

Nurses: Champions for carers across the life course

Carers

Carers provide regular and on-going care and emotional support to a family member who has a physical or mental illness, a disability, and/or misuses substances. Carers may be supporting a parent, sibling or other family member.

Carers may become vulnerable when the level of caregiving and responsibility to the person in need of care becomes excessive or inappropriate for a child, risking impacting on his or her emotional or physical well-being or educational achievement and life chances*.

*Working together to support young carers and their families: A Template for a Local Memorandum of Understanding between Statutory Directors for Children's Services and Adult Social Services (August 2012)

http://www.youngcarer.com/sites/default/files/Imce_user_files/PTP/mou_young_carers_2012.pdf



Design created by Lucy Davies, aged 11

Issues facing carers

The following are examples of the impact of caring across the life course:

- Poor public health outcomes including:
 - Mental health issues including, behavioural problems, self-harming or eating disorders, stress and anxiety and depression
 - Physical health problems such as back injury caused by lifting and tiredness because of interrupted sleep
- School absences / work absences, underachievement and lowered aspirations.
- Many young carers experience bullying
- Social isolation
- Poor self-esteem and feeling that they are different from other children
- Difficulty in sleeping and concentrating
- Poor diet
- Financial hardship
- Reluctance to seek help
- Fear of being taken into care or losing parent or partner/family member
- Increased risk of safeguarding issues for young carers

Key Messages from young carers

- We need to know who the school nurse is, what support they can provide and how to contact them and to be reassured the service is confidential
- Recognise that our caring responsibilities can affect our health and wellbeing – including educational attainment, emotional, physical and social health
- Access to services that are non-judgemental, who listen to me and support me
- Reassurance that school nurses have the skill, knowledge, training and confidence to support me
- To know that school nurses are working in partnership with schools, teachers and other health services to support young carers
- To only have to tell our story once and not to feel pressured into sharing information
- To be able to contact my parent and for time out when things are difficult
- Access to support or respite when I need it most to avoid crisis
- Confidence that I have time to be 'me' but know that my caring responsibilities are being met
- To be recognised as an 'expert' in care and my contribution valued
- For support to be non-intrusive support and tailored to my needs

Key Messages from adult carers

- We want to keep a normal home routine
- Recognise and value our contribution to caring
- Involve us in decision making and keep us informed of changes
- We want someone to listen to our concerns – without being judgemental
- Take time to speak to our families and carers to find out our needs
- Help us with our 'wellbeing' and mental health
- Help us to stay in our home with as much support as is necessary
- Tell us what carer breaks and respite are available to us
- Help us to identify triggers to anticipate and prevent crises
- Help us to get support to manage care alongside paid employment/childcare responsibilities
- Recognise increasing frailty of older carers/likelihood of spouses undertaking mutual caring roles
- Support young carers with the transition role to adult carers
- We need help to find our way through 'systems' and to find the right support

Useful resources

- Young and adult carers pathways
- [The Children's Society](#)
- [Barnardos](#)
- [Carers Trust](#)
- Carers Strategy
- [Recognised, valued and supported. Next Steps for the Carers Strategy. Department of Health, 2010](#)
- [Be Bothered: Making education count for young carers. Family Action 2012](#)
- [Supporting Young Carers: Identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of young carers and their families. Ofsted, 2009](#)
- [Supporting Young Carers: A resource for schools, Carers Trust and The Children's Society, 2012](#)
- [Carers Trust Carers Hub](#)
- [No-one Alone](#)
- [Care in local communities: A new vision and model for district nursing](#)

Making every contact count

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My role as a Champion for Carers is to:

- Act as an advocate for young or adult carers
- Ensure that the voices of carers and carers groups are heard by decision makers and commissioners in order to influence service delivery and design.
- Act as an expert for my team and colleagues
- Contribute to training by promoting information and resources
- Work with partners, such as schools, employers, secondary health services and social care to raise awareness of the needs of carers in order to achieve early identification and support for them and their families.
- Work with partners, such as GPs, Community Nurses and secondary care to improve early identification and support of carers and their families in primary care

As a champion for carers I pledge to:

- Contribute to the development of local and regional networks of school nursing champions for young carers and emerging adult nurse networks
- Be responsible for remaining professionally updated regarding policy and practice where appropriate
- Attend updates for 'School Nurse Champions for Young Carers' or champions for adult carers
- Keep myself and my colleagues informed about current best practice for supporting young and adult carers and their families
- Commit to sharing my knowledge on supporting young and adult carers and their families with at least 25 people (professionals and carers).
- Link to partner agencies and organisations including voluntary organisations to understand the contribution and support they can provide e.g. Carers Trust, The Children's Society, Barnardos, Carers Trust



Photograph modelled for The Children's Society © Nick David

Local Information



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