

YOUNG CARERS MATTER

Being a young carer is challenging at the best of times but the pandemic has brought new hurdles too. We've collected together some advice to help you through.

It's not easy to juggle caring, studying and looking after your own health and well-being, especially if it's difficult to get a break or you're missing your friends. We know that some young carers have talked about finding it harder to do things that used to be simple, like getting food and medicines for their family.

[Watch Charley, 15, share her experience of the lockdown.](#)

"I AM AN ADULT IN A CHILD'S BODY"

You may think that people don't understand you or can't empathise with what you're going through. Our Youth Council worked with poet Aneirin Karadog to explore how they feel. [Watch it online.](#)

SUPPORT NOT SYMPATHY

We work with our [Youth Council](#) to make sure more people know about the issues that are important to young and young adult carers. They told us that they want support, not sympathy, so we've asked support workers, teachers and most importantly, young carers themselves, for tips on how to cope during the lockdown. We've got advice on who you can turn to for help and support too.

Remember, you still have a right to feel safe, listened to and protected from harm.

[Watch the 'support not sympathy' video.](#)

WHO WE ARE

Carers Trust Wales is a charity that works for and with carers of all ages. 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, has a mental health condition or addiction. We work with [Network Partners](#) around Wales who deliver direct support to carers.

[Find out more about Carers Trust Wales.](#)

SPECIAL THANKS

All these resources are based on tried and tested methods by young carers, support workers and specialists in young carers. A big thank you to everyone who contributed by sharing their knowledge, including: Bridgend Young Carers, Carers Trust South East Wales, Carmarthenshire Young Carers, Dr Feylyn Lewis, Dr Patri Masterton-Algar, EAS education consortia, Kate Evans (St Gwladys Primary School), Swansea Carers Centre, Swansea YMCA Young Carers Project and all the fantastic young carers.

For more information contact wales@carers.org

Mental health and well-being

Keep talking

Young carers clubs around Wales have adapted to the new lockdown rules and are changing how they support you. If you're part of a young carers service, your support workers are still there for you. Many are running fun group sessions online, speaking to young carers individually over the phone and even dropping books and craft parcels to homes.

Even if you haven't been in touch for a while, if you feel you need support now, reach out to your local carers service or local authority. We've got some helpful contact details at the end of this resource.

There are many other organisations that you can speak to, including:

[Young Minds](#)

[Children's Commissioner of Wales](#)

[Childline](#)

[Samaritans](#)

[NSPCC](#)

themix.org.uk

exchange-counselling.wales

Establish a routine

Having a routine can help bring structure and order to the day.

Go to bed and wake up at a regular time each day; your body needs good sleep to function well. Try to unwind before bed and avoid screens just before you try to sleep.

Getting up, washed and dressed will get your day off to a positive start.

If the long days seem daunting, consider making a timetable with your family, so that you know you've got time for schoolwork, caring and fun.

Limit news and social media

Staying informed about the coronavirus is helpful but spending too much time reading the news can mean you worry more than you need to. The amount of information and news online can be overwhelming.

Try to:

- Limit the amount of times you check the news,
- Stick to reputable sources for information, like the NHS,
- Be aware of 'fake news' online.

Social media is great to help you to stay in touch but make sure you follow [Internet Safety rules](#) and don't be afraid to be selective about who you interact with on social media. Talk to people who build you up. If an interaction is making you feel bad, take a break.

Friends and family

It's not the same as a hug but staying in touch with friends and family is still important. There are lots of games you can play [during online video calls too](#). Young carers' groups have been enjoying activities like bake-alongs and quizzes.

Maybe try your hand at letter writing? You could design cards and send them to friends and family to let them know that you're thinking of them.

Get creative

It's a good time to try your own hand at writing. Consider starting a blog about being a young carer to help others.

Journalling can be a great way to clear your mind too; reflect on what you're grateful for and work through worries.

Top tens

Make 'top ten' share them with friends and family or just for fun. Try listing your top ten:

- films

- songs
- recipes
- places you want to visit after lockdown is over
- things you're enjoying about lockdown

I'm bored

It's normal to get fed up spending day after day indoors! Here are some ideas on activities to keep you occupied:

- Learn origami
- Make a dreamcatcher
- Learn new dance moves
- Set a new 'keepie-uppie' record
- Plant seeds in a pot or in the garden
- Make a Vlog or write a blog
- Make a nutritious smoothie or other healthy treat using a recipe from '[change4life](#)'

Even if you're very busy caring for others it's important you have time in the day to do something that you enjoy.

