



# Protecting Young Carers from Bullying

A Guide for Schools,  
Community Groups and  
Policy Makers



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The Bullying Prevention Project (Young Carers) is one of Carers Trust's Innovation Generation projects. It was managed by Daniel Phelps. This guide is accompanied by the film 'Protecting Young Carers from Bullying' and a training PowerPoint presentation.

The Carers Trust Innovation Generation Projects are collaborative projects between Carers Trust and local services that aim to develop new and effective practice in supporting young carers and their families. Learning from local projects is subsequently disseminated to the wider young carers sector and relevant stakeholders to encourage the growth of good practice.

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# Introduction

**This guide is aimed at all professionals who work with young people and are therefore likely to come across young carers. This includes those working in a dedicated young carers service, a school, a community group, or in a health or social care setting. It is also of relevance to anyone with policy making responsibilities that affect transport and sport or leisure opportunities for young people.**

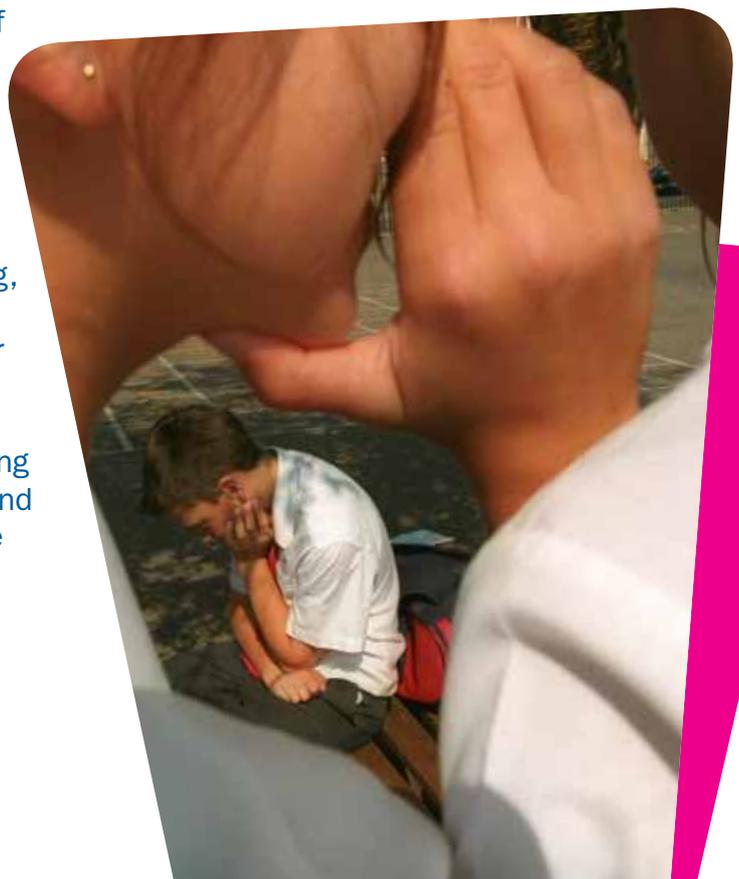
The aim of the guide, along with the accompanying film and training presentation, is to raise the awareness and understanding of the relationship between being a young carer and bullying, in order that proactive steps can be taken to help prevent young carers from being bullied.

Based on consultation with young carers themselves and wider research, this guide sets out how having caring responsibilities for a family member may increase the susceptibility of a young person to being bullied. It suggests why young carers may be more likely to be and remain victims of bullying and offers key recommendations and actions that can be taken.

Due to their caring responsibilities and family situations, many young carers are already vulnerable and will experience negative impacts to their health, wellbeing, education, social lives and life chances. Having to deal with bullying on top of their already challenging lives, makes young carers doubly disadvantaged and may compound existing negative impacts. Young carers may retract further into lifestyles and behaviours – such as spending more time online – that may already have developed as a result of their caring responsibilities, having to stay at home and the isolation

this can create. The guide also highlights barriers to resolving bullying issues that are specific to and linked to being a young carer.

Therefore, taking together what is already well documented about the impacts of bullying on young people and the well documented evidence of the impacts of caring responsibilities on young carers, it is vital that proactive measures are taken to protect young carers from being bullied and being doubly disadvantaged.



### **Accessible transport and sport and leisure opportunities**

This guide highlights how the difficulties many young carers experience with socialising and isolation can increase the likelihood of them being bullied.

It is important that those in position to shape policy and commission services recognise that access to affordable transport and leisure opportunities is vital. This enables young carers to stay connected to their peers and is key to their health and wellbeing.

Services working with young carers can highlight these issues in conversations with local commissioners.

## **Methodology**

### **Consultation with young carers, parents and professionals**

Devon Carers ran focus groups with young carers at club nights and at two whole day events with young carers and young adult carers. The views of other young carers and their parents were also sought through a paper questionnaire and telephone interviews. They were asked about their personal and caring circumstances, their experiences of bullying in different settings, how the bullying was dealt with and what they thought could be done to prevent bullying of young carers. Conversations also took place with a range of professionals to steer the project.

### **Other research**

Additional research literature relating to young carers and bullying was sourced and has been used throughout this guide.

## **Evaluation**

A short evaluation document details the consultation method and initial feedback from professionals who have received training based on the resources. This is available at <https://professionals.carers.org/bullying>.

### **Other tools to use with this guide**

A PowerPoint presentation and a short film have also been produced to accompany this guide. The film can be accessed on the Carers Trust YouTube channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/CarersTrust>.

