

Meeting the health and wellbeing needs of young carers

BRIGHT
FUTURES



Helping children and young people to fulfil their potential is a key ambition of all councils, but our children's services are under increasing pressure.

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Foreword

It is clear young carers face many disadvantages. The very fact that they spend so much time caring takes its toll on their education, on their physical health and on their emotional wellbeing.

What can be done to tackle these inequalities? Councils are under a legal duty to identify young carers and carry out assessments that consider the impact on the child and whole family. But finding those young carers is tricky. They are often isolated and hidden from view. The last census puts the official figure for young carers at nearly 170,000. But research by the BBC and Nottingham University has suggested the true figure may be four times higher than official estimates claim.

It means councils have to look at new ways of identifying carers before they even think about helping them.

That requires close working with partners in the NHS and across schools in particular to refer young carers on. But once they are in the system keeping young carers engaged and involved so that the impact of their caring responsibilities can be minimised is no easy task. There is, unfortunately, no silver bullet to meeting these challenges. It requires concerted effort on many different levels.

But help is at hand. NHS England has developed a carers toolkit to help support the health and wellbeing of carers and the national Young Carers in Schools programme provides a template for working with our partners in education. The Children's Society and Carers Trust are a great source of help and information too.

We can't ignore that children's services have been affected by budget cuts and increasing demand. That is why the Local Government Association (LGA) is calling on the Government to fully fund children's services through its Bright Futures campaign www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures

But, as the case studies in this report show, there is good work already being done, even in difficult circumstances, that we can learn from.

Now we must build on the progress that has been made so we can ensure young carers get the support they need and the opportunities they are entitled to have the bright future they deserve.



Councillor Izzi Seccombe
Chair, Community Wellbeing Board

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Introduction

A young carer is defined in section 96 of the Children and Families Act as a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person of any age. That can be a parent or sibling, grandparent or friend. It can include help for physical or mental illness, frailty in old age, a disability or because of substance misuse.

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 placed a legal duty on local authorities from 1 April 2015 to identify young carers and carry out both a needs assessment and a transition assessment to consider the impact on the child and whole family. They build on the requirements set out by the Children's Act 1989.

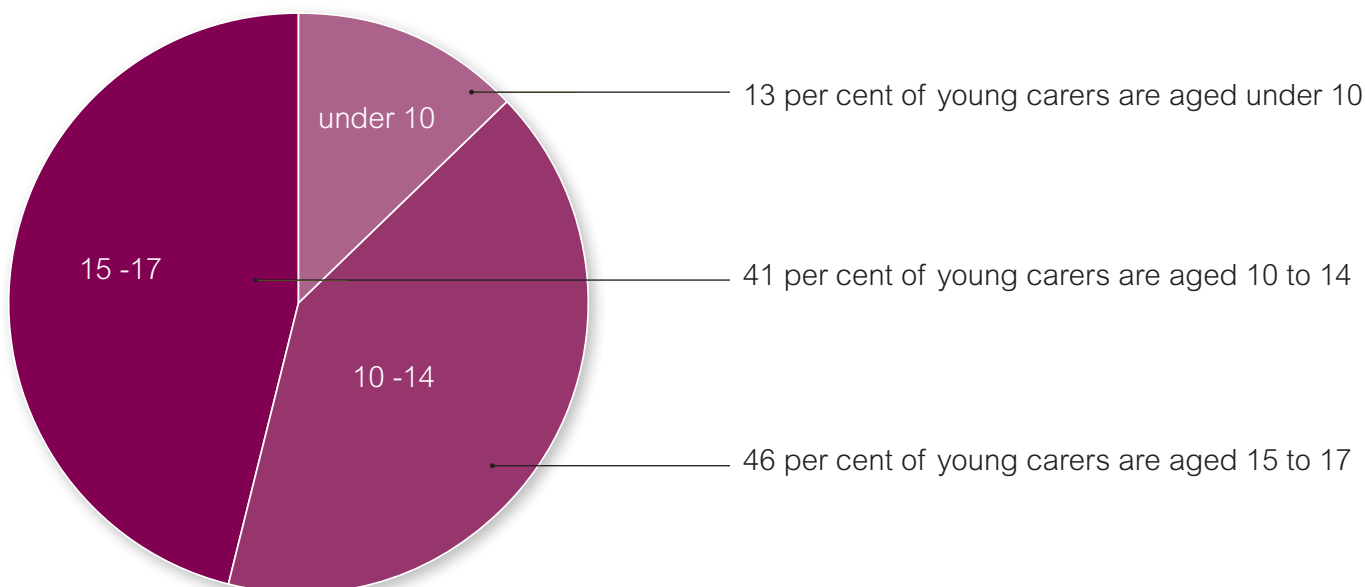
Councils – or the organisations they commission – can carry out this assessment if they think the child is providing care, the child asks them to or the child's parents ask them to. The assessment should look at the amount, nature and type of care being provided, the impact on that young person's wellbeing, education, personal and emotional development and whether any of the caring tasks are excessive or inappropriate.

It should specifically address whether the young person wants to continue caring and if it is appropriate for them to do so. If further help is needed a referral to either the local early help service for preventative support or the young carers service for direct support should follow. If there are concerns that the child may be at significant risk of harm a safeguarding referral should be made.

The individual they are caring for should also be reviewed to see if they are entitled to more support to reduce the caring burden on the young person.

