

SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS

STRATEGY GUIDE

Theme: Young Carers

Introduction

The [Carers Trust](#) and [The Children's Society](#) define a young carer as: "A person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person. They often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult." Young people aged between 14 and 25 are sometimes referred to as young adult carers, but definitions and terminology appear to be interchangeable.

Young carers provide regular and ongoing care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled or misuses substances. While many children and young people provide everyday help to family members, what distinguishes children as a young carer is that responsibilities persist over time and are important in maintaining the health or wellbeing of a family member (The lives of young carers in England Qualitative report to DfE, 2016).



The additional responsibility of caring at home often places increased pressures on a child or young person beyond that expected of someone without such responsibilities. Caring responsibilities can include tasks such as cooking and household chores, administering medication, washing and helping with toileting needs or being there to listen and help calm a situation. The [Care Act Statutory Guidance, 2014](#) states: 'A young carer becomes vulnerable when their caring role risks impacting upon their emotional or physical wellbeing and their prospects in education and life.'

Research has shown that children or young people who care for parents and relatives are at greater risk of mental and emotional difficulties and are more likely to do badly at school or college (Becker and Sempik, 2019).

Young carers can be hidden from plain sight. According to the 2011 census, there were 166,000 young carers, however, findings from the BBC and the University of Nottingham in 2018, estimate there are over 800,000 children in England performing a caring role (Joseph *et al.*, 2019).

It is sometimes difficult for a child or young person to recognise that they are taking on responsibilities within the home beyond what would normally be expected, especially when this has been the household norm/expectation for some time. It is also recognised that research with these children and young people is challenging because they often do not recognise themselves as carers (Cass *et al.* 2009, 2011; Noble-Carr and Woodman, 2016).

A study in Glasgow, The health, well-being and future opportunities of young carers: a population approach (Robison *et al.*, 2020), reiterates the complexities of data collection and identification on a young carer. The Young carers in England: Findings from the 2018 BBC survey on the prevalence and nature of caring among young people (Joseph *et al.*, 2019) uses the Multidimensional Assessment of Caring Activities (MACA-YC18) to identify young carers. This methodology is an 18-item checklist of caring activities. The checklist has been adopted by many local authorities, young carers organisations, researchers and professionals.

It is widely recognised that identifying those children and young people carrying out additional care and support at home can present challenges. The challenge for professionals is how to identify young carers/young adult carers and to establish, and put in place, appropriate support. This is a challenge for all services and professionals.

What is the impact on safeguarding adolescents?

Evidence shows that having a caring role can impact negatively on a child's physical and mental wellbeing, social relations, education and employment prospects. Identification, and more importantly early or timely identification, is a crucial first step in ensuring young carers receive the support they need before a child becomes vulnerable.

- 68% of young carers are bullied in schools.

- Over 39% of young carers had not informed their teacher or any member of staff that they were a young carer.
- 27% of young carers (aged 11–15) miss school or experience educational difficulties (40% where children care for a relative with drug or alcohol problems).

Source: Carers Trust, 2012

The [Learning and Work Institute](#) state that a young adult carer is three times more likely, than other young people to be NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and five times more likely to drop out of college.

Identifying children and young people that have care responsibilities in their homes supports safeguarding by developing an understanding of the commitments that a child or young person has. For children in education, additional considerations can be given to trips away, finances, assignment deadlines, attendance, start and finish times and changes in timetables. This can be reviewed from one term to another depending on the impact this may have on home routines.



Additional Resources and Information

National

[Carers Trust](#) - A major charity that works to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

[The Childrens Society](#) - Provide specialist support that empowers young people to make positive changes and rediscover their hope.

[Carers Federation](#) – Organisation in England that provides a diverse range of services.

[Barnardo's: Young Carers sub-hub](#) - Range of resources, tools, videos and more to support families with young carers.

Local

[Hampshire County Council: Young Carers](#) - Local projects and support groups for young carers in Hampshire.

[Hampshire Young Carers Alliance \(HYCA\)](#) - A consortium of ten young carer projects/services across Hampshire.

[Isle of Wight Council: Young Carers](#) - Provides support, information and advice for young carers and their families.

Identification and support

[Identification Practice of Young Carers in England – Review, Tips and Tools](#) - Primarily aimed to be a guide for local government, this resource produced by the Carers Trust is also useful to leaders, commissioners and professionals in health, education, voluntary and young carer services.

[Training resources to help with improving the identification and support of young carers](#) - Produced by the Carers Trust, these resources are designed to support the training of a wide range of professionals and volunteers to identify and support young carers.

[Carers Trust: Professionals Resources](#) - Offers a wide range of resources and information for all sectors who work with carers.

[Supporting professionals working with young carers](#) – Information from The Children’s Society.

[Still Hidden, Still Ignored Who cares for young carers?](#) - Barnardo’s Young Carers Report (2017)

Education specific resources

[Young carers: Mentally Healthy Schools](#) - Information on identifying the signs and what schools and further education settings can do.

[Young Carer in Schools \(YCIS\) programme](#) - Developed by the Carers Trust and The Children’s Society, this programme for schools shares good practice, practical tools, resources and training.

[The Driving Change Programme](#) - Developed by the Carers Federation to support young carers in Further Education Colleges (post-16 provision). This is a quality standard and there is an accreditation process, the aim of which is to develop a deeper understanding of young carers needs, and implement appropriate and effective support, including that on offer in the local community. The standard supports the formalising of processes, considers policy writing, determining whether the organisations policies recognise the needs of young carers, and supports the identification of young carers. Ultimately the aim is to raise attainment and prevent young adult carers becoming NEET).

Short films

[BBC News: Young carers](#) – Various BBC clips about young carers.

References

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