

Guidance for Schools Covid-19 Recovery

With the staff briefing, this document explores the challenges young carers are facing during the Covid-19 crisis and offers practical guidance for school staff on how to identify and support young carers 'Back to School'.

Who are young carers?

A 'young carer' is defined in section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 as: '... a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person ... This relates to care for any family member who is physically or mentally ill, frail elderly, disabled or misuses alcohol or substances.'

They are often hidden and are particularly vulnerable during the Covid-19 crisis. Many have experienced an increase in their caring responsibilities or are caring for the first time. There are likely to be young carers in your classes, as research shows that as many as one in five pupils in secondary schools are young carers¹.

Safeguarding and identifying young carers

Young carers are recognised as a vulnerable group in need of early help. However, they are often only identified after a crisis. Many do not know that they are young carers or may not identify with the label. Young carers are no more likely than their peers to encounter support services. They often remain unsupported, taking on inappropriate caring roles which adversely impact their educational attendance, attainment and wellbeing².

What you can do:

- Consider any assumptions that you may have about young carers and learn more about them.
- Identify a named lead staff member for young carers and communicate this to students.
- Use welfare calls as an opportunity to identify young carers. Some key questions to help identify them are included in the staff briefing.
- Work with other agencies to offer coordinated support for the whole family.
- Where appropriate, signpost to your local carer service or local authority.

Contact your nearest young carer support service

carers.org/help-and-info/carer-services-near-you

www.childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/young-carers-services

Young carers' attendance

Young carers' attendance at school can be affected by their caring responsibilities with an average of 48 school days missed or cut short per year³. Young carers are telling us that, due to Coronavirus, many are not feeling confident to return to school. At home, young carers may not have access to technology, or are sharing laptops and tablets with siblings, so are unable to access online classes or complete their schoolwork.

Planning and reassurance are crucial to avoid young carers missing out.

What you can do:

- Consider which students may need to borrow IT equipment and continue to offer offline alternatives to digital home working.
- In cases of non or irregular attendance think young carer. They, or their family, may need more support to attend school.
- Inform young carers that they are entitled to a local authority assessment of their needs, which includes access to education.

Young carers' attainment

We know that, due to their caring role, young carers are already likely to have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level than their peers⁴. The Coronavirus crisis risks exacerbating the situation, stopping young carers from reaching their full potential.

What you can do:

- Set flexible deadlines to alleviate anxieties about schoolwork.
- Be clear on whether schoolwork completed at home will be graded so that young carers can prioritise their workload in the little time they have.
- Discuss future study and career options with young carers so they remain optimistic about what they can achieve.

Wellbeing and young carers

Young carers face extra pressures and can struggle to look after themselves and their mental health. Anxiety is high for a lot of shielding families. Clear plans which take the individual into consideration, communicated clearly to families can help reduce some of this anxiety.

What you can do:

- Where possible, communicate clearly to parents and students about the school's social isolation policies and phased return to school plans.
- Discuss young carers in mental health or peer support sessions.

The Young Carers in Schools programme

Young Carers in Schools is an exciting initiative in England that makes it as easy as possible for schools to identify and support young carers, and awards good practice.

Carers Trust and The Children's Society are available to support you through this time, free of charge. For more information about the Young Carers in Schools programme and resources to help you continue to identify and support young carers in your school, see: youngcarersinschools.com/.



¹Joseph, S (2018), *BBC survey* (BBC and University of Nottingham).

²Becker, S (2013), *Hidden from View* (The Children's Society and University of Nottingham).

³Dearden, C, Becker, S (2004), *Young Carers in the UK* (University of Nottingham).

⁴Becker, S (2013), *Hidden from View* (The Children's Society and University of Nottingham).