Key statistics

- 166,363 young carers in England – a fifth higher than a decade previously
- 1 in 12 young carers is caring for more than 15 hours a week
- 1 in 20 misses school because of their caring responsibilities
- Young carers are 1.5 times more likely to have a long-term illness, special educational needs or a disability
- Young carers are 1.5 times more likely to be from a ethnic minority community
- Average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer
- Young carers providing over 50 hours of care a week are up to five times more likely to report their general health as 'not good'



- 55 per cent of young carers look after their mother and 25 per cent for a sibling
- 78 per cent provide help with practical tasks such as cooking and cleaning
- 26 per cent provide nursing care
- 57 per cent provide emotional support
- 4 in 10 young carers report feeling sad in the past week
- 1 in 4 young carers report feeling lonely in the past week
- 1 in 2 young carers report feeling angry in the past week

Sources for figures: 2011 Census, The Children's Society, Department for Education omnibus survey report 2017, Young Carers in the UK by Loughborough University

Must knows

- **A whole family approach is key.** When assessing a young person's needs check whether the individual they are caring for is entitled to more support to minimise the young person's caring burden.
- **Get adult and children's social care teams working as one.** An adult assessment should always consider what the impact on children in the household may be.
- **Consider implementing a memorandum of understanding** with key partners to set out roles and responsibilities.
- **Ensure the voices of young people are heard** either through a forum, council or some other mechanism.
- **Provide training to the wider workforce** – schools, GPs, health visitors, school nurses and hospital staff – and consider incorporating key message about young carers into other training programmes, such as safeguarding courses.
- **Ensure you have a clear and easy-to-understand system** for young people to self-refer for assessments.
- **Work with other services.** Family support workers, substance misuse teams, mental health teams and school nurses all provide valuable help that can complement the work of young carers services.
- **Schools are vital.** Getting them signed up to the national Young Carers in Schools programme is a way of getting them engaged, but they must be supported to achieve the standards.
- **Get health services on board.** Having champions in place in GP practices and hospitals is an effective approach to raising awareness about the issue and increasing referrals.
- **Consider the needs of young adult carers** as a specific group. This can span the late child years – 16 plus – to early adulthood.

Devon

Helping young carers prepare for adulthood

In Devon young carers have been provided with a range of support to help prepare them for adulthood. This has included summer skills courses and a number of different training programmes. It has helped those who have taken part achieve qualifications and gain places at university.

The challenge

There is a limit to what young carers services can do themselves. With tight budgets and small teams of staff, there is always a trade off between providing intensive one-to-one support and organising group activities and days out. Devon Young Carers is no different.

The service is led by Westbank Community Health and Care with support from two other charities, TTVS (formerly known as Torridge Voluntary Services) and Young Devon. A team of seven full time staff work intensively with about 100 young people at any one time, with another 200 taking part in various activities.

As young carers get older their needs change, requiring a different sort of support.

Devon Young Carers Manager Matthew Byrne says: “We have close to 3,000 young carers on our books. Not all of them need help week-in, week-out. But they do need someone to support them, to open doors for them and help them develop the resilience and skills they need as they get older. That is an important part of our work too.”

The solution

Devon’s service has sought to partner with other agencies to help provide wider support. The biggest project is the Bright Futures scheme. It was launched in 2012 with the help of Lottery funding. It delivers a bespoke package of training and support to carers aged 18 to 24 to help them through periods of transition and change in their lives. They get to take part in activities such as basic first aid training, teamwork challenges, self-defence classes and training as diverse as dog grooming and film editing.

Devon Young Carers has also linked up with other groups, including the National Citizen Service, which runs summer skills courses and the local Sir Francis Chichester Trust. The trust runs the Outward Bound Skills for Life Award, a 19-day training scheme for young people aged 16 to 19 focussing on problem-solving, leadership and teamwork. The course usually costs close to £2,000, but a limited number of places are offered to young carers for free.

Mr Byrne says: “There are so many opportunities out there and we see part of our job as unlocking those opportunities for young carers. The case work is important but by working with others you can achieve so much more. Young carers want the same things as their peers – but there are sometimes barriers they have to overcome.

“Sometimes it can be really simple things. For example, we have worked with the Carers Trust to produce guidance for local sports clubs and organisations such as scout groups just to raise awareness about some of the challenges young carers face from struggling to get to places to missing things because of their

caring responsibilities. It is about making sure those sort of groups understand the needs of young carers and accommodate them so young carers feel welcome.”

The impact

Feedback from those who have taken part in some of the projects and opportunities suggests the approach taken by Devon is having a real impact on the lives of young carers.

More than 500 young people have participated in Bright Futures. An evaluation of the project published in 2017 found three-quarters felt more positive about their futures thanks to the support they received, while for two-thirds it improved their attendance at school or college. In the last year alone this support has helped 20 young carers go on to university and another 15 pursue an ASDAN vocational qualification.

Feedback from those who have been helped through the other schemes has also been positive.

Stephen (not his real name), who completed the Outward Bound course last year, describes it as the “best experience of my life”.

“I learned a lot about myself – I learned to have confidence in myself and others. I learned to put my trust in other people as well as having to trust myself, whether that be facing a personal fear or making a team decision. I learned to believe in myself and I realised that making friends from around the world isn’t as scary as it first seemed.

“Outward Bound has taught me to be more resilient than ever. I’ve learned that plans don’t always go the way you want them to so you have to be accepting and flexible.”

Lessons learned

While there has been really good engagement with the projects that the carers service has run, not every project has worked out. Five years ago health and wellbeing workshops were run for young carers. People were invited to provide information and guidance to young carers on topics such as physical activity, cooking and emotional wellbeing.

“The format didn’t really work” says Mr Byrne. “We just could not get the interest from young carers. I think the thing is they like to be treated like everyone else. So what we have tried to do is build some of the messages into our activities. On days out, for example, we do some that are physically active and encourage healthy lifestyles in that way.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Bright Futures is continuing thanks to close to £500,000 of extra Lottery funding. The money will allow the scheme to keep supporting young carers for another three years. Devon Young Carers also continues to look at new ways to tap into opportunities that will benefit young carers.

“There will be a slight shift in focus though,” says Mr Byrne. “We want to make sure we do more for those really isolated young carers. We have done a lot for those that were perhaps more engaged, but going forward we want to make sure we are reaching those young people who are at risk of slipping under the radar.”

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Liverpool

Involving young people in decisions

Young people have been put at the heart of making decision about the young carers service in Liverpool. The council has built a stipulation into the contract to ensure their service provider involves them. This has led to the appointment of a coordinator that involves 100 young people in developing and designing services.

The challenge

Consulting with young carers and involving them in the design of services is widely considered to be good practice. Many areas have set up forums of young carers to achieve this, but these can have limitations. For one, it means services tend to rely on the same group of voices when they want feedback. Secondly, those who get involved in the forums tend to be drawn from the older age groups that services work with.

