



Children and Families Act and Care Act 2014 – 10 years on for young carers and young adult carers

A report from the APPG for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers following a deep dive into the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 ten years on in relation to young carers and young adult carers.

May 2024

Disclaimer

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About the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers brings together Parliamentarians from across the political spectrum who are committed to improving the lives of young carers and young adult carers.

The group's mission is to provide a forum for key issues affecting young carers and young adult carers which will be addressed collaboratively by Parliamentarians and other key stakeholders, including young carers and young adult carers.

The APPG holds regular meetings in Parliament with an ambitious agenda of work and seeks to make the very strongest collective case to Central Government as it seeks to achieve the best support, services and outcomes for young carers and young adult carers.

The officers of the APPG are:

Chair: Paul Blomfield MP

Vice-Chair: Duncan Baker MP

Vice-Chair: Ed Davey MP

Vice-Chair: Lord Young of Cookham

In addition to the officers, there are additional MPs and Peers who are members of the APPG (Members are defined as those who have asked to be on the group's mailing list or who actively support the work of the APPG without being officers).

You can find a full list of the APPG members on the APPG's webpage – www.carers.org/appg

Carers Trust provide the secretariat to the APPG and you can find more information about the work of the APPG at www.carers.org/appg or by contacting appg@carers.org.

Children and Families Act and Care Act – 10 years on for young carers

About the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014

The Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 were two pieces of legislation passed in 2014 which included specific provisions designed to significantly improve support and outcomes for young carers across England.

Between them, the two pieces of legislation introduced:

- A duty on local authorities to provide Young Carers Needs Assessments¹ if a young carer or their parent requested one, or if it appeared they may need one. There was no minimum age or level of caring included. The aim of this new right was to prevent or reduce ‘inappropriate or excessive levels of care’ being provided by children.
- A duty on local authorities to offer ‘transitions assessments’ to young carers if it feels the young carer is likely to have needs for support after becoming 18²
- A duty on local authorities to take ‘reasonable steps’ to identify young carers³
- A focus on a ‘Whole-family approach’ in relation to supporting young carers. The starting point should be providing support to the person with care needs and then assessing what support needs for the young carer remain.

¹ Children and Families Act 2014, s96(1)

² Care Act 2014, s63

³ Children and Families Act 2014, s96(12)

A deep dive into the impact of the legislation for young carers and young adult carers

Our inquiry into the life opportunities of young carers and young adult carers⁴ raised concerns in relation to how young carers needs assessments and transition assessments were working in practice. The inquiry also highlighted issues in relation to identification of young carers.

To coincide with the ten-year anniversary of the two pieces of legislation, we undertook a deep dive into the impact that the Acts are having in relation to young carers and young adult carers.

Our May 2024 meeting was focused on this piece of work and we invited written evidence in advance of the meeting. At the meeting we heard from:

- Andy McGowan, Policy and Practice Manager at Carers Trust who provided an overview of the written evidence submitted to the APPG
- Dr Chloe Alexander, Research Fellow at the Centre for Care - University of Birmingham
- Sharron Smith, CEO at York Carers Centre who provided the perspective of a local carer service
- A young adult carer

At the meeting, APPG observers, which included representatives from carer services, universities and local authorities were also invited to give oral evidence during the meeting.

Thank you to the following who gave evidence to this deep dive:

- Carers in Hertfordshire
- Carers Trust
- Carly Ellicott, University of Plymouth
- Dr Chloe Alexander, Centre for Care, University of Birmingham
- Gloucestershire Young Carers
- Helen Leadbitter MBE – Young Carers Initiative
- Imago
- John Bangs – Independent Young Carers policy consultant
- Local Authority 1
- Local Carer Service 1
- MYTIME Young Carers
- Dr Rebecca Lacey, St George's, University of London
- Sheffield Young Carers
- York Carers Centre
- Young Adult Carer 1

⁴ ['Being a young carer, you have to choose between your future and the future of the person you care for' November 2023](#)

Our findings

The evidence we received clearly showed that whilst both the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 provided solid foundations for improving identification and support for young carers and young adult carers, the legislation have not yet been able to achieve their stated aims.

Awareness and identification

Whilst the majority of respondents felt that the Children and Families Act has helped to raise of awareness of young carers and improve identification within children's social care and schools, there is clearly still far more which needs to improve.

It takes on average three years for a young carer to be identified, with many being identified only when situations reach crisis point. Carer organisations reported that they still receive very few referrals from adult social care or health professionals. We are concerned that the evidence suggests that the average length of time for a young carer to be identified has not reduced in the past ten years. We also feel believe it is unacceptable that there are still young carers going as long as ten years before any professional is identifying them for support, even when multiple practitioners are involved with the family.

Improving early identification of young carers and young adult carers, particularly within adult social care and health settings, but also colleges, training providers and employers must be a priority for the next Government. NHS England, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission also have a crucial role in improving identification of young carers.

Whilst some areas reporting having multi-agency strategic groups in place to improve identification and support of young carers, it was clear that in other areas, increasing identification was being left to local carer services. All local authorities should ensure that they have such a group in place, bringing together representation from children's social care, adult social care, education, health and the voluntary sector.

