

School leadership teams

“Research has emphasised the importance of changing schools’ organisational structures and senior management teams are crucial in driving those changes and ensuring that good practice becomes embedded in the school’s organisational structure. Similarly, having tools in place, such as a young carers’ policy, and pre-prepared lesson and assembly plans may also assist in bringing about a sustained approach to supporting young carers.”¹

Who is this chapter for?

- School leadership teams
- School lead or school staff interested in becoming/establishing a school lead within your school and team

This chapter will support schools to:

- ensure that all teaching and non teaching staff are aware of the issues affecting young carers.
- develop a policy to support young carers and their families.
- implement a whole-school approach towards supporting young carers.
- ensure that staff work with external agencies and other professionals, providing a multi-agency approach that supports the whole family. This includes working with adults’ services in order to support the adult with care needs.

Synopsis

School leadership teams should be aware that all schools will have young carers and that these young carers have specific needs. Many young carers face enormous barriers to learning. It is vital that the leadership of the school puts in place measures to identify and support young carers.

Why is the role of school leadership teams important?

Without identification and support, young carers are at risk of underachieving. Understanding the needs of young carers and providing them with support will help attendance, behaviour, achievement and well-being, as well as help them to reach their full potential.

Establishing a support framework for young carers based around a whole-school approach is vital for removing the barriers to learning that young carers can often face. Providing the right support at the right time will help young carers experience the same educational and life experiences as their peers.



A whole-school approach of support should be underpinned by policy and aim to develop a culture of understanding and respect where young carers and their families feel safe and confident to seek support. It should include how support is managed and provided, training of staff, teaching on the issues of caring and disability using relevant parts of the curriculum and wider school activities, such as assemblies, PHSCE and SEAL, and working in partnership with other agencies. Above all, it should enable pupils who are young carers to help shape the support.

Framework for the inspection of maintained schools in England from September 2009²

Under the framework for inspection, there are seven main judgements for pupils' outcomes, all of which are highly relevant to young carers. In addition to the five *Every Child Matters (ECM)* outcomes, pupils' behaviour, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development will be judged. Being a young carer can impact on these particular areas of their life, particularly social development. It is, therefore, key that all schools support young carers in these areas with the aim of removing barriers to learning so that they have the same access to education as their peers.

Judgments on the effectiveness of the provision in schools will include the effectiveness of care, guidance and support provided. For young carers, all three of these are needed in order to prosper in school and reach their full potential.

Among the leadership and management judgements each of the following are especially pertinent to supporting young carers with a whole school approach:

- 3 The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents.
- 4 The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being.
- 5 The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination.
- 6 The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

Other chapters to help you understand this topic

- 2 Young carers and their education
- 3 National legislation and guidance
- 12 Developing a school policy for young carers and their families
- 13 Developing a school lead for young carers and their families

Key resources

See the tools at the end of this chapter.

¹Informal feedback provided following an Include partnership training session: **The National Young Carers Initiative**

² *Framework for the inspection of maintained schools in England from September 2009*. Ofsted: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Other/General/Framework-for-the-inspection-of-maintained-schools-in-England-from-September-2009>



11.1 Checklist for school leadership teams

Use this checklist to ascertain what steps your school has taken so far.

Policy and Planning	Yes	No	Notes
A nominated school lead is in place and a team has been identified to support this role.			
A regular programme of awareness-raising for all staff about the needs of young carers is in place.			
There is adequate and funded provision for care, personal development, SEAL etc. The needs of young carers (and their families, where appropriate) are reflected in all policies and practice.			

Management	Yes	No	Notes
There are secured pastoral arrangements supporting the needs of young carers and these are linked with available support out of school.			
Appropriate communication systems are in place for the parents of young carers.			
There is reference to young carers in appropriate sections of the Self Evaluation Form (SEF)/school profile/school development plan.			