## **About Carers Trust**

Carers Trust is a major 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 a UK wide network of quality assured independent partners, through our unique online services and through the provision of grants to help carers get the extra help they need to live their own lives. With these locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

Our vision is of a world where the role and contribution of **unpaid carers** is recognised and they have access to the trusted quality support and services they need to live their own lives.

# Part 1

## Young carers and bullying

This section:

- Sets out what is already known from research about young carers and bullying.
- Includes the views of young carers, young adult carers and parents who were involved in this project about:
  - the specific reasons why young carers believe they were bullied
  - how the bullying may relate to them being a young carer
  - why young carers may be at greater risk of being bullied.

### Who are young carers?

A young carer is someone under 18 who helps look after someone in their family, or a friend, who is ill, disabled or misuses drugs or alcohol.

Young adult carers are young people aged 16–25 who care, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction.

The tasks and level of caring undertaken by young carers can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability of the person they care for, the level and frequency of need for care and the structure of the family as a whole.

A young carer may undertake some or all of the following:

- **Emotional support:** listening, calming, being present.
- **Practical tasks:** cooking, housework, shopping.
- **Physical care:** lifting, helping up the stairs, physiotherapy.
- **Personal care:** dressing, washing, toileting needs.
- **Household management:** paying bills, managing finances, collecting benefits.
- **Looking after siblings:** putting to bed, walking to school, parenting.



**Interpretation:** for hearing/speech impairment or English as an additional language.

**Administering medication:** handling insulin needles, preparing tablets daily and reminding to take medication.

The impact of caring on young people:

**Physical health:** can be affected by caring through the night, repeatedly lifting a heavy adult, poor diet and lack of sleep and self-caring.

**Emotional wellbeing:** stress, tiredness and mental ill-health are common for young carers. In the 2016 GP Patient Survey, 50% more young adult carers reported anxiety and depression compared with their peers without caring roles (NHS England and Ipsos MORI, 2016).

**Isolation:** feeling different or isolated from their peers, not being able to join in and missing out on social opportunities, bullying and harassment.

**Unstable environment:** traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, losing income and housing or seeing the effects of illness or addiction.

**Reduced life chances:** poorer attainment in GCSEs and increased likelihood of becoming not in employment, education or training (NEET) post-16.

## How many young carers are there?

Estimates of the number of young carers vary significantly. We do know that many young carers remain hidden due to fear of consequences, stigma, family loyalty, bullying, not knowing what support is available or how to access it. A survey by the BBC in 2010 suggested that there are approximately 700,000 young carers in the UK.<sup>1</sup>

## What is bullying?

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as: “The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group, by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face-to-face or through cyberspace.”

When consulting young carers we asked them to define bullying in the following terms:

### What kind of bullying was it?

- Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting.
- Verbal: name calling, threats, threats by phone or internet.
- Indirect: spreading rumours, excluding someone, writing graffiti about someone, excluding someone from the group, posting information or photos of someone online.

### Would you describe the bullying in any of the following ways?

- Cyberbullying.
- Racist and/or related to religion.
- Homophobic bullying (to do with your sexuality).
- Sexist bullying (because you are a boy or a girl).
- Bullying because someone in your family is unwell or has a disability.

<sup>1</sup> The BBC, with assistance from The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, surveyed 4,029 pupils in ten secondary schools and found 337 had caring responsibilities.

## Are young carers more likely to be bullied?



Schools and clubs just need to be aware that very young children could be dealing with tough responsibilities and they are struggling especially if they are being bullied. I wish I had more support when I was that age.”

Young adult carer

Studies have shown that young carers are significantly more likely to be bullied than others:

- Young people who had caring responsibilities in their household are more likely to be victims of bullying (Green, R, Collingwood, A, Ross, A, National Centre for Social Research, 2010).
- In a survey of children in years 6, 8 and 10 (ages 10–15), 46% said that they had been bullied at some point while at school (Chamberlain, T et al, 2010).
- In a survey of young carers, over two thirds (68%) said that they had been bullied at school (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 2009).
- A 2015 survey of vulnerable groups and their online lives, identified young carers as being markedly more likely than their peers to be cyberbullied – 58% in contrast to 25% (Katz, A, 2015).
- A 2010 research report found that having a caring responsibility is one of the main characteristics of young people aged between 14 and 16 who have been bullied. As well as being much more likely to be victims of bullying, overall, young

carers were also more likely to be ‘new’ victims as they grew older, that is they were not being bullied when aged 14 but began to be bullied when they were older. ‘As young people grow older their social lives become important and these young people may increasingly become isolated from their peers due to having more responsibilities at home.’ (Green, R, Collingwood, A, Ross, A, National Centre for Social Research, 2010).

## Why are young carers bullied?

### Lack of awareness and understanding about disability

A significant number of the young carers identified disability or illness in the family as a *main reason* why they had been bullied. Young carers felt they had been singled out and targeted because the appearance or behaviour of a family member was distinctive. Bullying had also been triggered by ill-informed comments and judgements about a young carer’s family made by an adult and repeated to the young carer by their child.

### Young carers were asked whether they would describe the bullying as being due to someone in their family having a disability or being unwell:

“ Because my dad uses a stick, other children threatened some nasty things.”

Young carer

“ People decided that, because your brothers are ‘weird’ then you must be a ‘weirdo’ too.”

Young adult carer

**“ I know that they make comments about me because I am overweight and use a walking stick. ”**

**Parent**

One parent described the bullying as being “due to health issues in the family and the distress it caused”.

