

Legislation into Practice: Making the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 a Reality for Young Carers



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Executive summary

A young carer is a child or young person under 18 who helps look after someone in their family, or a friend, who is ill, disabled or misuses drugs or alcohol.

Census data shows the number of young carers in England is around 166,000; other research indicates that there could be 700,000 young carers (BBC, 2010).

Young carers and young adult carers become vulnerable when their role puts at risk their emotional or physical wellbeing and their prospects in education and life.

Research shows young carers' educational attainment, life chances, and mental and physical health can all be affected by caring.

Local authorities work hard to support vulnerable families in their localities, and there are examples of positive commissioning work; however, this is still not consistent across the country, as evidenced by the Children's Commissioner survey, among others (Children's Commissioner, 2016).

Young carers and their families in England have specific rights to assessment and support under the Children and Families Act and Care Act. These are positive steps for young carers; however, there is still work to be done to effectively implement the legislation.

Local authorities must take 'reasonable steps' (Children and Families Act) to identify young carers in their area who have support needs. Commissioning schools work – as part of services for young carers – is one effective way to take these reasonable steps. Young carers and practitioners alike identify that school is a place that can make a significant difference to the wellbeing and attainment of young carers. Independent evaluation of work to support local authorities' implementation of duties has recommended local authority commissioners embed Young Carers in Schools work as part of service specifications, and collaborate with schools on this work, as a way to support young carers.

Young carer services play a key role in identifying and supporting young carers – they have developed innovative and robustly tried and tested approaches to supporting young carers. These include early intervention and provide added value. Sustainability of these services is a key issue.

The England-wide free Young Carers in Schools programme provides an excellent method of engaging with schools, with step-by-step guides and easy to use resources. Quantifiable and qualitative evaluation of the programme is positive, showing a demonstrable impact on young carers' achievement, attendance, and wellbeing.

There are cost benefits to commissioning young carer services, providing cost-effective ways to improve the outcomes for young carers; alongside the impressive benefits of the Young Carers in Schools programme, including both in commissioning service specifications is a robust way to support this vulnerable group of children and young people.

Commissioning local young carers services and successfully incorporating Young Carers in Schools can support local authorities in the Ofsted inspection process. Ofsted has said that it will look closely at how local areas are supporting young carers.

Local authorities themselves have identified the following as among the benefits to commissioning local schools' engagement:

- Increased, and earlier, identification.
- Better Ofsted inspections.
- Improved family working and/or support.
- Improved attainment.

Page 39 sets out some suggestions for next steps.

Introduction

This resource supports the case for the effective and economic ways that local young carer services offer both preventative and responsive support for young carers and their families. It also sets out the case to include the Young Carers in Schools programme in all aspects of educational support and collectively how this would support local authorities to ensure they fulfil their statutory duties as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014. Most importantly, it will help achieve positive outcomes for young carers and their families.

There are too many examples of good practice to include them all in this resource, so where appropriate, links have been given to full evaluation reports and other relevant documentation. That said, several key examples have been included in more detail as they highlight key points useful to the overall objective of this resource. These include Making a Step Change (Ecorys, 2016), Commissioning Services for Young Carers and their families (Phelps, D, 2012) and Young Carers: The Support provided to Young Carers in England (Children's Commissioner, 2016).

Anecdotally, we are also aware that there is a plethora of other good practice that we have not captured and in these times of reduced resources this makes the case for collaboration even more crucial.

This resource has been designed with a primary focus on supporting commissioners and leads within local authorities with statutory responsibility for young carers. In the spirit of the whole system approach however, we would also hope that it would be of interest to other colleagues including the lead members for children's services. It is for use in local authorities in England but could be easily adapted for use in the rest of the UK.

About Carers Trust

Carers Trust is a major charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

We do this with a UK wide network of quality assured independent partners and through the provision of grants to help carers get the extra help they need to live their own lives. With these locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

Our vision is that unpaid carers count and can access the help they need to live their lives.

About The Children's Society

Right now in Britain there are children and young people who feel scared, unloved and unable to cope. The Children's Society works with these young people, step by step, for as long as it takes.

We listen. We support. We act.

There are no simple answers so we work with others to tackle complex problems. Only together can we make a difference to the lives of children now and in the future.

Because no child should feel alone.

Recommendations

This section re-visits the recommendations set out in various reports including Making a Step Change for Young Carers and their Families: Putting it into Practice Final Evaluation Report (Whitley, J, 2016) and Invisible and in Distress: Prioritising the Mental Health of England's Young Carers (Alexander, C, 2016). Making a Step Change was a partnership project between Carers Trust and The Children's Society and supported the effective implementation by local authorities of the duties required under legislation regarding young carers and their families. The recommendations to consider when developing effective delivery models for young carers and their families, included:

- Collaborative whole family approaches.
- Identification of young carers.
- Assessment and support services.
- Measures to assess impact.
- Working collaboratively with schools.
- Working collaboratively with health services.

The Making a Step Change report was commissioned by Carers Trust and highlighted that local authority commissioners should increase the sustainability and stability of young carer services and support partnership working between young carer services and mental health services. Young carers also told us about other sources of support that they valued because it made a positive difference to their mental health, including:

- Counsellors accessed through a young carer service, school, college or their GP.
- A professional who works with the person they care for taking a whole family approach and offering them support as a young carer.
- Emotional support, understanding and flexibility from a teacher at school or college.
- Emotional and practical support from a young carers support worker or peer support at a young carer service.

Local young carer services already play a key role in identifying young carers who are not in contact with other support services and making sure that they receive the additional support they need. In practice, these services can struggle to sustain this work, which risks young carers being cut off from support. Extending and sustaining commissioning and grant funding of these services is an essential part of ensuring the needs of young carers are assessed, and responded to – therefore fulfilling the statutory requirements as set out in the legislation.

“Increasingly too there are inappropriate referrals (not actually young carers), or due to reductions in public funding, [they are] presenting with more complex needs and crisis.”

Commissioned young carer service

This resource highlights how local young carer services and the Young Carers in Schools programme have developed innovative and robustly tried and tested approaches to address the recommendations highlighted on page 8.

The nationally recognised Young Carers in Schools award process, which will be discussed at length in a later section, has effectively improved the outcomes for young carers in an education setting.

Research carried out in December 2016 with 72 awarded schools highlighted improvements across attainment, attendance and wellbeing for those young carers in the schools. A specific recommendation from Making a Step Change for Young Carers and their Families: Putting it into Practice: Analysis of the Trailblazers (Ecorys, 2016) re-enforces this stating:

- Local authority commissioners should embed the nationally recognised Young Carers in Schools in all service specifications.
- Local authorities should consider means of embedding Young Carers in Schools in collaboration with schools.

