

# Carers Strategy: Meeting the needs of young carers and young adult carers

## Who are young and young adult carers?

Young carers are children and young people under 18 years old who provide unpaid care to a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally ill, or misuses substances<sup>1</sup>. Young adult carers are young people aged 16-25 with unpaid caring responsibilities who are transitioning into adulthood.

Young carers and young adult carers become vulnerable when their role puts at risk their emotional or physical wellbeing and their prospects in education and life.

The tasks and level of caring undertaken by young and young adult carers can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of need for care, the involvement of services and the structure of the family as a whole.

A young carer may undertake some or all of the following:

- Emotional support: listening, calming, being present.
- Practical tasks: cooking, housework, shopping.
- Physical care: lifting, helping up the stairs, physiotherapy.
- Personal care: dressing, washing, toileting needs.
- Household management: paying bills, managing finances, collecting benefits.
- Looking after siblings: putting to bed, walking to school, parenting.

## Why do young and young adult carers need support?

The negative effects of caring can be significant and enduring on a young person's physical and emotional health, socialisation and life opportunities. Without sufficient and coordinated health and social care provision, young carers may be relied on to provide inappropriate or excessive caring roles which put their own health and wellbeing at risk.

The 2011 Census in England identified 166,363 young carers aged under 18 years old and 292,820 young adult carers aged between 16 and 25 years old. These figures are likely to be an under representation as many young carers remain hidden. Research from the BBC in 2010 found that as many as 1 in 12 secondary school pupils have a moderate or high levels of caring responsibility, that's 700,000 young carers in the UK.

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Often unrecognised and unsupported, young carers and young adult carers exist across the UK. They can be found in all schools, colleges and universities and many workplaces.

**Young carers and their families are affected strongly by the policies and practices developed across education, health, social care and employability and skills. This submission provides recommendations to improve identification and support.**

### Support in school

**Schools** are vital and ideally positioned to identify young carers early and initiate support. Identifying young carers is an essential step towards offering them support to learn, study and get the grades they need to achieve. Without adequate identification and support young carers and young adult carers are left to balance the demands of education and caring. This puts at risk their school qualifications and engagement with education.

Impact of caring on a young person's education and attainment

- 27% of young carers of secondary school age experience educational difficulties or miss school, and where pupils are caring for someone who misuses drugs or alcohol, 40% have educational difficulties<sup>[2]</sup>.
- Young adult carers aged between 16 and 18 years are twice as likely to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET)<sup>[3]</sup>.
- 68% of young carers experience bullying at school and 39% said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring role<sup>[4]</sup>.
- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers e.g. the difference between nine B's and nine C's.<sup>[5]</sup>

Young carers repeatedly tell us that they would like more support in schools.

#### Key recommendations

- All schools should identify young carers and ensure they have access to support.
- All young carers should be eligible for Pupil Premium (full briefing available)
- Ofsted should ask every school how many and how they are identifying and supporting young carers

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<sup>[2]</sup> Dearden, C and Becker, S (2004), 'Young Carers in the UK: The 2004 Report'. London: Carers UK.

<sup>[3]</sup> Audit Commission (2010) Against the odds: Re-engaging young people in education, employment or training (London, Audit Commission)

<sup>[4]</sup> The Princess Royal Trust for Carers (2010), 'Supporting Young Carers - A Schools Resource Survey'.

<sup>[5]</sup> Hidden from view

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- DfE should collect school level attendance and attainment data about young carers through the school census and for this to be shared through RAISE online (one of the main mechanisms schools and Ofsted use to compare school performance).

### Case study

Carers Trust and The Children's Society are leading the [Young Carers in Schools](#) initiative which makes it as easy as possible for schools to support young carers, and awards good practice. More than 700 schools are engaged in the programme and 69 have been given a Young Carers in Schools Award). The Young Carers in Schools Programme provides a step by step guide on how to implement a whole school approach to identification and support for young carers as well as a bronze, silver and gold standard. We have examples of excellent practice amongst our awarded schools.