We welcome Ofsted specifically highlighting identification of young carers within their revised Children's Services inspection framework. Ofsted should ensure that they are routinely asking local authorities for information on who is identifying young carers.

Assessments

In our November 2023 inquiry, we looked in some detail at the issue around Young Carers Needs Assessments and Transitions Assessments for young carers transitioning to adulthood. In this deep dive, we received further evidence highlighting a wide range of issues in relation to how these assessments are operating.

As an APPG we believe it is unacceptable that ten years on from the duty on local authorities to undertake assessments in order to prevent children taking on inappropriate or excessive levels of carers, the proportion of young carers providing 20+ hours of care a week has increased, not decreased. Whilst we absolutely agree that no child should be providing such high levels of care, what is of most concern is the fact that the number of 5 to 9 year olds providing 20-49 and 50+ hours a week has increased from 2011. Ensuring young carers needs assessments are reducing the number of children providing such high levels of care must be an absolute priority for the next Government and requires collaborative efforts from the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care.

Respondents highlighted the lack of guidance for local authorities in relation to defining and responding to 'inappropriate' and 'excessive' levels of care. Whilst assessment tools and processes will need to fit with local social care and early help arrangements, we do believe there is a need for further direction from the Department for Education to ensure some element of consistency across areas. As a minimum, Ofsted should be ensuring that assessments are considering both the amount of care being provided, and also the impact on the young carer. There should also be a clear process and criterion for when a young carer can have their assessment reviewed. Any new guidance should also make clear to local authorities that there is no minimum age for assessments as well as guidance on how to conduct assessments with younger young carers. Ofsted also have a key role to play in ensuring that young carers under the age of eight are able to access assessments and support.

Respondents described how young carers were still seen as '*the responsibility of children's services*'. It was particularly alarming to receive evidence from Carers Trust which showed that over 90% of local authorities did not appear to have any arrangements in place to facilitate joint working between children's and adults services in relation to young carers. With the recently refreshed 'No Wrong Doors for Young Carers' Memorandum of Understanding, Ofsted, CQC, the Department for Education and the Department of Health and Social Care must collectively ensure that all local authorities are embedding this MoU.

Respondents highlighted the need for increased accountability in relation to statutory assessments and duties for local authorities. We welcome the fact that both Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission have revised their assurance frameworks in the past six months to include increased references to young carers, and that both supported the recent refresh of 'No Wrong Doors for Young Carers'. Relevant themes from inspections of both Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care should be regularly reviewed and used to improve practice within local authorities.

Carer organisations commissioned to provide Young Carers Needs Assessments highlighted how they have seen significant increases in the number of assessments they are completing, but no increase in the amount of funding to meet this increased level of assessed need.

Transitions for young carers was the area where the most room for improvement was identified. There still appears to be multiple parts of the country, where it is not clear how a young carer can access a transitions assessment, despite local authorities being under a duty to provide them for almost ten years. We are concerned by the evidence from respondents which suggested that there appears to have been no further activity in relation to transitions assessments, since the DHSC-commissioned research in 2020, carried out by The Children's Society⁵. That research found that more than half of young adult carers reported not having received a transitions assessment.

Even when assessments are happening, some respondents highlighted how adult social care and adult health services are now engaging with the assessments or the support needed:

"We had a case where mental health services agreed it was needed to put support in for the young carer to be able to leave home and go to university but was unwilling to put that plan in place before they actually went. This resulted in them not going." **Carer service**

Beyond transitions assessments, we received evidence from young adult carers about some local authorities where support for adult carers is limited to those caring for adults, meaning that sibling young adult carers do not have access to support. This is something which the Department of Health and Social Care and the Care Quality Commission should review in order to ensure all young carers have access to support when they turn 18.

Whole-family approaches

This was a topic where the feedback from respondents was very split. In some areas, respondents reported that support for young carers via a whole-family approach is embedded into early help, using a 'Child and Family Assessment'. Others said there simply wasn't the capacity to consider 'whole-family' – so services work in silos with the person with the care and support needs.

There was widespread consensus that more work is needed to improve joint working between children's and adult services – both social care, but also health services. We welcome the Department for Education including an expectation in the updated Working Together to Safeguard Children for adult social care to liaise with children's social care services to ensure a joined-up approach. But given the findings of this deep dive, the

⁵ "Shaping our future – Improving Assessment and support for Young Carers' transitions into adulthood", The Children's Society, 2020. Available at https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/young-carer_transition_report.pdf

Department for Education, Department of Health and Social Care, CQC and Ofsted should all proactively work to ensure this is happening in practice.

We were particularly concerned to receive evidence highlighting the differential treatment amongst different groups of young carers, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Issues raised included stigma, mistrust in statutory services and a lack of translation.

Recommendations

The variety of issues raised through this deep dive further emphasise the pressing need for an all-age cross-Government National Carers' Strategy and Action Plan. This strategy should have senior cross-government support, be co-produced with young carers and young adult carers and will need appropriate financial resource to ensure implementation.

