

Young Carers:

Working Together to Support Families with a Young Carer

June 2014

Welcome to our special bulletin on Young Carers, produced in honour of Carers Week 2014, by young carers from The Carer's Centre. This bulletin aims to promote awareness of young carers, including how to spot if they need additional support, how their caring role effects them & how to access local services. A Young Carer is defined as:

A child or young person who has a significant caring role for a family member who has a long term physical or mental illness, disability or substance misuse issue.

Census figures show that 166,000 children in England, aged 5-17, are caring for their siblings, parents or others. This shocking number is likely to underestimate the true picture, as many young carers remain hidden from official statistics and the agencies set up to identify & support them. As Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of The Children's Society says 'We know from years of working with young carers that this figure is likely to be the tip of the iceberg.'

The number of young carers in Brighton & Hove is estimated to be more like **2000**.



How to recognise a Young Carer who may need support

Very few Young Carers will see themselves as Young Carers, and very few know that there is help available, or that they can ask for it. They may also not see the benefits of letting people, particularly schools, know the situation they are in. The following are some key signs, which may indicate a Young Carer is having difficulties as a result of their caring role. Obviously some of these could also indicate other issues, but it may help to signpost you to issues that someone might be facing.

- False maturity – acting much older than their years, though immature in other aspects
- Regularly late or not attending school
- Not taking part in extra activities outside of school hours, or activities that require financial contribution
- Not wanting their parents to come to the school, or parents not able to come to school (maybe due to access, or mental health issues)
- Distracted in lessons, unable to concentrate, may have behavioral issues, attention seeking etc.
- Not handing homework in on time, rushed or of a different standard to work done in school.
- Depression
- Tiredness
- Backache
- Under or over achieving
- Few friends, or always after friends
- Quiet
- Asks questions about illnesses
- Wanting to phone home
- Child (or parent) missing appointments

The Carers Centre Young Carers Project can offer advice and support.
Call 01273 746222 or visit
www.thecarerscentre.org



The Effects of Caring

Children and young people can experience positive & negative effects because of their caring responsibilities. Therefore some young carers may not exhibit any problems or issues at school, school being their escape or chance to be 'normal'. Others may exhibit the following effects, either all the time, or during times of crisis in the family.

Emotional

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Insecurity
- Guilt
- Feelings of anger & resentment
- False maturity

Educational

- Poor attendance
- Lateness
- Poor concentration
- Difficulty in doing home work
- Difficulty in attending extra curricular activities
- Under-achievement

Financial

- Many families where there is an illness/disability are reliant on benefits. Lack of money restricts the life of young carers.

Which one is the young carer?



Young carers are just young people – with caring responsibilities! They look the same as everyone else but they can lead very different lives!

Social

- Isolation
- Disruption of friendships
- Bullying
- Difficulty in having time/ability to go out to play and socialise
- Not being able to act their age, having to be too mature
- Being seen as / not wanting to be seen as different

Health

- Back strain from lifting an adult or child
- Physical problems connected to emotional stress; e.g. headaches, feeling sick, and eating disorders,
- Lack of sleep / rest
- May develop emotional and mental health problems, such as depression.

Today I picked my mum up off the floor. Tomorrow my exams will start.

Every day I'm a carer.

If you look after someone find out about the support available
www.carersweek.org



1 in 3 young carers spend between 11–20 hours each week caring.



The Positive Effects of Caring

Contributing to the care of a family member or friend with a disability or illness can be a positive experience for a young person. It can be an expression of commitment and affection, which can serve to strengthen the relationship between the young person providing the care and the person receiving the care.

By making an important and positive contribution to family life, the young carer can feel more valued and included. The caring role can give young carers a sense of responsibility and identity, and can build self-confidence and esteem.

Providing care can also enable a young person to develop personally and to gain life skills. For example, as a result of the contribution they make and the responsibilities they take on, young carers can achieve greater maturity & resilience, can develop problem-solving and coping skills and can become more independent. Caring can also enhance practical skills in managing money, maintaining a home, providing child care, organising appointments and liaising with professionals.

