

Young Carers in Schools:

Taking manageable steps to identify hidden young carers in schools – Good Practice example



Purpose

This good practice spotlight provides information about how one school has used the tools and resources available within the programme to develop their provision for young carers and to successfully achieve the Bronze Award.

Summary

Without provision being put into place, many of the young carers now identified at Millthorpe School would have remained hidden. Millthorpe School used the basic steps outlined in the Step-by-Step Guide to put their provision into place. As a result, young carers at Millthorpe now have support to achieve their potential, attend school and/or arrive on time, have positive wellbeing, and engage in class and with their peers.

Background information

Sue Cordell is the Assistant Director of Inclusion at Millthorpe School in York. Working alongside Angela Nicholson, Student Support Officer, they have used the Young Carers in Schools programme to guide them on the implementation of their provision for young carers.

Millthorpe School hosted a Young Carers in Schools Professional Development event in October 2015 and successfully achieved the Young Carers in Schools Bronze Award in November 2015.

Millthorpe School's mission is to equip all of their young people for the challenges, opportunities and responsibilities of adult life by ensuring the highest level of qualifications, by developing them socially, emotionally and culturally, and by giving them opportunities to both lead and to help others.

Why did your school decide to develop its provision for young carers?

Millthorpe became aware of two pupils who were young carers, these pupils were being supported by pastoral staff. From working with these pupils we quickly began to see the different support needs they had to be able to achieve their potential, attend school and/or arrive on time, have positive wellbeing, and engage in class and with their peers. Due to these varying needs, we recognised young carers as a vulnerable pupil group, whose outcomes needed to be supported and monitored by the school.

We also started looking at the statistics that were coming through about young carers nationally, including a key piece of research from the BBC that indicates as many as 1 in twelve secondary school students are young carers. I've been teaching for over 20 years and it made me think back to all the children I had worked with and how many of them could have been young carers. Thinking about the challenges they faced with staff being unaware and with little support in school because particular needs had not been clearly identified.

We were shocked by the significant numbers about how many hidden young carers could be in our school and identified that we needed to take a proactive approach to ensure we identified these hidden young carers and effectively assess their support needs.

What impact do you feel your school has achieved to date?

To date, we have used the tools available through the Young Carers in Schools programme to develop a basic level of provision. In doing so, we have tried to establish a culture in school where everyone knows that it is okay to be a young carer and it is okay to let us know.

As a result we have now identified 28 young carers. We are certain that had we not begun putting our young carer provision into place, these pupils would have remained hidden. We also know that there are still many young carers we are yet to identify. We therefore are continuing to develop our provision further and are adopting the practice set out at the Silver level of the Award. In doing so, we are continuing to identify young carers, with two more being identified only recently.

Thanks to the steps we have taken to develop a positive culture within our school, we have very quickly seen the self-esteem and confidence of our pupils with caring responsibilities grow significantly. We now have a number of identified young carers who are well known throughout the school. They have helped us with presentations to both internal and external professionals including Head teachers, Governors and at a Young Carers in Schools event that we hosted. We have also seen a social impact, as strong friendships have formed within our young carer group and a number of our young carers also now attend groups run by our local young carers' service: York Carers Centre.

Last term we implemented various forms of support to enable identified young carers to achieve at school. With each pupil's consent, we liaise with other

school staff to build understanding of the pupil's individual situation. We run regular drop-in sessions for young carers and provide emotional support and help with homework. We can refer pupils to additional support and have developed a really strong working relationship with York Carers Centre, who have worked with us to implement the programme.

We have also ensured that the progress of all our young carers can be monitored through our whole school system for tracking attainment and attendance.

What key challenges have you faced in developing provision for young carers and how have you overcome them?

One of our main challenges was identifying hidden young carers. To help us, we have robust systems in place during the transition process when pupils join our school in Year 7. A member of our young carer team will visit our feeder schools and request that information about identified young carers is shared with us, provided appropriate consent has been given, of course. Our young carer team will then get in contact with the pupil and their family and ensure appropriate support is put in place throughout their transition to our school.

In addition, when Year 6 parents and families come to the school induction evening, they will be given a welcome pack which includes two different forms sharing our contact information and asks whether a pupil is a young carer. This is an opportunity for families to share this information with us if they want to. If a young carer is identified at this point, we will then follow up with them accordingly.

To help us continue to identify pupils who may become young carers throughout the school year, we have a pupil self-referral form and a parent referral form on our website. We have also shared key information about young carers, such as the potential signs a pupil may have a caring role, with all our staff and have made this information available in the staff room and on our staff shared drive.

These systems and other communication throughout the year such as our weekly emails, also encourages and offers opportunities for parents of young carers to self-identify.

What tools or webinars from Young Carers in Schools have you found to be the most useful?

I've had experience of using and working with lots of other programmes and I have found them not to be as supportive or as useful as the tools available through the Young Carers in Schools programme. You can just lift the tools directly from the Guide and use them straight away, it's great!

In particular we found that completing the Baseline Review was really helpful. It not only enabled us to see what we had in place already and what to work on next, but also helped us to navigate easily through the Step-by-Step Guide, as it signposts you to the relevant tools for each of your outstanding actions

Do you have any key advice, or top tips, for other schools?

- The programme is great at breaking down the steps schools can take to develop their practice. I'd recommend starting by completing the baseline review and working through the actions incrementally. Use the Step-by-step Guide to get your basics in place first, get them right and then build on it.
- We have been working and developing our young carer provision for some time now and you do need time to do the work properly. You need time to build up the relationship with your young carers and to understand what they need.
- Ask your identified young carers for their views! We've found it really beneficial to work alongside our young carers as they've helped us to inform our practice and make sure it meets their needs.
- Involve your Senior Leadership Team and Governors. Doing so can ensure everyone in the school is motivated to identify young carers, and understands what they can do, as part of their wider roles, to improve outcomes for young carers at our school. I feel that being involved in the programme has enabled worthy recognition for the hard work the team are doing.



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