Monitoring, evaluation and review	Yes	No	Notes
There are opportunities to develop all pupils' awareness of the needs of particular groups of vulnerable pupils, such as young carers in, for example, PHSCE, SEAL and RRR work.			
Steps have been taken to ensure that young carers are given every opportunity to be fully included in school life and activities.			
Systems have been established to monitor the well-being and academic progress of young carers.			
There is a robust and regular programme of self-review to monitor and revise provision for young carers.			

**Developed in Hampshire as part of The Children's Society/Include partnership*



11.2 Case studies: schools*

The following schools have established support for young carers and here you can read about why and how they support them, any challenges they have met, benefits, future developments and top tips.

Harrop Fold High School, Salford, England

Why support young carers?

The relationship between Harrop Fold High School and Salford Young Carers' Service has been in development since September 2007. Salford City Children Services Department commissioned, as a pilot scheme, the Young Carers Education Project from Salford Young Carers' Service to address the rising concerns regarding young carers and their education.

It was felt that by supporting young carers within the school, it would both benefit and support pupils and the school, those pupils who were young carers would feel less isolated and it would help the school community understand issues and behaviour.

Our aim was to:

1. deliver awareness-raising sessions to all pupils in the school via citizenship/PHSE lessons. The young carer support worker delivered a formal workshop to all students highlighting issues faced by and support available to young carers.
2. develop a process for students within the school to self-refer if they felt they may be a young carer.
3. support young carers within the school both individually and via group drop-ins.
4. increase awareness amongst all professionals working within the school community.

The school has ten recognised young carers, six pupils who are being monitored via school in case situations deteriorate, a further seven recognised young carers who have left school since the commencement of the project and nine new young carers who have since been recognised and who are now receiving support because of the Project's involvement with the school.

The scheme has been highly successful and the Young Carers Education Project now operates in nine high schools across the city and has identified 30 young people who were previously unrecognised as young carers.

What support is in place?

- The young carers' support worker is a highly visible presence in school one morning a week and is situated in the pastoral office. They support pupils via one-to-one meetings in school and informal drop-in sessions during break times. They have access to a computer and printer.
- Year leaders across school provide support with student timetables and during one-to-one sessions.
- Year leaders can follow the agreed referral process to refer students to the young carers' service.



- Year leaders liaise weekly to discuss pupils on a need to know basis.
- Home visits are carried out, with year leaders if required, and the young carers' support worker attends family action meetings to give input, thus providing good representations of young carers' needs and views at meetings with other agencies and professionals.
- When the young carers' support worker is not present in school, year leaders can make contact via telephone and email.
- Salford Young Carers' Service's contact details are displayed on all year notice boards.
- Recognised young carers can access support in and outside of school.
- A young carers' newsletter is regularly emailed to all year leaders.
- All new year seven pupils undergo awareness-raising sessions. Refresher sessions are available for years ten and 11 and these tie in with exam topics when needed.

What challenges have we met?

Support for young carers is strong and consistent. The young carers' support worker liaises regularly with the year leaders and this relationship has resulted in excellent support for identified young carers in and out of school. However, year leaders are aware that further young carers have still not been identified to the young carers' support worker or themselves. The continual challenge is to continue trying to remove the stigma and fear that inhibits some young carers from seeking support.

Benefits of supporting young carers

The young carers' support worker and year leaders understand the unique situations of the young carers and how these can impact issues such as attendance, achievement, and emotional well being. Young carers consequently feel emotionally supported by the school.

Barriers to learning are being identified at an early stage and this reduces students' feelings of isolation and stress.

Future developments

1. School work will continue to highlight the support services available and provide young carers with an opportunity to self-refer.
2. Salford Young Carers' Service's contact details will continue to be displayed.
3. Year leaders to investigate raising awareness during assemblies to target all young carers attending the school. More frequent workshops will be delivered by Salford Young Carers' Service.
4. Possibility of staff workshops for awareness-raising purposes.
5. Potential of a more flexible referral process, for example a grading process of need required, (since some pupils who have not met criteria have not benefitted from support) and the further development of tiered support for pupils.



