

Services offered by Action for Young Carers include:



- Free confidential one to one support
- Information about the condition of the person cared for
- Counselling service
- Help to access services
- Someone to speak to professionals on their behalf
- Opportunity to take a break
- Bespoke courses to enable young carers to deal with their caring role

AYC can help your organisation identify and support young carers, we have workers who work specifically in the health and education fields.

Useful Resources

The following are useful points of contact if you require more information about young carers:

Action for Young Carers
Morgan House, Gilbert Road
Boston. Lincolnshire PE21 7TR
Tel: 01205 358834
Email: ayc@carersfederation.co.uk
www.carersfederation.co.uk/ayc

Action for Young Carers
Unit 10, Evans Business Centre
Gateway Park, Roman Way
Lincoln. LN6 9UH
Tel (01522) 705170
Tel (01522) 705171

Web: www.youngcarer.com
(Provides information, advice and support to young carers, their families and professionals)

YC NET
Under 18?
Looking after someone who is sick or disabled?
Web: www.youngcarers.net
To chat, for advice, information and support.

Princess Royal Trust for Carers
Web: www.carers.org

Carers UK
Web: www.carersonline.org

Carers Direct Helpline
0808 802 0202
Web: www.nhs.uk/carersdirect



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Young Carers - Information for Professionals

Action for Young Carers

Action for Young Carers is a service within the Carers Federation, a diverse organisation based in Nottingham and working across the country. Action for Young Carers is established in Lincolnshire, delivering a range of provision to young carers themselves and lobbying for service improvements.

What is a Young Carer?

A young carer is a child or young person under the age of 18 who has a caring responsibility. The person they care for may be a parent, sibling, grandparent or other relative and may be affected by:

- A physical disability
- Mental health condition
- Learning disability
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Any other long term illness or condition

Young carers could be anyone in the family and may be from any background or culture.

In 1998, the Carers National Association (now Carers UK) defined a young carer as:

“ Anyone under the age of 18 whose life is some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of someone who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, or is affected by substance misuse. ”



There are an estimated
175,000 carers
aged under 18
in the UK

2001 Census (Carers UK)

Information

The role of the young carer



The intensity of a child's caring role may be determined by several factors. These include:

- Living in a single-parent family where the parent is cared for
- The young carer is the oldest child and has a responsibility for younger siblings
- The parent or cared for person has a combination of medical conditions
- The younger carer is caring for more than one family member
- Financial constraints
- Lack of support from extended family/professional agencies

What does a Young Carer do?

Young carers help family members in a variety of ways. These might include:



- Practical tasks - washing, cooking or ironing
- Personal care - bathing and dressing
- Emotional support - offering a 'listening ear'
- Physical lifting and carrying
- Assisting with medication or collecting prescriptions
- Helping to look after younger siblings
- Ensuring safety
- Managing the family budget and paying bills
- Interpreting

It is not uncommon for young carers to carry out a combination of these tasks and the above list is by no means exhaustive. In some cases, a child may not undertake many practical tasks around the home but may have a significant role in offering emotional support. The nature of the child's caring role will be determined by the illness or disability, family circumstances, and the support received by external agencies.

Issues affecting young carers

Being a young carer can have a profound effect on a child or young person. Having the responsibility of a caring role means that it may result in young carers missing out on opportunities and choices that other children have.

They may also feel left out and frustrated when health professionals become involved. Young carers dealing with a particular medical condition on a daily basis may have useful insight which can be disregarded, or they may want more information about their cared for condition but find it difficult to find age appropriate details.

Difficulties facing young carers

“ It can be very difficult to invite friends back to our homes. This can lead to us feeling isolated and it can be very depressing and lonely ”*

Young carers may face difficulties in the following areas:

- Feeling no-one understands them
- Conflict between needs of the cared for and their own needs
- Lack of recognition, praise or respect
- Feeling 'different' from other children
- Tiredness
- Problems at school with peers (isolation and bullying)
- Lack of time to complete homework
- Problems juggling school and home life
- Lack of time for social activities
- Difficulty in accessing services if under 16
- Enhanced responsibility/expectation from others
- Missing out on childhood
- Problems moving into adulthood (finding work, their own home and establishing relationships)

Young carers can be a very 'hidden' group of young people and their needs and those of the person for whom they are caring are often only identified when there is a crisis. Young carers may choose to remain hidden, by not being open about their home situation, for a number of reasons:

- They may fear the repercussions of being identified or asking for help
- They may worry that they will not be believed
- They may worry that important decisions may be taken without young carer consultation
- They may not want to be singled out
- They may fear outside intervention such as being put into care
- They may be anxious that they will be teased or bullied by peers

“ I can't remember anything ever being offered. There simply was no service available. ”

Young Carer now aged 22 years

*Extract from 'Making it Work, Good Practice with Young Carers and their Families'