

"It helps to be able to call home during breaks to check my mum's ok"

Getting the right information about what's out there helps me feel less stressed."



"If information about young carers and disability issues were included in PSE lessons that would help people understand"

"You need to understand how hard it is and why our homework is late and why we are so tired after our mum has been on a bender"

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Connecting Young Carers
Ensuring young carers are seen, heard and supported

Connecting Young Carers is a branch of Highland Community Care Forum, a company limited by guarantee.
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YOUNG CARERS

SEEN HEARD SUPPORTED

Information for schools



www.connectingyoungcarers.org

Connecting Young Carers

Connecting Young Carers is a charity committed to ensuring that young carers in Highland are **SEEN**, **HEARD** and **SUPPORTED** by professionals, at school and within their local communities. We strive to achieve this by raising awareness of young carers so that they can receive the help and support they need.

We recognise that some caring responsibilities can have a significant impact on a young person's education, their physical and mental health and their relationships with their peers.

By identifying, assessing and supporting young carers, schools, agencies and practitioners can aid them in their caring roles and enable them to reach their full potential.

Adequate and timely support enhances young carers' opportunities to become **successful learners, confident individuals** and to thrive in the future.



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"Everyone should be told how to recognise a young carer as this is the way we can get help"

Legislation and Relevant Strategies

Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 Legislation

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 will be fully implemented from April 2018. There are specific provisions in the Bill for young carers around identification, assessment, involvement in care and support planning. Local Authorities will be **duty bound** to recognise and prepare a **Young Carer Statement** that summarises the needs and actions that should be taken to address any barriers that young carers face. Statements should be prepared for carers under 18, or 18 and over if they are still at school. The statement should identify personal outcomes for the young carer and must contain information about:

- **Impact of caring on the young carer's wellbeing (referencing SHANARRI guidelines)**
- **Extent to which the young carer is able and willing to provide care**
- **Extent to which the nature of the care provided is appropriate**
- **Support which is needed, if any**

In Highland the Child's Plan process will provide the vehicle for meeting this legal requirement. For some, the **Young Carer's Statement** will be short and simple and can be recorded in pastoral notes on SEEMiS, or on a Form 1. Young carers in high end caring roles require a more detailed plan and their needs and personal outcome should be summarised in a Child's Plan. Where a young carer already has a Child's Plan to address other identified needs, the statement should be incorporated within the existing plan to ensure there is a focus on the impact caring has on the young person. The statement should be regularly reviewed to account for any changes in caring and family circumstances.

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC is the overarching approach to supporting children and young people in Scotland and to encourage inter-agency working to deliver the right support at the right time for every child in Scotland.

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMA is payable to eligible 16-19 year olds in Scotland.

Carers of this age group who may miss school or college due to their caring responsibilities should be encouraged to let the education institution know about their family situation. Within the new EMA guidance, young carers are recognised as being vulnerable and entitled to additional flexibility around entitlement.

Highland Practice Model

The components of the practice model have been designed to ensure that assessment and information about children and young people is recorded in a consistent way by all professionals. This should help to provide a shared understanding of a child or young person's needs and clarify how best to address concerns. The model and the tools which support it can be used by workers in adult and children's services and in single or multi service/agency contexts. This is particularly pertinent when assessing the needs of Young Carers.

"It's hard to pay attention when you're thinking about the person your caring for"

Who is a young carer

A young carer is a child or young person who helps to care for or support a family member who has an illness, a disability, experiences mental ill-health or substance misuse.

56% of young carers care for a parent.

28% of young carers are sibling carers and provide care for a sibling who is disabled, has an additional support need, or another long term illness. Sibling carers often support parents to care for their brother or sister and in some cases this can have a significant impact on the young carer.

16% of young carers care for both a parent and a sibling.

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

(Highland Survey 2014)



Types of care and support a young carer might do

Young people take on various caring roles which can include:-

Practical: housework, shopping, cooking, managing bills

Personal care: washing, dressing, toileting

Physical care: such as helping a parent move around in and outside of the home, lifting, moving and handling or helping with exercises.

Childcare: Taking on the role of a parent ensuring siblings are fed, washed, dressed, supported to school and entertained

Emotional Support: Reassuring the person they care for, listening to their concerns, encouraging them to eat, take medication,

Social Support: Supporting a family member to attend medical appointments, access the shops and public transport.



