

Identification of young carers

“When I found out about her family situation I suddenly understood why she was often late and seldom did her homework. I was amazed at just how well she had done, but frustrated that we as staff had not known.” (Teacher)

Who is this chapter for?

- All staff
- School lead and their teams or staff interested in becoming/establishing a school lead within your school
- Senior leadership team
- “Feeder” primary schools, 6th forms and colleges
- Parent support adviser

This chapter will support schools to:

- identify young carers and their families before their caring role impacts on education.
- help young carers feel that school is a secure and safe environment so that they have the confidence to talk to a teacher or staff member.
- provide appropriate opportunities for young carers to self identify.

Synopsis

In the past, some pupils have struggled through the education system without being recognised as a young carer; their needs and those of the person for whom they are caring are often only identified at crisis point. Even then, the extent of their caring role and the impact on their own development may not be recognised quickly or fully assessed.

Schools should be proactive in identifying young carers as soon as possible and not simply when education welfare officers are tackling absence. A secure environment should be created so that young carers and their families feel comfortable enough to self-identify. The earlier a young carer is identified, the less likely an inappropriate caring role will become engrained.



Self identification

Before encouraging young carers to come forward, it is helpful to understand the reasons why they may feel uncomfortable doing so:

- They worry that the family will be split up and taken into care.
- They want to keep it a secret and/or are embarrassed about the person who is ill or has disabilities.
- They may not realise that they are carers or that life is different to that of their peers.
- They don't want to be any different from their peers.
- They believe that the school will show no interest in their family circumstances.
- School is different; they have a new or different identity.
- It's not the sort of thing that can be discussed with friends.
- There has been no opportunity to share their story.
- They are worried about bullying.
- They see no reason or positive actions occurring as a result of telling their story.

Young carers are not easy to identify and many will actively try to conceal their caring role.

Good practice in identification

Some young carers may tell their teacher about their additional responsibilities. A member of staff may be alerted to their caring role following conversation with the pupil or by direct information from parents or carers. Before your school actively seeks to identify young carers, it is strongly recommended that support for pupils should already be in place. In addition, it is important for pupils to see that it is readily accessible before they identify themselves as young carers.

Good identification stems from a whole-school approach. The following are practical ways of doing this.

1. Provide training to all relevant school staff which includes:
 - Reasons why young carers and their families do not wish to be identified.
 - Possible indicators of a young carer.
2. Publicise information about available support.
3. Raise awareness of the issues faced by young carers to pupils and staff.
4. Develop a secure and safe environment where pupils have the confidence to let staff know that they are a young carer.
 - implement a school lead and ensure that pupils know who that school lead is.
 - promote positive images of disability, illness, mental ill-health and caring throughout the school curriculum and environment.¹
 - develop policies and practice to prevent bullying, stigma and to raise the self-esteem of children who are young carers.²



5. Provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to self-identify.
 - Publicise how pupils can access support effectively.
 - Offer comfortable methods of communication for pupils to self-identify, for example by way of emailing the school lead, using a school post box or completing an intranet questionnaire.
 - Provide opportunities for identification following assemblies and PHSE lessons.
 - Use an awareness raising event, such as Carers Week.

6. Create an environment whereby families have the confidence to inform your school that their child has caring responsibilities.
 - Stimulate good communication between your school and families.
 - Ensure that your school meets the *Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005*.³

7. Adapt your admissions process to provide opportunities for pupils and families to inform schools that:
 - the pupil has parents or other family members who have illness or disability, or who is affected by mental ill-health or substance misuse.
 - the pupil helps to look after them and what impact this has on his/her education.
 - the family is in touch with support services that could reduce the young carer's role. (Some families may choose to keep their illness or disability a secret, but offering signposting and information about other services at an early stage can make all the difference.)

8. Develop good partnership working with your local young carers' service and use awareness-raising by the local service as an opportunity to identify young carers.

9. Use a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/or other assessment tools when a pupil appears to be a young carer or is in need of extra support.

Where can your school get more support?

Various tools have been produced to aid identification, (see Key resources). It is vital to ensure as much privacy as possible when any forms are being completed as some young carers will find divulging personal information difficult. Consider asking students to fold forms, or even use envelopes or a secure box.

Young carers have a right to an assessment of their needs.⁴ When it is found that a pupil may be taking on inappropriate levels of caring, you may need to involve other agencies and complete a Child in Need Assessment.⁵



Other chapters to help you understand this topic

- 12** Developing a school policy for young carers and their families
- 14** Staff training and awareness
- 16** Working with young carers: a model
- 17** Early intervention and preventative work
- 18** Identification of young carers
- 24** Assessment and monitoring
- 31** Transition from primary to secondary school
- 34** Information for young carers and parents

Key resources

As well as the tool found at the end of this chapter and those found in the above suggested chapters, the following resources are key.

→ **Young Carers' Project Student Questionnaire Guidance for Tutors and Young Carers' Project Student Questionnaire**

A resource pack for people working with young carers. p37 - 38.

<http://static.carers.org/files/young-carers-resource-pack-0307-3130.pdf>

→ **Every Child Matters (ECM)**

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers Guidance: Delivering Every Child Matters for young carers:

<http://static.carers.org/files/trust-guidance-delivering-every-child-matters-for-young-carers-2177.doc>

→ **Include Project: Information for teachers and school staff**

The Children's Society.

<http://www.youngcarer.com/pdfs/nateducation07.pdf>

→ **Whole Family Pathway**

Page 21: What do you do if you identify a young carer? The Children's Society.

www.youngcarer.com/pdfs/Whole%20Family%20Pathway%2010th.pdf

→ **Early identification, assessment of needs and intervention – The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for children and young people: A guide for managers**

<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=IW90%2f0907&>

¹Frank, J. (2002). *Making It Work: Good practice with young carers and their families*. The Children's Society.

²Frank, J. (2002). *Making It Work: Good practice with young carers and their families*. The Children's Society.

³*Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005*: www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001068?CID=DWP&TYPE=Sponsoredsearch&CRE=DisabilityDiscriminationAct

⁴*Carers (Recognition & Services) Act 1995*: www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts1995/ukpga_19950012_en_1

⁵*Children Act 1989*: www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1989/ukpga_19890041_en_



18.1 Possible indicators of a young carer

The following is a list of possible indicators of a young carer. Many can be indicative of other issues too. Together, they may help you build a profile of a pupil. Further sensitive information and appropriate questions may then, in turn, lead to a pupil letting you know that they are a young carer.

Is the pupil...	✓
...often late or missing days or weeks off school for no reason?	
...often tired, anxious or withdrawn?	
...having problems socially or with making friends? Conversely, do they get on well with adults and present themselves as mature for their age?	
...a victim of bullying? This is sometimes explicitly linked to a family member's disability, health or substance misuse problem.	
...depressed?	
...finding it difficult to concentrate on their work?	
...having difficulty in joining in extra curricular activities or is unable to attend school trips?	
...isolated because of their family situation or because they lack social skills with their peers (and yet they are confident with adults?)	
...not handing in 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?	
...having physical problems such as back pain (perhaps from heavy lifting)?	
...secretive about home life?	
...showing signs of neglect or poor diet?	



Are parents (or another relative)...	✓
...sick, have a disability, illness or substance misuse problem? (Remember that not all children who have a family member who is ill or with disabilities is a young carer.)	
...difficult to engage with?	
...not attending parents' evenings?	
...not communicating with school?	