As a minimum the strategy should set out:

- Plans to increase early identification across education, health and social care. There should be a particular emphasis on identification and support for young carers from under-represented backgrounds, including young carers from minority ethnic communities, younger young carers, and those caring for people because of mental illness or addiction.
- How the Government plans to reduce the number of young carers and young adult carers providing inappropriate and/or excessive levels of care and where possible prevent it happening at all.
- Measures to improve transitions for young carers into adulthood

In addition to activity contained within a Carers Strategy, based on the evidence we received, we also recommend that:

- The Department for Education should issue updated guidance in relation to Young Carers Assessments. This work should include a focus on what constitutes 'inappropriate' and 'excessive' care
- To further improve identification and support within education, the Department for Education should add a requirement to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' for all schools and colleges to have a young carers lead and young carers policy.
- The Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care should consider the introduction of new reporting requirements in relation to local authority duties towards young carers
- The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England should ensure that the updated NHS Constitution references the key role that the NHS has to play in identifying young carers and adopting a whole-family approach.
- The Care Quality Commission and Ofsted should publish a thematic review of themes identified through local authority assessments in relation to young carers.

Appendix One – Written evidence

We opened a call for evidence ahead of our meeting on Tuesday 21st May 2014 to provide an opportunity for feedback from organisations working with young carers and young adult carers, local authorities academics and individuals.

APPG observers also had the opportunity to feed into the process in the meeting itself.

Responses to the Call for Evidence

Respondent 1

Name: Anonymous

Organisation/role: Carer Service CEO

What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

Some positive impact in that there is now a duty on Local Authorities to protect children from inappropriate caring and to improve wellbeing, possibly led to improved contracts for VCSE to provide support for young carers and young adult carers and their families. Includes early identification and the duty to carry out assessments which is improved from previous.

What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

Initially awareness was far improved but over time this has reduced as departments become busier and the identification of young carers is now left to the VCSE (as we have a contract in our area)

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made some difference.

Our contract clearly asks us to identify young and young adult carers, but over time the onus on other LA staff to identify and support has reduced.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to Young Carers Needs Assessments has helped reduce the number of young carers providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care”?

Agree.

We are contracted to undertake young carers assessments but there is no process in place for sharing this information with the LA, so we are often left holding cases trying to fight for services on behalf of families. The right to an assessment doesn't automatically lead to more services for the cared for person, removing caring roles. There is however more support for the young carers to cope and manage caring roles.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to a Transitions Assessment has improved the transition for young carers from children’s to adults services”?

Disagree.

We are not aware of any transition assessments taking place in our area, nor had any conversations about young carers transitioning to adult services. Our service transitions according to need for carers support but other than that we are not aware of anything else.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“Young adult carers are able to access transitions assessments when they need them, and these assessments lead to support ”?

Disagree.

We are not aware of any transition assessments formally taking place, though our support is provided in a seamless way.

Based on your experience, how well do you feel a ‘whole-family approach’ has been embedded into the identification and support for young carers?

Somewhat badly.

Children and Adult’s services don’t talk to each other, we have not witnessed or heard of any joint assessments between carers and cared for taking place. Not many social care staff working with adults would consider young carers despite us delivering training and awareness sessions – there is no direction from above.

What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

What the act says is right but the implementation is variable across areas. There needs to be stricter direction, guidelines can be ignored. Education could do more to identify and work holistically.

Respondent 2

Name: Carly Ellicott

Organisation/role: PhD Candidate, University of Plymouth

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made little difference.

Removing Young Carers as a specific area of inspection focus from the Education Inspection Framework by the Department of Education, has demonstrated a detrimental decline in awareness of young carers in schools as noted by the recent school census data. 'The MMCA studies were carried out with children and young people aged 7-22 years. (Joseph et al. 2012:7). However we need to know more about younger carers. A UK study conducted by Barnardo's identified that 12% of young carers had begun a caring role at the age of five and two thirds of young carers took on that role during primary school'. (James, 2017)' Ellicott, C. & Woodsworth, A. (2024) Young Carers in the UK, Unpublished Routledge International Handbook of Social Work: London (Release July 2024)

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

"The introduction of the right to Young Carers Needs Assessments has helped reduce the number of young carers providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care"?

Neither agree nor disagree.

Young carers in early childhood remain underrepresented, and Early Help assessments do not make the recognition of young carers in early childhood clear enough.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

"The introduction of the right to a Transitions Assessment has improved the transition for young carers from children's to adults services"?

Neither agree nor disagree.

It is not my area of focus, however we need to look at transitions into education from early years into primary to consider how families at risk can be identified in order to prevent or reduce caring roles from becoming inappropriate.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

"Young adult carers are able to access transitions assessments when they need them, and these assessments lead to support "?

Neither agree nor disagree.

Support remains a postcode lottery and practice is inconsistent.

Based on your experience, how well do you feel a 'whole-family approach' has been embedded into the identification and support for young carers?

Somewhat badly.