Being a young carer means I can make sure my mum's ok, and I can feel proud of myself for ensuring she's safe and stable. You get to feel proud and like you're really making a difference to someone in a good way. You learn skills about how to be independent and be able to function when I move out. We are more understanding and accepting of the problems faced by others.

I like the fact that myself and my mum have a really close relationship together because I've grown up being there for her as much as I can



Young carers at an activity day

How many young carers are there?

- There are about **700,000 young carers in the UK**. (BBC 2010)
- That's about **1 in 12 secondary aged pupils**.
- There are likely to be young carers in every school and college.

*The Census identified over 200,000 young carers, but many remain hidden.



Documentaries on Young Carers

Watch The Carers Centre great documentary on Young Carers experiences and worries [here](#).

'**The Hidden Lives of Young Carers**' was made by Beth Impett, a young carer in Brighton & Hove, explores the issues faced by young carers and the support that is available from The Carers Centre.

'**A Day in the life of Eddie**' was devised & produced by young carers aged 10-16 from Brighton & Hove. It follows Eddie, an ordinary boy juggling his little sister and sick mother's caring needs. Winner of the Activision First Light Movies 'Best Animation' category in 2009'

The average age of a young carer

= 12

I stay at home and help. If there was something my dad needed and friends invited me to do something, I'd stay with my dad, if he had an accident....it is just easier to stay close. If you miss the first few sessions of something, like an afterschool activity, it's hard to get into it. It is hard to get into the football team, everyone already knows each other and their position. It's hard to fit in

I just didn't have time to commit to homework and I failed almost everything. I'm now re-sitting my English and I will be going to Northampton Uni to study History. I am going to be a teacher. I also didn't really have friendships or relationships, they took a backseat and seemed insignificant. It was a bit of a solitary life and hard for me to get into things

The quotes used are from young carers in Brighton & Hove, kindly provided by the Young Carers Project

Being a Young Carer from the The Children's Views Digest

In January 2006 Dr Roger Morgan OBE, Children's Rights Director for England, recorded the views of young carers at a consultation workshop:

"A major task for young carers was giving emotional support and company, along with practical tasks like 24 hour personal support, toileting, washing and putting someone to bed. Many were the main back-up person to a main adult carer. Other frequent tasks were doing jobs around the house that an adult they were caring for couldn't do, looking after other children in the family and doing the family shopping. They might be responsible for taking the person they were caring for out and about and pushing them in a wheelchair.

Young carers also had to look after themselves more than other children and young people of their age, because the adults at home were less able to do things for them.

A key task was giving medication. Many were very worried about the responsibility of this, and of having to get complicated medication right, often involving giving dozens of tablets with different dosages at different times. Doctors did not usually give young carers any advice about giving medicines to the adult they were caring for, nor about any warning signs they needed to look out for. Young carers responsible for giving out medication wanted to be told fully how to give that medication safely. They also needed training about the best ways of caring, including practical things like lifting someone, first aid, travelling with a disabled person, and about the disability or illness of the person they were caring for. Young carers could be injured by lifting a disabled adult in the wrong way. Many told us they were worried for the person they cared for that they might be getting the caring wrong.

Being a young carer meant much more work and responsibility than most children & young people your age have. You could miss out on your own childhood and social life as a young person, and could suffer from emotional and stress problems yourself.

Your school work might well be affected. Young carers have to grow up and take responsibilities fast – and some carers are still at primary school. Although young carers didn't report being bullied for being young carers, they said that almost as bad was having to put up with other people's comments, reactions and prejudices – when seeing a child pushing an adult in a wheelchair, or about a disabled or mentally ill adult. It would be helpful if schools did more to promote basic politeness towards disabled and ill people – and those caring for them. Other children could make nasty comments about your disabled or ill family member – and it was also difficult to cope with staff at school frequently asking you questions about things at home.

You often got into difficulties over handing in coursework late or being tired at school after being up at night coping with caring tasks. Sometimes peaks of caring work and peaks of school work coincided, and teachers differed in whether or not they were prepared to make any allowances for what you had to do at home as a carer. Schools often did not understand that you might need to phone home during the school day to check whether a crisis had happened at home, and which you might have to deal with.