- Where the disability is obvious because a parent uses a mobility aid or because of their physical appearance, other children may focus on this difference and act in an unkind way.
- Where a sibling’s behaviour attracts attention, young carers can be drawn into disagreements and feel the need to defend their sibling which can lead to themselves being seen as different by association.
- Assumptions are made that a person who is very overweight for example, is responsible for their condition rather than it being due to an underlying medical condition. The whole family can become isolated as a result of the perception by others that they are choosing a certain lifestyle.

An eight-year-old young carer explained that she had to move class because she was “having trouble with some people”. The trouble had started with her friend’s mother laughing at the young carer’s mother because she was in a wheelchair:

**“**

**Other parents say things to their children like, ‘Yes well I go to work’ ... meaning that I am choosing not to go, rather than because I am ill.”**

**Parent**

- Limited knowledge about illness and disability can lead to a lack of understanding and empathy.
- Sometimes because the illness or disability is not visible, for example mental ill-health, assumptions and insinuations are made that someone is not actually unwell at all.

### **Young carers can be vulnerable**

Young carers may be more emotionally vulnerable because of the ongoing worries and stress associated with ill-health and disability in a family.

Recently bereaved and therefore highly vulnerable young carers reported being subjected to direct and in some cases, sustained bullying. Young carers are 50% more likely to have an illness or special educational needs of their own (The Children’s Society, 2013). With their own additional needs or health problems they can be bullied because they are seen as ‘different’ and less able to defend themselves.

### **Young carers were asked about the kinds of bullying that they experienced and how they would describe it:**

An 11-year-old started secondary school shortly after her father died. She received a text message from another child saying that it was her fault that her father had died and that her mother was unwell.

**“ He gets asked, ‘Where is your dad? Oh you haven’t got one anymore’. ”**

**Parent**

- ❖ Coping with illness or disability can be *stressful for the whole family* and can impact upon the mood or behaviour of a child in other settings, which may then have an alienating effect on their relationships with other children.
- 🟡 Young carers can become a target for bullying because of their own vulnerability.
- 🟢 Young carers feel that other young people often don't understand and don't particularly care, as it doesn't affect them.
- 🟠 Lack of knowledge or understanding about illness and disability can lead to isolation from peers.



**I'm bullied just because it's me.”**  
**A young carer with Asperger syndrome**



**Family have disabilities ... I got ruled out a lot by others and felt alone because of things I couldn't help, got bullied for diabetes and epilepsy and if I had a seizure I would get picked on for weeks about it, even by people I didn't know.”**  
**Young adult carer**

- 🟠 Young carers with additional needs are often vulnerable on more than one level and are dealing with caring as well as their own specific needs.

### **Young carers are perceived as different**

26% of young adult carers aged 14–25 have experienced bullying at school because of their caring role (Sempik, J and Becker, S, 2013). The reason young carers believed

that they had been bullied is summed up by the organisation Respectme: 'Some children and young people don't see or understand diversity, they only see difference.' (Respectme, 2016).

Whether it is because of their behaviour or their appearance, the young carers felt that their caring responsibilities can lead to them being perceived as 'different' which may then be the catalyst for bullying.

### **Young carers were asked why they thought the bullying happened:**

“ Because they didn't like me personally and physically.”  
 Young carer

“ Because I come from different places.”  
 Young carer

“ Size bullying eg weight ... name.”  
 Young adult carer

- ❖ The young carers tried to rationalise the bullying and understand why it was happening, even considering what they might have 'done wrong'.
- 🟡 The appearance and presentation of some young carers can be affected by their caring responsibilities, which may then become the trigger for bullying behaviour by others.

One parent said that if her son is late back after lunch he gets comments like: 'Oh, you have had to go home to take your mum to the toilet, to clean her up'.

A 12-year-old young carer takes his younger sisters to school and is often late to school as a result. He continually gets comments

from other young people about his lateness and why he doesn't get punished. He doesn't want to have to explain to them why he is late as he is wary that that will make him even more of a target.

- Other young people may pick up on different or exceptional behaviour and use it against young carers.
- Young carers can be guarded about explaining their caring responsibilities to their peers as they are fearful of the response they might receive. This can itself lead to difficulties with other young people as they are seen as 'different'.

## Doubly disadvantaged

Young carers who are bullied are doubly disadvantaged – they are coping with the challenges of caring for a family member, as well as the everyday pressures of school and friendships and then on top of that, they are being bullied. The table below demonstrates how the impact of caring and the impact of bullying on children and young people is very similar and so for those children and young people who are both young carers and who are being bullied, the overall impact is likely to be greater.

The impact of caring	The impact of bullying
Around one in 20 young carers misses school because of their caring responsibilities (The Children's Society, 2013).	Bullying causes absence from school. 16,000 young people aged 11–15 are absent from school at any one time due to bullying (Brown, V, Clery E, Ferguson C, May 2011).
The average GCSE score for young carers is significantly lower than for young people who were not young carers, the difference between 9 Bs and 9 Cs (The Children's Society, 2013).	Young people who reported being bullied at school had significantly lower GCSE scores than those who hadn't reported being bullied (Green, R, Collingwood, A, Ross, A, National Centre for Social Research, 2010).
Young adult carers aged between 16 and 18 years are twice as likely to be NEET (Audit Commission, 2010).	Young people who reported being bullied were much more likely to be NEET than those who were not bullied (Green, R, Collingwood, A, Ross, A, National Centre for Social Research, 2010).
<p>Young carers can experience mental health difficulties such as, stress, anxiety and depression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research commissioned by Carers Trust found that 38% of young adult carers (aged 14–25) reported having a mental health problem (Sempik, J and Becker, S, 2013).</li> <li>• Self-harm, using drugs and alcohol, and food are some of the ways young carers may try to deal with their difficult feelings (Young Minds, 2016).</li> </ul>	<p>The links between bullying and mental health problems are well established:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children bullied in their early years are up to three times more likely to self-harm.</li> <li>• There is a greatly increased risk of depression among bullying victims.</li> <li>• Bullying victims are 2–3 times more likely to experience anxiety.</li> <li>• Symptoms of anxiety increase vulnerability to being bullied as they can make children stand out among their peers, exposing them as different (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2015).</li> </ul>

# Part 2

## The impact of bullying on young carers

This section:

- ▀ Sets out some of the impacts of bullying on young carers.
- ▀ Highlights the potential barriers to seeking support.