The solution

Liverpool City Council decided against setting up a forum. Instead it has written into the contract with its local young carers service provider, Barnardo's Liverpool, that it is responsible for engagement and ensuring the needs, views and voices of young carers and their families are represented.

Barnardo's Liverpool has developed the Keeping the Family in Mind initiative to ensure the views and experiences of young carers and their families are listened to by service providers, commissioners and decision makers in Liverpool. Part of this is enabling young carers to come together and be directly involved with pieces of specific work. Keeping

the Family in Mind is led by a coordinator and enhances and supports the wider work of the direct and indirect young carers service.

For example, four years ago young carers came together to meet with Liverpool City Council to inform the re-tendering of the young carers service. They were not only involved with the design of the service but they also sat on the panel that was responsible for interviewing and deciding on the new service provider.

Jane Weller, Liverpool's Commissioning and Contract Manager for carers, says: "We really worked together as a group when it came to re-designing the young carers service and making a decision about who should be the next provider. There was a real breadth of ages – from six to late teens so we had to adopt different approaches to ensure everyone could have their say.

"We asked the prospective providers to make young person friendly presentations to them and they asked really challenging questions and scored them. It was a great process and really helped to shape the service we have today."

The input from young carers involved with this piece of work influenced the decision to pass the statutory young carer assessment function from council staff to the young carers service and to increase the age at which people could stay with the young carers service from 18 to 25, allowing for a more gradual transition to adult services should this be required.

The impact

At any one time Liverpool has about 100 young carers involved in giving feedback and shaping services, supported by the Keeping the Family in Mind coordinator.

Ms Weller says: “That is much more than we would ever achieve if we simply relied on a forum. It is an organic process. Children and young people are getting involved all the time and hopefully it is helping us make the best decisions for these young people.”

Councillor Barry Kushner, the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, agrees. “Young people have been involved at every stage of the design and commissioning of our young carers service.” This, he says, ensures that young carers get the “support they need”.

The success of the approach can also be seen in the way other areas have involved young carers too. For example, Mersey Care NHS Trust has involved young carers in the development of their in-patient family rooms and, more recently, Liverpool’s further and higher education institutions have set up a steering group and are listening to the experiences of young adult carers to help shape policies in local universities and colleges.

Lessons learned

Ms Weller says it is important to provide comprehensive support to young people when they get involved in the co-design of service. During the re-tendering process, for example, a council engagement officer was allocated to work specifically with the young carers on the panel. Other work that has been done has also required careful consideration to be given to the needs of children, young people and their families.

“You have to be prepared to hold events outside of office hours – after school and on weekends,” she says. “You cannot just expect them to come out of school. And if you are holding something straight after school, you also need to think about having food ready for them.”

How is the approach being sustained?

The council is in the final stages of drawing up its new carers strategy, which, of course, has been developed with the help of young carers. Councillor Kushner predicts this strategy will provide many more opportunities for young carers to get involved in influencing strategic change and service design.

“We are constantly looking to improve and innovate. Our young carers are at the heart of this as we have shown over many years. That will continue as we move forward with the new strategy.”

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Luton

Getting adult and children's social care to work together

Luton Borough Council's adult social workers are playing an active role in identifying and assessing young carers alongside their colleagues from the children's team following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two teams. Introduced at the start of 2016, it is already helping ensure the number of referrals to the young carers service is increasing.

The challenge

Since the introduction of the 2014 Children and Families Act children's social workers have taken the lead when it comes to identifying young carers. But their adult counterparts also play a key role identifying children and young people who may need support.

Through their work with adults and families in the community, they can find themselves visiting homes where children and young people also live. Roles and responsibilities between the two are not always clear though.

The solution

Luton signed a memorandum of understanding between adult and children's social care at the start of 2016 to demonstrate their commitment to working together to provide support for young carers and their families. It built on practices established by the council's Young Carers Strategy 2014 -2017. The two documents set out clear protocols for adult social workers when identifying and dealing with children who could be carers.

The first step is to carry out an early help assessment, which identifies whether a full

young carers assessment is needed. Who carries out that early assessment varies depending on the level of experience of the adult social worker. Those with the required skills, experience and training, which is provided by the council, can carry out the assessments themselves. Other professionals can refer to the early help team, the children's social worker or direct to the young carers provider, CHUMS.

If a full assessment is then needed it is carried out by CHUMS, after which support is organised based on individual need.

This can involve participating in group work in schools or one-to-one support if this is more appropriate. CHUMS also provides group activities, days out and family fun days in the school holidays.

The impact

The joined-up work between adult and children's social care and CHUMS is leading to increasing numbers of young carers being identified. Last year 130 new referrals were made to the young carers service – a rise of nearly 40 per cent on the year before.

Currently the service is working with 250 young people – and the feedback they and their parents provide about the support received is extremely positive. The fun activity days are particularly popular. Over recent years these have involved overnight camps, picnics, visits to farms and trips to Thorpe Park theme resort.

One mother, whose children have been supported, says she cannot thank the service enough for everything it does.

“The help and everything they do is wonderful. My children absolutely loved coming to the clubs and with my disability I cannot take my children to many places, but what you did was truly amazing and more helpful than a thank you gives enough credit for. I honestly cannot thank CHUMS enough. The service is a true blessing.”

Lessons learned

Just over 12 months ago CHUMS introduced a new element to the full assessment process – and it is helping the service to tailor the support they provide. The MACA (multidimensional assessment of caring activities) questionnaire is now completed by the young carers themselves and can be used as an indicator of the total amount of caring activity undertaken. It gets the young carers to fill in subscale scores in six particular areas – domestic tasks, household management, personal care, emotional care, sibling care and financial/practical care.

