

Young Carers and the school census

An England briefing analysing the results of the Spring 2023 school census in relation to young carers.

About Carers Trust

Carers Trust works to transform the lives of unpaid carers. It partners with its UK-wide network of local carer organisations to provide funding and support, deliver innovative and evidence-based programmes, raise awareness, and influence policy. Carers Trust hosts the Young Carers Alliance, a network of over 170 organisations and 400 individuals committed to improving identification and support for young carers and young adult carers. Carers Trust's vision is that unpaid carers are heard and valued, with access to support, advice and resources to enable them to live fulfilled lives.

Young carers and the school census

As a result of campaigning by Carers Trust, The Children's Society and other charities, the government announced in 2021 (in the Adult Social Care White Paper, 'People at the Heart of Care'), that young carers were to be added to the school census for schools in England for the first time. Young Carers were added to the Spring Census return as of January 2023.

Schools had the option to record if a pupil was a young carer, and if so, who they were identified by (school or parent).

The results of the school census in relation to young carers

School census data (including data relating to young carers) was released on Thursday 8th June 2023. The data showed that there was significant under-reporting of the number of young carers in schools (both when compared to the estimated number of young carers in schools, and the numbers known to local young carer services).

In total, 38,983 pupils were recorded as young carers, representing 0.5% of the pupil population and an average of 260 young carers per local authority. The breakdown is as follows (the percentage in brackets indicates the proportion of that cohort who were recorded as young carers):

Primary Schools	Secondary schools	State-funded special schools	Non-maintained special schools	Alternative Provision
15,441 (0.3%)	23,261 (0.6%)	238	2	41

The Department for Education stated that 79% of schools recorded having no young carers. This means that the 38,983 young carers recorded in the school census were from just 21% of schools. If the numbers from those schools were replicated equally across the remaining 79% of schools, then the number of identified young carers would be 185, 633 in England.

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Variations in the school census data relating to young carers

There was significant variation, both in the number of young carers recorded across different local authority areas, but also in relation to the numbers recorded by schools compared with the number known to local young carer services.

Carers Trust has already received anecdotal feedback from Young Alliance members where they are supporting two or even three times the number of young carers recorded in the school census:

Hampshire – 3237 young carers are receiving direct support from the young carer services, whilst 1632 were recorded by schools.

Lincolnshire – 2518 young carers are currently known to the young carers service, whilst 748 young carers were recorded by schools.

Kent – 7500 young carers are registered with the young carers service, whilst 2,141 were recorded by schools.

Variations across areas

Whilst the national proportion of pupils recorded as young carers was 0,5%, there was a significant geographical variation.

In relation to the number of pupils recorded as young carers across local authorities, the number recorded ranged from 7 to 2141¹. The data for primary schools shows that in 4 local authorities (Camden, City of London, Islington and Kensington and Chelsea), there were no young carers recorded in any of their primary schools.

Analysis of the proportion of pupils recorded, found that the percentages ranged from lower than 0.1% up to nearly 2%.

Even across areas with similar pupil population sizes, there was a marked difference in the number of young carers recorded on the school census. Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole was the local authority area which had the highest proportion of pupils recorded as young carers (1.9%), with 999 young carers identified out of a pupil population of 52,915; Redbridge has a similar pupil population (58,418), but only 21 young carers were recorded (0.03%).

You can find the 10 highest and 10 lowest local authority areas in relation to the percentage of pupils recorded as young carers, which can be found in **Appendix 1**. A spreadsheet containing the full breakdown of numbers of young carers recorded by local authority area (including across different school types) can be found at www.carers.org/schoolcensus.

¹ There are 2 local authority areas where no young carers were identified (City of London and Isles of Scilly) but as their pupil population sizes are considerably smaller than other local authorities, they have not been included in the **Appendix 1** table showing the fewest proportions of young carers identified.

Why is it important for schools to be recording who their young carers are?

Research consistently shows the significant impact that caring responsibilities can have on the educational experience and outcomes of children.

Carers Trust's latest report into the experiences of young carers and young adult carers, *'Being a young carer is not a choice; it's just what we do'* found that 1 in 3 young carers and young adult carers said they struggle to balance caring with education. A cross-European study of young carers also found that 37% of young carers said their performance had suffered as a result of caring responsibilities, and 36% reported being bullied specifically about caring.

In terms of longer-term educational outcomes, a UCL-Carers Trust research collaboration found that young carers are 38% less likely to obtain a university degree; with those caring for more than 35 hours per week being 86% less likely.²

Carers Trust believe it is essential that schools are recording young carers on their pupil management systems, and regularly reviewing their attendance and attainment alongside other groups of potentially vulnerable pupils.