### The difficulties experienced in different settings

The young carers and their families described bullying taking place in a whole range of settings where children and young people come together, although, not surprisingly, the dominant experience tends to be in school, where they spend most of their time. Some young carers said they had moved class or school and left groups as a consequence of bullying. On more than one occasion, bullying was given as the reason why a young carer had become home-schooled which, although effective in putting an end to the bullying, may have a whole set of additional consequences including increased isolation from peers, taking on greater levels of care and ultimately, reduced life chances. A small number said that they had not stopped, nor would stop attending groups when bullying had occurred, but that requires a level of resilience that many young carers may not have.

#### Young carers were asked whether the bullying had led to them withdrawing from activities:

“ I left Guides because the bullying was bad and nothing was ever done about it.”

Young adult carer

“ Because of bullying I left a Scout group and instead my dad and I set up our own local Scout group in our village.”

Young adult carer

“ If you quit, you have let them change you and that's what they want to do.”

Young carer

One seven-year-old young carer moved class because she was being bullied but then felt sad because she was no longer in a class with her friends.

A parent described her son's experience at Cadets: “If there was six places and there was seven of them he was left out ... when they went gliding and on the helicopter he was left out ... it wasn't just the children.”

- Young carers can find it harder to join in and may get left out or excluded because they are seen as different which puts them at risk of withdrawing permanently from a variety of activities.
- Taking part in groups is often more complicated and requires greater effort for young carers. This means that they are more likely to withdraw if they experience bullying.
- The impact of being moved or withdrawn can be far reaching for young carers who are already struggling with friendships and isolation and are emotionally vulnerable.

A significant number of young carers are unable to attend any groups or extra-curricular activities and regularly miss out on activities such as parties and sleepovers. This can be due to financial constraints, transport issues, or the young carer being required, or feeling that they are required, to be at home to provide care and support.

## Isolation and inability to join in social opportunities

The young carers reported that bullying leads to them becoming increasingly isolated and excluded. Almost all those who had experienced bullying also reported that they found it difficult to participate in social and extra-curricular activities as a direct result of being a young carer. A vicious circle develops where inability to join in because of caring leads to bullying, which then leads to even greater isolation. Conversely, most of those who had not been bullied said that they were able to take up social opportunities without difficulty. For those who say that they struggle to join in socially, there seems to be heavy reliance on technology as the means by which they stay in touch with and make friends; this can lead to exposure to cyberbullying and potentially, to other forms of online risk.

**Young carers and parents were asked if young carers found it easy to join in social activities and opportunities with their peers such as meeting up, parties, sleepovers, residential breaks, clubs, and sports practice sessions and matches:**

“ He always thinks about me first.”

Parent

“ Doesn't like leaving me.”

Parent

“ My friends didn't seem to understand my commitments and caring role for my family.”

Young adult carer



**“ I never went on sleepovers as a child.”**

**Young adult carer**

**“ I was very regularly excluded from parties, events etc. I was pretty much left out of all social stuff at secondary school.”**

**Young adult carer**

- Some of the young carers could not even contemplate going out, or if they did, it would be dependent on complicated arrangements and the health of the person they care for.
- Planned activities and events may be regularly cancelled because of the needs of the person they care for. Young carers can then feel as if there is no point in making arrangements in the future, have nothing to look forward to and become more isolated from their peers as a consequence.
- Young carers are often anxious about, or don't like leaving the person who they care for.
- A lack of understanding among their peers leads to isolation which may then be a gateway to bullying.

## **Bullying crossing over into different settings**

‘There is evidence to suggest that pupils who are badly bullied in school are more likely to be bullied out of school, for instance on their way to or from school, at groups and clubs or through cyberbullying.’ (Department for Education, 2014).

A recurring theme was that where bullying took place in one setting, it often then continued into others. For some young carers there is a sense that they literally

have nowhere to hide. Examples of bullying crossing over from community settings into school and vice versa were all too common and technology has also made it possible for bullying to continue into the home and become something that is happening 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Where bullying takes place in primary school it can, like the young people involved, transition into secondary school and onto the bus or the walk to and from school.

## **Young carers were asked about the kinds of bullying that they had experienced and where it had taken place:**

One young carer was seen out in the community with her disabled brothers by other children that she knew from school. As a result of that, bullying began at school and continued from primary into secondary school.

**“ Someone took a video of him at the gym and passed it around the school so he stopped going.”**

**Parent**

**“ At one point I received hate emails every day, then for years I would be bullied verbally by a few different people just around school and in my form.”**

**Young adult carer**

- Young carers may be seen out in the community with the person who they care for and lack of understanding of illness and disability as well as the perception that they and their family are somehow different, may lead to bullying in school.
- Bullying in school can lead to young carers being excluded socially.
- Cyberbullying not only crosses the boundaries of the community and school but can also mean bullying continues both day and night.