Many young carers didn't feel they were helped by social care services, who didn't usually offer help, advice, equipment or support to the young carer, but concentrated instead on doing an assessment of how well things were for the adult being cared for. Professionals tended to conclude that all was well if the young carer seemed to be coping. This led to the young carer being taken for granted rather than supported.

Our workshop group advised that if any assessment found that a young carer was involved, then it should include identifying and giving any help or support that young carer needed to help them care. It was not helpful when social care services started looking into whether a young carer might need to be taken into care because their parent had difficulties, rather than seeing the need as helping the young carer to cope. Some young carers felt they needed respite care for themselves, as well as better access to the services that are there to help adult carers. Being children they were often not able to get services available to adult carers.

Very often, things might be all right for some time until something went wrong, and then the young carer would need someone to fall back on – for their own sake and for the person or people they were caring for. Those in the workshop did not want new forms of support, just guidance and support in what they were already doing, equipment and benefits available to adult carers, and the ability to have some regular enjoyable time out with other young carers – that is, more of what young carers' groups already provide. Back-up support for young carers needs to be available all the time, as the demands and pressures of caring are often very unpredictable and you need help when you need it, not when it is timetabled to be available. This is important if a school does provide someone to talk to about caring and school pressures. Your needs and the support the school may plan are often not in phase. A regular phone call from a supporter to check all is well would be valuable.

Generally, young carers accepted their roles as carers, their caring tasks, and more understanding among people generally and at school in particular of the realities of being a young carer."

Care Act 2014 Offers Hope of Better Support for Young Carers

The **Care Act 2014** has introduced a raft of measures designed to improve support for young carers. Local authorities will have a duty to consider the needs of children living in households where there is an adult who has a disability or impairment that requires help or care as part of a “whole family assessment”. Professionals assessing an ill or disabled adult need to consider whether a child is in the household and consider whether any of the children may undertake any care roles in the home

The act also enables children to have their own carers' needs assessment carried out, and introduces a new right for young carers aged 16 to 18 who are transitioning to adulthood to have their specific needs assessed in light of how their role might change. The measures, alongside those introduced in the **Children and Families Act 2014**, aim to identify child carers and support their needs earlier.

The **Carers Trust** has set up an initiative to help school staff better understand the needs of young carers, and the first Young Carers Awareness day was on Friday 13th June 2014. The **Young Carers in Schools Programme**, run in partnership with The Children's Society, The Carers Trust & **Young Carers in Focus** provides training and resources to help schools & teachers improve how they support pupils who have caring responsibilities.

The programme has now completed its pilot phase and also includes an award scheme, with bronze, silver and gold certificates for schools, based on the level of support they offer young carers. Carers Trust research shows that a quarter of young carers were bullied because of their caring role and only half received any additional support in school.

I worry every time I go to school, or go out. I think I cannot sleep as mum might have a fit in the night and die.

Carers Trust chief executive Thea Stein said: “This programme will help schools to stop and think about how taking on the responsibilities of caring impacts on every aspect of a young carer's life.”

Support for Local Schools

In Brighton & Hove The Carers' Centre have been working with local schools for the last four years to raise awareness & support pupils by:

- Training schools staff to identify and support young carers
- Running awareness raising sessions for pupils (Year 6 and 7) during PSHE class
- Providing resource packs for staff, and posters for staff, pupils and parents
- Supporting the creation and development of peer support groups for young carers
- Establishing a schools policy for young carers
- Identifying and working with a dedicated link worker in each school

Through increased awareness and understanding, the schools work is: reducing the stigma of being a young carer (and thereby the subsequent risk of bullying); advocating for young carers within schools; and helping to identify more young carers across the city.