In March 2016 35 Award-winning schools provided key data showing significant positive impacts on attendance, achievement and confidence of pupils with caring responsibilities following their participating in the programme:

- 94% had identified more young carers in their schools, identifying almost 500 young carers in total.
- 94% reported improvements in the well-being and confidence of young carers at school
- 91% had witnessed a positive impact on the achievement of young carers at their school.
- 74% had seen improved attendance among young carers at school.

### Support in Further and Higher education

Young adult carers are disadvantaged in further and higher education. They already have vastly more challenging home lives than other students, having to juggle their caring commitments with their studies. Young adult carers do not know how to identify themselves at university or college and there are limited support systems in place.

Impact of caring on Further and Higher Education:

- 14% of young carers in school said they could not go to college or university because of their caring role.
- 24% of young adult carers in school said they could not go to college or university for financial reasons, while 41% were unsure.

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- More than half of young adult carers in college or university were struggling because of their caring role.
- Young adult carers are four times more likely to have dropped out of college or universities than students without caring roles.

Many college and university students do not have a clear opportunity to identify themselves as a young adult carer, especially early on in their studies when support could have the greatest impact. 45% of the young adult carers we surveyed in 2013 said they did not have a particular person at college or university who recognised they were a carer and helped them.

### Key recommendations

- Young adult carers should be included in the Vulnerable Students element of the 16-19 discretionary bursary (full briefing available)
- Young adult carers should be recognised as a disadvantaged group of students with specific needs within higher education policy
- Colleges and universities should identify and support young adult carers in line with best practice models (see below)

### Case Studies

- Carers Trust formed a National Network of Universities supporting carers and developed a [toolkit](#) to help universities with ideas and practice to help young adult carers access and succeed in university. We are also building [examples](#) of good practice on our website site.
- Carers Trust and The Learning and Work Institute partnered to provide [resources](#) for colleges and services to support young adult carers to succeed in college

## Support in employment

Being a carer in employment is difficult at any age, but the issues are compounded for young adult carers who are at the beginning of their careers, attempting to enter the workplace often with lower qualifications and with extra requirements for their employers.

Once in work, a lack of awareness amongst employers about caring and its day to day impact can mean that young adult carers are penalised when they need to respond to a caring emergency, making it difficult to sustain employment.

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### Impact of caring on young carers and employment:

- Young carers in work between the ages of 20-21 are more likely to be in lower skilled occupations than their peers and have reported that their caring role can influence their choice of career for example, applying for work in the 'caring' professions.
- Young carers aged between 16 and 18 years are twice as likely as their peers to be not in employment, education or training (NEET).<sup>ii</sup>
- 87% of young adult carers who were surveyed in 2013 (n=37) reported they did not get good careers advice or the advice they needed<sup>iii</sup>.
- Many young adult carers will prioritise jobs that have flexible arrangements for employees, are part time or are close to home.

### Key recommendations

- Young adult carers should be included in the local authority duty to oversee the careers advice for vulnerable groups up to the age of 25.
- The government should consider how programmes addressing young people's employment and carers' employment can improve the opportunities for young adult carers
- Apprenticeship providers should identify and offer support to young adult carers so they can access apprenticeships

### Case study

- Carers Trust has developed an employment [guide](#) for young adult carers

### Support for their health:

Caring is a risk factor for children and young people's mental and physical health. Young carers have told us they want their own health needs to be prioritised, especially their mental health. Too often children who care are developing mental health issues of their own, including stress, anxiety, depression and eating disorders. Young carers have told us about the risks to their own wellbeing which without support, can rapidly escalate from tiredness into more serious issues such as depression and self-harm.