## Cyberbullying and online risk



**At one point I received hate emails every day.”**

**Young adult carer**

Young carers have been identified as being particularly susceptible to cyberbullying. The young carers reported that they often find it difficult or are unable to join in social activities but that they are able to maintain contact with friends, this may be with the use of technology and via social media. In effect, their inability to physically join in can lead to an over reliance on the internet and devices to stay in touch and connect with other young people, which increases their exposure to potential cyberbullying and other forms of online abuse.

A 2015 Cybersurvey of vulnerable groups and their online lives conducted by Youthworks Consulting, found that young carers are a very vulnerable group: ‘Not only are they bullied more than others, they are also cyberbullied.’ 58% had been cyberbullied in contrast to 25% of their peers. ‘Their online risk-taking is high and they often visit websites encouraging self-harm or suicidal thoughts. They are heavy users of chatrooms – 33% in contrast to



18% of peers who are not carers and have no difficulties or responsibilities.’

‘They need specialised support not only in terms of reducing the bullying targeted at them, but in helping them to stay safe online as they are often required to be at home when other teens are out socialising. They tend to spend many hours online.’ (Katz, A, 2015).

Young carers may be particularly at risk of being online because of the following:

- E-safety:** as well as needing more specialised support, young carers may be more likely to miss one-off lessons on e-safety and their parents could have difficulty in attending information and advice evenings.
- Time spent online:** young carers who have limited opportunities to leave the home may use time online as a way of taking a break and escaping.
- Staying in touch via technology:** young carers who are isolated and unable to join in because of their caring responsibilities may be overly reliant on this way of staying in touch and connecting.
- Shopping online:** young carers are increasingly shopping for the family online and encounter difficulties with credit card safety or pressure to buy.

## Barriers to getting help with bullying

The barriers to young carers seeking and securing support when bullying is happening can be complex. While some said that they would tell, or had told staff members when bullying had taken place, most were very clear that they wouldn't tell anyone because they believed or had found that it made things worse. Both young carers and their parents believed that where adults lacked understanding of and empathy for young carers, they would fail to deal with bullying effectively.

### Young carers were asked if they would tell an adult at their school or group that they were being bullied:

“ He has been let down so much, he thinks it is not worth it. He ends up getting into trouble.”  
Parent

“ I don't think they [teachers] have a clue what it is like – they should be more understanding.”  
Parent

“ I didn't really tell anyone.”  
Young adult carer

“ Because it's not physical or witnessed a lot of the time their [teachers'] hands are tied.”  
Parent

“ I wouldn't tell people about being bullied because I felt that no one cared.”

Young adult carer

“ A child put his hands around my son's neck and he (her son) swore and was punished for swearing.”

Parent

- Perhaps because of their increased emotional vulnerability, or where the bullying is chronic, young carers can end up retaliating and getting into trouble themselves. The focus can then shift away from the bullying to their behaviour.
- Some of the young carers were resigned to the fact that nothing can or will be done about bullying so they saw no point in reporting it.
- The strength of desire to blend in and be like everyone else and the fear of being singled out can lead to young carers choosing to not report bullying incidents.

## Protecting parents and parental awareness

A common theme for the young carers was that they wanted to protect their parents from any additional worries by not telling them that bullying was happening. Where parents are unaware that bullying is taking place, young carers cannot benefit from their emotional support or any interventions they may be able to make and which could be instrumental in putting an end to the bullying.

‘Young people who reported being bullied at the age of 14 or 15 whose parents also reported them being bullied were more likely to escape being bullied by the age of

16 than those who do not ...The findings suggest that parental awareness may be a key factor in helping those young people to escape being bullied.' (National Centre for Social Research, 2010).

### **Young carers were asked if they would tell their parents that they were being bullied:**

**“ I wouldn't tell my mum and dad, they have too much going on at the moment.”**

**Young carer**

**“ I don't want them to worry about me as they already have so much to think about.”**

**Young adult carer**

**“ What does worry me is what he is not telling me about the bullying. He worries that it will worry me.”**

**Parent**

**“ Mum, if she is very unwell I would not want to worry her.”**

**Young carer**

- Young carers are acutely aware of the levels of stress in their family and the precariousness of an individual's health.
- They may hold back from telling someone about their worries or things that have happened to them based on the state of that person's health on a particular day.
- They may put the needs of the person they care for before their own and either not tell them about bullying incidents at all, or minimise their seriousness.

## **Reporting bullying**

Experiences of how bullying is addressed were variable, although many felt that lack of understanding and training around young carers and bullying often leads to a failure to deal with it effectively, if at all. The young carers felt confident about reporting incidents if they had good relationships with individuals whom they could trust and most importantly, who wouldn't make things worse. Other settings did less well in creating a culture where young carers felt that bullying was dealt with successfully. Where young carers had the impression that the person who they needed or wanted to speak to was too busy or hadn't got the time to really listen, they were put off trying. This may have been after going through significant upset before feeling able to tell someone.

It is evident that there were some settings where bullying was dealt with effectively. The young carers were clear however, that some approaches to dealing with bullying can make things worse for them and where this had happened, they were put off from reporting incidents in the future.

### **Young carers were asked if they felt confident about reporting the bullying and whether they believed it would be dealt with effectively:**

**“ I didn't ever tell because it would have made it worse. There's nothing they would have been able to do to stop it because if they gave out detentions etc . . . it would only have made it worse.”**

**Young adult carer**

“ When I mentioned it to my PE teacher she refused to put me and a friend in a different group despite telling her that seven or eight of those in the current group bullied us.”

Young adult carer

“ I wouldn't normally tell teachers because they have a lot on and it might not get done.”

Young carer

“

I would tell my family and counsellor.”