Top tips

- Have a school-based support worker.
- Link the support worker into a team, such as the pastoral team.
- Treat the support worker as a member of the main school team, whilst allowing them to maintain independence. It is important to show balance as pupils access the service because it is seen as being different from normal school support.
- Make posters and information available to all pupils.

Llanfyllin High School, Wales

Why support young carers?

We recognise the benefits to individual pupils of enabling Powys Young Carers' Service to offer support within our school. Informal support has been developing for several years and this has been recently formalised with an agreement to host a series of awareness-raising workshops with all KS3 pupils, plus a staff training session during INSET time.

Our school has found six young carers at KS3 who registered with Powys Young Carers' Service and four at KS4 who are also registered.

What support is in place?

The headmaster acts as the formal lead on external partnerships, whilst the pastoral managers act as the link to the Young Carers' Service.

Current support arrangements are based on the needs of each individual young carer and one-to-one sessions are provided by the Young Carers' Service outreach worker. Support includes "talk time" for young carers with our pastoral team who will pass on appropriate information to all staff working with individual young carers if circumstances are difficult. We try to offer an understanding approach at all times.

What has worked?

We have provided training to all staff during a one-hour workshop, whilst KS3 pupils have taken part in a structured PHSE workshop. Both workshops were carried out by a support worker from Powys Young Carers' Service.

One-to-one support is excellent and Powys Young Carers' Service offers this support at the end of a phone with great response times.

The Service consistently offers useful and pertinent advocacy at core group meetings and the trips and clubs offered by them seem popular and a great opportunity for young carers to have some respite.

What challenges have we met?

There have been some issues regarding confidentiality which we are trying to rectify. These are due to Powys Young Carers' Service's working policy whereby a young carer must give consent for the Service to inform the school of their caring status. Currently, the outreach worker is only able to advise how many pupils are young carers and not their identity.



Benefits of supporting young carers

Young carers often appear to feel isolated from their peers. The Carers' Service offers support, understanding, and friendship and instils a form of normality to pupils who have had to harbour a number of difficulties in their lives.

Future developments

We are currently piloting Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and will explore the community-focused school arena to ascertain if we are able to offer further support outside of school time.

Llanfyllin High School would like to see a rolling programme of year seven PHSE workshops in the first term every year to highlight what Powys Young Carers' Service offers to young carers and what we as a school can do to support during this difficult period of transition.

Top Tips

- Make time to create good relationships with young carers support workers.
- Do whatever you can to create space for listening and understanding young carers' needs.

St. Joseph's High School, Northern Ireland

Why support young carers?

As part of their internal pastoral care work with pupils, staff within the school became aware that there were young carers in the school who needed support and assistance.

It was recognised that in addition to support from staff, young carers would benefit from the support of external specialist carer agencies. Having researched and consulted with external agencies, and following an initial visit by the young carers project officer from Newry & Mourne Carers' Centre, schools staff were briefed on young carers' issues and advised how they could provide assistance. Our school thrives on the welfare of children and believes that young carers should be recognised more and given additional support in their education.

We invited the Carers' Centres' Young Carers' Project to give a presentation to all pupils in years eight, nine and ten in November 2009. This was organised through the Extended Schools Programme.

The greatest needs within the school are:

- identification for emotional and financial support.
- staff awareness and understanding for unmet deadlines and discipline.

Once pupils are identified, pupils are provided with the option of counselling. Twenty pupils have identified themselves as young carers.



What support is in place?

The school has updated its pastoral care policy to reflect the issues and needs that young carers face daily and to ensure that staff have more empathy with pupils who are carers.

The extended schools programme coordinator acts as the school lead since they hold the bursary. They work hand in hand with Newry and Mourne Young Carers' Project to offer ongoing support. Form teachers and head of years also work closely with the Project to identify pupils with problems. All information is confidential.

