

Young Carer Case Studies

These young carer stories are designed to be used with the other resources produced for Young Carers Awareness Day.

The following four stories are either real, or based on the real story of a young carer.

Danny's story

Danny, is 16 years old and a young adult carer who cares for his mum and cousin.

Danny has been a carer for a year and it changed his life overnight. Before, he could go out with his friends most days but now he often can't go out because he has to help his mum, make the dinner and tidy up, and make sure his mum takes her medicine.

When people ask him: 'If you had the chance not to be a young carer would you?' he always replies: "No, because it's a fab bond between me and my mum and I wouldn't change it for the world."

Danny also cooks dinner for his cousin who is blind but Danny doesn't always find cooking very easy.

Danny has had support from his local young carers service. Getting to know other young carers who are in similar situations has really helped him.

Marlon's story

Marlon is five and is an infant carer. He lives alone with his mum who has heart problems and low blood pressure.

He helps his mum with her personal and emotional care as well as doing regular household cleaning, washing up, helping with cooking and carrying heavy shopping bags. He worries a lot about his mum's health and sits with her to keep her company and make sure she is okay.

Two years ago, after his Grandmother had died, Marlon and his mum had gradually become more and more isolated. Marlon didn't talk much or play with other children and had been wetting his bed.

His deputy head teacher noticed something was up and referred him for carers support from his local carers service. Now he is getting help with his poor health and is coming to terms with the loss of his grandmother.

He also takes part in monthly clubs and school holiday trips. He and his mum have also had some family support including bereavement counselling and a family short break.

Emma's Story

Emma, 13, cares for her mum and brother Aaron.

Emma's mum first went into hospital when Emma was eight, just after her youngest brother Aaron was born. Her mum was diagnosed with sarcoidosis, which affects the immune system. Her mum was in and out of hospital all the time. Visiting her was scary as she was always really pale and had loads of tubes connected to her.

Emma's step dad works long hours, so as the eldest, she started to help tidy and do the washing up and laundry. When her mum was at home but feeling ill Emma would often take days off school to help look after her. Emma didn't tell most of her friends what was going on because she didn't want them to think she was different. But some people did make hurtful comments.

Aaron was diagnosed with autism when he was four. Emma says: "Now and again I'd get frustrated about not being able to go out with my friends or go shopping but I got used to things. I do get jealous of friends who have less to worry about, but I don't dwell on it – it's just part of my life. At school, people will mess about during their lessons and then do their work at home. But I can't do that – I try to get everything done at school.

"I think my home life has affected my personality because I have more things going on than your average 13-year-old."

Emma is concerned about what the future holds for Aaron but doesn't dwell on it too much. She prefers to concentrate on the present because she hasn't got the time to think about anything else.

Jake's story

Jake is ten years old and lives at home with his dad who has alcohol issues.

Jake takes on a lot of responsibility at home and the two of them have become isolated from other family members and their local community.

Jake constantly worries about his dad and had started to find himself becoming more and more anxious about his life and in particular his upcoming move to a new school.

However, he was able to attend a series of workshops run by his local carers service, which helped young carers to think about who they are, manage their feelings, and to look at their aspirations. He was able to speak about his feelings which helped him enormously. He was also thrilled to meet other young carers of the same age some of whom are already at his new school. They have been helping Jake feel a bit less worried about the next big step in his life.

Information and support

[www.professionals.carers.org/
Young-Carers-in-School-Wales](http://www.professionals.carers.org/Young-Carers-in-School-Wales)
www.youngcarerstoolkit.co.uk
www.youngminds.org.uk



The Young Carer Quiz

This quiz is designed to be used with the other resources produced for Young Carers Awareness Day.

1. How many young carers are there in the UK?
2. On average, how many young carers are there in each classroom?
3. Up to 80% of young carers are missing out on what other children their age are doing.
True or False?
4. Young carers do better than their peers at GCSE level?
True or False?
5. Most teachers know who the young carers are in their class.
True or False?
6. What is the average age of a young carer?
7. What percentage of young carers are bullied simply because they are helping or caring for someone?
8. Most young carers don't want to go to college or university.
True or False?
9. There are young carers as young as five?
True or False

Answers

1. A survey in 2010 by the BBC estimated there to be 700,000 young carers in the UK.¹
2. There are an estimated two young carers in every classroom.²
3. **True.** A Carers Trust survey found that 80% of young carers were missing out on their childhood because of their caring role.³
4. **False.** Young carers don't do as well at GCSE level as their peers (juggling caring and education can be tough!).⁴
5. **False.** A survey found that 42% of young carers said there was not a particular person at school who recognised them as a carer and helped them.⁵
6. The average age of a young carer is 13.⁶
7. In recent research, a quarter (26%) were bullied at school because they are helping or caring for someone.⁷
8. **False.** The majority (84%) in a recent survey, said they intended to go to university or college.⁸
9. **True.** Some services are working with younger or infant carers aged 5–8.⁹

¹ The BBC, with assistance from The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, surveyed 4,029 pupils in ten secondary schools in 2010 and found 337 had caring responsibilities.