Young carer

“

I would tell a responsible adult at school.”

Young carer

- The young carers said that they were concerned that the action taken against bullying could compound the situation for them.
- Having taken the step of telling somebody about bullying, some of the young carers felt that they were not listened to or that no meaningful action had been taken.
- Young carers can form the impression that staff are busy and may not have time to listen to them or take action.
- Where the young carers felt valued and understood, they identified adults they could speak to about bullying.



## Summary of key issues

- Young carers are more likely to be bullied than their peers.
- The vulnerability of young carers may make them more susceptible to being bullied.
- Being perceived as different may make young carers more susceptible to being bullied.
- Young carers who are bullied are doubly disadvantaged – one compounding the impact of the other.
- Young carers are particularly susceptible to cyberbullying and other online risks.
- Young carers often find it much harder – or too difficult – to join in regular social or extra-curricular activities.
- Being isolated and unable to join in social opportunities may lead to young carers being bullied and vice versa.
- Friendship difficulties, and lack of peer support and understanding may increase the likelihood of bullying for young carers.
- There are specific reasons why young carers do not ask for help when bullied.

# Part 3

## What can be done to protect young carers from bullying?

This section:

- Provides guidance about changes to systems and procedures that can be made to protect young carers from bullying.
- Gives practical advice from young carers and their families.
- Demonstrates the importance and value of specifically including young carers within existing bullying prevention strategies.

### Staff training and awareness

The young carers said that the adults whom they come into contact with, either at school or in the community, often lack understanding of their situation and the impact that it has on them. The young carers felt that without that understanding, adults would not be sensitive to the specific reasons why and how bullying might be triggered for them.

**Young carers were asked if it would be helpful to them for the adults whom they come into contact with in different settings to know more about what it is like to be a young carer:**

**“ Teachers don’t know enough. Got in trouble for not doing homework due to caring.”**

**Young adult carer**

**“ There should definitely be more training for teachers, so many times I had teachers who just didn’t understand at all and got angry at me on days when I couldn’t cope. Some even embarrassed me in front of the whole class.”**

**Young adult carer**

**“ Having people who went through school as young carers go and speak to them and tell them what it was like and what would have helped.”**

**Young adult carer**

## Actions:

- Prioritise training for *all* staff and volunteers, to increase their awareness and understanding of young carers and the day-to-day issues that they face.
- Invite former young carers to play a significant role in providing training/ awareness-raising and in policy making.



**I'm up for this job [awareness raising]."**

**Young carer**

- Train *all* staff and volunteers in strategies for dealing with bullying incidents and how it can differ for young carers.
- Ensure that adults who come into contact with children and young people in any setting, demonstrate acceptance and the value of difference.
- Establish good links with outside agencies such as the local young carers service, and invite them in to deliver talks or assemblies and work with them to support individual young carers.

## Support for young carers – an identified person

The young carers and their families said that they valued having an identified person whom they can go to if they are experiencing difficulties and are more likely to feel confident about reporting bullying incidents and to believe that something will be done about it. For some, the support and involvement of an outside agency such as a local young carers service was seen to be important or even preferable, as was peer support and mentoring.

### Young carers were asked if it would help to have an identified person with responsibility for young carers, whom they could go to when they are having difficulties at their school or group:

A parent said that "trust in the staff and a close bond with staff" meant that her child would report bullying.

A young carer said that if they were being bullied they would report it to; "Pastoral support, ... school is very good to talk to."

**"It is good to have someone to confide in."**

**Young carer**

A young carer who was being bullied by other members of her rugby team and was seriously considering quitting, identified the support of her coach as being the reason why she felt able to stay.

**"Regular mentor sessions and young carer visits in school have helped me particularly when I am stressed. It is hard to let my mum know my worries sometimes, as she is ill."**

**Young carer**

**"Maybe a buddy in school, like older one, with younger one."**

**Young carer**

## Actions:

- Establish an identified person whom young carers can go to if they are having difficulties. This could be someone with a wider pastoral support role, a teaching assistant or a specific youth leader.
- Ensure that young carers and their parents know who the identified person is and how to access them. Ensure that young carers are given attention and time in order to build up trust with the identified person.
- Provide young carers with a space where they can go to have time out, to feel safe, to talk to someone confidentially and to meet other young carers.
- Explore the option of a peer mentor or buddy who is also a young carer.
- Recognise that what works for one young person may not work for another, so offer choice and flexibility around support – work with the young carer and respect their wishes.

## Peer relationships

‘Friendship, peer relationships and social opportunities are the best way of preventing bullying.’ (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2015a). They should be central to any strategy to reduce bullying for young carers.

Many of the young carers felt that other young people do not understand, or in some cases, care about what life is like for young carers. Some suggested that it would be good to make other young people ‘walk in their shoes’ or at least gain better understanding of the difficulties they face. Young carers don’t want to be singled out, but they do want their role to be acknowledged as something that should be respected. Most however, just want to be able to fit in and be accepted by their peers. Young carers may be more susceptible to being bullied if they are not able to participate in the same range of social opportunities as their peers.

**Young carers were asked if they thought it would be helpful for other young people to know more about what it is like to be a young carer:**

“ I just wanted to blend in and be just like everyone else, not have anything that singled me out.”

Young adult carer

“ Get people to realise how tiring and hard it is being a carer.”

Young adult carer

“ I think it’s something that people don’t even think about if it doesn’t bother them.”

