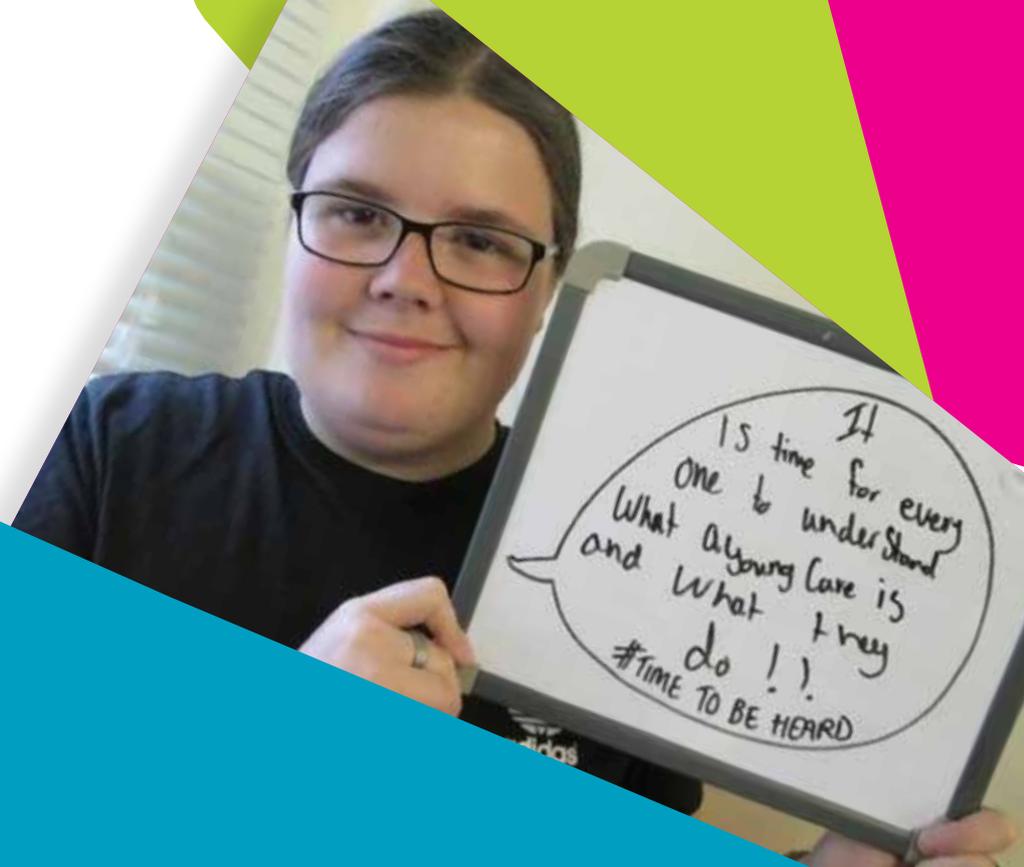


Supporting Young Carers in School:

An Introduction for Primary and Secondary School Staff



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Although the policy and legislation referred to in this guide applies to England the principles are applicable across the whole of the UK.

Carers Trust

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

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Carers Trust is a major new 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 118 independent carers centres, 63 Crossroads Care schemes and 96 young carers services. Together we are united by a shared vision for carers – to make sure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK.

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Who are young carers?

Young carers are children and young people under 18 years old who provide regular and ongoing care to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses substances (ADASS, ADCS and The Children's Society, 2012).

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.

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

Practical tasks For example, cooking, housework, shopping	Physical care For example, lifting, helping up the stairs, physiotherapy	Personal care For example, dressing, washing, toileting needs	Emotional support For example, listening, calming, being present
Household management For example, paying bills, managing finances, collecting benefits	Looking after siblings For example, putting to bed, walking to school, parenting	Interpretation For example, for hearing/speech impairment or English as an additional language	Administering medication For example, insulin needles, preparing daily tablets

Why do young carers need your support?

A young carer's personal and physical development, physical and emotional health, and social opportunities can all be affected by the family situation and their caring role. Young carers learn practical and caring skills at an early age and can be wrongly seen as 'copers'.

