

STEP ⑦

Step 7: Raising Awareness of School Staff about Young Carers



Key information

To meet the needs of young carers in your school, it is vital that all school staff:

- Understand why young carers need support to enjoy and achieve at school.
- Sign up to the school's whole school commitment for young carers.
- Know the simple things they can do to identify, support and signpost young carers as part of their wider roles within the school.



Building staff understanding and responsibility for meeting the needs of young carers does not mean creating additional functionality within staff's existing roles. Rather, by being aware of how to identify and support young carers, staff will be better equipped to fulfil their existing roles within the school.

Why should schools raise the awareness of all staff members about these key points?

It is important that all staff members (teaching and non-teaching) understand young carer issues because:

- Doing so will help deliver a positive whole school ethos where young carers and their families are respected and valued and feel safe and confident to access support.
- Many young carers are hidden (see Step 1: Gaining an understanding about young carers). To identify pupils with caring responsibilities effectively, all school staff should understand the possible signs that a pupil is a young carer and what to do when they identify such a child/young person (see Step 7, Tool 1: Checklist of signs a pupil is a young carer).
- A pupil with caring responsibilities may self-identify to any member of staff whom they feel they can talk to and share their worries and concerns with.
- All staff need to be aware of the school's process for sharing information about a young carer. This will help ensure that information is only shared with the appropriate consent and with a view to guaranteeing a pupil does not need to repeat their story several times.
- All staff should know not to discuss a pupil's caring role in front of their peers.
- A member of support staff who has established relationships with the local community may become aware a pupil is a young carer through conversations with the family and should be able to signpost them to support.
- Teachers and support staff delivering targeted interventions, such as homework clubs, should know how to ensure these interventions meet young carers' needs, for example that homework clubs should be run at lunchtime.

- All teaching staff should be able to adapt their practice to meet the needs of young carers in their class teaching.
- Office staff should know why it may be important for pupils to have access to the phone at break and lunchtime to check on a family member and to ensure the appropriate handling of messages from home.

“ Having the ability to ask yourself ‘who is having a bad day?’ and adjust your behaviour accordingly is one of the most important things teachers have. ”

Teacher

How should the schools raise staff awareness?

Young Carers School Operational Leads should prioritise how they intend to raise the awareness of pupils and their families when reviewing their school’s provision (see Step 2: Reviewing your school’s provision for young carers).

The basics

In summary, schools beginning to develop their young carers’ provision may initially wish to raise

awareness by developing and maintaining young carer material on a staff noticeboard and the intranet and/or shared drive.

This material should contain:

- The name and contact information of the Young Carers School Operational Lead.
- The school’s whole school commitment to young carers (see Step 5, Tool 1: Recommended points to include in a whole school commitment).
- Awareness raising information regarding who young carers are, the likelihood that there will be many young carers at the school, the impact of caring on young people and the types of support available for young carers.
- A checklist of possible signs that a pupil is a young carer and what to do if staff know a pupil who is, or could be, a young carer and/or if a pupil tells them they have a caring role (Step 7, Tool 1: Checklist of signs a pupil is a young carer).

To secure proactive staff commitment, this material should be endorsed by the Senior Leadership Team.

See Step 7, Tool 2: Exemplar staff noticeboard material.



Implementing this action will help schools achieve the Bronze level of the Young Carers in Schools Award.

Building on the basics

To meet young carers' needs more effectively, schools should also ensure training on young carer issues:

- Is included in all staff inductions.
- Features regularly as part of staff continuous professional development, for example, as part of a staff INSET day, staff meeting or twilight session.

Staff training should cover:

- Who young carers are and what their caring role might involve.
- The likely number of young carers in the school and why young carers are often hidden.
- The particular challenges young carers often experience that impact on their capacity to enjoy and achieve at school.
- The ways in which staff can support young carers as part of their wider roles in the school (see Step 7, Tool 3: How school staff can support young carers).
- The possible signs a pupil may be a young carer.
- What support is available both within and outside the school.

To ensure training effectively raises school staff's understanding and confidence in how to meet young carers' needs, it is important that the Young Carers School Operational Lead evaluates the impact of training in their school.



Implementing this action will help schools achieve the Silver level of the Young Carers in Schools Award.

Best practice

To achieve best practice for young carers, staff should also have specific training to identify young people affected by stigmatised illnesses (such as parental mental ill-health, parental substance misuse and HIV).

Local safeguarding children's boards within local authorities may host specific training of this type that could be made available to education staff.



Including specific training for teachers to identify young people affected by stigmatised illnesses will help schools achieve the Gold level of the Young Carers in Schools Award.

What tools are provided to support schools deliver training?

Training resources, accompanying this Step-by-step Guide include:

- Step 7, Tool 4: Staff training facilitator's guide.
- Step 7, Tool 5: PowerPoint for use in staff training.
- Step 7, Tool 6: Handouts for use in staff training.
- Step 7, Tool 7: Staff training evaluation form.

The purpose of these tools is to support the Young Carers School Operational Lead to deliver training in their school. Outside agencies, such as a local young carers service, may also be able to provide support with staff training or deliver the training themselves. Your school might want to consider inviting other professionals working in your school to join training sessions and even share training with other schools in the same school cluster or multi-academy trust.

Considering adult carers among your staff group

During training sessions, staff may identify themselves as carers and highlight their own support needs. It would be useful to make information available to adult carers, such as the Carers Trust website (Carers.org), local carers support information and the NHS Carers Direct helpline (0300 123 1053).



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