

Young Carers

Who is a Young Carer?

A Young Carer is a child under the age of 18 who provides a substantial amount of care for a family member who has an illness, disability, or who has a problematic use of drugs and/or alcohol. They provide care for a person, which would usually be provided by an adult and might include the following:

- household tasks beyond what would be expected of a child
- monitoring the health of the person they care for and giving medication
- personal care including bathing and dressing
- sitting with or supervising the adult or child with care needs
- general responsibility for the person with care needs

They might care for a parent, a brother or sister who has a disability or another family member like a grandparent.

Without support, Young Carers can face many caring issues on their own. They may feel lonely and isolated because they cannot socialise with friends. They may be absent or late for school because they are caring for someone or supervising younger brothers or sisters. Other children may bully them. They may have to deal with a range of emotions from fear, frustration and guilt, to anger, stress and loneliness.

Support available for Young Carers in Cheshire West and Chester

Like Adult Carers, Young Carers are entitled to support with their caring role. The Community Care Assessment of the person with the care needs should take account of whether the Young Carer is providing a substantial amount of care. This assessment is carried out by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

To get an assessment, the Young Carer or adult they are caring for should contact their local Access Team, see Factsheet 14 for contact details. For more information on Carers Assessments and Community Care Assessments see Factsheets 4 and 5.

Young Carers projects provide support in many different ways such as:

- social activities so that they have the opportunity to mix with friends who are experiencing similar issues
- information and advice on caring issues
- emotional support so that they can have someone with whom to share their concerns and anxieties

- mutual support and understanding
- support with homework and accessing learning resources
- respite breaks so that they can have a break from caring or have time with their parents, where they care for a brother or sister with disabilities
- opportunities to build self confidence and self esteem with activity days and residential breaks.

Anyone can refer a Young Carer to a project including the Young Carer themselves. For contact details see Factsheet 14, or for further information please contact Cheshire Carers Centre.

If you have access to the Internet and need support as a Young Carer there are several useful websites.

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers website for Young Carers can be found at www.youngcarers.net. Along with a range of resources, this website provides a chat room and message board for Young Carers.

Contact a Family, at www.contactfamily.org.uk, an organisation that supports families and Carers of children with disabilities, also offers information and guidance on caring for a brother or sister.

www.kooth.com provides an online counselling service for young people

Support is available for social care and education professionals who may have contact with Young Carers in Cheshire. The Cheshire Young Carers Advisory Group aims to raise awareness of issues facing Young Carers, highlighting the need for services and support. They provide curriculum guidance and training packs for schools and social care professionals in Cheshire West and Chester.

For more information on all of the above, please contact Cheshire Carers Centre on the freephone Helpline on 0800 085 0307.