

# Making a step change for young carers and their families: Putting it into practice

## Key Briefing: Local Authorities Engagement with Schools

### Introduction

**Carers Trust** and **The Children's Society** delivered a one year Department for Education funded programme between April 2015 and March 2016 to support local authorities develop collaborative, whole family models that effectively implement their duties toward young carers and their families as set out in the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014. This series of **Making a Step Change: Putting it into practice** briefings draws on practical examples in undertaking these duties to identify, assess and support young carers and their families within a whole family approach.

### Summary

Understanding the role and challenges for young carers is essential. Studies have looked at the impact of caring roles on the education and future attainment of young carers and the results are worrying.

- 27% of young carers (aged 11-15 miss school or experience educational difficulties (rising to 40% where children care for a relative with drug or alcohol problems).<sup>1</sup>
- Young carers are more likely than the national average not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) between 16 and 19.<sup>2</sup>
- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the difference between nine B's and nine C's.<sup>2</sup>
- A quarter of young carers said they were bullied at school because of their caring role.<sup>3</sup>

The findings of many surveys reveal the impact that caring has on young carers, including restricting their educational attainment and their future employment opportunities. Education professionals, Children's and adults' services and community organisations therefore have a key role in identifying and supporting the education and employment potential of young carers, now and into the future.

## **Legislation, Guidance & Strategy**

In 2010, the Government's National Carers Strategy identified "enabling those with caring responsibilities to fulfil their educational and employment potential" as a key priority area, and recognized that more should be done to identify and support young carers in particular.<sup>3</sup> This commitment was followed in April 2015 by the Children and Families Act 2014 that required local authorities to "take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are young carers within their area who have needs for support."

Though adults' and children's services should be identifying young carers by 'thinking whole family', it is equally important that local authorities empower other professionals that come in contact with young people to be asking the questions that encourage young carers to identify themselves. Schools, being on the frontline with young people, are ideally placed to dramatically increase awareness, identification and support. The Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 affirms that "schools are vital to identifying young people and carers who may not already be in contact with local authorities."<sup>4</sup>

In February 2016, The Department for Education published "The lives of young carers in England" – detailing the effect of caring. This research found desire "for school staff, particularly in secondary schools, to have a greater awareness of children's caring responsibilities".

Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework (2015) states that inspectors WILL look at young carers' outcomes when making judgements. N.B. The 2015 wording is significantly stronger than that included in the previous framework which stated that inspectors MAY look at outcomes for young carers.

## **The Young Carers in School Programme (YCiS)**

The adoption of a whole school approach, which embeds the young carers within existing school systems and includes the provision of academic, pastoral and whole family support, is vital. This approach is vital to tackling the multiple reasons why young carers are hidden and improving attendance, attainment and wellbeing. It will:

- a. Create a positive whole school ethos where young carers feel safe and confident to access support.
- b. Ensure all school staff know the potential signs that a pupil may be a young carer and what to do next i.e. inform the school lead.
- c. Enable the effective delivery of flexibilities, interventions and support to raise outcomes e.g. flexibilities.
- d. Ensure the attendance, attainment and wellbeing are monitored as part of the existing school systems.

- e. Enable effective information sharing.

The Young Carers in Schools programme, run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society, makes the implementation of this whole school approach as easy as possible, and awards effective practice. It offers schools practical tools, professional development and good practice spotlights and opportunity to gain national recognition for effective practice through the Young Carers in Schools Award. This approach has been developed through extensive consultation and piloting with school staff, local authorities, young carers services, Multi Academy Trusts and young carers.

### **Key benefits to using YCiS locally:**

- a. Through YCiS, Carers Trust and The Children's Society break down the whole school approach into easy-to-follow, manageable steps so that schools can prioritise what to do next. These steps are underpinned by a comprehensive package of support (tools, good practice spotlights, and professional development), which have received overwhelmingly positive support from school leaders and staff. Support received overwhelmingly positive feedback from schools: *I've had experience of using and working with lots of other programmes and I have found them not to be as supportive or as useful as the tools available through Young Carers in Schools – Assistant. Director of Inclusion, Milthorpe School York. "inspirational" "excellent" "hugely informative" – school staff.*
- b. YCiS enables schools to demonstrate to Ofsted that your school is meeting the needs of young carers, specifically mentioned in the Common Inspection Framework, 2015. An inspection report for a YCiS award winning school specifically mentioned the schools staff ability to proactively identify pupils who may at times be vulnerable as well as the school's support for young carers.
- c. YCiS facilitates and adds credibility to local authority requests to schools - the opportunity to gain recognition from several national charities is a key hook for many schools, particularly as other schools in their area gain awards.
- d. YCiS has significant support from key national stakeholders (Association for Teachers and Lecturers, Association of School and College Leaders, Voice the Union, National Association of Headteachers, National Governors Association who are committed to raising the profile of young carers support in schools, and YCiS through their networks.), and is increasingly recognised in the school sector.