“MACA is a great tool,” says Senior Commissioning Manager Lindsey Barron. “It has helped us capture a much rounder picture of a young person’s life and the sort of support they need. I think it has really helped us tailor our approach to each individual in a way we could not before.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Improving partnership working with schools and the health service has been identified as a key priority for the future. The young carers service is already working with over 40 schools, holding group sessions on site so children are able to access support easily without disturbing their learning. The work has also encouraged greater recognition of the role of children in caring in the wider school community. For example, two years ago a group of year eight and nine boys at one local high school came up with an idea for an app – called Who Cares? – which won the Good

People’s Choice Award. It linked to the Carers Trust’s online support network, Babble, to connect isolated young carers, pinpoint local health services and share stories.

“The boys weren’t young carers themselves, but it just shows how a school can bring pupils together and raise awareness about the issue,” says Ms Barron. “Schools have an incredibly important role to play in supporting young carers. We need more schools to get involved and signed up to the national Young Carers in Schools initiative.”

Meanwhile, the council is in the process of drawing up a memorandum of understanding between public health, the local clinical commissioning group (CCG) and social care. It is expected to be signed next year and the hope is it will have just as much impact as the memorandum between children’s and adult social care did.

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Nottingham

Developing a young carers app

An app has been developed for young carers in Nottingham, helping them to access advice and support and find out when activities are taking place. It has proved popular among young carers, particularly the 10 to 15 age group.

The challenge

Young carers can often feel isolated and alone. Their caring responsibilities mean they have little time for themselves. Research by The Children's Society has shown that a third of young carers are providing more than five hours of care a week, with one in 20 doing over 15. Take into account the time they spend at school and it can be difficult to engage them with services, even if those services that are there to help.

The solution

Nottingham City Council has turned to digital technology to help engage young carers. Research suggests three-quarters of children aged over nine have a mobile phone, so the council and its young carers service provider, Action for Young Carers (AYC), decided to look at how they could use them to reach out to young people. A working group of young carers and AYC staff was established and together they developed the idea of an app.

It was launched in October 2014 and can be accessed via smart phones as well as desktops. The app can be used to help young people monitor their own mental and physical health and includes information about the activities and help available through the service, from days out to when and where the

support groups are taking place. Users can also ask questions and receive advice from the AYC team.

Councillor David Mellen, Nottingham's Portfolio Holder for Early Intervention and Early Years, says: "We wanted to find a new way to engage with young people. We know people, especially young people, are using their phones for lots of things so we felt developing an app would help them access support – and that has proved to be the case."

The impact

Since the app was introduced the numbers using the young carers service has increased; in the first year following launch by nearly a third. There are now just under 400 people receiving support with 150 regularly using the app at any one time. It has proved particularly popular among the 10 to 15 age group.

Those who have signed up report how it has helped them get the help from AYC that they need. One young carer, aged 12, finds it really useful for keeping in touch with what is going on, – and knowing that support is there when they need it is really reassuring.

"AYC supports me and they've helped me to see that there are other young carers just like me and I'm not alone. They give me a break from being a young carer and listen to me. I like going to AYC because I feel I can be myself."

Lessons learned

One of the benefits of the app has been that it provides an immediate idea of what help people need, says Councillor Mellen.

“We have found that we have been responding and developing the service in reaction to what people are using the app for. It has helped to highlight where there is a need. So, for example, we have issued a card with advice about where to go when there is an emergency. It is not always possible to provide an immediate response via the app so we have made sure young carers are aware of where they can go for help.”

The advice issued includes information about where to go for help from the NHS, social care and basic home safety in the event of a fire or burglary.

How is the approach being sustained?

The app continues to be actively promoted. Young carers are encouraged to sign up to it when they have their full assessments. It is also available in schools. But Councillor Mellen says there are two clear priorities for the future – helping young people transition to adult services and identifying more young carers.

“As young people get older they tend to outgrow the young people’s services and using the app. That is understandable. What you want and need at 21 is quite different from the support you require in your teenage years. But these young carers are still vulnerable and we know we have to do more to help them as they get caught between the young people’s service and adult’s service.

“We also know we need to do more to reach out to younger carers. The latest census suggests there are more carers out there than are being helped. That is a challenge for all services so we want to work closely with schools in particular to make sure we are providing help to all the people who would benefit from it.”

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Oxfordshire

Working with schools

Oxfordshire County Council was one of the trailblazers for the national Young Carers in Schools awards programme. Its scheme has been running for five years now and so far a fifth of schools have signed up, with those that have taken part reporting it is helping them to do more for young carers.

The challenge

Schools have always been a key partner in Oxfordshire County Council's drive to support young carers. The council's young carers service carries out assessments and coordinates support. Staff have regularly visited schools to take part in assemblies and raise awareness about the issue. But faced with mounting evidence that children who are young carers perform badly at school in terms of attainment and attendance, the council decided more should be done.

So five years ago staff from the council's young carers team began drawing up plans about how to involve schools more. Deborah Parkhouse, who leads the team, which is part of the children's social care department, says: "We realised schools needed to play a much more active role. Children spend a lot of their time there and so we wanted to develop something that would help ensure staff were able to help."

The solution

The work led to the creation of the Young Carers School Standard. The scheme was launched in September 2013 and became one of the trailblazers for the national programme.

It provides schools with support and training in how to help and identify young carers, while encouraging them to sign up to work towards achieving the standard award, covering seven themes:

- identification
- assessment and support
- young carers voices
- attainment and attendance
- whole-school approach
- emotional support and counselling
- transition from primary to secondary.

Schools can achieve gold, silver or bronze depending on what they do. For example, to give young carers a voice they need to create a young carers group and create a noticeboard at the school, but to get a gold this has to be increased to having two ambassadors and young carer representation on the school council.

Meanwhile, for the emotional support and counselling theme schools need to provide a confidential space for young carers to talk for bronze, but for gold they need to be able to demonstrate how they offer access to therapeutic interventions. Each school has to appoint a young carers lead who acts as the first point of call within the school for young carers. This can be any member of staff – a teacher, teaching assistant or member of the leadership team.

When a school applies for a gold award, inspection visits are carried out by a team of young carers themselves who interview staff and other young carers to find out how effectively the school is addressing the issues.

Councillor Steve Harrod, Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services, says: “We tend not to think of children as carers, but this is the reality for many children of school age who for various reasons find themselves responsible for the care of a family member at home. There might be less time for homework or extra-curricular activities and there could be issues with school attendance linked to caring commitments.