Well-being box

Everyone has bad days so gift the 'future you' a personalised well-being box to dip into on low days. Find a shoebox and fill it with items that make you happy, such as:

- chocolate,
- bath bombs,
- photos of happy memories,
- printouts of your favourite inspirational quotes.

You're great as you are

Listen to your own body and mind and do what works for you. Don't worry if other people seem to be running half marathons every day or hosting zoom parties and you're not. What's important is that you find a way to stay well during this difficult time. If you're struggling, know there are people and organisations who can support you.

Don't compare your life to people on social media. People only show you what they want you to see. As Thomas Jefferson said, "Comparison is the thief of joy". Don't be afraid to take some time off social media for your well-being.

Break up screen time

Stretch your legs or make a cuppa during film/TV marathons. Having a 10-minute break between episodes, gives your eyes and brain a rest.

Fresh air

If you're able to go out for a daily walk or exercise, do it! Fresh air, new sights, sounds and movement are all good for your physical and mental health. Even a lap round the block can help to lift your mood.

Some young carers told us they have a set time for a daily walk as it's comforting to have a routine. For example, walk your dog or go for a stroll straight after breakfast each day.

Physical health

Eat well

If you're cooking meals for your family, or helping adults in your house to cook, try and get your 5-a day in, or as many as you can manage. One way is to stock up on frozen vegetables that you can add in to most meals. [Check out these simple recipes for healthy wraps, spaghetti Bolognese and 'no bake cakes'](#). There are lots more on the [NHS change4life website](#) too.

Stay active

Staying active doesn't have to mean jogging or a workout – you can get ideas for fun activities on [this NHS website](#). How about setting up obstacle courses for your siblings? Or dusting off your roller skates?

Although, [Joe Wicks workouts](#) *the* [Ballet Coach](#) and other online workouts are quite fun too!

Encourage your friends and family to join in

Start a challenge with your friends and family. You can all download the same app and count steps on daily basis. It means you can encourage each other and stay connected.

Looking good!

Each morning, shower, dress, brush your teeth and hair as if you were going out. Personal hygiene and self-care still matters and it will give you a mental lift.

Have a pamper night. Have a bubble bath, paint your nails, style your hair or use a facemask (you can search online for recipes to make one at home!).

Support for eating disorders

It's important to be kind to yourself and to recognise that you are having to adapt the ways you are used to keeping your body healthy.

If you are managing an eating disorder and are having difficulty, there is lots of [useful information on Beat's website](#). Remember that your GP and other medical professionals are still there to support you at this time, too.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about slowing down, being in the moment and just breathing. Here's an [introduction](#) to mindfulness and there are some activities to try [here](#). If you're not sure where to start, ask a trusted adult to help you.

One day at a time

Remember that the pandemic is new for everyone. Lots of people are finding the current circumstances and lack of certainty about what will happen in the future difficult. It's OK if some days don't go very well or you don't get much done. Be kind to yourself and try to make tomorrow a better day.

Talking and being open

As a young carer you're used to supporting others, but you need to look after yourself before you can look after others. You can't pour from an empty cup!

Be open

Talk to other young carers if you can, or a support worker if you have one. Many young carers will be facing similar worries and concerns as you – you're not alone. They might have some tips or hints to help you along or give you a safe space to share your worries.

Seek out support

If you need help, do reach out to family, friends, teachers, support workers and helplines.

[Charlie Mackesy](#) wrote "Asking for help isn't giving up... it's refusing to give up".

Don't feel guilty for asking for help or worry that other people might be more in need than you. It is far better to ask for help before you reach breaking point than after. You have a right to feel happy and safe.

Education and school

Schools across Wales are working hard to make sure that everyone can continue to learn from home. If like many young carers you're finding it tricky to balance learning with your caring role, your school and support worker if you have one are there to help you. They can also help you prioritise your learning so even if you don't have much time, you can make the most of it.

It's important that you get the time and space you need so that you don't feel stressed and worried about the work you have to get done. Talk to your family about how you can all work together to make sure you're not feeling under too much pressure.

Can't get through it all?

If your home is busy or chaotic, don't worry if you can't get all your schoolwork done. No one can perfectly recreate school in the house. What is most important is that you are safe and well. If you feel worried about schoolwork, let your teacher know that you're finding it difficult to keep up, they should reassure you that you can take things at your own pace.

Stay ambitious

It's a big shock if you have just found out that your exams have been cancelled or if you've had to radically change the way you learn. This doesn't mean you won't meet your life goals though; stay ambitious!