Young adult carer

## Actions:

- Acknowledge a young person’s caring role by simply considering how they might be feeling and how their caring role is affecting them in everything they do on a daily basis. For example, their emotional resilience, their physical appearance and their financial circumstances can all be affected on a day-to-day basis and can impact upon their relationships and ability to join in.
- Support friendships and bolster peer relations by giving young carers opportunities to meet others in smaller more supportive groups.
- Consider that young carers may sometimes react more intensely to bullying than their peers; ensure that the focus does not shift to being about their behaviour.

## Enabling young carers to join in

### Actions:

- Ensure young carers are able to participate as well as take a break without having to explain to a group. Be aware that their caring role may lead to them being late or tired or worried.
- Be creative and flexible around supporting young carers to join in social opportunities. Consider the possible barriers to them being able to participate and how they might be addressed.
- Look for solutions that allow young carers to join in without being seen as different or singled out. Ensure that they are able to access support discreetly and can, if they wish to, talk to someone privately about their circumstances.
- Explore ways of working together with a young carer's family to ensure that they are able to join in (see Barriers to joining in, below). Consider that some parents may have difficulty with taking phone calls or attending meetings. Email or text may be better options.

### Barriers to joining in

- Lack of transport to and from activities.
- The cost of activities.
- Not having appropriate clothing or sports equipment.
- Anxiety about leaving the person they care for.



### Values and attitudes

'It's not just about the environment, your policy or the measures you have in place to deal with bullying. A child's experience will be directly affected by the response they get from the adult. It's about the personal touch, and we should always be mindful of this.' (Respectme, 2016).

Young carers and their families expressed mixed feelings about how effectively bullying is addressed. There was a perception that while settings are compliant with anti-bullying requirements on paper, a significant number are falling short in practice.

The young carers said they want to see bullying dealt with, are open to being consulted and involved in the development of policies and strategies and have views and ideas about what does and doesn't work for them.

## Young carers were asked whether they felt that settings should do more to ensure that everyone knows what bullying is and how to stop it:

“ Perhaps should have more talks about bullying and its effects.”

Parent

“ A box where you can put in slips which say something someone said or did to you or someone else and their name without putting your name.”

Young carer

## Actions:

- Ensure that anti-bullying policies are understood and utilised by all adults, including non-teaching staff and volunteers.
- Make sure that your anti-bullying policy is up to date, freely accessible and regularly promoted. Everyone should know how your group or school will deal with bullying.
- Have robust anti-bullying policies that include *specific reference to young carers*, the specific reasons why they may be bullied and how to reduce this.
- Involve and include young carers in developing anti-bullying policy and practice.
- Make your organisation's support for young carers explicit and visible to all from the outset. For example, in prospectuses, websites, newsletters, posters and training.
- Identify opportunities where awareness of disability can be raised and make this part of the culture of the group or school. For example, hold a series of assemblies about disability, for the whole school.
- Involve young carers' parents in the process of dealing with bullying incidents while bearing in mind that young carers are worried about adding to pressures within the family.
- Don't assume that parents of young carers know that bullying is happening and be aware that they may find it more difficult to attend meetings or make and take phone calls.
- If bullying is taking place in one setting and crossing over into another, make links where possible and use the expertise of everyone to achieve a common view of how the problem can be solved.
- Give young carers the opportunity to say if they have experienced bullying while at your group or school, either by asking them directly, for example: "I know that young carers can be bullied, may I ask if that has happened to you here?" or conduct a wider bullying survey of all young people and include specific questions for young carers (see [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/resources/school-assessment-tools/](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/resources/school-assessment-tools/)).
- Check that young carers and their parents are aware of ways to keep safe online and reinforce messages and advice regularly.
- Make sure young carers know they can call ChildLine any time on 0800 1111 or visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk).

## Recommendations

- A.** Provide staff training to increase understanding of the specific issues young carers face and how and why they may trigger bullying.
- B.** Create a culture within your organisation where difference is respected and valued by all.
- C.** Ensure someone is available for young carers to talk to.
- D.** Support and enable young carers to join in social activities and wider opportunities.
- E.** Help young carers to maintain good friendships and peer relationships.
- F.** Teach young carers how to stay safe online and provide safe, positive online opportunities and experiences.
- G.** Develop policies that enable young carers to access transport and leisure and sporting opportunities.

See Appendix for detailed Self-evaluation actions list.

# Further information and resources

## Carers Trust

### Local support

You can find your nearest Carers Trust Network Partner by using our Find local care and carer services facility at Carers.org (any time) or calling 0844 800 4361 (Monday– Friday, 9am–5pm).

### Online support for carers

Carers can get 24-hour support, every day of the year, from our online services for carers. Carers Trust online services are open to all carers, wherever they live in the UK and whatever their age.

-  Babble ([babble.carers.org](https://babble.carers.org)) is for young carers under 18.
-  Matter ([matter.carers.org](https://matter.carers.org)) is for young adult carers aged 16–25.
-  Carers Space (<https://space.carers.org>) is for carers aged 18 and over.

For email support contact [support@carers.org](mailto:support@carers.org).

### Information about young carers and bullying

Visit <https://professionals.carers.org/young-carers-and-bullying>.

## Young Carers in Schools Programme

The Young Carers in Schools programme is an England-wide initiative that enables schools to take a systematic approach to identifying and supporting young carers and awards good practice.

Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society Young Carers in Focus partners, it is working with schools, services and local authorities across England to share good practice and develop relevant, accessible tools and training. In doing so, Young Carers in Schools supports local young carers services across England to build, maintain and celebrate their engagement with schools. The Young carers in Schools programme materials are for use in secondary and primary schools across England, but could be easily adapted for use in the rest of the UK.

To find out more and access key tools visit [www.youngcarersinschools.com](http://www.youngcarersinschools.com).