'As much of the literature on young carers only considers older children, often starting at the age of 7 or 8, these youngest carers are missed. Department for Education (2021) and Marmot (2015:112) provide evidence that the impact of early childhood experiences has a 'profound effect on their [young carers] life chances and hence their health as adults.' Knowing this confers on professionals an ethical responsibility to take, 'practical action to influence what other people do in practice' (McNiff, 2017:77). In doing so, professionals and researchers must act to ensure that early identification and assessment accurately represents the needs of our youngest carers, ensuring that they are seen and understood within their communities and educational establishments ' Ellicott, C. & Woodsworth, A. (2024) Young Carers in the UK, Unpublished Routledge International Handbook of Social Work: London (Release July 2024)

What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

Include young carers in early childhood in the narrative of young carer policy and practice, this involves engaging with the early childhood care and education sector to inform research, policy and practice, and help raise awareness of young carers needs throughout all life stages. This would support a ' Think Young carer' approach which promotes early identification.

Any other comments?

I am currently writing a scoping review : How are Young Carers represented in broader literature and what factors influence dominant representations of Young Carers in Early Childhood in the UK ? spanning the last decade since the introduction of the Children and Families Act (2014). The review has been registered with JBI.

Respondent 3

Name: Dr Chloe Alexander

Organisation/role: Research Fellow, Centre for Care - University of Birmingham

What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 provide a framework that is useful to young carers and their family, creating clear definitions for young carers and their entitlement to recognition. Young carers and their families are found to be informed about their particular needs and some are aware of the possibility of support. We know from research conducted in 2016 by the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England that just 20% of young carers might be identified by the local authority with calculations based on a low estimate of the young carer population (1), although data available on this is poor. Administrative data should be available to assess the implementation of these duties but is not routinely collated and monitored. Where young carers, disabled children and their parents are familiar with local authority or third sector young carers services, they often value their expertise and resources - but more needs to be done to increase identification and awareness of support available.

Some families with more than one child that is a young carer can feel restricted by the targeting of support from age 5 upwards, not recognising especially young children and their role in care.

The limitations and weaknesses of the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 have a negative impact on young carers, young adult carers and their families. The legislation is weak in terms of a family's eligibility for support once a young carer has been identified and needs-assessed. It also lacks measures that monitor the implementation of the legislation and the fulfilment of duties on local authorities to identify and assess the needs of young carers.

References

- (1) The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England. (2016). Young Carers: The support provided to Young Carers in England. London: The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England.

What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

My research has found that the processes of identification appear to have driven greater activity to raise awareness of young carers. This is also likely to be the result of a stronger network of third sector young carers services, with limited financial support from local authorities.

Once families become aware of the use of the young carer label to identify their child, they can have a mixed experience. They may receive beneficial interventions from professionals and be offered additional opportunities for the child identified as a young carer, such as one-to-one support and trips with other young carers. At the same time they are unlikely to receive offers of services that change care arrangements. Families are typically ineligible for adult social care services and

priced out of private services. The young carer and their family then live with the difficulties of knowing that their child is labelled as different and disadvantaged but without the means to address it (2). The imbalance between the obligation to identify young carers and the weaker powers to offer services can stigmatise families whilst continuing their exclusion from social care services that could alter, reduce or stop the child's role in care. My research has found that disabled parents and disabled siblings of young carers experience stress and stigma because of this predicament. Young carers and young adult carers may also be put off from accessing support because of the concern that the most impactful forms of support are withheld and identification opens few doors.

References: Alexander, C. (2021). Affects of policy design: The case of young carers in the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. *Social Policy & Administration*, 55(5), 968-980. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12692>

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made some difference.

I wish to draw the APPG's attention to upcoming research that will provide new insights into identification processes and how it can be improved. I will be working with a group of young carers and young adult carers that will be developing their own research interests in this area. The group will be supported to contribute through participatory research and will improve our understanding of the processes that support children and young people to identify themselves as carers. They will conduct original research on how growing up as a young carer affects the way that children view support services.

The project will explore:

- factors which help to connect young carers and young adult carers with services.
- factors that increase the isolation and present barriers to support amongst young carers and young adult carers.
- the potential to increase identification of young adult carers, strengthen the benefits of this process and reduce any negative impacts or stigma.

During 2024 the young adult carer participatory research group could be available for discussion with the APPG about their lived experiences and their views on improving identification processes, if this would be helpful to the APPG's upcoming work (3).

References

(3) More information about the Centre for Care research group on 'Care trajectories and constraints': <https://centreforcure.ac.uk/research-groups/care-trajectories-and-constraints/>

What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 do not address the urgent need for social care services to be provided on a greater scale to adults with care and support needs, including those assessed as having lower levels of needs. Data shows an increasing gap between the number of people requesting support from adult social care and the number actually receiving any support (4). It is estimated that nearly half a million adults are waiting for care or for an assessment (5).

This could have a positive impact on large numbers of young carers and young adult carers by creating choice about whether they could reduce or stop their caring role. We should encourage and respond to the reasonable expectations from young carers, young adult carers and their families that where children and young people have become involved in care, families should be able to draw on public services to reduce, mitigate and prevent unpaid care work by children and young people.

The lack of duties and powers for NHS organisations to contribute to a whole family approach severely limits the extent to which young carers and young adult carers are identified, assessed and offered services that reduce or improve their involvement in care.