“ When I found out about her family situation I suddenly understood why she was often late and seldom did her homework. I was amazed at just how well she had done but frustrated that we as staff had not known.”
Teacher

Impact of caring on young people

- Physical health: 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.
- Isolation: feeling different or isolated from their peers, limited opportunities for socialisation, bullying and harassment – more than two out of three young carers are bullied at school (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 2010, and Dearden, C and Becker, S, 2004).
- Unstable environment: traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, losing income and housing, or seeing the effects of an illness or addiction.

What can this mean for a young carer's education and attainment?

- 27% of young carers of secondary school age experience educational difficulties or miss school, and where pupils are caring for someone who misuses drugs or alcohol, 40% have educational difficulties.
- Young adult carers aged between 16 and 18 years are twice as likely to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (Audit Commission, 2010).
- 68% of young carers experience bullying at school and 39% said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring role (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 2010).

What can supporting young carers do for your school?



Case example – Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council invested in a mapping exercise to gain a better understanding of the needs of young carers in its county. The initiative collected data on the attainment and school attendance of young carers. This mapping of young carers in schools provided evidence that there is an educational attainment gap for young carers. Using this data Oxfordshire raised the profile of young carers and progressed the work to target support to young carers in schools. The attainment evidence over three years showed a marked improvement at Key Stage 4 (<http://professionals.carers.org>).

Attainment – Key Stage 4

5 A* - C GCSEs (inc E and M)	Young carers	Oxfordshire average
2009	13.5%	52.9%
2010	29.9%	57.3%
2011	30.4%	57.4%
2012	40.0%	57.2%

Of the 2012 cohort of 73 (for whom data could be matched):

- 37 (60%) were free school meals eligible
- 29 (47%) were identified as having special educational needs
- 6 (8.2%) were of non-white British ethnicity.

What does the Government say?

In October 2012, Edward Timpson, the Minister for Children and Families, stated that: “Schools have a key role in identifying and supporting all young carers. We look to schools to create a supportive environment that responds to each child’s personal circumstances. It is important that head teachers and governors are allowed the necessary local freedom to exercise their welfare responsibilities in the most appropriate way. Ofsted take particular interest in the experiences of more vulnerable children, including young carers, during inspections.” (Hansard, 2012).

“Knowing that they are not alone has helped them greatly.”
Teacher

What does Ofsted say?

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.

Ofsted's Schools Inspection Handbook framework states: "Inspection is primarily about evaluating how well individual pupils benefit from their school. It is important to test the school's response to individual needs by observing how well it helps all pupils to make progress and fulfil their potential." It includes young carers as those with protected characteristics whose achievements it may be relevant to pay particular attention to (Ofsted, 2013).

Why are young carers hidden?

- Their parent's condition is not obvious so people don't think that they need any help.
- They 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.
- 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 can be discussed with 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 taken into care.
- They want to keep it a secret and/or are embarrassed.
- They see no reason or positive actions occurring as a result of telling their story.

You may think you only have a small number of young carers in your school. The likelihood is that there are many more but they remain hidden.



Finally admitting to my teacher what was going on at home was the bravest thing I'd ever done ... after that, things finally changed for me."

Young carer

Good practice in identifying young carers

→ Make it everybody's business

- Provide training on young carers to all relevant school staff.
- Publicise information about available support.
- Raise awareness of the issues faced by young carers to pupils and staff.

→ Develop a secure and safe environment where pupils have the confidence to let staff know that they are a young carer

- Ensure there is a designated person for young carers to talk to.
- Promote positive images of disability, illness, mental ill health and caring throughout the school curriculum and environment.
- Develop policies and practice to prevent bullying and stigma and to raise the self-esteem of children who are young carers.

→ Provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to self-identify

- Publicise how pupils can access support effectively.
- Provide opportunities for identification following assemblies and personal, social, health and economics education lessons (PSHE education).
- Provide non face-to-face communication opportunities, such as a post box, texting service or online method.

→ Create an environment where families have the confidence to inform your school that their child has caring responsibilities

- Publicise your young carer support on your website and in other communication.
- Stimulate good communication between your school and families.
- Ensure that your school meets the Equality Act 2010.

