

STEP ①

Step 1: Gaining an Understanding About Young Carers



Key information

Young carers experience particular challenges that impact on their capacity to engage in learning.

To ensure your school's provision meets the needs of young carers and raises their attendance and attainment effectively, an essential first step is to develop your knowledge about:

- Who young carers are and what their caring role might involve.
- The likely number of young carers in each school and why so many are hidden.
- The potential impacts of caring responsibilities on a pupil's achievement, attendance and wellbeing.
- What approach schools need to take to meet the needs of young carers effectively (Phelps, D, Leadbitter, H, Manzi, D, 2010).

“As a young carer you often have many worries which can limit concentration. Young carers should have someone there within school to talk to about their caring roles with confidence and trust.”

Young carer

- Government's and Ofsted's approaches to young carers.
- Young carers' rights

Who are young carers?

A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person who is ill, disabled, has a mental health condition, or addiction problem.

'A young carer becomes vulnerable when their caring roles risks impacting upon their emotional or physical wellbeing and their prospects in education and life.' (Department of Health, 2014).

“I have witnessed young carers grow from strength to strength once they are identified and support is in place.”

A Young Carers School
Operational Lead

What activities might their caring role involve?

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

Young carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. These can include:

- Practical tasks – cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care – lifting or helping someone use the stairs.
- Personal care – dressing, washing, helping with toileting needs.
- Emotional support – listening, calming, being present.
- Managing the family budget, collecting benefits and prescriptions.
- Medication management.
- Looking after younger siblings.
- Helping someone communicate.



You might not think that there are many young carers at your school, but pupils with caring responsibilities are not always easy to identify.

Will there be young carers in every school?

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

The 2011 Census identified over 177,000 young carers in England and Wales, although this is widely believed to be the tip of the iceberg.

Further research (BBC, 2010) suggests there could be 700,000 young carers in the UK, many unaware of the impact that caring is having on their lives. That means about one in 12 secondary aged pupils have caring responsibilities.

39% of young carers have said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring role (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 2010).

Why are many young carers hidden?

- The condition of the person they care for is not obvious so people don't think that the young person needs any help.
- Young carers do not realise that they are a carer or that their life is different to their peers.
- They don't want to be any different from their peers so they don't draw attention to their caring role.
- They believe that the school will show no interest in their family circumstances.

- They want to keep their identity at school separate from their caring role.
- It's not the sort of thing they feel they can discuss with their friends.
- There has been no opportunity to share their story.
- They are worried about bullying.
- They worry that the family will be split up and that they will be taken into care.
- They want to keep caring a secret and/or are embarrassed.
- They see no reason to tell their story and don't believe that any positive action will occur as a result of doing so.

What impact can caring responsibilities have on a pupil's achievement and wellbeing?

Caring can affect a young person's:

- **Physical health:** Young carers are often severely affected by caring through the night, repeatedly lifting a heavy adult, poor diet and lack of sleep.
- **Emotional wellbeing:** Stress, tiredness and mental ill-health are common for young carers.
- **Socialisation:** Young carers often feel different or isolated from their peers and have limited opportunities for socialising. A quarter of young carers in the UK said they were bullied at school because of their caring role (Carers Trust, 2013).
- **Stable environment:** Young carers can experience traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, losing income and housing, or seeing the effects of an illness or addiction on the person they care for.

As a result, caring responsibilities have a significant impact on a pupil's learning:

- 27% of young carers of secondary school age in England experience educational difficulties or miss school (Dearden and Becker, 2004).
- If left unsupported, young carers can continue to struggle with school and have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the difference between nine Bs and nine Cs (The Children's Society, 2013).
- By the time they reach 16 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).



Supporting young carers will not only improve outcomes for these pupils, it will also improve your school's attendance and attainment levels.

What approach do schools need to take to meet young carers' needs effectively?

It is vital that schools take a whole school approach to identifying and supporting young carers, and all school staff have the knowledge and confidence to identify and support pupils with caring responsibilities.

This commitment and capability is essential because:

- One of the main reasons young carers say they do not access support is stigma. A positive whole school ethos where young carers and their families are respected and valued by pupils, staff and the wider school community is crucial to ensuring young carers and their families feel safe and confident to access support.
- Many young carers are hidden. All school staff need to know how to identify young carers to ensure they do not slip through the net.
- A pupil with caring responsibilities may self-identify to any member of staff whom they feel they can talk to and share their worries and concerns.
- All staff need to be aware of the school's process for sharing information about a young carer. This will help ensure that information is only shared with the appropriate consent and with a view to guaranteeing that a pupil does not have to repeat their story several times.
- All staff should know not to discuss a pupil's caring role in front of their peers.



Building staff understanding and responsibility for meeting the needs of young carers does not mean creating additional functionality within staff's existing roles.

Rather, by being aware of how to identify and support young carers, staff will be better equipped to fulfil their existing roles within the school.

What is Ofsted's approach to young carers?