This resource will draw on good practice and case examples to evidence the benefits of working with your local young carer service, highlighting value for money, whole family approaches and effective early intervention work. It is written in the spirit of collaboration, and with the understanding that many of our local authority partners are grappling with the challenge of fulfilling these duties during times of austerity. Research by Manchester Metropolitan University highlighted that for every £1 invested in young carer services, the saving to the Exchequer and wider society is £6.72 (Crossroads Caring for Carers and The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 2008). This makes a strong economic case for considering the most effective way to do this alongside the impressive outcomes that Young Carers in Schools has evidenced (Carers Trust, 2017a).

We have reviewed and considered feedback from two events facilitated by the Young Carers in Schools programme in 2017 for local authority partners. This showed there was a consensus among attendees that they intended to use the programme in schools to increase the identification and support of young carers in their local areas.

As the main funders of identification and support services to young carers, local authorities can determine the best way to allocate and spend their limited resources. This resource focuses on highlighting how working with local young carer services and those delivered by Carers Trust Network Partners is a positive and cost-effective way of achieving the best outcomes for young carers. It also demonstrates how the Young Carers in Schools programme can support local authorities to more effectively meet their duties around identification and support of young carers.

Local authorities' statutory duties – The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014

Most stakeholders involved in the young carers and young adult carers arenas welcomed the legislation that received royal assent in 2014. The introduction of the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 in April 2015 set out to significantly improve the rights of young carers and young adult carers. While the aim of this section is to highlight the key areas of the acts in relation to the above a later focus will highlight how the reality is somewhat different.

Responsibilities for identifying and supporting young carers are placed on the local authority. These responsibilities are set out in the Children's Act 1989 (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014) and under the Care Act 2014. Section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 introduces new rights for young carers to ensure young carers and their families are identified and their needs for support are assessed.

From April 2015 all young carers have been entitled to an assessment of their needs from the local authority. This provision works alongside measures in the Care Act 2014 for transition assessment for young carers as they approach adulthood, and for assessing adults to enable a 'whole family approach' to providing assessment and support. Further explanations for these obligations are explained in:

- The Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015.
- Guidance related to both Acts.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department for Education, 2015).

In summary:

Children and Families Act 2014

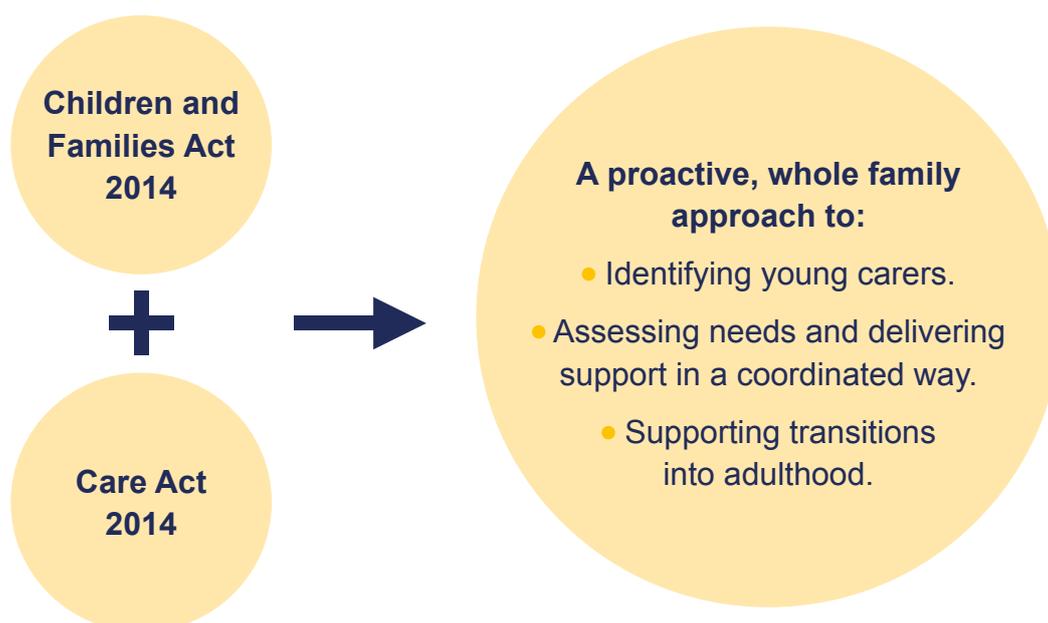
- Gives young carers and young adult carers in England a right to a carer's assessment and to have their needs met (if the assessment shows this is needed).

The Care Act 2014

- Requires local authorities to adopt a whole system, whole council, whole family approach.
- Coordinates services and support around the person and their family and considers the impact of the care needs of an adult on their family, including children.
- Covers young carers in 'transition' from children's to adult services before they are 18, as well as adult carers.

The concept of the whole family approach is frequently referenced in the statutory guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 (Department of Health and Social Care, 2018) – in particular how this relates to young carers' assessments and the assessments of adults in need of care and support. The Care Act and Whole-Family Approaches (Department of Health et al, 2015) provides more in-depth detail for practitioners about how to implement this, and:

- Shifted the focus from young carers needing to self-identify and request an assessment as it was previously, to professionals who come into contact with young carers being required to identify them and offer an assessment when it appeared they were providing care.
- Made it a requirement that young carers are offered an assessment, regardless of the level or type of caring they were providing.
- Used a whole family approach, meaning that children who may be caring, or may undertake caring in the future, are identified when establishing the care needs of a family member.
- Protected young carers from inappropriate caring responsibilities. Local authorities should consider how supporting the adult with needs for care and support can prevent the young carer from undertaking excessive or inappropriate care and support responsibilities.



Both acts include information on how young carers can become vulnerable:

- If a young carer is prevented from accessing education, for example if the person they care for has needs which result in the young carer regularly being absent from school or if it impacts on their learning.
- If a young carer is prevented from building relationships and friendships.
- If their caring role impacts on any other aspect of the young carer's wellbeing.

Local authorities' duties, in relation to identification and assessment

- Local authorities must take 'reasonable steps' to identify young carers in their area who have support needs. This might include working with schools, or young carer services to identify anyone who has support needs.
- Local authorities must assess whether young carers in their area have support needs and, if so, what those needs are.
- The local authority should take a whole family approach to assessing and supporting adults. Through assessments of adults with care needs, local authorities must identify any children who undertake a caring role – young carers or potential young carers. This means that as soon as the care needs of someone in the family become clear these needs are met, thereby reducing the potential for inappropriate caring situations.
- In doing so, local authorities should consider how they can identify young people who will need a transition assessment but are not receiving children's services.

