



**Young Carers
Alliance**

**Young Carers and the Schools Census
Comms Pack for schools**

July 2022

Young Carers and the Schools Census



Who are young carers?

A young carer is someone under the age of 18 who looks after someone who has a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem. As well as those caring for parents, they may also support brothers, sisters, elderly relatives or even friends too. Research suggests that 10% of all children are providing high or very high levels of care.

It is likely that you will have at least 1 or 2 young carers in every class in every year group in your school.

If young carers are not identified at an early stage then they often end up taking on inappropriate and excessive levels of caring responsibilities. A recent survey by the charity Caring Together found that on average young carers were caring for 3 years before receiving any support, and there were some caring for more than 10 years. This can have a significant impact on their education, health and future opportunities:

- 27% of young carers aged 11-15 miss school or experience educational difficulties
- 1 in 4 young carers have reported being bullied because of their caring role
- There are over 1500 young carers aged 5-7 nationally providing more than 50 hours of care a week
- At least a third of young carers said their caring role resulted in them either 'always' or 'usually' feeling 'worried', 'lonely' or 'stressed'

We are asking you for your help to ensure that all young carers in the country are identified and supported.

Young carers and the school census

From Spring 2023, young carers are for the first time going to be included on the school census return. This will enable a much clearer picture of the number of young carers in schools, but also provides opportunities to use this data to monitor attendance and attainment of young carers.

Schools will be able to use the following codeset (CS118):

Code	Young carer indicator
N	Not declared
P	Identified as a young carer by parent or guardian
S	Identified as a young carer by school

What do schools need to do in order to prepare for this change?

In order for the school census return to provide an accurate representation of the number of young carers in schools, schools will need to have systems and processes in place to:

1. Raise awareness of young carers with all staff and pupils
2. Flag who the young carers in your school are
3. Ensure that young carers who are identified are linked into available support, both within school and externally

The Young Carers Alliance have produced a checklist which headteachers and senior leaders can use to ensure they are prepared for the addition of young carers to the census and that any young carers identified are linked into support.

The challenge for schools

To help ensure that every young carer in the county is identified at the earliest opportunity and linked into available support, the Children's Commissioner and the Young Carers Alliance are asking for every school to:

1. Have a Young Carers Champion so that every young carer has a trusted adult in school they can go to if things are difficult or they need more support
2. Have a Young Carers policy (designed with young carers) so that every young carer in the county knows what support is available to them in their school

Support for Young Carers

There is a range of support available to young carers across England, either commissioned by local authorities/health, or funded through grants and donations.

You can find your local young carers service by visiting

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/young-people/young-carers/local-service-finder>

There is also information and/or support available for particular groups of young carers:

Children of Parents with Mental Illness – Our Time (<https://ourtime.org.uk/>)

Siblings of disabled children:

Sense - <https://www.sense.org.uk/our-services/support-for-children/support-for-young-carers-and-siblings/>

Sibs - <https://www.sibs.org.uk/>

Children where there has been sexual abuse/violent crime – Restitute – www.restitute.org

Young Carers Assessments

Young carers have legal rights to assessments and support. Schools can play a key role in ensuring that pupils and families are aware of their rights to assessment and might be best placed to support them in requesting one.

A Young Carers Needs Assessment under s17ZA of the Children Act 1989 is designed to ensure that young carers are not taking on inappropriate or excessive caring responsibilities. They are available to any young carer who requests one, no matter who they care for or how much care they provide.

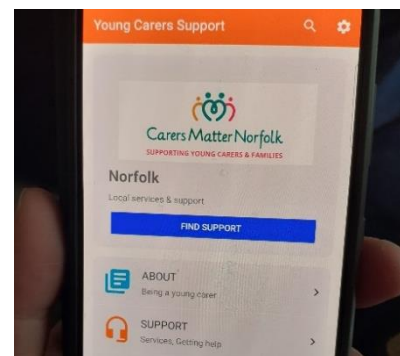
You can find out how to refer for a Young Carers Assessment by contacting your local young carers' organisation or local authority.

Young Adult Carer Transitions Assessments

Young Adult Carers (young carers approaching adulthood) are also entitled to an assessment under s63 of the Care Act 2014 to help ensure that any barriers to them making successful transitions into adulthood are removed. You should again contact your local authority or young carers' organisation to find out how they are working in your local area (including at what age).