→ Adapt your admissions process to provide opportunities for pupils and families to inform schools that:

- The pupil has parents or other family members who have an illness or disability, or who is affected by mental ill health or substance misuse.
- The pupil helps to look after them and what impact this has on their education.
- The family is in touch with support services that could reduce the young carer's role.

→ Develop good partnership working with your local young carers service

- Support the carers service awareness-raising as an opportunity to identify young carers.
- Engage with your pupils with caring responsibilities who have been identified by the young carers service but not to your school.

What young carers say would help them

“ Ask me separately why my work is not in, I will explain but not in front of everyone.”

- “
1. If they tried to understand my situation more.
 2. If they discussed my changing needs regularly rather than just once.
 3. If they provided support when I miss lessons.
 4. Flexibility.”

“ Understood that although I got good grades when I said I needed help, I needed help and that sometimes I could not do it all and would need some time just to stop.”

- “
1. Help me when I had issues from home.
 2. See how my day was.
 3. Tell me not to worry about my brother getting in trouble.”

“ I feel the way my teachers could have helped me more is to understand if or why I'm late to school instead of getting in trouble!”

“ Treat us like other pupils but remember we have extra problems outside of school and we need extra support.”

Young carers have said they would like:

- Someone we can talk to who understands about young carers and will listen.
- Teachers to be understanding and flexible if we have issues with our homework and support us.
- Other students to understand.
- Support when we are bullied.
- Access to our phones in case anything is wrong at home.
- A support group with other young carers, mentoring or counselling.
- Not to be labelled or seen as a trouble maker.

Existing mechanisms available to support young carers in school

The Pupil Premium

Introduced by the Government in 2011, the Pupil Premium provides additional funding to schools to support their disadvantaged pupils. Funding is based on the number of pupils who are or have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years (known as 'Ever 6 FSM'). For the financial year 1 April 2013–31 March 2014 this funding amounts to £900 per pupil.

Identifying and supporting young carers is a low cost and effective way of improving the attainment of this often low achieving pupil group; many of whom are in receipt of free school meals.

Young carers are four times more likely to live in households where no adults are in work (The Children's Society, 2013). This highlights the significant number of young carers likely to be eligible for free school meals that would benefit from targeted support funded through the Pupil Premium.

School nurses

In April 2013, the Government announced that England's 1,200 school nurses and their teams would lead a newly strengthened and tailored school nursing service, meaning better care and support for children, including young carers.

The Department for Education and the Department of Health have developed a Pathway for Young Carers which provides a co-ordinated approach between school nursing, education and young carers services.