The whole school – pupils, teachers and parents - is approached during assembly to raise awareness. We also organise visits from local health professionals. Importantly the young carers officer also liaises with feeder primary schools to provide comprehensive support to young carers and family carers.

What has worked?

Identification of pupils who are young carers. Once identified, an assessment procedure is carried out by Newry and Mourne Young Carers' Project.

What challenges have we met?

Translating policy to practice and getting this to be accepted by both staff and pupils and raising the awareness with all.

Benefits of supporting young carers

It enables a more holistic support for the young carers as well as offering empathy, listening, counselling and ultimately giving young carers a voice.

Future developments

We plan on organising a club or society with Newry and Mourne Young Carers' Project who will offer a listening ear in school once a month and will include young carers' input in any planned events or activities.

Top tips

- Go slowly, listen and always treat young carers as special, unique and valued.
- Make yourself or a counsellor available.

**Case studies were correct at time of writing (November 2009).*



11.3 Young carers: snapshots of challenges faced and solutions, and positive methods of working

Here, young carers provide snapshots into some of the challenges they face on a daily basis, as well as tips to teachers and pupils on how these challenges can be overcome. Also, included below are examples of ways in which pupils have been supported in schools. These will be helpful for you and your school to understand the issues and be able to make the small changes necessary so as to avoid even larger impacts on pupils' lives.

Challenges

A

Challenge

I am 11 and I look after my sister who has seven different learning difficulties. I swapped classes in year six, which my old teacher didn't really understand. My mum came into school and explained to my new teacher about my sister and this made things easier. If I was late I could say because of my sister and I wouldn't have to go into detail.

Tip

My tip would be to have a time out with a member of staff to talk to and cheer you up if you were upset or stressed.

B

Challenge

I am 16 and I look after my mum who has depression. When I have to help mum get up in the morning and I miss the bus, I arrive to school really late. I used to have to explain my situation every time or I'd get a detention, so I started to skip school if I was going to be late.

Tip

Schools should have a system in place so that I don't have to keep repeating what is going on at home.



C

Challenge

When I was at primary school, I was in the middle of a spelling test when we heard my brother who is autistic shrieking outside. He was having a “meltdown”. Everyone got up and looked out of the window. The classroom assistant was chasing him all over the field. My teacher asked me, in front of the whole class, to go and “sort him out”. When I got to his class, his teacher wouldn’t let me in and said they had it in hand, but I didn’t feel like they did. They didn’t know him as well as me. I knew they weren’t doing the right things and I could have made things better for him much quicker. I was really worried for the rest of the morning and felt like crying.

Tip

Schools need to think about how young carers feel in situations like this and should have a plan worked out if they are to be involved in any situation concerning their brother or sister. Some children don’t want anything to do with their siblings at school, whereas others, like me, get more worried if they are used to caring and then are not allowed to in school.

D

Challenge

I don’t know which teachers know what about my family situation. I only know that my head of year has been told, but don’t know what he has done with the information. Sometimes the teachers are understanding and other times they aren’t. I am too scared to tell them if I have a problem getting my homework done, because I don’t know if I am going to get shouted at. I get all panicky before the lesson if I know I haven’t done it, so I go to the school counsellor instead of going to lessons. Then I get more behind because I have missed another lesson.

Tip

School should agree with the young person which teachers are told about you being a young carer and exactly what they are told. I think it should be up to me to decide who knows. Also, agree a system for the young person to let a teacher know if there has been a problem without having to explain again and again or in front of other pupils. Something like a card you could show without having to say anything. You could then talk to the teacher privately after the lesson.

E

Challenge

I am 17 and I have been caring for my mum who has fibromyalgia for over two years now. I’ve missed coursework deadlines and have been late for registration. My friends find it difficult to talk to me about it.