References

(4) The King's Fund social care 360 - access

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/social-care-360>

(5) ADASS Autumn Survey 2024 <https://www.adass.org.uk/adass-autumn-survey-part-2-final-report-press-release>

Any other comments?

Many young carers and their families struggle with poverty because of low levels of welfare payments and high housing costs. For example, my research found that low levels of Universal Credit payments resulted in impoverished conditions and poor housing for some families with young carers. In another case, limited availability of housing and No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) rules for those without citizenship status resulted in young carers living in poor and insecure housing (6). The combined impact of poverty and punitive 'hostile environment' policies on families that have migrated to the UK, intensify and worsen the circumstances for children and young people involved in providing care. This is an especially disadvantaged group in need of support.

References

(6) Alexander, C. (2021). Unequal Conditions of Care and the Implications for Social Policies on Young Carers. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 38(5), 505-518. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-021-00781-w>

Respondent 4

Name: Hana Gill

Organisation/role: Gloucestershire Young Carers, Director of Development & Engagement

What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

The right to a needs assessment is a great foundation and the expanded definition have helped raise the profile of young carers and their specific needs - however what they really need is support and an assessment is only the start.

What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

Good impact on awareness generally (across services/local government especially).

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made some difference.

By strengthening their rights in law and the rights to a needs assessment the laws have raised the profile of young carers especially for local authorities has helped to raise awareness and improve earlier identification, especially in schools.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to Young Carers Needs Assessments has helped reduce the number of young carers providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care”?

Agree.

Slightly agree. It enables YCOs and social care to challenge inappropriate care when this is identified in a needs assessment. However there is not always the suitable support available to make an impact and change the situation (or this support is difficult to access)

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to a Transitions Assessment has improved the transition for young carers from children’s to adults services”?

Neither agree nor disagree.

The transition assessment has enormous potential for young and young adult carers but for it to be meaningful and impactful it needs Childrens services, Adult social care and young carer services to work together well and this is not happening in many areas of the country. If a young adult is being asked if they want to continue to provide care and they do not, we need to ensure the care needed in the family can be accessed from elsewhere.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“Young adult carers are able to access transitions assessments when they need them, and these assessments lead to support ”?

Neither agree nor disagree.

As above I still think there are very few young adult carers across the country who are accessing these assessments or even aware of them. Even when they do happen, as a young carer service we can support the young adult carer and help raise aspirations for their future but we can't fill in the gaps on care if they want to, for example, go away to university. We need adult social care to be in the process and responsive to future needs identified in these assessments.

Based on your experience, how well do you feel a 'whole-family approach' has been embedded into the identification and support for young carers?

Somewhat well.

In Gloucestershire we work hard with different agencies to support the whole family, but joint working between adult and children's services around young carers could still be improved.

What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

Data collection of assessments in different areas.

Young carers to be made aware of their rights in a way that reaches them.

Local authorities to be held to account in terms of meeting their legal obligations.

Easy user guides to help translate legal rights into practice. Funding for young carers assessment and the follow on support that is necessary..

Any other comments?

Ten years on there could be some work reminding and re-educating relevant agencies about the laws and what they should mean for young and young adult carers. The economic case for supporting young and young adult carers needs to be made too, as this will help strengthen the argument in investing in young carer. young adult carer services and why this is so crucial.

Respondent 5

Name: Carole Whittle

Organisation/role: Carers in Hertfordshire, Health and Wellbeing Manager

What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

The act raised the profile of young carers amongst some social care professionals, however it did little to ensure other professionals including health gave this any level of priority. It has given carers organisations, such as ours, levers to open doors and encourage action but at a time of austerity and cuts to budgets this has been required to be done with no additional resources and this has limited the impact for individual young carers and their families.

In 2014 we registered around 160 young carers in 2023 we registered 560 but we have had no significant funding increases to manage this increased demand on our service. This means more young carers are being identified but we cannot offer them the same level of service and support that we could in 2014.

Young adult carers is a term that means different things in different places. Some refer to age 14 plus whilst others use 16 or even 18 as the starting point. This means it is hard to analyse data for this group. Some at this age need support to transition away from caring, either to leave home and or go to university. The Hertfordshire Young Peoples health and wellbeing survey identified that young carers were significantly less likely than their peers to plan to continue in education when they leave school. (55.4% compared to 67.1%) https://hcc-pei.shinyapps.io/yphws_dashboard/_w_fb79eb83/_w_61419087/ Our experience of completing transition assessments is that to be successful we need a pre-existing relationship with the young person and time to support over months, not just complete an assessment.

The right to an assessment whilst it is a useful tool to be effective needs time and resource behind it if it is going to result in meaningful change for young carers and their families.

What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

I don't think the increase in the identification of young carers cited above can all be attributed to the introduction of the legislation and the awareness remains patchy across professionals. Mental health care professionals, awareness of young carers and their needs and their rights to an assessment when they are transitioning to adulthood remains low. For professionals outside social care there is still a culture that this is the responsibility of children's services and they seem unaware of the parts of the legislation that apply to them. This is demonstrated by the NHS website which says "The social worker must also look at your education, training, leisure opportunities and views about your future." There is no requirement for the assessment to be completed by a social worker and indeed it rarely is in our experience and so this gives families a false impression of the process. The NHS does have legal duties to identify carers including young carers and refer them for support and this does not seem to be well understood in many

health settings. It will be interesting to see if the Health and Care Act 2022 has any impact on this as so far it also seems not well understood or implemented especially for young carers.