Identification can only be accomplished effectively through:

- Strong leadership.
- Collaboration and partnership working between services.
- Where all services are involved in the identification of young carers.
- Where the whole system ensures that young carers and their families can move along clearly identified pathways to appropriate support services that meet their individual needs.

Both acts are intended to link together to provide a clear framework for local authorities to take a whole family approach to identifying, assessing and supporting adults and young carers, and deliver support in a joined up coordinated way. It is the responsibility of councils to coordinate the support of those who have been using children's or transition services with the support provided by adult services. A useful resource is the template for a local memorandum of understanding between

“ Everyone involved should talk to each other and work together. They need to recognise that we know what's going on because we live it every day. They need to listen to us and our parents. ”

Young carer

statutory Directors of Children’s and Adult Social Services developed as part of No Wrong Doors: Working Together to Support Young Carers and their Families (ADCS, et al, 2015). Additionally, examples from good practice suggest that the willingness of services such as social care, education, housing, employment and health to work together with families can make a difference to the future of young carers.

This resource aims to set out a clear rationale why one of the key partners in this role should be third sector providers of young carer services and to this end the following section provides some examples of these organisations.

Young Carers: The Support provided to Young Carers in England (Children’s Commissioner for England, 2016) was published following a survey sent to all local authorities in England. This survey requested data on all young people providing care with regards to referrals and assessment and support these children received. From the responses it was estimated that only 20% of young carers were receiving support from their local authority. Both the authorities and voluntary sector organisations that responded agreed that the emphasis on assessment resulted in the limited resources available being used for this with very little remaining for support. The report also posed the question as to what resources were available to identify those young carers who were not recognised by support services and it was felt that schools were key in this stage of the identification process.

For example, data on unmet need from one area of England is highlighted below with an overall figure for all local authorities of 20%:

Identified and supported	Projected total	Census estimate	% of young carers supported
2,754 (1)	3,498 (2)	20,637 (3)	17% (4)

- (1) Number of young cares aged 5–17.
- (2) Estimate included all local authorities in England.
- (3) 2011 Census.
- (4) Estimate per region of unmet need as a ratio of column 2 to the Census estimate in column 3.

This quantitative data was supported by anecdotal evidence provided by local authorities.

Further data included in the open text response highlighted 32% of the 59 local authorities stated there was poor identification of young carers in schools. Although it is recognised that there are many issues that need addressing, this resource focuses on demonstrating that by commissioning local young carer services and including Young Carers in Schools as an essential element of that work, these statistics could be drastically improved.

“ We estimate we are currently providing for approximately 30% of all the young carers thought to be in our local authority. ”

A local authority

Who are young carers and young adult carers?

Most readers of this resource will be very aware of the factors that define young carers and young adult carers. Before we move on to consider some solutions regarding how we make the legislation a reality for this group of young people this section provides an opportunity to reflect on key data. Some of this data was gathered during Young Carers Awareness Day in 2017 as part of a wide-reaching survey involving young carers and based on 303 responses.

A young carer is someone under 18 who helps look after someone in their family, or a friend, who is ill, disabled or misuses drugs or alcohol.

The 2011 Census identified 166,000 young carers under 18 in England and 293,000 16 to 24-year-old young adult carers. Further research (BBC, 2010) suggests there could be 700,000 young carers in the UK, many unaware of the impact that caring is having on their lives.

Young adult carers are young people aged 16–25 who care, unpaid, for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction.

Research shows young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, the equivalent of nine grades lower than their peers, for example, the difference between nine Cs and nine Ds (The Children's Society, 2013). A Carers Trust survey of 61 young carers aged 14–16 found that on average each year young carers would miss ten full days of school and cut short 38 days because of their caring role (Sempik, J and Becker, S, 2013).

As many as one in 12 secondary school pupils in England (BBC, 2010) could be a young carer, a vulnerable pupil group specifically mentioned in Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2015a). The difficult experiences that young carers face during their schooling and the lack of support both have an impact on their prospects for further study or employment. The Audit Commission reported that young adult carers aged 16–18 are twice as likely as other young people of the same age to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) (Audit Commission, 2010). In research commissioned by Carers Trust, 14% of young carers in school said they could not go to college or university because of their caring role (Alexander, C, 2014).

There are multiple and diverse reasons why young carers' education can be affected which subsequently affects their life chances. Feedback from young carers highlights just some of the reasons:

- They are worried about bullying – a quarter of young carers said they were bullied at school because of their caring role (Sempik, J and Becker, S, 2013).
- No one listens – 35% of young carers had not informed their school that they were a carer (Ecorys, 2016).
- Attendance – 73% took time off school/arrive late/leave early because they needed to care for a family member (Carers Trust, 2017b).
- Concentration – 58% said being a carer makes it difficult to meet deadlines (Carers Trust, 2017b).

“ My caring role ... sets me back and means I can't reach my potential. ”

Young carer

- Mental health – 48% said being a young carer made them feel stressed and 44% said it made them feel tired (Carers Trust, 2015).
- Physical health – young carers providing 50+ hours of care a week were up to five times more likely to report their general health as 'Not good' (Office for National Statistics, 2013).

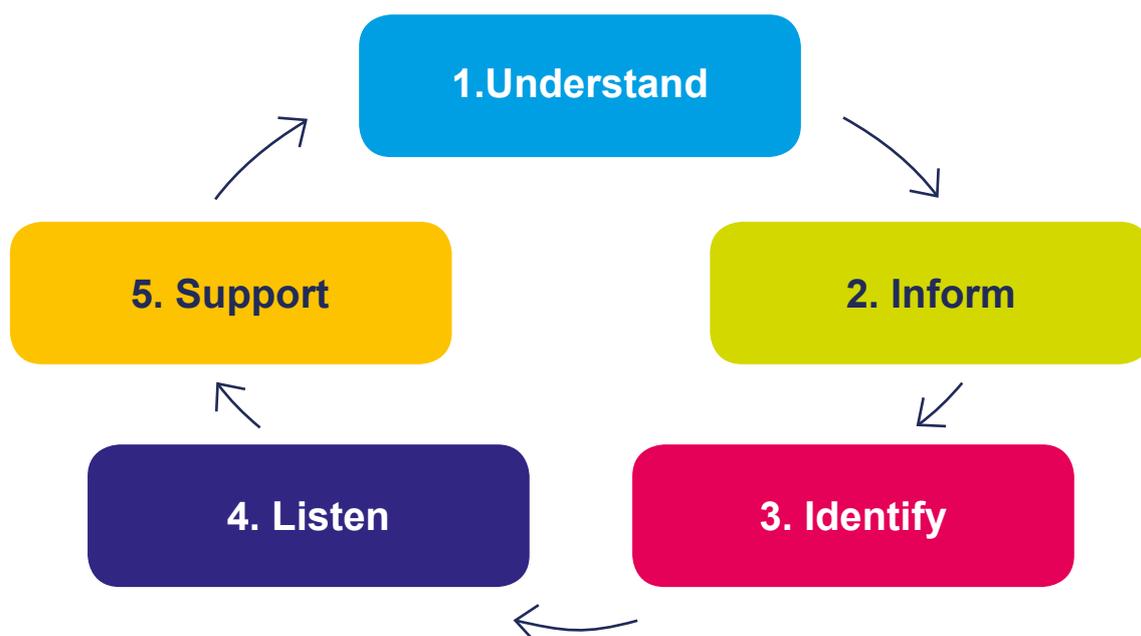
About the Young Carers in Schools Programme