Recognising a young carer

Sometimes it can be quite hard to recognise a young carer as they may be trying to hide their caring role from others. Signs to look out for may include:

Is the child or young person...?

- Often late or absent from school with little explanation
- Maybe falling behind on school work, handing in homework late or incomplete
- Often tired, anxious, withdrawn or worried
- Isolated from peers, struggling to attend extra-curricular activities and trips
- Secretive about their home life
- Showing signs of poor hygiene or diet
- Displaying disruptive behaviour
- Talking openly about family health issues
- Becoming uncomfortable when addressing various health topics

Is a young person's family member...?

- Experiencing illness, disability, mental ill health or has a history of substance misuse
- Frequently missing appointments with school/other professionals
- Difficult to engage with or contact

Some families who experience disability or illness have a strong network of support and the young people in the family may demonstrate great resilience and not be significantly impacted by a family member's health.

Some young carers are hidden young carers. These are children who care for a family member who either experiences mental ill health or misuses substances. Young carers who are carrying out hidden caring roles often don't view themselves as carers due to either the episodic nature of their family members' illness or fear surrounding the stigma of the illness or condition.

For many young carers, caring and supporting a family member has become normal to them. They may not always recognise that they are carrying out a very responsible role.

Positive aspects of caring

Young Carers can be

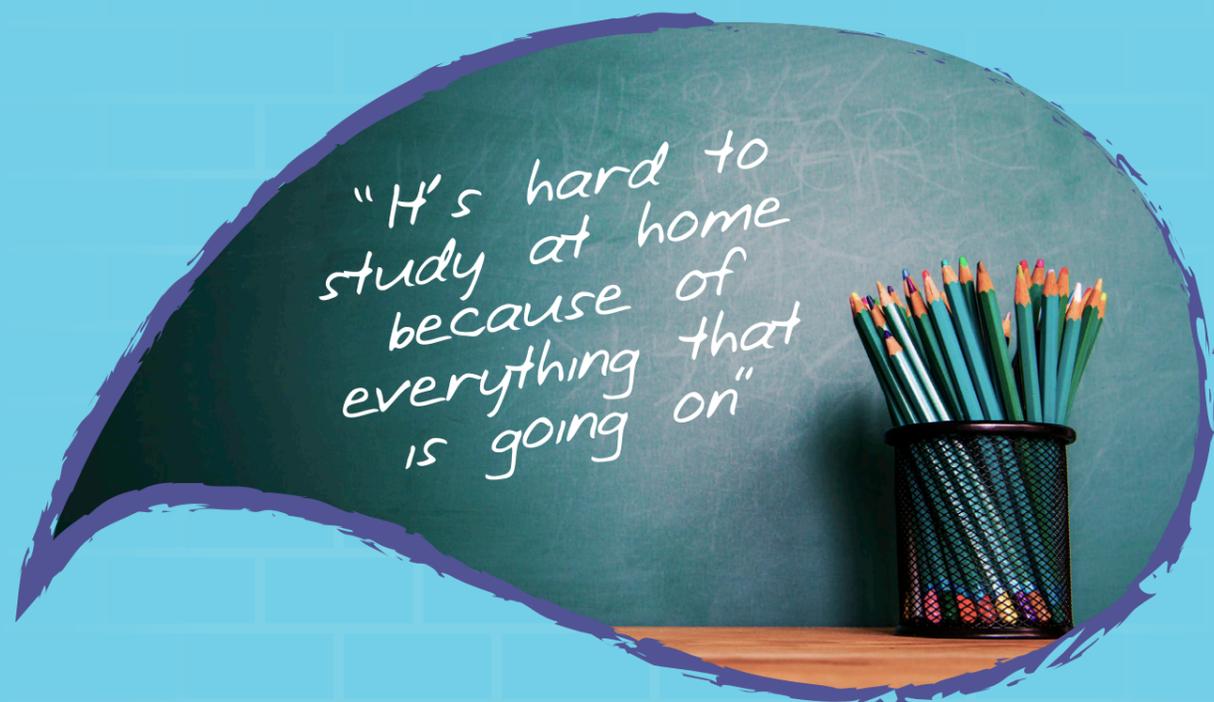
- Resilient
- Self-motivated
- Well organised
- Have good life skills at an early age
- Effective communicators
- Very tolerant of people different to them

These skills are a great foundation for a young person to start their adult life

Some young carers may benefit from involvement from their local young carers project. Anyone can contact Connecting Young Carers to discuss a possible referral.