“There may also be time during the school day when a young carer needs to contact someone at home. The standard is about putting measures in place to identify these issues and provide the extra support that children in this situation may need to fulfil their potential.”

The impact

There are now over 60 schools signed up to the standard – 10 of which have gone on to achieve gold. Those who have taken part are full of praise. Sharon Hembury, the Young Carers School Link Worker from gold-award-winning St Nicholas Primary School says: “By signing up for the young carers school standard programme and focusing on the challenges that young carers face, it has enabled us to support both academically and emotionally children that are facing obligations placed on them through the needs of others.

“Up until three years ago when we signed up for the standards, these young carers would have potentially slipped below the radar at school and become invisible and disadvantaged.”

The scheme has also received the thumbs-up from young carers themselves. Megan Collier, who is now 18 and has taken part in inspections, says it has inspired schools to make “great efforts” to help people like herself.

“I think the standard is such a positive thing that really goes a long way to helping young people.”

Ms Parkhouse is also delighted with the attitude shown by those who have taken part.

“It has helped schools become really involved. Some have been quite innovative, bidding for funding to take young carers for days out or developing school projects around caring. It has been wonderful to see.”

But as well as helping support carers, the standards have improved identification.

The young carers service has identified nearly 3,000 under 18s with a caring role in the county.

Lessons learned

Ms Parkhouse says that as the scheme has developed the importance of providing support to schools has become clear. There are 7.6 full-time equivalent staff in her team who spend an average of half a day each working with schools.

“We give schools an information folder and a USB stick containing good practice examples to get them going. But they do need extra help – filling in the forms, gathering and reviewing the evidence and developing their programmes, especially in the early days,” she says. “So my team can provide them with support on email, the phone or even with individual visits if needed. Without that you would find it difficult to get schools really taking part. But you have to find a balance. You don’t want to do it all for them.”

How is the approach being sustained?

The council is constantly looking to increase the numbers of schools taking part. About a fifth of schools in the county are involved – a rise of 50 per cent on the year before. There is also a particular emphasis on improving attendance as part of a wider council drive to improve rates. As part of the standard, schools have to track performance and demonstrate steps they are taking to improve attendance.

“We are working very closely with schools on this. Attendance can drop among young carers so by providing the support they may need and making sure the school understands the challenges they face we hope we can improve this,” adds Ms Parkhouse.

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Salford

Creating equality of opportunity

The Gaddum Centre is commissioned by Salford City Council to run its carers service. One of Gaddum's key priorities is to narrow the inequalities young carers face. Through its work with local businesses, schools and the voluntary sector, it is helping young people achieve their potential by staying in school, going to university and finding work.

The challenge

It is well known young carers face many disadvantages compared to their peers.

Around one in 20 misses school because of their caring responsibilities and education attainment at GCSE is also lower. Their families are more likely to be in poverty and they are 1.5 times more likely to have a special education need or disability. But despite this there is no strong evidence that they are more likely to come in contact with support agencies.

The solution

Salford City Council commissions the Gaddum Centre to provide the local carers service. This core funding enables Gaddum to secure additional funding with which to expand the support it is able to provide, particularly to young and young adult carers.

"Young carers face so many disadvantages," says Charlotte Elmitt, who leads the work with young carers. "Their caring responsibilities mean they might miss out on school and socialising. They can face isolation from their peers and they are often faced with incredibly high levels of responsibility at home. Our role is

to support them to realise their full potential by helping them stay engaged with education, to access either employment or training and have the space to develop a social life away from being a carer."

When a referral is received Gaddum carries out an assessment to establish the level of caring being undertaken and whether extra support can be provided to the family to reduce the caring burden. An individual support plan is then established, using a menu of group, one-to-one and family work. This work focuses on recognition of the caring role and building self-esteem, confidence and resilience.

Ms Elmitt says: "The menu of support involves us working closely with partner organisations across Salford as well as working with the young people to shape the service. Meaningful co-production is a key facet of what we do."

For young carers under the age of 17 that can involve working closely with school, while for carers 18 to 24 that can involve professional peer mentoring through the connections the service has with local businesses as well as work placements and advice and support for applying for university.

The impact

The reach of the service has grown and grown. The service now provides support to over 300 young carers and young adult carers each year. Some are supported for only a few months, while others get help for a number of years.

One of those is Rachel (not her real name), who cares for her father who has mental health and alcohol issues. She has been in contact with the service for the past six years. When she was first identified she had moved school 11 times. The service worked closely with her through year 11 and two years at college providing both emotional and practical support, including writing references, exam help and arranging accommodation. After college she went on to study at Manchester University.

The work has also seen Gaddum set up successful partnerships with other agencies. An example of this is the Inspiring Futures project set up with Manchester YMCA.

It was established as a pilot in 2014 to provide opportunities for personal and social development and employability skills and involves tailored support, social skills workshops and organised training and volunteering placements.

Lessons learned

Gaddum works closely with other agencies from mental health and substance misuse to family support workers. A partnership approach is essential to both identifying and supporting young carers and their families, says Ms Elmitt.

“You cannot do it alone. You need to rely on the specialist expertise of other agencies. You cannot solve all the problems.”

How is the approach being sustained?

Carers services and other agencies can only make a difference to the lives of young carers if they are able to identify them. In Salford Gaddum has good working relationships with almost 40 schools, the school nursing service, children’s social care and family support workers. But while awareness in Salford is relatively high, Gaddum is conscious that there is still work to be done.

“We have identified lower referral numbers coming from the health service,” says Ms Elmitt. “So we are developing a programme of work to support staff working in health services to raise awareness and embed a referral pathway.”

This includes work with both GPs and pharmacists so they identify and refer young carers they come across.

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Sandwell

Getting the NHS involved

Sandwell Young Carers has appointed a dedicated post to work with GPs. Staff from over 60 local practices have been given training, information and advice in how to identify and support young carers. The scheme has proved so successful it is now being expanded to pharmacies and hospices.