² Following a survey in 2010, the BBC estimated that there are 700,000 young carers in the UK. That equates to one in 12 school children or two in every classroom.

³ Carers Trust (2015), *Missing Out Survey* (Carers Trust).

⁴ Sempik, J, Becker, S (2013), *Young Adult Carers at School: Experiences and Perceptions of Caring and Education* (Carers Trust).

⁵ Sempik, J, Becker, S (2013), *Young Adult Carers at School: Experiences and Perceptions of Caring and Education* (Carers Trust).

⁶ Census 2011 (England and Wales).

⁷ Sempik, J, Becker, S (2013), *Young Adult Carers at School: Experiences and Perceptions of Caring and Education* (Carers Trust).

⁸ Sempik, J, Becker, S (2013), *Young Adult Carers at School: Experiences and Perceptions of Caring and Education* (Carers Trust).

⁹ Mills, P, Ashley, D, Phelps, D, Warren, S, (2015), *Supporting Young Carers Aged 5-8, a Resource for Professionals Working with Younger Carers* (Carers Trust).

Information and support

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Be an Agony Aunt for a Young Carer!

This activity is designed to be used with the other resources produced for Young Carers Awareness Day.

What problems do young carers worry about? What would be helpful to say to them?

Here are three issues that young carers are facing. They are based on real examples of problems that young carers have had. What might you say to help them?

Choose one and respond to the young carer in the style of an agony aunt.

To get you started, you will find an example of a response sent to a young carer by an online agony aunt on the back of this sheet.

Problem 1

My brother is ten and has a learning disability that means he behaves like a two-year-old. I am the only one that can calm him down and who he listens to. This is making me really stressed and I can't have a break without him. My parents find it really hard and leave me to look after him most of the time. What can I do to change their minds and help with my brother's behaviour? – **Asif**

Problem 2

My dad is disabled and he needs me to do lots of stuff for him. People at school have been excluding me from hanging around with them and everything has got so much I don't think I can cope with it any more. Please can you give me some advice because my mum is worried and I have been going to the doctors because I am really depressed and I don't know what to do. I need help. – **Stephen**

Problem 3

My mum's in hospital at the moment because she has kidney problems. So me and my little sister are living with our auntie. She keeps crying loads which makes us upset! Whenever I mention it she keeps saying that I'm being rude. How can I tell her in a good way that we can't cope with all this? – **Joanne**

Here's an example of a message a young carer sent to a service for young carers:

Hello, my name is Natalie. I care for my mum every day before and after school. She has serious heart problems and has had an operation but she's got to have more treatments all the time so it's quite scary. Caring for her is hard especially since she has been in and out of hospital and it's been pretty tough especially in school due to the fact I don't concentrate on work. I don't have much time to myself as I look after my mum. I don't have a life like any other 15-year-old. **Is there any advice you can give me?**

And here's how the agony aunt for the young carers service, Susannah, responded:

Hi Natalie

I'm really sorry to hear how unwell your mum has been; this must have been a worrying and stressful time for you, so it's not surprising you're finding it all a bit too much to deal with. Like many young carers, you have found that caring for a relative is affecting other parts of your life, like school work and the 'normal' things that young people your age are doing. That's really hard to manage, but the good news is that there are ways that you can get some help and support.

Have you told anyone at school about the situation at home? If not, it might be a good idea to confide in one of your teachers, or any adult in school who you get on with. Often, it's not until a student tells people they are struggling to cope that things start to improve.

You could also find out if there's a young carers service in your area. You should be able to do this by searching online for 'young carers' and your nearest town or city.

Another thing that often helps young carers to cope is to have other young people, in similar situations, to talk to. You might find it helpful to introduce yourself on a website for young carers, to make friends and get some advice. It's important to check that it's safe first, though.

Lastly, you mention that your mum has heart problems. That must be really hard to cope with, so I do understand why you're feeling you need some extra support. It might help you to understand a bit more about heart disease and the ways you can support your mum through her treatment. This link might be helpful: <http://tinyurl.com/heart-booklet> – a great booklet from the British Heart Foundation that tells you all about caring for someone with heart problems.

I hope some of this gives you some ideas about where to go for help and I really hope your mum is much better soon.

Take care, Natalie.

Susannah

Information and support

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