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Evidence that young carers have worse physical and mental health than their peers:

- The 2011 Census showed that young carers providing 50+ hours of care a week were up to five times more likely to report their general health as 'Not good'.<sup>1</sup>
- Carers Trust surveyed 348 young carers and found 48% said being a young carer made them feel stressed and 44% said it made them feel tired<sup>2</sup>.
- Carers Trust surveyed 300 young adult carers and found that 45% had mental health problems.<sup>3</sup>
- In the 2016 GP Patient Survey, 50% more young adult carers reported anxiety and depression compared with their peers without caring roles.<sup>4</sup>

### Key recommendations

- Local Transformation Plans for children and young people's mental health services should address the needs of young carers and young adult carers
- All mental health trusts should implement the Triangle of Care for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers to make sure information and support is given to young carers
- Health and social care should work together to support families and workforce development should ensure practitioners are able to identify and support young carers effectively
- GPs, Pharmacies and school nurses should identify young carers and they should be offered regular health checks.
- The Government should ensure that young and young adult carers have access to affordable transport and leisure activities in order to reduce isolation and negative impacts on health and wellbeing
- Local services should be funded to support young and young adult carers, creating opportunities for respite, socialisation, building their confidence and improving their wellbeing.

## Protection from inappropriate caring and enabling positive transition to adulthood.

The introduction of the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 considerably improved the rights of young carers and young adult carers. The law:

- Provided for a whole family approach meaning that children who may be caring, or may undertake caring in the future are identified when establishing

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics (2013) Providing unpaid care may have an adverse affect on young carers' general health accessed online <http://bit.ly/1uHR1PX>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.carers.org/press-release/research-shows-young-carers-are-worried-and-stressed-proud-what-they-do>

<sup>3</sup> Alexander, C. (2014) Time to be Heard: Improving Recognition and Support for Young Adult Carers. (London, Carers Trust)

<sup>4</sup> GP Patient Survey results accessed at <http://results.gp-patient.co.uk/report/explanation.aspx>

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the care needs of a family member, and protected from inappropriate caring responsibilities.

- Shifted the focus from young carers needing to self-identify and request an assessment to being identified by the professionals who come into contact with them and being offered an assessment, regardless of the level or type of caring they were providing.
- Created new transition support for young adult carers focusing on building their aspirations and positive transitions into adulthood and opportunity.

The changes in the law put in place the infrastructure to protect children from being negatively and unduly impacted by caring for family members and was welcomed by the sector. However, feedback from young carers services indicates that many young carers and their families still aren't receiving the support they need. Services also remain underfunded and there appears to be very limited provision around transition.

Young carers are still being left to provide support for family members leaving their own futures at risk.

### Key recommendations:

- The Government should ensure the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 are effectively implemented and monitored. (Resources and models of practice, case studies [available](#)).
- Health and social care needs to be adequately funded so that children and young people do not take on inappropriate caring roles which put their own futures at risk.
- Improving the sustainability and the coverage of young carers services and young adult carers services.
- Local support and services should be funded to build the aspirations of young adult carers and help them plan and reach their goals, as provided for in the Care Act 2014. (full programme evaluation, case studies and cost benefit analysis available)
- Develop resources that stimulate increased transition support for young carers from local authorities.
- Protection of and investment in preventative support for young carers and their families linked with assessment

### Examples of practice

- Carers Trust worked in Partnership with The children's Society, funded by DfE, to trail blaze effective implementation of the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 in 6 Local Authorities. [Making a Step Change](#) focused on whole family working, effective identification of young carers, and good

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practice assessment and support service models. (briefing on key messages available)

- Carers Trust have engaged 20,000 young adult carers over the past three years to transform their outcomes (Interim evaluation report available) including
  - Fifty projects have been established to support over 7500 young adult carers, focusing on transitions to adult, physical and emotional wellbeing, raising awareness amongst key organisations and improving access to support and information.
  - Direct online information, advice and support for young adult carers has been established alongside an online community fostering peer to peer support and socialisation.
  - 4000 young adult carers have been engaged to build their skills and gain the confidence to have their voices heard and create changes in their local community and nationally.

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<sup>i</sup> ADASS, ADCS and The Children's Society (2012), Memorandum of Understanding (ADASS, ADCS and The Children's Society)

<sup>ii</sup> Audit Commission (2010), Against The Odds, Targeted Briefing: Young Carers. London: Audit Commission.

<sup>iii</sup> Alexander, C (2014), Time to Be Heard, A Call for Recognition and Support for Young Adult Carers (London: Carers Trust). Survey of 295 carers aged between 14 and 25