"My school has a lunchtime homework club this helps me keep up to date with my work"





Speaking to Parents

It can be a daunting prospect speaking to a family member about a suspected or already identified caring role in the home.

Let them know

- You wish to support their child
- That you are aware that there are some health issues in the family and you would like to find out the best way to support their young person
- That there are many young people carrying out caring and support roles and many have developed positive life skills whilst doing this
- Ask if there are anything that they feel their child might need extra support with
- Make sure the family is aware of what support is available to them
- Reassure the family that they will be involved and supported as much as possible

"I don't need special treatment, I just need some understanding"

Young Carers in Education

It is important that young people have the opportunity to attain, both in education and in every aspect of their lives. Caring can impact on this, creating barriers to learning for some young carers. **Possible**

Barriers to Learning

- Lack of a quiet space and time to study in the home
- Family life is so hectic they don't get the time to learn or study at home
- Lack of sleep therefore unable to concentrate
- Irregular or late attendance
- Increased anxiety and concern about a family member whilst at school
- Anxiety about what they will go home to
- Often unable to participate in extracurricular activities therefore can miss out on important social and educational development
- Some young carers feel pressured to remain in a caring role and not progress onto further education
- Some young carers feel isolated from their peers which makes school an unhappy environment for them

Addressing barriers

For many young carers it is important to highlight the skills and capabilities they already have as a result of caring and supporting a family member.

Those in education or working with young carers can support them by:

- Working with young carers to create homework and study plans
- Ensuring young carers are involved in positive activities that boost and maintain their mental wellbeing - including coping strategies, mindfulness etc
- Encouraging young carers who have a particular hobby or interest to pursue it, ensuring they get time out and an opportunity to build positive friendships
- Having study periods or homework clubs, or creating a quiet space for them to relax
- Providing them with a point of contact so that they can regularly discuss their situation and the impact on their schooling
- Recognising when a young person has had difficulty completing homework due to a high end caring role and offering them additional help and extended deadlines
- If a young carer is late address this with them, away from their peers so as to not cause further embarrassment, and reassure them that they are very much wanted in school
- Teaching all pupils about young carers and various disabilities. This will have the two-fold effect of removing some of the stigma and allowing young carers to feel that school is an understanding and supportive environment.



Young Carers and their own well-being

Many young carer's physical and emotional well-being can suffer if they are carrying out a caring role. This could be aches and pains from heavy lifting or anxiety about what is going on at home.

It is important to recognise if a child or young person is carrying out a caring role at home as early as possible to prevent any possible negative effects from caring.

Very often a young carer may not be identified until their education or health is effected. By raising awareness and removing the stigma of young carers schools can ensure young people do not fall into crisis.

If an inappropriate level of caring is identified this must be acted on to reduce any harm it may cause the young person. A young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care given and responsibility becomes inappropriate, for example:-

- Young carer is unable to attend school regularly
- Young carer is displaying significant signs of neglect
- Young carer's mental health is significantly affected
- Young carer is carrying out inappropriate amounts of care or tasks that are deemed too adult for their age range



Speaking to Young Carers

Do not be concerned about approaching a young person about the possibility of them being in a caring role. Some young people are proud of what they do and having a responsible adult to confide in can be a positive step for them. For those young carers who are struggling in their caring role, having someone speak to them allows them to realise that they are not alone.

When speaking to a young carer ensure you highlight the positive attributes that you have noticed in them for example "I notice you are very helpful at home" that "you are very loving and take good care of your little sister", "I can see in class that you are very organised and good at looking after others"

- Find the young person at a time when they are not surrounded by their peers
- Reassure them when you ask to speak to them that they are not in trouble
- If you are aware that the young person responds well to a particular member of staff, include them in the conversation
- Find some common ground with the young person, ask open ended questions, and ask them what they enjoy at school, what they like to do on the weekends, what they do with their family at the weekends
- Talk to them about what a young carer is. Ask the young person if they have ever heard of a young carer, or do they think they might be one
- Reassure the young person that there are lots of young people in similar situations
- If you are aware that there is some illness or disability within the young person's family ask sensitive questions about how their relative is keeping, do they help out at home
- Make sure the young person is aware that you want to make sure that they are coping and that you are available if they ever need to speak
- Make sure you tell the young person what your next steps are

"I love my brother, but I feel my needs always come second"