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made little difference.

It has given levers to encourage the identification but its focus on local authority means that health and, education often don't see it as their issue as much. A broader firmer requirement to cooperate and identify would be helpful. Young people spend a lot of time in school and the people they care for are heavy users of health services, many of them may never require support from social care but that is where all the focus sits.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to Young Carers Needs Assessments has helped reduce the number of young carers providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care”?

Neither agree nor disagree

As the resources to do proper assessments for the larger number of young carers are not available let alone the long term support that is needed to prevent age inappropriate caring it has had a patchy results. With over 10% of young people completing the health survey in Hertfordshire secondary schools, identifying as having a caring role it would need more resources to achieve lasting change. Also some groups of young carers remain hidden and stigmatised particularly carers of parents with mental health and substance misuse issues.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to a Transitions Assessment has improved the transition for young carers from children's to adults services”?

Neither agree nor disagree.

Because the duty is again on the local authority and not integrated with education and others that could support such as the job centre, it is patchy with some strong case studies but others slipping through the net.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“Young adult carers are able to access transitions assessments when they need them, and these assessments lead to support ”?

Disagree.

Whilst young carers are able to access transition assessments, the most vulnerable often choose not to. This is due to a range of things including stigma, lack of trust in local authority, lack of time and lack of understanding of the difference it can make. To work this needs to be embedded into all services that support young people so they understand the benefits of referring a young carer for support. It also needs adult services to be willing to engage with those assessments to put support in place for when the young person turns 18. For example we had a case where mental health services agreed it was needed to put support in for the young carer to be able to leave home and go to university but was unwilling to put that plan in place before they actually went. This resulted in the not going..

Based on your experience, how well do you feel a 'whole-family approach' has been embedded into the identification and support for young carers?

Somewhat badly.

We still find that services do not have the capacity to consider whole family. So disabled children's services focus only on the child with disability, adult care focus on the adult, and mental health on the person with mental health needs. Substance misuse services often see it as a safeguarding issue and particularly don't see the risk that children taken into care return to the family to resume caring age 18 without a transition assessment or support. Whilst staff are under huge pressure considering young carers is viewed as an additional pressure. Many professionals are concerned that if they suggest children are carers this will damage their relationship with the parents and so shy away from the conversation. Staff need training, time and support to enable them to have positive conversations with parents.

What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

Strengthen the requirement to cooperate particularly to education settings, the school census shows shockingly high numbers of schools who are not aware of any young carers in their school. This needs to be urgently addressed.

For Health it awareness should be part of the curriculum for health care professionals ensuring they see the value in thinking whole family and considering young carers in conversations and referring for support.

Respondent 6

Name: Anonymous

Organisation/role: Local Authority Strategic Carers Lead

What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

Positive impact. It have given us the leverage needed to raise the profile of the needs of young carers and families in our borough. However, it needs to be strengthened further so that local authorities and councils are held accountable on these statutory requirements.

Some of the suggestions could include;

- 1) Annual reporting on the number of young carers and families that have been identified by the LA/ Council.
- 2) How many young carers and families have been offered or been assessed for their needs?
- 3) How many assessments has been triggered/ initiated by adults services when they have been assessing adults?
- 4) How many young adult carers have been transitioned due to having needs themselves, or for those who have continued in their caring role into adulthood.
- 5) How many young carers and families have been identified, assessed and supported by Children's Services under CIN or CP Plans.

What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

Positive (locally) - as we have used the legislation to help promote the profile/ needs of young carers and families, but also help promote the current offer to young carers and families.

The campaign to promote the offer of service offer, and also the need/ profile of young carers and families has had a two pronged approach;

- 1) Borough Campaign - wide promotion of who young carers are, and what support they are entitled to from the local authority etc.
- 2) Raise Awareness - with direct front line teams and services such as Children's, Adults, Early Help, SEND, Schools, Health, Commissioning etc about the rights of young carers, who they are and how to identify and refer for further support.

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made some difference.

The acts, or statutory duties placed on LAs need to be further strengthened, either by introducing stronger acts that require LAs to be more accountable, implement statutory reporting on young carers and families.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to Young Carers Needs Assessments has helped reduce the number of young carers providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care”?

Agree.

The assessments has assisted in ensuring that young carers are not undertaking inappropriate caring activities, or are being supported to balance the caring role/ activities with support from dedicated services.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to a Transitions Assessment has improved the transition for young carers from children’s to adults services”?

Agree.

We have developed a protocol enabling services to transition young adult carers from children’s services to adults/ SEND services.

Protocol, system and guides have been developed and rolled out across the LA.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“Young adult carers are able to access transitions assessments when they need them, and these assessments lead to support ”?

Agree.