The key aim of this resource is to provide a solution focused approach to the question posed regarding how we make the legislation a reality for young carers and young adults carers. Despite acknowledging that no one solution is the answer to all the challenges faced by our local authority colleagues we would suggest that the programme outlined in this chapter is perhaps one of the easiest to implement.

Young Carers in Schools is a well-established initiative in England (elements of which are now being rolled out in Wales). Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society, the programme has developed a whole system approach with the focus being to support key stakeholders to identify and support young carers in their education. The stakeholders include schools, young carer services, initial teacher education providers and local authorities.

The programme has developed extensive resources that make it as easy as possible for schools to develop their own whole school approach. These were created in partnership with schools during an early implementation stage in 2014/15. There are now over 200 schools in England that have been awarded across bronze, silver and gold standard.

The award process is based on five key principles which were developed in partnership with key stakeholders, including young carers:



The resources developed to date include:

Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Step-by-step Guide for Leaders, Teachers and Non-teaching Staff: Helping schools step by step, this resource contains essential tools, templates and guidance. With a tool for each step, no school needs to start from scratch. Available at <https://professionals.carers.org/stepbystep>.

Webinars, videos and case studies: Unpicking hot topics with unmissable, expert advice from award-winning schools.

Termly newsletters: Spotlighting key policy developments and new resources, and the very latest programme news.

Young Carers in Schools Award: Enabling schools to showcase their provision for young carers.

“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.”

Assistant Director
of Inclusion, Millthorpe
School, York



Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Toolkit for Initial Teacher Education Providers: Supporting teacher training providers to ensure that young carers are included in the curriculum, this resource raises awareness of how to identify and support young carers in their education from the start of a teaching career. Available at <https://professionals.carers.org/professionals.carers.org/initialteachereducationtoolkit>.

Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Toolkit for Young Carers Services: Supporting local young carer services to approach and influence schools to implement good practice this resource includes essential tools, templates and guidance to ensure services do not need to re-invent the wheel. Includes an option to brand key resources. Available at <https://professionals.carers.org/Young-Carers-in-Schools-Toolkit-for-Young-Carers-Services>.

To date, the programme has undertaken two evaluations with awarded schools, the most recent in December 2016. 72 of the awarded schools completed in-depth surveys and the results are presented in the infographic shown. A deep dive of the programme is being undertaken at the time of writing by an independent evaluator.

What schools have told us about the impact of the programme

89% said they had identified **more** young carers in their school.



94% said they had noticed improvements in the **wellbeing** and **confidence** of young carers at school.



60% had seen a **positive** impact in the **achievement** of young carers in their school.



74% had noticed **improved** attendance among young carers in their school.



We asked 72 schools that had received a Young Carers in Schools Award about the impact of implementing the programme.

What schools have told us about the impact of the programme

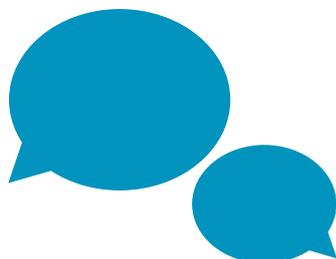
100% said they would recommend **Young Carers in Schools** to other schools.

“One of the best organised opportunities for achieving support for some of the most vulnerable people in society.”

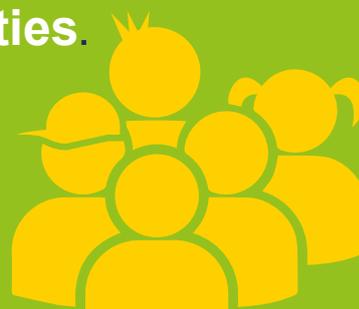
78% identified that young carers were **better connected / supported** by other organisations.



97% said they had a **better understanding** about the types of support young carers may need.



61% reported that young carers were **more able to engage in extracurricular activities**.



We asked 72 schools that had received a Young Carers in Schools Award about the impact of implementing the programme.

What are the key challenges for local authorities?

We know that local authorities work hard to support vulnerable families in their localities and there are many positive examples of good commissioning work. Many are addressing their statutory obligations to young carers following the introduction of key pieces of legislation. We also know from robust data such as the Children Commissioner's survey and much anecdotal evidence that there is still a long way to go. This section of this resource will explore this data alongside other key research and feedback from stakeholders, including the findings from Making a Step Change for Young Carers and their Families: Putting it into Practice: Analysis of the Trailblazers (Ecorys, 2016).

Difficulty identifying young carers

It is well documented that over the last ten years all services have been squeezed due to austerity measures. It is understandable that statutory partners will focus their limited budgets on meeting their statutory requirements and on supporting the most vulnerable groups. This presents the first challenge for commissioning services for those that do not always appear on the social care radar.

Young carers may not always be perceived as the most in need group, indeed many may fall below the existing thresholds for social care support. However, if they are not understood or supported appropriately, they are a group who are undoubtedly at risk of negative impacts on their health and wellbeing, education and social development. Strong and effective commissioning of services is therefore crucial in preventing not only poor individual outcomes, but also inflated costs to the wider public purse.

“If I had received some support when I was a young carer I would not have needed the counselling I have now.”

Parent of young carer

Increasing numbers of younger carers

The issue of identifying younger carers is becoming of increasing concern, the 2011 Census found an 83% increase in the number of young carers aged 5–7 years in the UK since 2001.

In January 2017, the Young Carers in Schools programme held an event for local authority partners to determine the opportunities and barriers to implementing the legislation. Most attendees reported that they had taken steps in implementing their statutory duties to provide assessments to young carers. However, this raised some issues which were also repeatedly raised in the Children’s Commissioner’s report (Children’s Commissioner, 2016). Following the implementation of the 2015 legislation many local authorities reported that the limited financial resources allocated resulted in a focus on the statutory assessments versus the delivery of whole family support.

