

The Going Higher Campaign Pack

Thank you for downloading this campaign pack

In it you will find out about

- **who** young adult carers are
- **why** Carers Trust thinks they should have better support in university
- some simple steps on **how** you can **add your support**

Who are young adult carers?

Young adult carers are aged 14-25 and care, unpaid, for a family member or friend who could not cope without their support. There are at least 375,000 young adult carers in the UK but we don't know exactly how many young adult carers there are. Many keep their caring role hidden or they may not even realise they are a carer so they don't seek help.

It is highly likely that there are young adult carers in every university, trying to complete their course to the best of their ability just like their peers. However, they often experience additional challenges.

My name is Matthew and I am studying politics and sociology in my second year at university and I am a member of the university football team. There are heavy pressures in the life of a student, be it from the workload, meeting deadlines or limited finance. However another aspect hinders me as it does for many others across the UK.



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I am also a young adult carer for my mother and father and have been for around 8 years now. They live back at home, away from university. The stress of worrying for their health and trying to be there for them whilst balancing university life hinders my ability to perform to the level I know I can.

I have higher levels of stress than others because of the constant worry for those back home. In particular, managing workload when I can't predict when they will need me. I also worry about finance, meaning I am often faced with saddening trade-offs.

On one occasion I received a call informing me that my father was due to be taken into theatre for a very risky operation. However the lack of emergency finance and the need to meet an essay deadline meant I could not even go to see my dad - potentially for the last time.

Knowing that I wouldn't get the emergency loan in the time needed I had no option but to sit and worry.

Fortunately he was ok but the stress of not being able to even see him whilst completing my essay really lowered the quality of work I submitted which, in the long run, really takes its toll on both myself and my degree.

I have also had to enquire about an emergency loan at a time when I couldn't even afford food until my pay cheque came in but I was referred to come back in another two days' time.

I feel my university could have helped me out by a quicker response rate and by providing emergency finance and flexible deadlines to stop the stress. This will ultimately improve my grades.

If a scheme was implemented regarding additional funding for young adult carers, I would have known that there were emergency funds so I could have seen my father.

A check on applications asking if the student is a carer would vastly improve the support provided from the outset, including counselling, finance options or other support. This would stop the need for the carer to approach staff, especially those feeling cautious or pessimistic.

I feel that universities have the potential to improve the lives of young adult carers by listening to Going Higher and implementing strategies as a result. They need to learn more about the daily lives of student carers to really improve their mental and physical wellbeing as well as their standard of work.

The overall message I want universities to hear is to include a carer check on applications and the automatic offer of and increased support from the start to the end of the student's degree.

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Carers Trust believes that this is unacceptable. No one should have to make the kinds of choices that Matt has made, particularly while being under a huge amount of pressure to succeed in his exams.

That is why we are asking all universities to include young adult carers when they look at the different groups that may need extra support to fulfil their potential.

It only takes three simple steps

- **Identify** the number of young adult carers attending your university
- **Support** all young adult carers throughout their education to ensure they maintain good mental health, complete their course and achieve the best grades possible
- **Report** on young adult carers progress to showcase universities achievements

We want to make sure that young adult carers are not forgotten by universities when they think about which groups of students could benefit from more support. Your Student Union Welfare Officer is in the perfect position to bridge the gap between students and the university – that is why we want to have as many of them supporting the Going Higher campaign as possible.

If you are the Student Union Welfare Officer, please take a look at the Welfare Officers Going Higher campaign pack to see how you could make student carers a priority for your university. www.carers.org/goinghigherunion

If you are a current student, read our tips on how to get a meeting with your Welfare Officer and how to make it productive. www.carer.org/goinghigherstudents

Make sure you check if your Welfare Officer is supporting the Going Higher campaign by clicking here www.carers.org/goinghigherunion

If they are not supporting the campaign then ask them to – they are there to represent your voice.

If you are a university take a look at our toolkit to see what other universities are already doing and what you can do to support young adult carers.

<https://professionals.carers.org/universities-supporting-students-caring-responsibilities>

Glossary

Student's Union Welfare Officer

Almost all universities will have a Students Union. You can find yours here:

<http://www.nus.org.uk/en/students-unions/students-union-map/>

It their job to ensure the Student Union and the university are aware of the issues that affect students and take action to address them by raising their concerns, for groups and for individuals.

If you want to add support for your campaign they will be a great place to start as they have the resources to spread the word about student carers. The Welfare Officer has a particular interest in the health and wellbeing of all students so talk to them first to see what they can do.

Sometimes their job title will be different so you might need to read their job descriptions and decide who you think is best to approach.

Widening Participation Team

This is the team who ensure that everyone is able to apply, attend and thrive at university no matter what their family background is or their personal situation. It is important that they know how to attract young adult carers and support them throughout their time at university.

This team is also likely to respond to the OFFA with their access agreements.

Office for Fair Access (OFFA)

An independent regulatory organisation that makes sure that students from all kinds of backgrounds are able to do their best at university. They do this by monitoring the access agreements which all universities who charge £6000 per year in fees submit.

Access agreements

All universities who charge £6000 per year fees for students must complete an access agreement. This shows they are working hard to have students from as many backgrounds as possible at their university and that they are doing as well as possible when they are there.

Access agreements need to show how universities will attract students from all backgrounds; what targets they use to know if they are successful and their plan for telling students about additional financial support. From 2016-17 this will need to include young carers although it does not at the moment.

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Student Support

This team help with practical things like student finance and health and wellbeing. They need to be aware of how best to support young adult carers and the way their circumstances can differ from other students.

Student Advice Centre

If you are facing challenges at university, you should go to your Student Advice Centre. They are the one stop shop to find out where you can get the best support to improve your personal circumstances.

Vice Chancellor

This is the person with the most power within a university. They decide the priorities for the university and ensure that all the teams are working as well as they can. It is very important that every university's Vice Chancellor understands who young adult carers are and how important it is to support them from when they apply to when they graduate.

Student Liaison Committee

If you feel that your Students Union is too big to go to then you can try your Student Liaison Committee. Most university departments will have them to link between students and the academic department – a bit like Student Unions but just for subjects rather than the whole university.

You can see if they want to show support for the young adult carers in their department by supporting Going Higher.

The details for your course staff liaison committee representative should be available on your university website.

Matter

This is a safe, online space for young adult carers aged 16-25 to share experiences with each other and receive one to one support from professionals. You can visit the website here <https://matter.carers.org/>

If you have any questions about the Going Higher campaign or student carers please let us know and we will help you.

Just call 020 7922 7752 and ask for Sophie Parr in the Policy Team or drop her an email at campaigns@carers.org