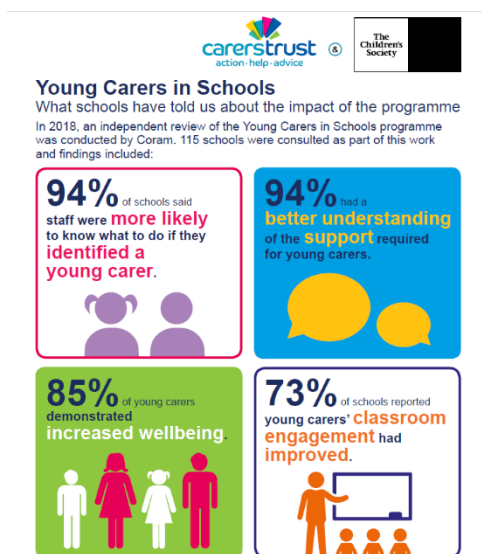
Young Carers Support App

There is free [App](#) (available on both Android and Apple) which contains useful national information for young carers. Some areas have also got local pages. No registration is required so young carers, parents and professionals may find it equally of use. Search "Young Carers Support App"



Support for schools

There is support available to schools to help you improve your ability to identify and support young carers within your setting.



Young Carers in Schools

[Young Carers in Schools](#) (YCiS) is a free initiative that makes it as easy as possible for schools to support young carers, and awards good practice. Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society, the YCiS programme provide schools across England with the tools and resources to support young carers. These include a [step-by-step guide](#) for school leaders, teachers and non-teaching staff.

Implementing YCiS has shown increased well-being, achievement and attainment of young carers.

Some young carer organisations also have their own local programmes such as Caring Together's Carer Friendly Tick in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. Many local young carer organisations offer awareness-raising sessions for staff and/or pupils.

Top tips for schools

Research by Warhurst, Bayless and Maynard (in prep) found that school staff have 3 key recommendations for supporting Young Carers in school (If your school would be interested in being involved in the next research about Young Carers in schools, please email amy.warhurst@winchester.ac.uk)

1. Using resources available to help schools to identify, support and signpost young carers (e.g. Young Carers in Schools).
2. Individualised approaches including awareness raising and focused peer support are most effective both in identifying young carers and creating a community of support and trust
3. Establishing trust and open communication with young people and their families enabled and facilitated the support processes (offering in school support, flexibility for learning, referrals to outside agencies)

Tip: Link in with your local young carers project so you know what support is available – a good relationship will increase chances of young carers consenting to you knowing they are a young carer

Identification

- Using a tool such as the [Multi-dimensional Activity of Caring Activities \(MACA-18\) assessment](#), a short, standardised questionnaire, with all pupils can help to identify potential young carers. Repeating the exercise annually may help identify new young carers.
- There are some groups of young carers where the MACA-18 may not as easily identify them, and so there are particular questions in the MACA-18 which by paying particular attention to the scores may help you identify potential young carers:
 - Children of parents with mental illness** – Questions 13, 14 and 15
 - Siblings** – Questions 16,17 and 18
- Increasing conversations around topics such as mental illness, addiction and disability, alongside visible support in school for young carers will increase the chances of young carers coming forward for support.
- Awareness-raising activities with pupils can also help increase self-identification and identification of young carers by their friends.
- Review any Early Help, Child in Need or Child Protection cases you have open where parental mental illness or alcohol/drug addiction are relevant

Tip: Consider adding a question to your school enrolment paperwork which asks if there is a parent(s), siblings or family members who have disabilities or other long-term physical or mental health conditions.

Make clear **why** you're asking for the information

Signs that a pupil may be a young carer

(Taken from 'Supporting Young Carers in Schools: A Toolkit for Initial Teacher Education Providers'; Carers Trust, The Children's Society)

The following checklist of signs that a child or young person may be a young carer may of course also be indicators of many other issues. However, knowing these signs can help all school staff to build up a picture of a pupil and ask the right questions to reveal that a pupil is a young carer.

Is the pupil...	Y/N
Often late or missing days or weeks off school for no reason?	
Often tired, anxious or withdrawn?	
Having problems socially or with making friends?	
Presenting as very mature for their age?	
A victim of bullying?	
Depressed?	
Finding it difficult to concentrate on their work?	
Having difficulty in joining in extracurricular activities or unable to attend school trips?	
Isolated?	
Not handing in their homework/coursework on time, or completing it late and to a low standard?	
Anxious or concerned about an ill or disabled relative?	
Displaying behavioural problems?	

Is the pupil...	Y/N
Having physical problems such as back pain (perhaps from heavy lifting)?	
Secretive about home life?	
Showing signs of physical neglect or poor diet, for example hungry, thin or lacking clean uniform?	
Listed as a Child in Need, subject to a Child Protection plan, or Looked-after Child Plan where parental ill health or addiction issues are involved?	
A sibling of a pupil at your school who is registered with disabilities or ongoing health problems, including mental ill health?	
Are the parents/another family member	Y/N
Disabled or do they have an illness or addiction problem?	
Difficult to engage with?	
Not attending parent's evenings?	
Not communicating with school?	
On low incomes, and unable to afford school-related expenses? This may be because of disability related unemployment.	