Tip

Talk to teachers about what you’re going through and they will help you sort your work out. Also, don’t be afraid to tell your friends what’s happening and say it’s ok for them to talk about it.



F

Challenge

Sometimes I forget to get my homework diary signed when there is a lot of stuff going on at home and I have had detentions for not having it signed on the right day. The teacher wouldn't let me explain and said that we had all been warned. Besides, I don't like to bother my mum to sign when she is not well.

Tip

Have a system in school so that I can let the teacher know that there is a problem with getting it signed without having to say anything in front of the whole class or get shouted at.

G

Challenge

I was really tired, because things at home were not good and I hadn't slept properly. In PE I got a lunchtime detention for changing too slowly! I had to stand outside the staff room for half an hour and by the time the teacher let me go they had finished serving lunch so I had nothing to eat. I hadn't had any breakfast either because there wasn't time and I would have missed the bus. I was really upset and hungry so instead of going to lessons I went and told the school counsellor what had happened and she said that teachers were not allowed to make you miss lunch and she would speak to the PE teacher. Later the teacher came back to me and said someone had told her I was upset. She said I was silly for getting upset over a lunchtime detention. I didn't go to school the next day.

Tip

All teachers should be made aware of young carers' issues. Young carers need someone in school to help them explain their situation when teachers don't listen or don't fully understand.

Positive methods of working

A

What's working?

Every tutor group at my school has been challenged to raise money for charity. The one that raises the most gets a trip out. I have helped my young carers' project to do assemblies about young carers at my school and so my tutor group has chosen to raise money for young carers. I feel really proud that I have helped other people to understand and that they want to raise money to help people like me.

Tip

Doing assemblies at school can be a good way of getting other pupils to understand about young carers. You don't have to take part unless you want to, you can let the project workers do it but it sounds a lot better coming from a young person themselves.



B

What's working?

When I first started secondary school it was really hard to cope with all the new rules and demands on top of everything else. Then I started going to a weekly lunch time drop-in session for young carers. It is run by my local young carers' project. We can go along with any problems and get help in school to sort them out. The young carers' worker can explain things to the teachers when I don't know what to say to them or when I am too scared. Sometimes at drop-in we just have a laugh. We can take a friend along if we want to. If we need to we can have a one-to-one meeting with the young carers' worker in school.

Tip

Schools need to have a system for supporting young carers who have issues in school and should make sure that there is an adult present who can help young carers to speak up.

C

What's working?

Sometimes it is really hard to fit in at secondary school when you have got other things on your mind. I am now in year ten and I have been trained as a peer mentor for young carers in my school. I have two pupils: one in year seven and one in year eight. I have asked my tutor if we can use my tutor room to talk in at lunchtime.

If I would have had a peer mentor when I was in year seven, I would have asked them about all kinds of things, like what do you do if you can't get your homework done because of caring, or what do you do if you are late in the morning, or who to go to if you are worried about your mum while you are at school.

Tip

Sometimes, it is easier to talk to another pupil, such as a peer mentor, rather than a teacher. Plus, they can look out for you around school, especially at lunchtimes, and check you are ok and can help you to talk to a teacher or young carers' worker if you are worried about what to say. I think every school should have them.

D

What's working?

I am a 15 year old boy and I live alone with my mum who has ME and depression. My dad died earlier this year. I am expected to achieve very good GCSE grades, but I have become unable to go to school. I don't know why. The thought of going makes me ill. My mum is too unwell to support me to go, so I stay at home.



Instead of fining my mum or insisting on a medical diagnosis for authorised absence, my learning mentor and my deputy head formed a plan with my young carers' worker. I can go into school for short periods at times when I choose, can work in a more 'grownup' room away from the classrooms and I have a maths disc so that I can work at home. My teachers liaise with my mentor and communicate with me via email.

Tip

Be creative in your response. Don't rule something out just because it's not the way you would usually do it.