The challenge

Sandwell Young Carers has always enjoyed a close working relationship with the council's social care teams. Many of its referrals came via social workers who understand how to identify and support young carers. But traditionally there were fewer referrals from the NHS.

“Six or seven years ago we were getting none,” says Tracey Hawkins, Sandwell Young Carers Chief Executive Officer. “Young carers were just not on GPs’ radar. It was clear we had to do something about it.”

But not only does this have an impact on referrals, there can also be consequences for the health and wellbeing of young carers. Evidence shows they are more likely to have a long-term condition, disability or poor mental health.

The solution

The council decided to introduce a dedicated young carers post to work with GPs in 2012. A similar position was also created to work with schools. While they had a stronger record of working with young carers, the belief was that by improving knowledge in both sectors Sandwell could help identify young carers at an earlier stage. Sandwell Young Carers won the contract for these.

Ms Hawkins says: “The idea was to identify young carers early before a crisis situation developed. Often when social care gets involved it is because the situation has got really bad so the referrals we were getting were at this late stage. But GPs and schools have regular contact with these families and we all felt if we could develop a closer working relationship with them and help them identify and support young carers themselves it could make a real difference to young carers in our area.

“For example, GPs know if they have a patient with a certain condition what caring for that person involves. They understand what stress a child could be under and knowing who is a young carer means not only can they refer them on but they can also support them.”

Impact

With the help of the worker, GPs have been able to set up registers of young carers on their patient list and have been taught how to make referrals into the young carers service. One-to-one meetings have been held with practice managers and training provided to help them identify those who have not already come forward and provide support to help young carers attending appointments.

Each surgery also has a young carers lead, while posters have been put up in practices and information stalls held on flu clinic days to reach out to patients.

In total, 63 of the 67 GP surgeries based in Sandwell are now involved. Another three practices outside the area, but who have Sandwell-based patients, are also taking part.

It has led to a gradual stream of referrals into the service and improved support given to young carers who visit GP practices.

Lessons learned

When the work started, Sandwell Young Carers focussed on distributing information to GPs and carrying out initial visits. But as the scheme has progressed the service has found it is important to maintain regular face-to-face contact.

Ms Hawkins says: “You have to keep in touch because without that things slip. We attend a six-monthly learning event of GPs and practice managers and are always going back into practices. Staff change and issues crop up. You need to stay very hands on if you are going to keep things working well.”

How is the approach being sustained?

As well as the partnership with GPs, the young carers service also works closely with school nurses. This has included health workshops in the summer for young carers, looking at everything from the importance of healthy lifestyles to personal hygiene.

And last year the scope of the NHS worker's remit to include pharmacies and hospices. Three local pharmacies are already involved and are now displaying young carers posters and being taught how to refer patients on, while there's one hospice in contact.

“Similar to GPs, pharmacists will be coming into contact with families where there are young carers,” says Ms Hawkins. “By making them aware of the issues, we are opening up another avenue in which we can reach out to young carers. The health service is a key partner in the work we do now and it is something we want to build on.”

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Stockton

Easing everyday life with an ID card

In Stockton-on-Tees the young carers service has introduced an ID card to help young carers in their everyday lives. Young carers have used it in schools, shops and GP surgeries to identify themselves and prevent the need for having to give long explanations about their circumstances.

Councillor Anne McCoy, Stockton's Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, says: "Young carers play a really important role across the borough but they often face stress and anxiety due to their caring responsibilities. These cards support their emotional health and wellbeing by enabling them to ask for help where needed."

The challenge

Young carers can often find themselves in situations where they have to explain about their caring responsibilities. It may be at school when they need to check in on a parent or sibling they are looking after or it can be at the GPs when they attend appointments. The prospect of having to go through the details of their circumstances can be intimidating for some or simply too onerous, says Tracey Hamilton, the Manager of Eastern Ravens Trust, a charity which runs the young carers service for Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

The solution

After consulting with young carers, Eastern Ravens Trust launched an ID card in January 2016 to coincide with young carers awareness day. The card is the size of a credit card and lists the young person's name, school, college or training provider and has their photograph on the front. The back of the card is signed by a member of staff from the service to verify the young person is a carer. Carers aged 11 to 17 are entitled to apply for one and, if the application is accepted, it is provided for free.

The impact

Those who have used the ID cards report they have proved invaluable in identifying themselves in everything from schools and GP surgeries to youth centres and when they are out shopping. Over 50 have been handed out since the scheme was launched.

"It may not necessarily sound like a lot," says Ms Hamilton. "But it is really making a difference. Not all our young carers need the card, but those that have taken up the option say it really helps them feel comfortable and confident when they are out and about. For example, there is one young carer who has used it at school, showing it to staff, so she can ring home at lunchtime to check on her mother, who has mental health problems. It is just to make sure she is okay. It is really important to her and means she remains settled during the afternoon."

She also cites other examples. "We had a situation where there was some shops a little while back that stopped letting kids in wearing hoodies. But some of our young carers are responsible for doing the weekly shop. That was clearly a problem, but thanks to the cards they were allowed entry. It is little things like that that can make a big difference to their day-to-day lives."

Lessons learned

ID cards can, of course, only do so much. When it comes to improving the wellbeing of young carers Raverns has found one of the most important measures is providing young carers with the opportunity to mix with other young people in a similar situation.

“There is a lot of emphasis on a whole-family approach,” says Ms Hamilton. “That is quite right and that forms a key part of our assessment process. But you also need to support young carers directly.

“We have found providing them with a little respite and days out is so important. It does not have to be extravagant. We have been for picnics in the local park and caught the train to the coast. It is very easy for young carers to be isolated. Providing this sort of support ensures they develop bonds with other people who understand what they are going through.”

How is the approach being sustained?

While the ID cards have proved beneficial in schools and colleges and will continue to be promoted to young carers, there is much more Raverns wants to do with local education services. Raverns has a dedicated engagement officer who works directly with schools, running assemblies, taking lessons and advising staff.

Ms Hamilton says: “We are working with about two-thirds of schools, but we want to get more involved. Schools can play such a crucial role in identifying and supporting young carers.”