In its paper, *Supporting Young Carers: Identifying, Assessing and Meeting the Needs of Young Carers and their Families* (Ofsted, 2009), Ofsted reports that councils and partners should ensure that professionals within universal services are aware of the needs of young carers so they can be identified and supported.

The Ofsted Schools Inspection Handbook includes young carers as those with protected characteristics whose achievements it may be relevant to pay particular attention to (Ofsted, 2014).

What is the Government's approach to young carers?

Through the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014, the Government has shown its commitment to young carers by ensuring that they are protected from inappropriate or excessive caring.

In order to ensure that the Government's commitment is achieved, children and young people who have caring responsibilities must be identified early and supported to fulfil their potential.

The Government recognises that schools have a vital role to play and are ideally positioned to identify young carers and to initiate support. Doing so will ensure they are able to fully participate in their education and have a fair start in life.

“ Schools have a key role in identifying and supporting all young carers ... Ofsted take particular interest in the experiences of more vulnerable children, including young carers, during inspections.”

Edward Timpson, the Minister for Children and Families

What are young carer's rights?

The Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014, which came into force in April 2015, significantly strengthened the rights of young carers in England.

Previously, a young carer was entitled to an assessment of their needs. However, assessments had to be requested and young carers had to be providing or intending to provide a substantial amount of care on a regular basis. This approach was not preventative and meant that young carers and their families had to be aware of their services and rights and ask for support.

From April 2015:

- All young carers under the age of 18 have a right to an assessment regardless of who they care for, what type of care they provide or how often they provide it.
- A young carer has the right to an assessment based on the appearance of need – which means that young carers no longer have to request an assessment or be undertaking a 'regular and substantial' amount of care. An assessment can also be requested.

The changes in the Care Act 2014 reinforce these new rights by requiring that local authorities:

- Take a whole family approach to assessing and supporting adults so that young carer's needs are identified when undertaking an adult or adult carer's needs assessment. This should trigger action from both children's and adult services – assessing why a child is caring, what needs to change and what would help the family to prevent children from taking on this responsibility in the first place.

The new responsibilities are placed on the local authority, but other services including schools need to play a role in identifying young carers and coordinating support for whole families.

What funding is available for the development of the school's provision for young carers?

Identifying and supporting young carers is a low cost and effective way of improving the attainment of this often low achieving pupil group.

Young carers are frequently eligible for free school meals and Pupil Premium funding. However, as the needs of young carers mean they require different types of support to other disadvantaged pupils (see Step 6, Tool 1: Checklist of support young carers might need), it is important that schools identify pupils who have caring responsibilities in order to ensure effective use of this funding stream.

Head teachers and school governing bodies are required to publish details online each year on how they are using the Pupil Premium and the impact it is having on pupil achievement. It will be important for them to show how the school is using this funding to meet the needs of eligible young carers.

Pupil Premium funding is not ring fenced. Schools can target their use of this funding towards all young carers, regardless of eligibility, provided that the performance of the eligible pupils is demonstrably improving. Using Pupil Premium funding to support all pupils who are young carers is a low cost and effective way of improving the attainment of this often low achieving pupil group.

References

- Audit Commission (2010), *Against the Odds* (Audit Commission).
- The BBC (2010), with assistance from The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, surveyed 4,029 pupils in ten secondary schools and found 337 had caring responsibilities.
- Carers Trust (2013), *Supporting Young Carers in School: An Introduction for Primary and Secondary School Staff* (Carers Trust).
- Dearden, C and Becker, S (2004), *Young Carers in the UK: The 2004 Report* (Carers UK and The Children's Society).
- Department of Health (2014) *Care and Support Statutory Guidance: Issued under the Care Act 2014* (DH Publications).
- Ofsted (2009), *Supporting Young Carers: Identifying, Assessing and Meeting the Needs of Young Carers and their Families* (Ofsted).
- 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 Princess Royal Trust for Carers (2010), *Supporting Young Carers – A Schools Resource Survey* (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers).
- UK Census 2011. Source: Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government License v.1.0.



Carers Trust
32–36 Loman Street
London SE1 0EH
Tel: 0844 800 4361. Fax: 0844 800 4362
Email: info@carers.org

www.carers.org
www.babble.carers.org
www.youngcarersmatter.org
www.professionals.carers.org
 www.facebook.com/CarersTrust
 www.twitter.com/CarersTrust
 www.youtube.com/user/CarersTrust

Carers Trust is a registered charity in England and Wales (1145181) and in Scotland (SC042870). Registered as a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales No. 7697170. Registered office: 32–36 Loman Street, London SE1 0EH.

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.

The Children's Society
Unit 4, Calford House
Wessex Business Park
Wessex Way
Colden Common SO21 1WP
Tel: 01962 711 511. Fax: 01962 711 512
Email: include@childrenssociety.org.uk

www.childrenssociety.org.uk
www.youngcarers.com www.makewav.es/ycif
 www.facebook.com/thechildrenssociety
 www.twitter.com/YCIF_tweets and [childrenssociety](https://www.twitter.com/childrenssociety)

The Children's Society is a registered charity number 221124. Registered Office: Edward Rudolf House, Margery Street, London, WC1X 0J