The need to focus on crisis services

Additionally, further feedback at the event reported that local authorities were having to channel their limited resources towards the crisis end of services. This included mental health support (76%), drug and alcohol treatment (67%) and emergency/crisis planning (67%). This data was backed up by the findings of the Children’s Commissioner research (Children’s Commissioner, 2016). These types of support are well documented as being at a higher cost both financially

and emotionally to families, than support that is available to prevent young carers reaching the point where they may need this level of service. These issues were explored further with delegates at the 2017 event:

- 56% of local authorities stated that there is a lack of awareness of young carers among professionals.
- 14% stated that there needed to be better involvement from early help services rather than waiting until families are in crisis.

“There are ongoing challenges. We believe there may be young carers who are not known to us. This can be as a result of a lack of awareness, a desire to keep the caring role secret from professionals, from our own analysis there are some issues around the confidence of practitioners to enquire further about whether there are children in a household undertaking a caring role when assessing a parent’s care needs.”

Local authority in the Children’s Commissioner report (Children’s Commissioner, 2016).

Transitioning from children’s to adult services

The challenge of working across children’s and adult services is well documented and is particularly pertinent for young carers when they reach 18 years of age. That said, many young carers tell us of

the importance of joint working and the real difference that timely and effective support services make, much of which was captured in the No Wrong Doors report (ADCS et al, 2015).

Joint commissioning has, to some degree, addressed this but in these times of decreasing resources the temptation is to protect budgets across age groups as well as the health and social care agendas. Transition is often seen as a particularly vulnerable stage for young carers and young adult carers and feedback has often highlighted that this is when it is more important than ever to have access to continuity of support.

Prevalence of mental health issues

With the strong steer on child and adolescent mental health coming from central government this is a particularly challenging time for local authorities to develop and deliver innovative ways to support young people with mental health issues. Research shows that young carers are more likely to suffer from mental ill health than their peers:

- A survey of 350 young carers found 48% said being a young carer made them feel stressed and 44% said it made them feel tired (Carers Trust, 2015).
- Research with nearly 300 young adult carers found that 45% had mental health problems (Alexander, C, 2014).
- A GP patient survey found that young adult carers are 50% more likely to have anxiety and depression compared to young people without caring roles (GP Patient Survey, 2016).

Local young carer services play a key role in identifying hidden young carers and making sure that they receive the support they need. Commissioning and grant funding of these services is an essential part of ensuring the mental health needs of young carers are considered and responded to.

“From a personal point of view, growing up as a young carer I’ve had to overcome many different challenges to my peers in my caring role which have impacted on my mental health. As a young person who does suffer from mental health problems, and caring for a parent with a range of mental and physical health problems too, it is something I feel does need change. Better mental health services would definitely be a start as I feel this would benefit young carers especially, particularly when times are tough and when we don’t know where to turn to, as this can have drastic problems such as during exams. I definitely want to see a change in the mental health services available for young carers.”

Young carer

Changes to Ofsted inspection criteria

There have been several key changes to inspection criteria in recent years that affect local authorities. Ofsted now includes young carers as one of the vulnerable groups in the Common Inspection Framework: Education, Skills and Early Years (Ofsted, 2015a). This states: 'In making judgements, inspectors will pay particular attention to ... young carers.'

This change has been warmly welcomed but it does put further pressure on already stretched schools and there is still an expectation for local authorities to support maintained schools. In May 2016 for the first time, inspectors began to evaluate how local authorities, nurseries, schools, further education establishments, and health services identify children and young people with special educational needs (SENs). This will include a higher percentage of young carers as statistics show:

- Young carers caring for brothers, sisters or other relatives are three times more likely to have a special educational need.
- Young carers are 2.4 times more likely to have a disability or SEN compared with 1.5 times nationally.
- Young carers caring for a parent are 1.4 times more likely to have a SEN (Kirklees Council).

This new requirement is a positive move for those families of children with a SEN, among whose family members there could be a high percentage of young carers who are helping to support a sibling with a SEN, but equally puts additional pressure on local authorities to both monitor and report on this area of support.

How can commissioning local young carer services and incorporating Young Carers in Schools in service specifications help local authorities fulfil their duties?

Commissioning young carer services is of course not a new concept. Feedback from the local authorities who attended the Young Carers in Schools event in 2017 highlighted that 50% of them funded some element of a voluntary sector young carer service. The focus of this section will be around what is often seen as the strength of the voluntary sector, early intervention, value for money and responding to need followed by current issues regarding mental health, whole family approach and changes to inspection processes.

Why young carer services?

Young carer services range in size and services offered, with funding coming from a variety of sources including local authorities and voluntary sector grants. They can be part of a generic carer service or part of a larger charity. The Carers Trust website Carers.org has a search facility to help visitors to the site find a Carers Trust Network Partner (local carer service) by postcode or town. To complement this, The Children's Society website www.childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/young-carers-services has a map of young carers projects around the UK.

Some different types of activities offered by young carer services include:

- Activities and breaks.
- Peer and community support, including young carer groups and peer mentoring schemes.
- Information, advice and guidance, including one-to-one support and age appropriate information.
- Emotional support.
- Advocacy.
- Brokerage and support planning.
- Training in subjects such as health and safety, wellbeing and life skills.
- Emergency planning support.
- Whole family support.
- Raising awareness and upskilling the workforce, including engagement with education, health and social care professionals.
- Young carers informing service development.

Young carer services provide a level of expertise in supporting young carers that universal services, by virtue of being universal, cannot provide. Many can be flexible and creative in how they deliver services. Practitioners should be aware of their local young carer service and refer in and ask for support where relevant.

“ Voluntary sector young carers services are far more responsive and can say let’s do it. ”

Commissioner,
Bristol Local Authority

By championing the needs of young carers and families, many local carer services have driven forward strategic change and workforce development in local areas. Young carer services offer a range of early intervention and prevention support to young people with caring responsibilities aimed at:

- Identifying and supporting young carers early.
- Reducing inappropriate or excessive caring roles.
- Improving young carers’ physical, mental and emotional health.
- Reducing barriers to accessing and sustaining education, training and employment.
- Improving young carers’ life chances and helping them reach their potential.

Furthermore, young carers have consistently stated the value of the direct support they receive from a local young carer service:

“ Young carers speak particularly highly of the project-based support they receive. Many value the social and support activities projects provide and the opportunity they offer to get a break and mix with other young carers. ”

(Phelps, D, 2012).