To support this Raverns has been accredited to deliver the national Young Carers in Schools Awards and has also built an element of recognising and supporting young carers into the local healthy schools awards programme.

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Surrey

Training the wider workforce to help young carers

Surrey County Council has set up a team that coordinates training to help the wider workforce understand more about how they can help young carers. Over 4,000 staff from schools, the NHS and from across the council have been trained in the past decade.

The challenge

Joint working between local government, health, schools and the voluntary sector is considered vital to the prospects of young carers. This is made clear by the memorandum of understanding, 'No Wrong Doors', produced by the Local Government Association (LGA), Association Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), Association of Directors of Children Services (ADCS), The Children's Society and Carers Trust.

But to bring together staff working across such diverse sectors is difficult.

Following the publication of the first version of the memorandum in 2009, Surrey County Council began looking at new ways of engaging people who come into contact with young carers.

The solution

Surrey has set up a multi-agency strategy group and has a dedicated carers strategy and Development Manager, John Bangs, to coordinate a team who lead this work. The team work closely with the local young carers forum, which has advised and co-designed many of the projects.

Over the years they have developed a range of training and support resources for council staff, health professionals and schools. There is an e-training course, Young Carer Aware, that was developed in partnership with training provider Cylix.

It is a short four-part course that gives participants an overview of the numbers, challenges facing carers, how they can be supported and the relevant legislation.

The course is offered to all local social care practitioners and also to health professionals and has proved so successful that other areas have started using it.

The importance of young carers is also stressed during the mandatory child safeguarding training. But specialist face-to-face training is available too. This includes:

- Because Carers Count, a half-day course designed to give people real-life experience of what it is like to be a young carer from young people themselves
- Think Carer, Think Family, a one-day course that gives practitioners an opportunity to look in more detail at the assessment process
- customised training tailored to the needs of individual teams
- training for school staff delivered by Surrey Young Carers provider Action for Carers.

The council has also produced two assessment tools to help staff carry out reviews of young carers. There is About Me, for primary school-age children, and iCare, for secondary school-age children.

Mr Bangs says: “While we have outsourced the young carers service, it is local authority staff who have the responsibility for assessments so we developed these guides to help. Both adult’s social care, mental health and children’s staff can find themselves carrying them out and these tools act as prompts and guides to having those conversations with children.”

The impact

Over 4,000 staff from across schools, the NHS and council have been trained over the last 10 years. This includes everyone from teachers, governors and staff from the council’s contact centre to GPs, health visitors and hospital staff working in the health service. The result has been increasing numbers of young carers being identified. The service is currently working with over 2,000 under 18s – double the number it was 10 years previously.

The success of the work can also be seen in the number of ‘young carer champions’ that are in place across local services. There are more than 200, including doctors and nurses in the county’s hospitals. One of the hospitals – the Royal Surrey – even has a champion in each department. These professionals have agreed to lead on the issue, helping support awareness raising events and promoting training to their colleagues. Debbie Hustings, who helps coordinate the work on carers for the NHS on behalf of the consortium of local CCGs in Surrey, says health staff have really welcomed the opportunity.

“GPs are in a pivotal position to identify young carers as are community service practitioners, district nurses, school nurses and health visitors. In Surrey we have made a real commitment to our young carers. Our aim is to reduce the impact that caring can have on a young carers health and to improve the interface between young carers and the health service.”

Lessons learned

A factor in Surrey’s success is undoubtedly the good network of support the council has put in place. There is a team of three education advisers that work with schools, supporting staff, carrying out briefings on inset days, taking assemblies and providing advocacy for students. Carers Practice Advisers are also in place in adult social care department to help coordinate the work they are involved with, while advisers are situated in each hospital in the county having previously worked with GPs.

“You need expertise on the ground,” says Mr Bangs. “It is the glue that binds the work together.”

How is the approach being sustained?

One of the tools that has been launched to help engage the wider workforce is the Online Carers Prescription. This was first rolled out to GPs five years ago when it was used to refer carers for breaks. It was then adapted to refer carers for other services, including for assessments. It worked so well that Surrey has taken it out to the wider NHS workforce. Over the past 18 months it has started being used by medics, hospital staff, mental health workers and by the local clinical commissioning group.

Mr Bangs says: “It is really easy to use. It just takes a few moments. We know staff are really busy so we knew we had to design something that would not take long for them to refer people into the service.

“Once it was up-and-running in GP surgeries other staff became aware of it and actively asked for it too. It shows that they see the importance of supporting young carers which is really great.”

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Wiltshire

Helping military families

Wiltshire is home to thousands of armed forces families. The nature of military life means children are at higher risk of becoming carers. The council has been supporting them by working closely with the armed forces to provide dedicated support to young carers and wider help to their families.

The challenge

Children from military families are at higher risk of becoming young carers. The nature of the armed forces means children can find themselves looking after parents who have returned from service injured or who have post-traumatic stress disorder. They can also be caring for a parent who has health problems while their partner is away serving.

The issues are further compounded by the fact military families can often live far away from their extended family and support network. Wiltshire Council is no stranger to this. The county has one of the highest concentrations of military families in the country. Military personnel constitute more than three per cent of the local population with 15,000 currently stationed across the county. The highest concentrations are around the towns south east of Salisbury Plain including Larkhill, Bulford, Perham Down and Tidworth. The service pupil premium suggests there are about 6,000 service children in the county.

And these numbers are set to grow. By 2020 it is expected there will be 19,000 military personnel with the completion of the national Army Basing Programme, which will see the final army units stationed in Germany return to the UK and their new home on the Salisbury Plain.

The solution

Wiltshire has combined running bespoke projects for young carers with providing wider support for military families, as part of its support for the armed forces. The dedicated support for young carers has included a variety of different projects over the years with partners such as the Carers Trust and Army Welfare Service. They have included family workshops, respite, health promotion schemes and advocacy as well as day trips. And military families can, of course, access all universal services within the county, including children's centre services.

The Army Welfare Service in addition to the army's local welfare officers coordinate additional support for military families and work closely with statutory children's services and other partner agencies. They all regularly meet through Wiltshire's multi-agency forums where they share information and discuss issues. As part of the Army Basing Programme, Wiltshire has established monthly communication with the British Forces Social Work Service to ensure any families open to statutory services are known about and to ensure there is smooth transition.