Tip: Contact your local young carers service to ask if they can share with you basic information about pupils at your school with a caring role who are known to the service. Most services will be able to share this if it has been consented to by the young carer/their family.

Tip: Make sure your staff are not just looking for young carers where there are visible, physical support needs. Otherwise you risk missing young carers of:

- **Parents who are struggling with mental illness**
- **Siblings with a learning disability**
- **Family members who have developed support needs because of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and other forms of abuse/violence**

Identifying a Young Carers' champion

- Your young carers' champion doesn't have to be a teacher – the best champions are those who have a real desire to support young carers, are approachable and have the time to support
- Why not ask your young carers who they think might make a good champion?
- Some schools have more than one champion, just in case of absence and to help ensure support is available as number of young carers identified increases
- If your champion is not in a position to make school-wide decisions, then you need to have a way for them to escalate things to senior leaders.

Example: Glenmoor and Winton Academies in Bournemouth have got two young carers' champions, and they are both line managed by the principal so that any issues relating to young carers can feed straight into the Senior Leadership Team

- Some schools have an operational champion and a senior leadership team champion – one providing the main support to the young carers, and the other ensuring the school-wide systems and processes are in place, and that data is being reviewed at a senior level.
- Ensure young carers know how and when they can contact your champion

Creating a young carers' policy with your young carers

If you don't have (m)any young carers identified, ask your local young carers' service if they have got any young carers willing to help you – the policy can then be reviewed once you identify more young carers.

Tip: Start by asking the young people what causes them the most difficulty at school as young carers, or what would make balancing schools and caring easier.

Young carers often raise issues such as:

- Not being able to contact home to check on the person they care for, or the person they care for not being able to get key information to them
- Not having a quiet space at home to concentrate on homework/revision
- Needing to be able to have a 'time-out' if things get too much
- Getting homework in on time when things are really difficult at home
- Sibling carers often say how they find it difficult when they are relied upon during school hours to provide care to their brother or sister. This obviously impinges on their own learning and quality of education.

Creating and implementing your young carers' policy

Once you've identified the issues, you can then identify practical solutions/agree a level of flexibility which can tackle some of the issues.

Real-life example: Your school has a strict 'no-phones' policy due to issues with cyber-bullying. Megan's mum has been really unwell and is awaiting a call with important test results. Megan keeps going to the toilets to check her phone, text mum and once mum has her results, call her from the cubicle to discuss them.

Alternative solution: Your school retains its 'no-phones' policy but your young carers policy means that Megan is permitted to go to her Head of Year's Office at break and lunch to check if mum has texted her and give her mum a call in privacy. Mum is also given a contact number and e-mail address for the Young Carers' Champion, so can get a message to Megan through the champion

Some schools create a two-way agreement – what young carers can expect from the school and what the school can expect from their young carers.

There are example policies available on the [Back to School resources webpage](#), but ensure your policy works for your young carers and your school – young carers say there is nothing worse than having a policy which isn't adhered to.

In addition to support which is available for all young carers, the best young carers' policies enable a person-centered approach to support – acknowledging that what works for one young carer won't help another.

Ensure your policy is regularly reviewed like other school policies and that staff, pupils and families are aware of it.

Using your systems to support young carers

Having comprehensive systems and processes in place in relation to your young carers can help identify any early warning signs.

- Ensure you have a flag on your pupil management system for young carers and that staff routinely use it.
- Use this flag to review attendance and attainment for young carers alongside other vulnerable groups of pupils
- Review your arrangements for transitions support to ensure they meet the needs of young carers – have your young carers been able to visit schools/colleges? Do they know what support is available at their next setting? Does the new setting know what support you have provided?

Tip: You can find a Year 6 Young Carers transitions booklet on the [Back to School resources page](#)

Top tips for schools supporting young carers

Thanks to www.youngcarers.info for this helpful overview of some of the top tips for schools wanting to improve how they support their young carers

- Y** our school can change the life of a young carer!
- O** ffer peer and staff support to pupils with caring responsibilities.
- U** nderstanding and listening to young carers are key!
- N** ominate a School Lead for young carers to coordinate support
- G** ive young carers easy opportunities to self-identify including at the application stage

- C** reate a safe, supportive and understanding school culture for all young carers
- A** dd young carers to the curriculum so all pupils are aware and understand the issues
- R** aise awareness and train all staff about young carers
- E** xpect there to be young carers in your school
- R** aise awareness about how your school supports young carers
- S** upport young carers in partnership with a local young carer service