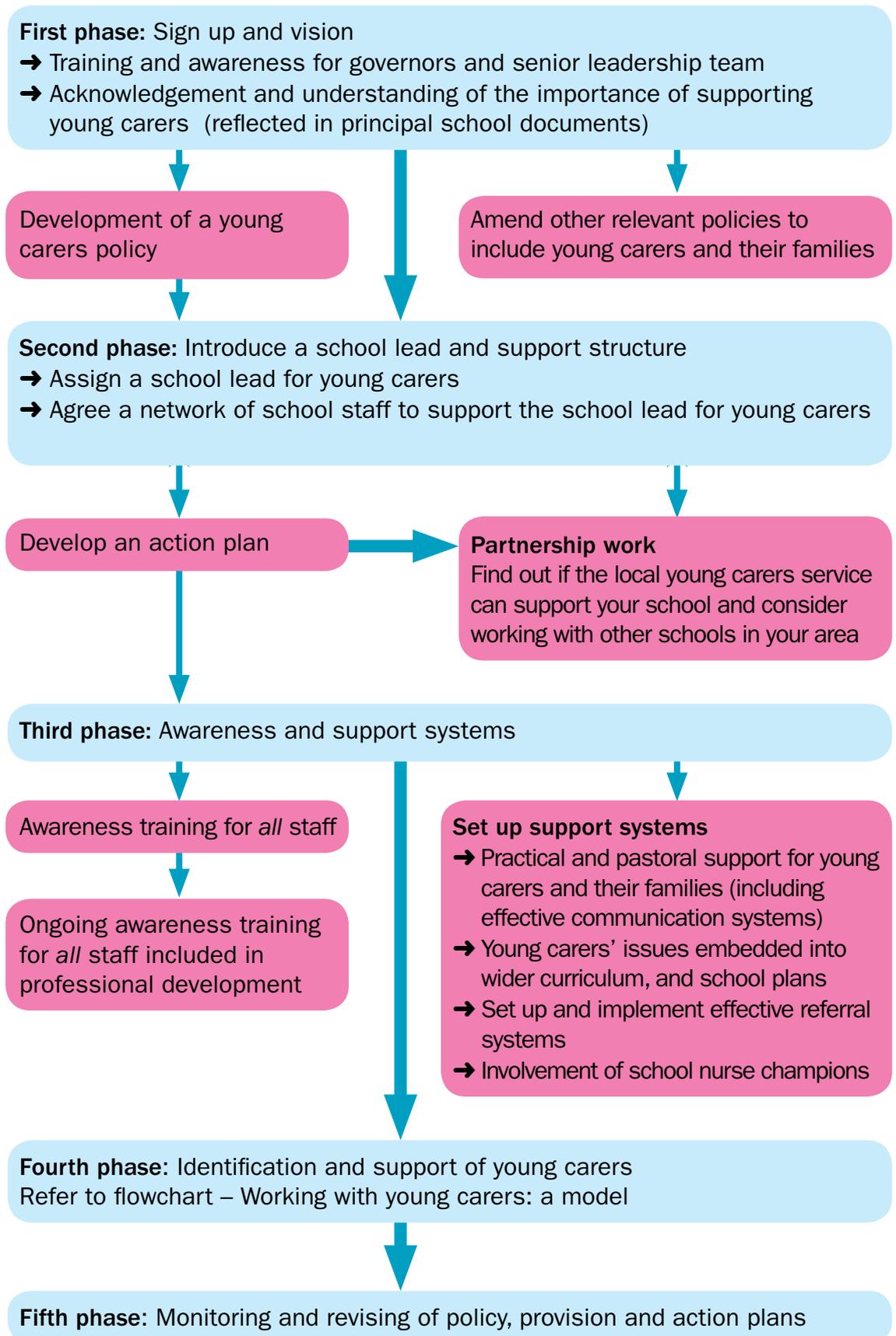
School nurses are ideally positioned to play a pivotal role in the lives of young people. School nurses can help reduce the negative impact of caring on the health and wellbeing of young carers by ensuring that young carers are identified early and receive timely, age-appropriate information, by spotting and addressing any emerging health needs and by ensuring that young carers are accessing appropriate health services and other support.

16–19 Bursary: Discretionary awards

Introduced by the Government in 2011, the 16-19 Bursary Fund provides additional funding for schools, colleges, training providers and local authorities to support young people to stay on in further education or training. The 16-19 Bursary Fund includes discretionary awards that allow education and training providers to identify young people with the greatest financial barriers and support them in ways that best meet their needs.

Guidance (Education Funding Agency, 2013) states that: "When assessing the need for financial support, institutions should also consider other exceptional circumstances, such as where a young person is providing care to a sick or disabled relative."

Setting up a framework of support: a model



Working with young carers: a model

PHASE 1: Identification and assessment

Awareness of a pupil being a young carer through enrolment information, parents, self-identification, or other indicators

- Use of questionnaire and checklists for information gathering
- Communication with parents/family
- Use of common assessment framework (when appropriate) or other assessment tool such as the MACA/PANOC (Joseph, S, Becker, F, Becker, S, 2012).

If appropriate, initiate child protection and safeguarding procedures.

PHASE 2: Establishing involvement of staff and other professionals as appropriate

- School Lead for young carers / personal tutor
- Young carers service
- Team around the child (when appropriate)
- Lead professional (when appropriate)

PHASE 3: Support

- Use a multi-agency approach, for example with a young carers service, counselling service, education welfare, educational psychology or careers service

Support for the whole family to consider parent/family needs, including health and social care needs and parenting support.