“ Access to education, employment training and holidays, for example three of our young carers were able to access free adventure breaks over the summer holidays via their young carer services. It would have been difficult for anyone else to turn that around, because of the processes. ”

Commissioner,
Bristol Local Authority

“ Young carers has helped me a lot. I realise I am not alone, made many new friends and gained lots of confidence and the main thing is I am no longer embarrassed because Mum uses a wheelchair. ”

Young carer

“ Young carers had given me more confidence and has made me learn to speak out more and not hide things away, they are always there if there is a problem or any issues I need to speak about. If I am struggling I am not afraid to speak out or to ask for help, as not everyone can manage their caring role, and that is what the young carer service is there for. ”

Young carer

Early intervention and added value

Family circumstances and caring responsibilities for many young carers can be extremely variable. It is more effective to support young carers through early intervention rather than allowing them to struggle later, if their circumstances become more difficult. Even for young carers and families who are coping reasonably well and where caring responsibilities appear limited, ensuring low-level support is often crucial to keeping the situation stable and sustainable. Young carers and families who have already accessed low-level support will have developed trust and confidence in a service, learned skills and formed supportive relationships, and are likely to be more resilient and more able to seek and engage with further support at an early point, than if they had not accessed support. Early targeted support can also set in place crisis or emergency plans which may help mitigate negative impacts if the situation should deteriorate.

In addition to improved personal outcomes for young carers and families, early intervention and prevention of escalating caring roles will secure cost benefits through the prevention of the need for costly future services. There are many examples of research focusing on cost benefits of early intervention work and some specific examples in relation to young carers include:

- An evaluation of Sheffield Young Carers Service identified for every £1 invested into the schemes, between £1.42 and £1.90 of benefits is estimated to be generated (Ecorys, 2016).
- Findings from NEF consulting, which was commissioned to conduct a cost benefit analysis of UK wide programme Young Adult Carers Services: Time for Change. The programme was delivered by local young carer services and focused on key areas including education, employment and mental health. Some of the findings included the net state value created per young carer which was found to be £868.21, therefore for every £1 spent, £1.77 is saved by the state (NEF Consulting, 2016).

- Research by York University which estimates an average lifetime public finance cost of £56,301 for a young person who is NEET when aged 16–18 (Audit Commission, 2010). We also know that young carers are twice as likely as other young people of the same age to be NEET (Audit Commission, 2010).

Further added value is gained via the plethora of grants and partnerships that young carer services are adept at securing, providing over 40% (around £16.5bn) of the voluntary sector's total income (NCVO, 2018). This money is often used to complement the services delivered under contract to statutory services. The case study below also highlights how innovative organisations can be with relatively small pots of money:

Norfolk Family Carers accessed a grant of £750 available for Network Partners of Carers Trust. They organised and delivered a two-day summer club focusing on mental health and wellbeing. The feedback highlighted that following the intervention, 75% of the young carers felt better about themselves, with 80% saying they had learnt techniques to deal with stress after attending and 88% saying they had benefitted from having someone to talk to about their caring role.

“ I was feeling angry but now I am feeling better. ”

Young carer

“ They bring added value, only a small amount of money – they are really successful in getting additional funding from other parties – the offer to young carers and families is greatly enhanced in comparison to what the local authority could deliver. ”

Commissioner,
Bristol Local Authority

It would be remiss not to conclude this section without considering the additional value that volunteers bring to voluntary sector young carer services. A further example from the Norfolk Family Carers' data highlighted above evidenced how the young carer projects have sought to extend and develop the support available for families by drawing on support mechanisms from within the local community (Audit Commission, 2010).

“ Voluntary sector providers have been able to draw on their existing work in this area, particularly in relation to volunteering and mentoring. This has included recruiting and training volunteer mentors and identifying local community services that families can become involved in.

Five areas are using local volunteers to provide mentoring support for young carer families. These areas are providing mentoring support for the family as a whole as well as specific support for young carers and/or adults within the families. They use both adult and peer (older young carers supporting younger carers) mentors, who provide a mixture of emotional and practical support for families. ”

(Ronicle, J and Kendall, S, 2010)

Whole family approach

As highlighted in an earlier section, the Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to adopt a whole family approach meaning that children who may be caring, or may undertake caring in the future, are identified when establishing the care needs of a family member, and protected from inappropriate caring responsibilities.

In line with the legislation detailed, many young carer services have now also adopted a whole family approach. Many are now assessing and responding to the needs of the whole family by directly supporting families or by actively coordinating the support of other services. This approach is valued by families who welcome having a link or key worker rather than having to negotiate with lots of other agencies. This is well documented in feedback and evaluations of other programmes and was also a finding in the Young Carer Pathfinders Programme research (York Consulting, 2011). It also means that young carer services are more able to negotiate a reduction in inappropriate caring roles by ensuring that services (both statutory and voluntary) are put in place for the person with care needs who is therefore less reliant on the young person to provide care. The Care Act 2014 states: ‘Putting the person at the heart of the assessment process is crucial to understanding the person’s needs, outcomes and wellbeing, and delivering better care and support.’

“ They know what works for young carers and families as they work with them day to day. ”

Commissioner,
Bristol Local Authority

“ Through home visits and phone conversations with parents and carers, project staff were able to identify unmet need and refer to relevant services, such as Norfolk’s Early Help Family Support services. ”

Norfolk Young Carers Service

It is worth reflecting more on the Young Carer Pathfinder programme (York Consulting, 2011) where 75% (12) of the local authorities commissioned voluntary agencies to deliver the work. This includes both national agencies, such as Action for Children and Family Action, and local organisations, such as Bolton Lads and Girls Club and Telford and Wrekin Young Carers Service. On exit from support, the evidence suggests that 60% of the young carers showed an overall improvement in their situation and for nearly 32%, concerns were removed.

A further example of a programme delivered by voluntary sector organisations focusing on whole family approaches was the Whole Family Intervention Pilot Programme (Hitchin, J and Bolsin, J, 2012). Funded by Comic Relief, the activities were broken down into four categories:

- Supporting the young person with their caring role.
- Supporting the family to adapt.
- Supporting the parent.
- Bringing in external support.

The qualitative findings showed that the whole family approach was more successful and relevant to the young carers than other types of support and that the interventions were successful where families could identify with and trust staff.

Mental health

As previously highlighted, young carers are particularly vulnerable to poor mental health which can affect their educational outcomes. There is a real opportunity with the recent publication of the Children and Young People’s Mental Health green paper (Department of Health and Department for Education, 2017) to support schools in the key role they play in this agenda. A case study has been included in the previous section where a young carer service accessed a small grant to run a programme focusing on mental health and wellbeing. The role of young carer services in early intervention and preventative services is vital when considering approaches to supporting young people with mental ill health.