Whilst learning might be different right now, you still have a right to education and a right to support to with your learning. Speak to your teacher or your parent/guardian if you're struggling as there may be support available for you.

Carers Trust Wales are rolling out resources for teachers and governing bodies to help ensure young carers are recognised and supported in school. Keep an eye out on carers.org/wales or twitter.com/carerstrustwal

There are some FAQs about further and higher education on Welsh Governments website that may [answer some questions](#) you have.

Choose a time that suits you

Find the time of day that suits you best to do schoolwork. For some, that's first thing in the morning. For others, it's in the evening when younger brothers and sisters are in bed. Try and play to your strengths and do things at the easiest time for you.

Timetable

Work with your family to plan a timetable that works for you all; this may mean you're disturbed less when you're trying to study.

Bitesize

Break your schoolwork into smaller chunks. For example, study for 40 mins) and then have a break. It'll help you concentrate better and make the work feel more manageable.

Online resources

There are some great resources online so make the most of them.

Here is a selection:

- [BBC Bitesize programmes](#)
- [Myleen's Music Klass](#)
- [Carole Vorderman mathematics](#)
- Daniel Radcliffe reading [Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone](#)

Struggling with IT equipment?

If you're trying to keep up with schoolwork but don't have the right equipment (for example you have only one laptop for the family) ask you parent/guardian to get in touch with your teacher. They may alter the work you are asked to do or offer additional support.

Read a book

You can choose to read any story that you enjoy, including reading your old favourites. If you are looking for some new recommendations, spend time browsing booktrust.org.uk making a list of all the books you want to read when libraries are open again! Some libraries are offering an online or postal service. It's worth asking your library what access to books they can give you at this time.

If you'd like to read books about mental health, and are aged 13 to 18, have a look at [Reading Well](#) which lists expert endorsed books that are (usually) available from your local library.

Check out Hwb

You might be familiar with Hwb already but this a great time to explore it a little more. It's updated daily and full of excellent resources. Check out the [resources](#) section and explore the free, virtual classrooms, and a massive bank of materials .

Get creative with learning

Learning to budget, cook, using the washing machine are all great life-skills to learn. Many schools are encouraging learners to share examples of the ways in which they help in the home and are counting them towards schoolwork. Think of how many skills you show by looking after someone.

Visit the zoo online

Make the most of online resources. Many tourist attractions like zoos and museums are running free online tours. [Check out some Egyptian Hieroglyphics at the British Museum in London.](#)

Support and links

There are many local organisations that are able to support you, we can't list them all here, but here is sneak peek at some of their activities. The chances are services local to you are delivering similar types of support.

Carmarthenshire Young Carers Group are:

updating social media each day, running online young carer groups, sharing resources and education support, setting fun challenges and checking in with individuals. They are also helping families prepare emergency plans and supporting to arrange food and medicine deliveries.

Swansea YMCA young carers are:

updating their Instagram and Twitter account ([@Egija_YMCA](#)), running an online group for young carers and family members, running 1-2-1 and group video sessions, running live online baking, music sessions and tutoring sessions. They're also delivering essential hygiene products to homes as well as equipment for young carers so everyone can join in with cooking and craft sessions.

Young Carers in Monmouthshire have:

online groups for young carer and their families and are checking in regularly with families via texts and phone calls.

Find your local young carers group

carers.org

actionforchildren.org.uk

YMCA

barnardos.org.uk/wales

Contact your local authority who can give you information, advice and support including contact details of your local young carers service

Blaenau Gwent
01495 315700

Bridgend
01656 642413 / 07989 655512

Caerphilly
0808 100 2500

Cardiff
02920 234234

Carmarthenshire
0300 333 2222

Ceredigion
01545 574000
Conwy
0300 456 1111

Denbighshire
0300 456 1000

Flintshire
01352 803444

Gwynedd
Llŷn area: 01758 704099
Caernarfon area: 01286 679099
Bangor area: 01248 363240
Eifionydd and Meirionnydd
North: 01766 510300
South Meirionnydd: 01341 424499

Isle of Anglesey
01248 752736

Merthyr Tydfil
01685 725000

Monmouthshire
01633 644644

Neath Port Talbot
01639 686802

Newport
01633 656656

Pembrokeshire
01437 764551

Powys
01597 827666

Rhondda Cynon Taf
01443 425003

Swansea
01792 636519

Torfaen
01495 762200

Vale of Glamorgan
01446 700111

Wrexham
01978 292066