## **Putting it into Practice**

Local Authority Trailblazers from the *Making a step change for young carers and their families: Putting it into Practice* project have demonstrated innovative ways of integrating schools into a whole family, whole council, whole system approach to supporting young carers and their families.

**Sandwell** have held 1:1 meetings with eight schools to engage them in YCiS, with all schools stating that they are likely or highly likely to apply for a YCiS Award. Through 1:1 meetings they have, to date, supported a number of schools to begin implementing the whole school approach and achieve a Bronze Young Carers in Schools Award.

**Devon, Stockton and Surrey** have held local authority wide events to engage schools in the programme, bringing together a total of 33 schools with 90% stating they are likely or highly likely to apply for a YCiS Award.

**In Oxfordshire**, an established programme and award for local school was already implemented and lead by the Local Authority. By working together with the Local Authority leads and the schools engaged with this programme they were able to benefit from the tools and resources being developed as part of the England-wide Young Carers in Schools programme, gain national recognition, and share learning with a wider audience while maintaining the local support and good practice that had been developed. Key to this was a young carers group having the opportunity to visit schools and review provision in person, including interviewing young carers in schools applying.

## Next Steps

- Maximise the use of local resources, and draw upon learning from across England, by incorporating the Young Carers in Schools tools, support and awards when developing in-house school engagement work/tenders to commissioning services to carry out school engagement work.
- Ask schools in your local authority to nominate a School Lead for Young Carers.
- Hold a local authority wide event for schools to raise awareness about need for a whole school approach and how this ties into school outcomes, the Young Carers in Schools programme, and local support available for young carers.
- Run/commission services to run a local network for schools, supporting them to work through the whole school approach set out in YCiS.
- Ensure existing school development workers, or services commissioned to engage schools contact YCiS team when developing approach; access webinars, resource and any events run by YCiS team to share key learning from across local authorities and the programme; and keep up to date through the YCiS eNewsletter for local authorities and young carers services.
- Contact YCiS team if run a Healthy Schools programme or Inclusion Quality Mark to identify how to maximise potential to encourage schools to adopt a whole school approach to young carers – e.g. All schools in Southend that are working towards an enhanced Healthy Schools Award, must attain a Bronze YCiS Award. LA has secured significant buy-in from local schools to adopt the whole school approach set out in YCiS.
- Utilise your authority's existing connections or programmes within schools.
- Ensure in-house/local authority commissioned education services are aware of the change in Ofsted's wording and research regarding the potential impact

of caring roles and that this, and links to the local young carers services and YCiS, are reflected in communications/webpages/training/existing networks for schools staff.

- Include young carers as a key data requirement in data gathering from schools.

## Tools & Resources

<sup>1</sup> Dearden, C and Becker, S (2004), Young Carers in the UK: The 2004 Report (Carers UK and The Children's Society)

<sup>2</sup> Hounsell, D. ***Hidden from View: The experiences of young carers in England***. 2013. London: The Children's Society. [http://www.youngcarer.com/sites/default/files/hidden\\_from\\_view\\_-\\_final.pdf](http://www.youngcarer.com/sites/default/files/hidden_from_view_-_final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Carers Trust. ***Supporting Young Carers in School: An Introduction for Primary and Secondary School Staff***. 2013. London: Carers Trust. [https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/supporting\\_young\\_carers\\_in\\_schools\\_-\\_an\\_introduction.pdf](https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/supporting_young_carers_in_schools_-_an_introduction.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> HM Government. ***Recognised, valued and supported: next steps for the Carers Strategy***. 2010. London: Crown. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/213804/dh\\_122393.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/213804/dh_122393.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Health. ***Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014***. 2014 London: Crown. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/366104/43380\\_239027\\_77\\_Care\\_Act\\_Book.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/366104/43380_239027_77_Care_Act_Book.pdf)

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Supporting young carers – A School Resource Survey. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers survey 2009

Phelps, D, Leadbitter, H, Manzi D (2010), Supporting Young Carers: A Resource for Schools (The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and The Children's Society).

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Briefing: Local Authorities Engagement with Schools  
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April 2016