The Local Government Association report, *Being Mindful of Mental Health*, which was targeted at councils on creating mentally healthy places, highlighted several links to the voluntary and community sectors:

‘The VCS are key partners in helping our communities keep mentally well. Locally based voluntary groups that provide specialised support and are based in the uniqueness of local communities, are invaluable partners in the mental health system.

‘Severe cuts to local government funding, over 40% since 2010, have hampered the ability of councils to continue to provide funding to these vital local groups. If we are to see an improvement in the nation’s mental health, the role of local government and how local government supports the voluntary sector needs to be a fundamental part of a new collective approach to mental health and wellness.’ (Local Government Association, 2017).

One tip included in the report, was to work closely with the local voluntary and community sector, incorporating their role into local mental health and wellbeing plans. The vital role that young carer services play in the early intervention agenda is reinforced by the estimate that £17bn per year is spent in England and Wales on late intervention, addressing the damaging problems that mental ill health has on children and young people, of which young carers will be a higher than national average proportion.

A Carers Trust Network Partner (local young carer service) accessed a grant from Carers Trust to provide mental health wellness sessions for young carers. The Network Partner reported how one of the young carers it supports benefited enormously from the sessions.

“This young carer cares for her mother who has a physical and mental health diagnosis. She also has a younger brother who has problems with his behaviour. She very rarely has time for herself and is often doing chores and extra household activities to ensure her mother’s life is made easier and her illnesses do not worsen. We invited her along to help her gain new skills in how to learn to relax.

“This young carer took part in the Yoga and Mindfulness session and became very emotional on the lunch break, due to things she had been experiencing recently. We were then able to use this time to do some work with her around body image and self-confidence.

“By ensuring she was able to attend the session and supporting her with transport gave her the opportunity to talk to someone and gave her the chance to experience something new. She has a chaotic home life and we feel, just having time away really aided her, within her caring role.

“She described her favourite part of the session as: “When we was staring at the crystal ball. It calmed my mind right down.” After the session, she asked the yoga instructor where she had purchased the crystal ball from, as she felt it helped so much and would like to do this activity at her leisure.

“Without this funding, this young carer would not have been able to experience yoga, due to her caring role and responsibilities, along with the costs of classes. She, along with other young carers, has asked if we are able to do this again, which is something that we will be looking into as an organisation. This will ensure that she will be able to keep up with her mindfulness practice and can have the support not only from her peers and young carer staff but also a professional in the yoga field. An outcome for this young carer is she can call on what she learnt when she feels stressed in her caring role.

“Due to the disclosure made, she will also be getting some additional one-to-one support and will be sign-posted to our Go Girls training course.

“The cost of this intervention and for 12 other young carers totalled £750 and was gained through a grant which once again highlights the excellent value for money that young carer services provide.”

Inspection process

This section highlights how commissioning local young carer services, and specifically incorporating the Young Carers in Schools programme in this work, could support local authorities in the inspection process. All local authorities have a duty to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential so that all children and young people benefit from a good education. It is widely recognised that young carers are disadvantaged in their education. Sean Harford, Ofsted’s National Director for Education, said the watchdog would look carefully at how local areas identified the needs of young people: “We will want to see evidence that the children and young people are progressing well, to their next stage of education or employment. Effective local area support is crucial for these children and young people who really need them.” (Ofsted, 2015b).

The above has set out compelling reasons why local young carer services should be adequately resourced to support the identification and support of young carers. There have historically been some concerns expressed by statutory partners that the support developed by the voluntary sector for young carers focused on group based support. It can be a challenge to develop demand led services when resources are being squeezed but feedback from some trailblazer authorities involved in the Making a Step Change Programme (Phelps, D, 2012) reiterated that there was still a role for group based support, not least because young carers liked support with and from other young carers.

Below is just a sample of positive feedback from parents and young carers:

“ [He] has been so much happier since [joining the young carer service]. At his school he feels a bit ‘odd-one-out’ so it has really helped him to meet others in similar situations. Thank you all so much. ”

Parent of a young carer

“ When we work to remove the barriers to education that student carers face (for example, through our enhanced bursary package), carers are able to stay on, be successful and achieve. Research into our carers population at college has shown that student carers are more likely to attend and achieve if they are registered with their local carers centre and teaching staff are aware of their caring responsibilities, making identifying and supporting student carers a top priority. ”

College Student Advisor in Welfare and Funding

Why include the Young Carers in Schools programme?

Helping schools to meet legislative requirements

The Children and Families Act 2014 required local authorities to ‘take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are young carers within their area who have needs for support’. Additionally, the Care Act statutory guidance (section 6.68) puts schools at the heart of the identification of young carers. To meet this requirement, local authorities will need to engage and support schools. This section sets out why Young Carers in Schools – an already developed resource that has been robustly tested and is evidencing extraordinary results – makes sense.

Maintained schools have statutory duties to promote children and young people’s wellbeing and statutory responsibilities (Public Health England, 2014) to provide a curriculum that is broadly based, balanced and meets the needs of all pupils. Under section 78 of the Education Act 2002 and the Academies Act 2010 such a curriculum must:

‘Promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.’ (Department for Education, 2014).

‘Promoting physical and mental health in schools creates a virtuous circle reinforcing children’s attainment and achievement that in turn improves their wellbeing, enabling children to thrive and achieve their full potential.’ (Department of Health, 2013).

Meeting young carers’ needs in school

The Young Carers in Schools programme was developed with numerous stakeholders including local authorities and young carers. One of the key messages that is consistently fed back from young carers is that they would like someone they trust in school to talk to, and for the teachers to be aware of and understand them. They also felt that more should be done to raise awareness among professionals about young carers and the support they require. Furthermore, young carers also felt that more could be done to raise awareness with their peers to tackle ignorance and bullying.

Proven benefits

Local authority partners that attended the Young Carers in Schools event in January 2017 described some of the benefits that incorporating Young Carers in Schools in their work with local young carer services had achieved:

Benefit	% of total respondents	Number of respondents
Local authority/commissioned service has been able to strengthen existing relations with schools in relation to young carers	62%	8
Local authority/commissioned service has been able to maximise use of resources by drawing on Young Carers in Schools materials rather than create their own	54%	7
School staff are more able to identify and support young carers	46%	6
Increased identification of young carers	39%	5
Improved wellbeing for young carers	31%	5
Improved attendance at school for young carers	31%	4
Improved achievement at school for young carers	23%	3

There are examples where local authorities included either a focus on working with schools or utilising Young Carers in Schools specifically in their service specifications:

“We’re very much aware that they [locally commissioned young carer services] would be prioritising Young Carers in Schools. Using a programme that is tried, tested and credible - they can go into schools with some clout and backing from a nationally accredited programme.”

