they support. Other schools have told us they want to achieve these excellent outcomes, but don’t know where to begin. This Step-by-step Guide sets out ten key steps to make identifying and supporting young carers as easy as possible:

**Step 1:** Gaining an understanding about young carers.

**Step 2:** Securing commitment of school leaders.

**Step 3:** Introducing a Young Carers School Operational Lead.

**Step 4:** Reviewing your school’s provision for young carers.

**Step 5:** Acknowledging young carers in principal school documents.

**Step 6:** Setting up systems to identify, assess and support young carers.

**Step 7:** Raising awareness of school staff about young carers.

**Step 8:** Raising awareness of pupils and families about young carers.

**Step 9:** Identifying, assessing and supporting young carers and their families.

**Step 10:** Sharing good practice with others.
Like other aspects of school life, the development of effective support for young carers is reliant on regular reviews of current provision and the identification of areas for continual improvement. The steps are therefore set out as a cyclical process, which schools should engage with throughout each school year.

Making it as easy as possible for schools to support young carers

The Step-by-step Guide has been written in association with teachers and school staff who understand the pressures that schools face to deliver the very wide range of demands placed upon them. As a result it is designed to be as flexible and helpful as possible.

Each step is accompanied by:

- Templates and exemplars.
- Materials to raise staff awareness.
- Teaching resources.
- Pupil noticeboard material.
- How to guides to running effective support.

All the tools are provided on the CD accompanying the Step-by-step Guide. This means that schools can use and adapt them to suit their school structure and local circumstances. They are also available online at https://professionals.carers.org.

Not all schools will need to use all the tools included here. Some may find it more helpful to choose those that will help enhance the support they already offer to young carers and their families while others will want to simply start and build their activities over a number of years.
About Carers Trust

Carers Trust is the UK’s largest charity providing services to unpaid carers, young carers and young adult carers. We work to make sure that carers of all ages are not overlooked or deprived of services they need, and this is underpinned in our vision – a world where the role and contribution of unpaid carers is recognised, and where they have access to the quality support services they need to live their own lives.

We support over 465,000 carers across the UK, including over 30,000 young carers. Our services are available in local communities via quality assured Network Partners and online via our new award winning service Babble (www.babble.carers.org). Designed by young carers for young carers, Babble is a safe space where young carers can come together and share their experiences, receive specific support and take part in online events. Schools can refer young carers to Babble or find your local service on www.carers.org by entering your postcode onto the mapping service on the home page. In addition to providing much needed practical and emotional advice, information and support we work with young carers to give them time out from their caring role and a chance to be a child again.

The evidence that we gain from service provision enables us to drive policy change, based on direct knowledge of young carers’ needs at UK-wide, nationwide and local level. Our campaigning and advocacy work enables us to raise the issues that young carers face wherever it makes the most impact and will change their lives for the better. We regularly work in partnership with other organisations for the benefit of young carers including professional bodies, national governments and charities such as Barnardo’s and The Children’s Society. With the changes in legislation there has never been a better time for Carers Trust’s young carers programme. We know that there are some 700,000 young carers across the UK, that’s two in every classroom, so our most important work is in working alongside organisations who work with children and young people to help them identify young carers and signpost them to support.
About The Children’s Society

The Children’s Society is a leading children’s charity committed to making childhood better for all children in England. Our national network of centres and programmes deliver specialist services for children who face disadvantage in their daily lives. Our schools work, children’s centres and mentoring programmes help children develop the skills and confidence they need to make the most of their childhood and play a full part in their local communities. Our research and campaigning aims to influence the thinking of everyone – including politicians and decision makers, creating real change and making childhood better for all children.

The Children’s Society Include Programme gives a voice to children and young people who care for parents or siblings who suffer from chronic illness or disability. We campaign for change and promote best practice with central and local government and work in partnership with social workers, teachers and health care professionals to deliver solutions that consider the needs of the whole family.

The Young Carers in Schools programme

The Young Carers in Schools programme is an exciting England-wide initiative that aims to make it as easy as possible for schools to support young carers and awards good practice.

Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children’s Society Young Carers in Focus partners, we are working with schools across England to share good practice and develop relevant, accessible tools and training. This initiative is funded by The Queen’s Trust and Big Lottery Fund.

The Step-by-step Guide builds on and develops principles and tools from a previous resource (Phelps, D, Leadbitter, H, Manzi, D, 2010). Some of the tools linked to the guide have been taken and/or adapted from this resource.

By taking part in the Young Carers in Schools programme, schools will have access to:

- **This Step-by-step Guide**: making it as easy as possible for you to identify and support young carers.

- **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.

This programme is currently funded until April 2017.

Get involved now by visiting [www.professionals.carers.org](http://www.professionals.carers.org) or [www.youngcarersinschools.wordpress.com](http://www.youngcarersinschools.wordpress.com).
Don’t forget to look out for this symbol throughout the Step-by-step Guide to find out how you can use the tools provided to meet the criteria in the Young Carers in Schools Award.

About Young Carers in Focus partners

The Young Carers in Focus (YcIF) is a partnership programme 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 works with 200 young carers across England, as Champions, to provide them with skills, knowledge and confidence to support them during transition into adulthood and supports them to advocate for change locally and nationally for young carers and their families. It also hosts a safe National social network for young carers via www.makewav.es/YCIF.
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References
• Carers Trust (2013), Supporting Young Carers in School: An Introduction for Primary and Secondary School Staff (Carers Trust).
• Ofsted (2014), School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted).
• Phelps, D, Leadbitter H, Manzi D (2010), Supporting Young Carers: A Resource for Schools (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and The Children’s Society).
• The Children’s Society (2013), Hidden from View (The Children’s Society).
Young Carers in Focus is a Big Lottery Fund partnership programme run by The Children’s Society in conjunction with Rethink Mental Illness, Digital Me, YMCA Fairthorne Group and The Fatherhood Institute.