

Behaviour

*"Sometimes I get angry and I..... I like lash out, you know?
It's just how I feel inside."*

Who is this chapter for?

- School lead or school staff interested in becoming/establishing a school lead within your school
- Education welfare officer
- Attendance officer
- Inclusion staff
- Parent support adviser

This chapter will support schools to:

- identify some of the links between being a young carer and negative behaviour in school.
- develop approaches to working with young carers who are exhibiting negative behaviour.

Synopsis:

Young carers are not immune to difficulties at home leading to negative behaviour within school. Worry, stress, pressures, confusion, a disrupted or chaotic family situation and feeling misunderstood or unsupported can all lead to poor behaviour in pupils.

There can be a big difference between the young person who seems 'mature beyond their years' in the home environment, where they are very protective of a family member with needs, and the young person who takes out their pent-up frustration or stress at school. The link between a young carer's family situation, their caring responsibilities and their behaviour should not be ignored and needs to be addressed in an appropriate and sensitive way.

Understanding the signs of behavioural issues

There is often a link between the pupil's home life and their behaviour in school. Pupils do not walk around school wearing a 'carer label', however, and so it is easy to miss or overlook the reasons behind poor behaviour. Increased awareness amongst staff members of a pupil's caring role and home environment will result in a more appropriate response to the pressures that the young carer is under. Problems often occur when staff have not been informed and consequently handle a particular situation inadequately.



Young people all react to situations differently. The behaviour of one pupil may be up and down just as their caring role and family situation is up and down, whereas another pupil may have been the 'model' student who then 'cracks' after years of caring.

If the root of the problem is not addressed and the young carer feels that no one understands them, their behaviour is unlikely to improve and it is possible that their relationship with your school may worsen.

Of course, young carers should be expected to follow the same rules as any other pupil and young carers themselves tell us that they want to be treated like their peers. However, by seeing and understanding that the root of the problem may be coming from the pressures and emotional turmoil that many young carers face at home, issues can be handled with more sensitivity and understanding and thus more positive outcomes are more likely to be achieved.

Pupils will not open up to every member of staff, only those with whom they feel comfortable and whom they trust. It is, therefore, important that young carers are aware of available staff with whom they can share home life.

Young carers advise that it can be good to be asked by staff how they are or how the person they care for is, provided it is done so privately. Professionals often skirt around the issues, whereas the 'direct' approach, although perhaps difficult, may often be best.

Detentions

Consideration should be given to lunchtime detentions rather than after school detentions which may cause excessive conflict for a young carer who has after school caring responsibilities. If a young carer has to get home quickly to check on the person they care for and support them, then they will most likely not attend the after school detention, thus getting themselves into more trouble. Young carers tell us that detentions in lunch time are a much better option.

Other chapters to help you understand this topic

- 5 Attendance
- 6 Behaviour
- 27 Crisis or emergency plans

Key resources

→ DCSF Advice and guidance to schools and local authorities on managing behaviour and attendance

Provides advice and guidance to schools and local authorities on managing the behaviour and attendance of groups of pupils at particular risk.

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/154426>

→ Behaviour, Attendance and SEAL (Primary)

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/behaviourattendanceandseal>



→ **Behaviour, Attendance and SEAL (Secondary)**

<http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/secondary/behaviourattendanceandseal>

→ **School attendance**

Advice and guidance provided by teachernet.

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/attendance/