Consider, for example:

- Parent support advisers
- Adult services
- Health services
- (Adult) carers services
- Respite care for the family

Set up support systems such as

- Personalised plan
- Homework/exam support
- Peer support group
- After school clubs
- Telephone access
- Staff to talk to/counselling
- Young carer card
- Emergency or crisis plan
- Transport support
- Support with transition to secondary school/college/university
- Regular review of attendance and attainment and implement support

Be mindful that pupil's and family's situations may change rapidly. Ongoing formal and informal monitoring is important. It may be necessary to re-visit any of the above phases

Young carer school policy

The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook (Ofsted, 2013) states that: “Inspection is primarily about evaluating how well individual pupils benefit from their school. It is important to test the school’s response to individual needs by observing how well it helps all pupils to make progress and fulfil their potential.”

Ofsted says it may be relevant to pay particular attention to the achievement of young carers as those who have protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Recommendations for a school’s young carer policy:

School commitment	In place?
The whole school is committed to meeting the needs of young carers so that they are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and have equal access to their education as their peers. (This commitment is reflected in all relevant school policies).	
A school lead has been assigned with responsibility for young carers and their families. Pupils and families will be made aware of the identity of the schools young carer lead and how to access support from them.	
The school uses the Pupil Premium to minimise any barriers to education and learning experienced by eligible young carers to improve their wellbeing, attainment and attendance.	
The school has an effective referral system and strong partnership in place with the local young carers service.	
The school actively seeks feedback and ideas from young carers and their families in order to shape and improve provision for young carers.	
The school understands the issues faced by young carers, what to look and listen for and how to respond	
→ Training on young carers’ issues is embedded in ongoing professional development for governors and all staff.	
→ The school keeps up to date with national and local developments and with legislation and guidance affecting young carers and their families.	
Young carers know how to access support	
→ Information about support available for young carers and how to access it is clearly available to both pupils and families.	
→ The school uses the curriculum to promote a full understanding, acceptance of, and respect for, issues such as caring, disability and impairment, for example, embedding the challenges faced by young carers into PSHE education lessons curriculum.	
→ The school is accessible and welcoming to parents with disabilities and/or illness, offering additional support to enable them to attend parents’ evenings or other school events. Home visits are considered where appropriate.	

→ The school offers additional support to remove any communication barriers with parents, so that parents are able to be fully engaged with the education of their child.	
During the school enrolment process for new pupils, the school:	
→ Identifies parent(s) or family members who have disabilities or other long-term physical or mental health conditions.	
→ Identifies if the pupil has caring responsibilities and if this means this young carer has any additional needs that need to be supported.	
→ Establishes individual plans to recognise the child's/young person's specific needs as a young carer.	
→ Refers/signposts young carers and their families to other support agencies and professionals as appropriate.	
Young carers are respected	
→ A young carer's privacy is respected and information about them or their caring role is not communicated in front of their peers.	
→ A family's privacy is respected and the school only shares information with professionals and agencies on a need to know basis in order to support pupils and their families.	
→ The school views young carers as any other pupil, but understands that they have the additional pressure of caring responsibilities.	
Transition support is in place for young carers	
→ The school offers support to the pupil and their family during the transition process, sharing agreed information with their new school/college/university lead for young carers and their families.	
→ The school will identify young carers at risk of falling into the NEET category and take appropriate actions to address this.	
The school will reduce barriers to education and learning	
→ The school offers lunch-time detentions as well as after school ones.	
→ The school allows young carers to use a telephone to call home during breaks and lunch times so as to reduce any worry they may have about a family member.	
→ Where appropriate, the school negotiates deadlines, for example, for homework and coursework.	
→ The school actively seeks feedback and ideas from young carers and their families in order to shape and improve provision for young carers.	
→ The school will consider how best to support those parents who find it difficult to escort younger children to school.	
→ The school uses and evaluates data effectively to identify and monitor the progress made by young carers and reviews young carers individual plans accordingly.	
→ The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.	

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Supporting resources

Young Carers e-learning module: <http://static.carers.org/e-learning>

Supporting Young Carers and their Families: Examples of Practice. <http://professionals.carers.org/young-carers/articles/supporting-young-carers-and-their-families-examples-of-practice,7139,PR.html>

“ Confidence. Young carers have said they feel they can express their true feelings to someone they feel comfortable with.”
Teacher



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Further information

Contact Anna Morris, Senior Policy Manager for Young and Young Adult Carers at Carers Trust, at policy@carers.org.

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Carers Trust

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London SE1 0EH
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