Commissioner, Bristol Local Authority

Further benefits were captured during an activity at the event that asked what the key benefits were from commissioning local schools engagement:

- Increased identification – impact on school performance and attainment standards.
- Better Ofsted inspections.
- Improved family working/support.
- Early identification – opportunities to get preventative support (however, there is a need to have a plan for young people who are home schooled).

- Lower cost – is there a link between people in local authority care who started out as a young carer?
- Improved attainment.
- Raising awareness among peers.

However, 44 of the local authorities stated that more training and awareness was needed. More recently, a survey by Barnardo’s of 808 teaching professionals, found 34% thought there were young carers at their school who were not sufficiently supported (Barnardo’s, 2017).

‘Schools are vital to identifying young people and carers who may not already be in contact with local authorities.’

Care and Statutory Guidance, issued under the Care Act 2014, Department of Health.

Local young carer services are best placed to develop relationships with their local education providers and the Young Carers in Schools programme has been developing resources to support them. Feedback at a national event in November 2016 facilitated by the Young Carers in Schools programme for young carer services in England, highlighted some of the benefits of this model.

“You often have many worries which can limit concentration. Young carers should have someone there within school to talk to about their caring roles with confidence and trust.”

Young carer

Benefits	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Service has strengthened existing relationships with schools	14	70%
Increased identification of young carers	13	65%
School staff are more able to identify and support young carers	12	60%
Improved wellbeing for young carers	12	60%
Service has been able to maximise use of resources by using Young Carers in Schools materials	11	55%
Secures timely and appropriate referrals	10	50%
Service has been able to demonstrate considerable added value to funders	10	50%
Improved achievement at school for young carers	10	50%
Improved wellbeing for young carers	7	35%
Young Carers in Schools has developed new relationships with schools	7	45%

Furthermore, we have collated positive feedback from local authority staff who attended the Young Carers in Schools event in 2017, about the tools and guidance provided as part of the Young Carers in Schools programme:

“Your resources are a very good starting point for us speaking to schools and highlighting what the school is already doing.”

“Anything that promotes good practice is useful.”

“It’s a very complete package.”

“The guidance is very comprehensive and easy to understand”

“I like the resources. I have printed it off and given it to the resource centres. We have tried to push the fact that the achievement will improve.”

“It’s very well written, helpful and supportive. Straightforward, easy steps.”

Schools are one universal service which can play a significant role in the early identification and support of young carers and there are many examples where young carer services have been successful in building relationships with schools. Historically, pupils with caring responsibilities were only identified after their attendance or behaviour had dropped. However, schools with access to the capacity and expertise of a young carers worker are able to introduce good practice into schools which has enabled them to identify young carers earlier and implement preventative support. Some examples include:

- A weekly school peer support group.
- One-to-one support for young carers.
- Personal, social, health and economics education lessons, citizenship lessons or assemblies on young carers' issues.

“ Staff are . . . acutely aware of the needs of students who may at times be vulnerable, and they make every effort to identify and support them.

Young carers . . . are effectively supported to ensure that they are able to attend school regularly and achieve well. ”

Ofsted Inspection report for Stockport Academy, a Young Carers in Schools Gold Award winning school, March 2015

- Training for all staff and governors.
- A young carers peer mentoring or buddying scheme.
- Additional curriculum support or homework clubs.
- Information detailing support.

We know that the schools that have implemented Young Carers in Schools have seen substantial improvements in attendance, attainment and wellbeing. In working towards building this into commissioned services we can then increase consistency and quality in this work and support the statutory requirement of local authorities. We also

know that since the introduction of young carers as a vulnerable group in the Ofsted Inspection Framework, schools that have implemented Young Carers in Schools have had this recognised in their inspection outcomes.

“ Without supportive teachers I wouldn’t have continued my academic career in the way that I have . . . I really do thank them. ”

Young carer

Helping to identify and support younger carers

The 2011 Census did not include children under the age of five as providing care. However, according to the Children Commissioner’s report (Children’s Commissioner, 2016) 33 local authorities had received young carer referrals for children under five and 22 local authorities

had assessed and provided support for young carers under five leading to a total of 160 supported young carers under the age of five. In an open text response to the Children Commissioner’s survey, seven local authorities stated that more attention should be directed at identifying and supporting children younger than eight. Young Carers in Schools translates across all age groups and the resources and good practice could easily be adapted for nurseries and pre-school.

“ I have witnessed young carers grow from strength to strength once they are identified and support is in place. ”

A Young Carers School
Operational Lead

“ Once identified, young carers have become more confident to reach out for support. As a consequence, attendance has increased as have their school grades. ”

A Young Carers School
Operational Lead

Next steps

All practitioners would agree that statutory duties introduced in the legislation are fundamentally a positive step for the estimated 700,000 young carers providing support and care. However, we know that there is still work to be done to effectively implement the legislation. This resource sets out how local authorities can support a whole systems approach to address the challenges of identifying and supporting young carers. In summary, these include:

Collaboration

The suggested outcomes outlined in the report *Commissioning Services for Young Carers and their Families* (Phelps, D, 2012) still provide an excellent framework for all partners to collaborate and achieve together. Commissioning local young carer services and including Young Carers in Schools in that work will go a long way to achieving many of them.

Commissioning local young carer services

This resource has highlighted the value for money that local voluntary sector organisations bring to the table and the excellent practice that already exists between schools and local young carer services. This practice needs to be replicated and embedded in long-term changes in order to improve the educational outcomes of young carers.

Including Young Carers in Schools in service specifications

We have provided both quantifiable and qualitative evidence throughout this resource on how Young Carers in Schools has impacted on the education experience of young carers. The programme is the only national free resource that includes a nationally recognised award process. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that this is potentially one of the simplest means of local authorities addressing some elements of the statutory duties they are legally bound to consider.

As a minimum, we ask that you consider ways to encourage schools in your localities to consider elements of the good practice included in the programme. Some examples of how this can be done include:

- Utilising the groups where school leaders and practitioners are brought together.
- Considering a campaign to promote the Pupil Premium. It is well documented that most schools are feeling the monetary squeeze in response to the new funding formula but we can consider other ways to raise resources. Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, recently stated that young carers should be automatically entitled to Pupil Premium. The additional funding would help schools to properly resource the ways in which they can identify and help young carers.
- Finding out if the healthy schools initiative is active in your locality. It is likely that the healthy school lead is employed by the local authority. Most areas have developed bespoke schemes relevant to their own opportunities and challenges but as we know that there are on average two young carers per classroom then it would be relevant to include some good practice elements in local awards.
- Utilising the model local memorandum of understanding which was published as part of No Wrong Doors (ADCS et al, 2015).

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