YAC that have needs, and or continue in the caring role are able to request a transitional assessments, which can lead to further support from ASC or SEND via a Carers or Parent Carers Assessment, and dedicated support from our Carers Support Service,

Based on your experience, how well do you feel a ‘whole-family approach’ has been embedded into the identification and support for young carers?

Very well

The offer and commitment to support young carers and families has been developed and embedded into the council's Early Help offer, ensuring that every identified young carer is supported by the EH standards and framework.

Young carers that are identified in Children's Social Care are also supported via whole family support (Child and Family Assessment).

Respondent 7

Name: Anonymous

Organisation/role: Young Adult Carer

What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

I am not sure, but I think it has meant we have legal recognition as something that exists in society.

What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

Based on my own experiences, I think it has had a relatively low impact but I am unable to compare this to before 2014.

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made little difference.

I was not identified as a young carer until I was 16, despite my school having regular meetings that meant they were aware of my role helping my sister at home. I think there should be legislation/guidance in place that means schools have a responsibility to consider if any child with a disabled sibling is a young carer.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to Young Carers Needs Assessments has helped reduce the number of young carers providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care”?

Disagree.

I know several young people who are still giving very high levels of care because they have no other choices.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to a Transitions Assessment has improved the transition for young carers from children’s to adults services”?

Strongly disagree.

My local carer's service only recognises adults who care for adults, and I am now an adult who helps to care for a child. I have now got no support, and if I hadn't chased this up with these different services, I would never have even found out what was going on.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“Young adult carers are able to access transitions assessments when they need them, and these assessments lead to support ”?

Disagree.

I was given a transition assessment when I requested one, but if I hadn't asked I don't think I would have been given one. The youth worker who did mine was very understanding and considered my concerns but nothing went forward from it and then the local carer's services left me in lingo.

Based on your experience, how well do you feel a 'whole-family approach' has been embedded into the identification and support for young carers?

Very badly.

I think this reflects on services supporting neurodiverse people and their families in general, but my family have had so little support, particularly for my mum and I as carers. Even things like when I was younger and was offered respite trips out, this made my sister jealous and meant my mum had more strain on her. The overall lack of support I think contributed to the breakdown of my parent's marriage just before my GCSEs, and I think that a whole-family approach has completely failed on us.

What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

Better enforcement, particularly in schools identifying young carers

Looking at families as a whole and including everyone

Respondent 10

Name: Andy McGowan

Organisation/role: Carers Trust, Policy and Practice Manager

What impact do you feel that the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 have had for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

The legislation has helped to raise awareness of young carers as a distinct group, beyond just being considered as 'Children in Need'. The legislation also introduced legal rights for young carers for the first time, which cannot be underplayed. However, the lack of guidance, monitoring, accountability and funding has mitigated the impact of these new rights in practice.

What impact do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 have had on the awareness of young carers, young adult carers and their needs?

The Children and Families Act 2014 has raised awareness of young carers within children's services, because the duties have tended to sit with them, but it also helped to raise awareness amongst schools. The duty relating to identification has led to an increased emphasis on awareness-raising within commissioned young carers activities.

In addition, lots of local authorities do have multi-agency strategy groups looking to improve identification of young carers,

Do you think the Children and Families Act 2014 has had a positive impact on the early identification of young carers?

It has made some difference.

Improved identification in schools, but still very little identification within adult social care and by health practitioners.

A Young Carers Alliance snapshot survey of young carers in 2022 found that on average, it takes 3 years for young carers to be identified, with some caring for as many as ten years before being linked into support. An average of 3 years is the same as what was found in a study by Barnardo's which pre-dated this legislation.

Members of the Young Carers Alliance report that schools are now the biggest source of identification, followed by children's services. The increased identification of young carers in schools is welcome, but there are still very few young carers identified within adult social care, or by health professionals such as GPs or adult mental health services.

There also appears to be a significant disparity between the identification of parental mental illness or addiction issues and the identification of young carers in those families. The latest Child in Need Assessment data from the Department for Education found that in 2023, there were 161,250 child in need/child protection assessments where concerns around a parent's mental health was identified, and there were 67,000 cases where drug misuse amongst a parent was recorded. In contrast, there were only 18,040 assessments where being a young carer was identified as a factor. Whilst not all of these children will be young carers, a significant number will be. The prevalence of parental mental illness within child in need/child protection assessments has increased from 129,230 in 2018 to 161,250

in 2023 – an increase of 32,030. In contrast, the prevalence of young carers increased by just 1940 in that same period.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to Young Carers Needs Assessments has helped reduce the number of young carers providing inappropriate or excessive levels of care”?

Disagree.

It is very difficult to make a judgment in relation to this question because there is such a lack of data in relation to assessments. But research by Professor Saul Becker has found that only 10-20% of young carers report ever having had an assessment. Feedback from members of the Young Carers Alliance and our network of local carer services has highlighted significant variation in the extent to which Young Carers Needs Assessments are happening and ‘working’.

The 2021 Census found that the proportion of young carers who are providing 50 hours of care a week or more has increased from 9% in 2011 to 12% in 2021. Of most concern is the fact that the number of 5 to 9 year olds providing 20-49 and 50+ hours a week has increased from 2011.