Case Study - MYTIME Young Carers

Young Carers Alliance member, MYTIME Young Carers ran a pilot involving six local secondary schools to support the schools to set up systems and processes around young carers identification and support.

The findings of this pilot were stark:

- The average rate of absence across the schools for young carers was nearly twice as high as for all pupils (14.1% vs 7.7%)
- The persistent absence rate for young carers was also more than two times higher (41.6% vs 19.7%)
- Young carers were twice as likely (22.6% vs 11.2%) to leave primary school below Age-Related Expectations. They were also nearly half as likely to meet be classed as "working above average" (12.5% vs 23.5%)

Two of the academies, Glenmoor and Winton (who are joined) have worked with MYTIME over three years to improve identification and support. At the start of this work, the academies had identified 17 young carers; now they have now identified around 100.

By the Senior Leadership Team reviewing attendance and attainment of young carers on a six-weekly basis and implementing a whole-school approach to young carer identification and support, the schools have seen an increase in attendance, participation in school, and attainment amongst their young carers.

² Baowen Xue, Rebecca E. Lacey, Giorgio Di Gessa, Anne McMunn; Does providing informal care in young adulthood impact educational attainment and employment in the UK?, *Advances in Life Course Research*, Volume 56, 2023,

Carers Trust's recommendations

The significant under-recording of young carers in the 2023 School Census is likely to be a combined result of a lack of awareness and it being the first time that young carers have been added to the school census.

In order to improve identification, recording and support for young carers ahead of the 2024 School Census, Carers Trust makes the following recommendations:

- The Department for Education should work with key stakeholders to **produce targeted communications/guidance around identification of young carers within education** for schools, young carer services and local authorities at the start of the Autumn 2023 term to ensure schools are aware of young carers being on the school census
- All schools should appoint a **Young Carers Lead** with strategic responsibility and oversight for identifying and implementing appropriate support for young carers and student carers
- They should also implement a **young carers policy** which is ideally produced with young carers and young adult carers in their setting and ensure they are linking with their **local young carers support**
- The Department for Education should carry out **initial analysis of the school census data** in relation to young carers and then include young carers data within the 'Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England' report
- Schools and local authorities should work with their local young carers service to **improve identification and also local data-sharing** in relation to young carers
- Ofsted should ensure that young carers are included within their **inspection framework** and specifically acknowledge the identification and support of young carers within inspection reports
- The needs of young carers should be included within the initial teacher training curriculum for all teachers.

To find out more

The school census data relating to young carers can be found at [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK](#). There is also the option on that webpage to create customised tables for specific areas, or specific school types.

You can find a spreadsheet containing the full breakdown of numbers of young carers recorded by local authority area (including across different school types) at www.carers.org/schoolcensus.

To find out about support available for schools to improve their ability to identify and support young carers, visit the **Young Carers in Schools website** – www.youngcarersinschools.com.

If you have further questions relating to this briefing or young carers in education, you can contact Andy McGowan, Policy and Practice Manager (Young Carers and Young Adult Carers) at Carers Trust – amcgowan@carers.org.

Appendix 1 – 10 highest and lowest proportions of pupils recorded as young carers by schools in that area

10 local authority areas with the highest percentage of pupils recorded as young carers by schools

Local authority	Number of pupils recorded as young carer	Percentage of pupil population	Total number of pupils recorded on school census	Total pupil population
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	999	1.9	52,915	53,914
Bedford	524	1.7	31,137	31,661
Plymouth	599	1.5	39,235	39,834
Suffolk	1,607	1.5	104,384	105,991
Cambridgeshire	1,246	1.4	90,789	92,035
Halton	244	1.3	18,851	19,095
Torbay	266	1.3	20,314	20,580
Swindon	478	1.3	37,064	37,542
Central Bedfordshire	643	1.3	47,818	48,461
Norfolk	1,548	1.3	118,997	120,545 V

10 local authority areas with the lowest percentage of pupils recorded as young carers by schools (NB – City of London and Isles of Scilly have not been included because the total number of pupils is significantly lower)

Local authority	Number of pupils recorded as young carer	Total pupil population	Percentage of pupil population recorded as young carers
Camden	7	21,639	0
Slough	9	33,530	0
Southwark	13	42,327	0
Rotherham	20	45,153	0
Redbridge	21	58,439	0
Kensington and Chelsea	11	13,286	0.1
Westminster	12	21,380	0.1
Hammersmith and Fulham	20	20,042	0.1
Islington	20	23,646	0.1
Rochdale	23	37,903	0.1