## **Anti-Bullying Alliance**

Anti-Bullying Alliance is a coalition of organisations and individuals, who work together to stop bullying and create safer environments in which children and young people can live, grow, play and learn. Find resources related to anti-bullying and practice, including online training for professionals.

[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/resources/](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/resources/)

## **BBC Advice**

Advice on bullying.

[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3qVx5ZQbmhCSySn0C3CjDjv/category-bullying](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3qVx5ZQbmhCSySn0C3CjDjv/category-bullying)

## **ChildLine**

ChildLine is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of 19. Young people can contact a ChildLine counsellor about anything.

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

## **Kidscape**

Preventing bullying, protecting children.

[www.kidscape.org.uk/](http://www.kidscape.org.uk/)

Being Me is a free anti-bullying classroom resource that seeks to celebrate difference and promote inclusion by giving young people in years 5–8 an invaluable insight into the potential challenges being faced by their peers.

[www.kidscape.org.uk/beingme](http://www.kidscape.org.uk/beingme)

## **NSPCC**

Information on bullying and cyberbullying.

[www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying-and-cyberbullying/](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying-and-cyberbullying/)

## **Respectme**

Scotland's anti-bullying service.

[www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk)

## **Suffolk Cyber Survey 2014**

Research into young people's usage of the internet and internet enabled devices. [http://youthworksconsulting.co.uk/uploads/14802889472015\\_02\\_09\\_Cybersurvey\\_2014\\_FINAL\\_\\_4a\\_.pdf](http://youthworksconsulting.co.uk/uploads/14802889472015_02_09_Cybersurvey_2014_FINAL__4a_.pdf)

## **The Children's Society**

For information about your local young carers service.

[www.youngcarer.com/young-carers-services](http://www.youngcarer.com/young-carers-services)

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# Appendix: Self-evaluation actions list to protect young carers from bullying

A. Staff training and awareness: ✓	
1	Train <i>all</i> staff and volunteers, to increase their awareness and understanding of young carers.
2	Involve former young carers in providing training/awareness-raising.
3	Train all staff and volunteers in strategies for dealing with bullying incidents and how it can differ for young carers.
4	Ensure that adults who come into contact with children and young people are seen to accept and value difference.
5	Establish good links with outside agencies such as the local young carers service.
B. Values and attitudes: ✓	
1	Have robust anti-bullying policies that include <i>specific reference to young carers</i> , the specific reasons why they may be bullied and how to reduce this.
2	<i>Involve and include young carers</i> in developing anti-bullying policy and practice.
3	Make your organisation's support for young carers explicit and visible to all.
4	Identify opportunities where awareness of disability can be raised such as a series of assemblies about disability.
5	Involve young carers' parents in the process of dealing with bullying incidents. (Be aware that young carers may worry about adding to pressures within the family.)
6	Don't assume parents of young carers are aware bullying is taking place.
7	Collaborate with staff from other services where bullying is crossing over between settings.
8	Provide young carers with appropriate opportunities to say if they have experienced bullying.
9	Check that young carers and their parents are aware of ways to keep safe online.

<b>C. Support for young carers – an identified person:</b>		✓
1	Establish an identified person for young carers who can give them their full attention and time.	
2	Ensure that young carers and their parents know who the identified person is to talk to.	
3	Provide young carers with a safe space to go to when needed.	
4	Offer choice and flexibility around support, work with the young carer and respect their wishes.	
5	Make sure young carers know they can call ChildLine any time on 0800 1111.	
<b>D. Enabling young carers to join in:</b>		✓
1	Ensure young carers are able to participate in clubs, social, leisure and sport activities. Consider barriers to participation such as transport.	
2	Look for solutions that allow young carers to join in without being seen as different or singled out. For example, ensuring young carers have access to appropriate clothing and equipment.	
3	Explore ways of working with a families to ensure young carers can join in.	
4	Use appropriate funding (such as the Pupil Premium in schools in England) to enable young carers to access after school clubs, by proving transport for example.	
<b>E. Peers and relationships:</b>		✓
1	Consider how young carers might be feeling. Their caring role can impact upon their relationships and ability to join in.	
2	Support friendships and bolster peer relations.	
3	Remember young carers may react more intensely to bullying than their peers – ensure the focus does not shift to being about <i>their</i> behaviour.	
4	Explore the option of a peer mentor or buddy who is also a young carer especially to support transition periods.	
<b>F. Online safety and experiences:</b>		✓
1	Teach young carers to stay safe online.	
2	Provide positive online opportunities.	
3	Support parents to be aware of the online risks for young carers.	
4	Ensure young carers also have social opportunities offline.	
<b>G. Policies for transport and sport and leisure opportunities</b>		✓
1	Offer free or reduced rates to enable young carers to access leisure and sport activities.	
2	Provide young carers with free or affordable transport.	





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32–36 Loman Street  
London SE1 0EH

Tel: 0844 800 4361 (calls charged at local rate if calling from a landline, calls to this number from a mobile are charged upwards of 14p a minute)

Fax: 0844 800 4362

Email: [info@carers.org](mailto:info@carers.org)

[Carers.org](http://carers.org)  
[matter.carers.org](http://matter.carers.org)  
[babble.carers.org](http://babble.carers.org)  
<http://professionals.carers.org>

 [www.facebook.com/CarersTrust](http://www.facebook.com/CarersTrust)

 [www.twitter.com/CarersTrust](http://www.twitter.com/CarersTrust)

 [www.youtube.com/user/CarersTrust](http://www.youtube.com/user/CarersTrust)

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