Ten years on from the legislation, there is still not any consistency in how ‘inappropriate’ or ‘excessive’ care are defined. As a result, one local authority could deem a particular caring situation as inappropriate, whilst the other would say that it is appropriate. We are concerned that decisions around what is inappropriate or excessive is being determined by the funding available to local authorities.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“The introduction of the right to a Transitions Assessment has improved the transition for young carers from children’s to adults services”?

Disagree.

There are still many areas where local carer services report that transition assessments still don’t happen, or that they do not know who is commissioned to provide them or how a young carer can access one.

Young adult carers also report a significant postcode lottery in support, with some areas commissioning bespoke/targeted support for young adult carers, whilst others require young adult carers to access the standard adult carer support offer.

We also know that there are local authorities who only commission adult carer support for adults caring for adults, meaning that sibling young adult carers are left without any access to support.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement:

“Young adult carers are able to access transitions assessments when they need them, and these assessments lead to support ”?

Disagree.

Much more needs to be done in order to ensure that young adult carers make successful transitions to adult life, including access to higher education, training or employment. Young adult carers are also less represented in carer services than younger carers. The 2021 England and Wales Census identified 229,690 young adult carers aged 18-24, compared with 127, 172 young carers. By contrast, Carers Trust’s 2023 survey of local carer services found that those services were reaching 35,211 young carers but only 9828 young adult carers.

Based on your experience, how well do you feel a ‘whole-family approach’ has been embedded into the identification and support for young carers?

Very badly.

The legislation clearly set out a commitment to a ‘whole-family approach’ and that the starting point for supporting young carers should be by looking at the needs of the person they care for, providing support for them, and then seeing what support needs remain.

‘No Wrong Doors for Young Carers’ is an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that was designed to improve joint working between children’s and adult services. This MoU was refreshed after the passing of the legislation, yet when Carers Trust reviewed the extent to which the MoU had been implemented in 2023, over 90% of local authorities did not have ‘No Wrong Doors’, or similar evidence of joint working currently in place.

Our network of local carer services report that in many areas, adult social care are not fully engaged in the work around improving identification and support for young carers, with it instead being left to Children’s Services.

The Care Quality Commission and Ofsted have both taking steps in the latter part of 2023/early 2024 to increase the focus on young carers within their assurance, but this will take time for this to have a widespread impact on culture and practice.

What more do you think can be done to improve the impact of the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 for young carers, young adult carers and their families?

There is a real need for greater accountability. With CQC and Ofsted both placing increased emphasis on young carers within their assurance processes, the themes and findings from their inspections should be reviewed in order to identify opportunities to maximise the impact of the legislation. When it is next updated, the NHS Constitution should also

included additional references to the key role that the NHS has to play in identifying young carers and adopting a whole-family approach.

The next Government must also prioritise improved guidance for local authorities in relation to their duties to young carers, specifically in relation to inappropriate and excessive care. There should be greater consistency as to how this is defined, and there should be a clear direction to local authorities about their role in reducing this. Increased funding for children's social care, adult social care and for local carer services will also be needed in order to ensure that young carers are not just assessed, but also supported.

Respondent 11

Name: Dr Rebecca Lacey

Organisation: St George's, University of London

Why does (early) identification matter?

We have been conducting research as part of a Nuffield Foundation project which looks at how wellbeing changes around becoming a young carer and how long-term any effects might last. This research provides evidence for the importance of early identification and support.

Using data from Understanding Society we find that:

- Young people who become young carers report a decline in life satisfaction quickly around becoming a young carer. This is the case compared to matched controls who have similar characteristics but do not become young carers.
- The lower life satisfaction in young carers compared to their peers persists for a few years after becoming a young carer.
- The decline in life satisfaction around becoming a young carer is especially evident for young people who start caring for 10+ hours per week. In fact, these young people start to report lower levels of life satisfaction relative to their peers about four years before they say that they have caring responsibilities. This points to the "creep" in the onset of the caring role.
- Young people who are living in households in the lowest fifth of household incomes in the UK have the most pronounced declines around becoming young carers compared to all other levels of household incomes.
- The decline in life satisfaction around becoming a "young adult carer" (aged 18-25) is more pronounced than when becoming a "young carer" (aged 10-17 in our data).

This research therefore provides support for the importance of early identification and support, particularly for those groups identified above (i.e. those providing >10 hours of care per week, young carers from lower income households).

Notes:

- These data relate to 2009-2023 and so most of this period is covered by when the Children and Families and Care Acts were in place.
- Please ask us for a reference to the above research nearer the time of publication as we will be able to provide it by then (currently a work in progress!)

Excessive care loads

We have seen from the Census 2021 data that there has been an increase in the % of young carers who are caring for many hours per week (e.g. 35+ hrs or even 50+ hrs). This shows that there are still many young people who are caring excessively.

Research from the Eurocare project shows how harmful excessive levels of care can be for young carers' future prospects. For instance, we show that young adult carers are 86% less likely to hold a university degree as their highest qualification compared to young people who do not have care responsibilities (Xue et al, 2022).