Any cases that are already within the UK that transfer to Wiltshire are referred to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) by the respective local authority so that a handover meeting can take place between local authorities with the family and other professionals.

The impact

Progress has been made and the carers service regularly works with young carers who need support. For military families who need statutory intervention, the support and safeguarding service continues to work closely with Army Welfare Services and the local welfare officers to provide additional support to families and contribute to meetings and the oversight of plans for children and young people who receive intervention from this service.

To help improve the support it provides to military families, Wiltshire has recently identified two team managers who will work closely with Army Welfare Services and the local welfare officers to look at specific issues, such as improved joint working, planning and future training and information events.

possible to cross-reference the prevalence of young carers with other key characteristics, including children and young people from a military background.

Wiltshire Council Cabinet Member for Children Laura Mayes says: “Caring for someone is a really tough role, but even more so for a young person. We want young people who provide care to continue to be given the same opportunities as everyone else to achieve what they want to do and this contract will help to provide that support.”

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Lessons learned

Historically armed forces families will often relocate and the system of transferring cases from one carer support service to another is not developed nationally. It means it can be a challenge identifying and increasing referrals. The Children’s Society has flagged in a recent report ‘Young Carers in Armed Forces Families’, making a number of recommendations for action, including that transition packs, which schools must put together by law, should also be required to document whether a child is a carer or not.

What next?

The council is making changes to the way the young carers service works. From 1 April 2018, the assessment of carers aged under 18 will be led and coordinated by children’s services instead of by the local carers service. The way referrals are made to the service is also changing. Out will go the old paper-based system, to be replaced by new online system called DART (Digital Assessment Referral Tool). DART has been recently developed in-house and has the potential to make the identification of young carers easier. It will be

Want to know more?

NHS England carers toolkit

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commitment-to-carers/carers-toolkit/>

Hidden From View: The Experiences of Young Carers in England (The Children's Society report, 2013)

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/commitment-to-carers/carers-toolkit/>

No Wrong Doors: A Template Memorandum of Understanding Between Adults and Children's Social Care (LGA and partners, 2015 update)

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/no-wrong-doors-working-to-27d.pdf>

Making a Step Change programme (final evaluation report, 2016)

<https://makingastepchange.info/project-learning/project-evaluations/>

Engaging with Health Services (lessons from Making a Step Change programme)

<https://makingastepchange.info/key-themes/engaging-with-health-services/>

Young Carers in Schools website

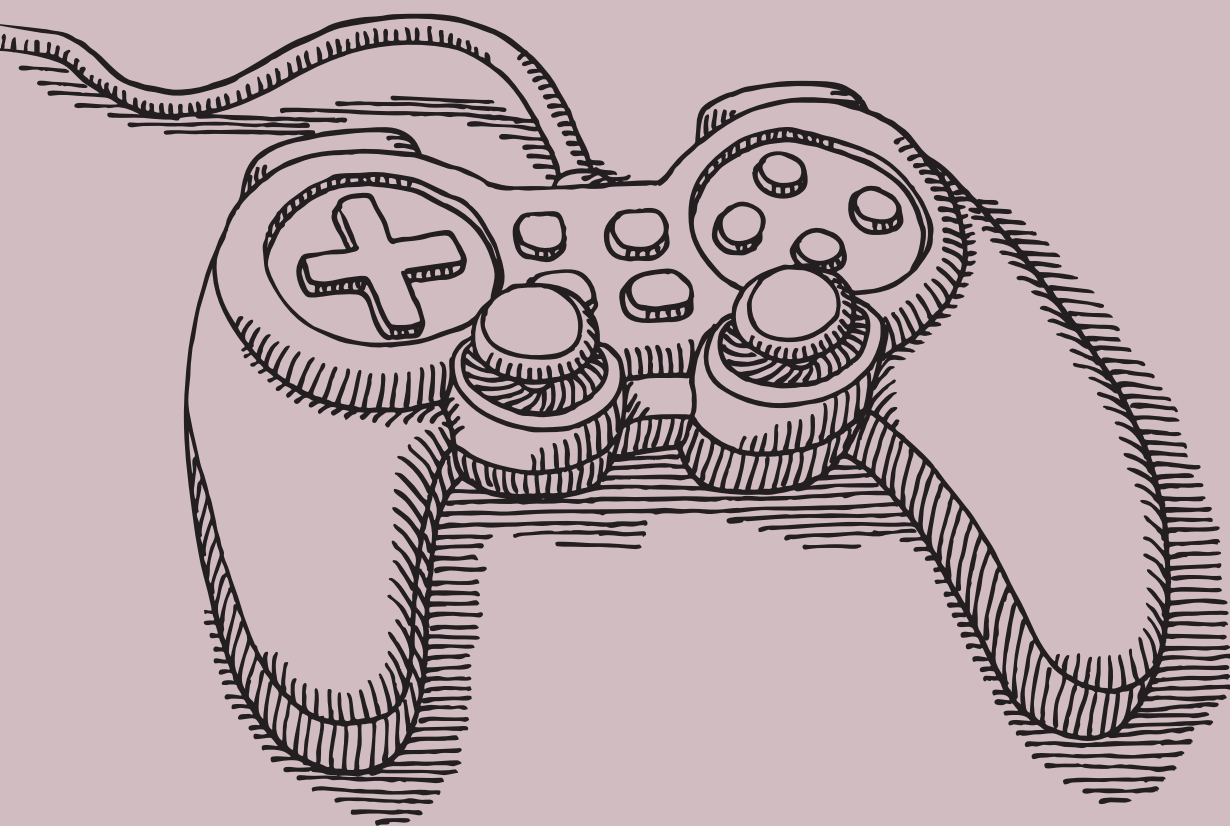
<https://youngcarersinschools.com/>

The Lives of Young Carers in England (Department for Education research, 2017)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-lives-of-young-carers-in-england>

The Children's Society health pages

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/health-and-mental-health>





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