

STEP ⑧

Step 8: Raising Awareness of Pupils and Families About Young Carers



Key information

To counteract the reasons why many young carers are hidden (see Step 1: Gaining an understanding about young carers), schools will need to proactively raise the awareness of pupils and their families about:

- What it means to be a young carer.
- Disabilities, mental and physical ill-health, and alcohol and substance misuse issues with a focus on dispelling common stereotypes.

“ I really enjoy learning about young carers and their life and would like to learn a lot more just in case it ever happens to me. ”

A pupil

Raising awareness in these areas can help pupils and their families self-identify as a young carer. It can also create more:

- Empathy towards pupils with caring responsibilities.
- Understanding as to why they may sometimes seem unsociable, stressed, worried or angry.
- Appreciation of the complicated responsibilities that young carers can have and why this can mean they can't attend clubs or why they have to rush off after school.

Not only will this

help remove the stigma associated with certain disabilities, illness, and alcohol and substance misuse, thus helping to prevent bullying, but it will also help young carers to talk about their caring roles with their peers.

To encourage young carers to access appropriate support, it is also important that schools create a safe and understanding environment for young carers and families and raise pupil and family awareness about:

- The types of support the school will provide to young carers, dependent on their needs, and how to access this.
- The types of support other organisations in the local community may be able to provide to young carers and their families.

“ I used to help out in the classroom occasionally and this was seen as a positive experience for children who have never met a wheelchair user before. The school also invited other disabled speakers to talk to the children from time to time. ”

Parent

Don't forget!

The earlier a young carer is identified the less likely an inappropriate caring role will become established and have a negative impact. No child or young person's education, wellbeing and potential should be affected by their caring role.

Ways to raise the awareness of pupils and their families

Young Carers School Operational Leads should prioritise how they intend to raise the awareness of pupils and their families when reviewing their school's provision (see Step 2: Reviewing your school's provision for young carers).

The basics

In summary, if your school is just beginning to develop its young carer provision, you may wish to focus initially on implementing the basics and raise awareness through:

- **Pupil noticeboards and school website**

The Young Carers School Operational Lead should develop and maintain material about young carers on the pupil noticeboard and school website. This material should include:

- The name and contact information of the Young Carers School Operational Lead.
- The school's whole school commitment to young carers.
- Awareness raising information regarding who young carers are, the likelihood that there will be many young carers at the school, the impact of caring on young people and/or children, and the types of support available for young carers.

See Step 8, Tool 1: Exemplar noticeboard material for primary schools and Step 8, Tool 2: Exemplar noticeboard material for secondary schools. This noticeboard will need to be refreshed on a regular basis to keep engaging pupils. Why not ask identified young carers to help produce new material for display?



Implementing this action will help schools achieve the Bronze level of the Young Carers in Schools Award.

Building on the basics

In schools looking to develop their provision for young carers further, the Young Carers School Operational Lead should:

- Ensure pupil noticeboards and/or school website also contains information signposting young carers to other resources, for example, details of the local young carers service, school nurse and emotional support delivered within and/or outside of school.
- Deliver regular assemblies to raise awareness of young carer issues which incorporate positive messages about disability/illness (including mental

ill-health, alcohol and substance misuse, and HIV). See Step 8, Tool 3: Suggested assembly/tutor group activities. The Young Carers School Operational Lead may also wish to invite relevant local services to make presentations about topics, such as mental ill-health.

- Work with relevant colleagues to ensure related aspects of the curriculum, such as PSHE, include teaching that explores the roles and responsibilities of young carers, promotes positive images of disability and challenges stereotypes (see Step 8, Tool 4: Suggested lesson activities).
- Timetable regular communication to families with a view to providing them with information about young carer issues, available support and how to contact the Young Carers School Operational Lead.

Potential communication channels to use with families include:

- Discrete letters/emails to coincide with young carer assemblies or PSHE teaching (see Step 8, Tool 5: Exemplar letter to parent(s)/guardian(s)).
- Articles in a school newsletter (see Step 8, Tool 6: Exemplar school newsletter article).
- Including the school's whole school commitment to young carers and their families in the school prospectus.

Through these mechanisms, schools can take a proactive approach to raising the awareness of pupils and their families about young carer issues. This will not only create a supportive school ethos but also help ensure no young carer slips through the net.



Implementing this action will help schools achieve the Silver level of the Young Carers in Schools Award.



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