To speak to someone about their schools work call 01273 746222 or email info@thecarerscentre.org

Young Carers Project Workers at The Big Picnic



Interview with Young Carers from Brighton & Hove

On 27 May 2014 I met with James & Mesaeel, two young carers who attend the Young Carers Project at the Carers Centre. We talked about the Brighton & Hove Local Safeguarding Children Board's newsletter and what information they felt would be interesting and helpful to share with our readers, which we know are predominately front line staff and managers working with children & families in Brighton & Hove.

James & Mesaeel decided to ask each other some questions using an interview format to tell their stories, and out of this produce some top tips for school teachers who are amongst our readers.

I hope you enjoying reading the interview as much as I did participating in it.

Mia Brown – LSCB Business Manager

Mia: James, who do you care for?

James: I care for my mother mainly, in some ways for my siblings as well. My mother has a physical disability, ME, which makes doing daily jobs difficult for her.

Mesaeel: How long have you been a young carer?

James: Well, she was diagnosed in 2001/2002, so I would have been 14/15, so quite a while now. I've sort of stopped my official caring role now I've moved away but I obviously still help out a lot.

Mia: What kind of tasks did you do?

James: Mainly household tasks like washing up, laundry, making beds, making food. When I learnt to drive I could do the shopping and take mum to the doctors.

Mesaeel: How do you 'cope' with being a young carer?

James: Learning to drive! It was a big sense of freedom for me, it meant I could just get out the house. Without the car you are restricted. Before I learnt to drive I used to get out of the house by walking to dog. It got rid of one of the daily chores and was an opportunity to have some relaxing alone time. I think dogs are therapeutic anyway, then recognise when something is wrong or when you aren't feeling right. I also played football, but not as regularly as I would have liked. School wasn't much of a coping mechanism for me personally. I never had enough time in the day to do homework, so I always got into trouble for that!

Mia: What aspects on your life have been effected by being a young carer?

James: Well, my school life for one, I just didn't have time to commit to homework and I failed almost everything. I'm now re-sitting my English and I will be going to Northampton Uni to study History. I am going to be a teacher. I also didn't really have friendships or relationships, they took a backseat and seemed insignificant. It was a bit of a solitary life and hard for me to get into things.

Mesaeel: What support have you received?

James: The Young Carers Project, about a year or so now. There are fortnightly meetings, you can have dinner and meet people who are similar to you. There was a great young carers weekend in Southampton, that was really useful actually just being able to get away for a bit. You hear people at school saying 'oh I've done this and that at the weekend' and this was my 'this and that', it was a lot of fun! I think I worried about telling friends I was a young carer, looking back now it feels a bit stupid but at the time I just didn't know what they would have been like. There is an idea of what families 'should' be like and mine felt like the polar opposite of that. In 'other' families it might be that mum and dad go to work and then pick the kids up from school, mine where at home and then I went in helped with cooking and cleaning. I don't know, I guess its not a very guy thing to do.

Mia: Who did you talk to about being a young carer?

James: I only really spoke to family and people from the Young Carers Project. Family played it down; maybe they were ashamed or just didn't like to talk about it. I felt like sometimes I was making a big deal out of it. I had someone who came into school to help support me, but I felt mummied. I didn't want that at all.

Mesaeel: What do you think that professionals sometimes do that doesn't help?

James: Its hard. People mean well, but they don't fully understand. To help support me at school I was taken out for a half a day to do time management and personal skills exercises, this stressed me out but I didn't have the confidence at the time to tell someone that this just wasn't working for me. I think people could have asked me what I wanted, what I would have found supportive. School didn't understand me or my needs, they'd take me out of class in front of other kids and then I'd have to explain where I was going and why. School is a separate place, it's an opportunity to be away from home and from the responsibility, but it followed me there, I felt stuck, like I couldn't get away, caught between a rock and a hard place. I'm not sure the school had much empathy.

James: Who do you care for, Mesaeeel?

Mesaeeel: I care from my mum and my dad. My dad has back problems and my mum is not well either. I think she has problems with her eyesight.

Mia: How long have you been caring for them?

Mesaeeel: I've been looking after them since I was in year 5/6, so I was about 10 years old. This is when it got bad. I am 12 now.

James: How do you help your mum and dad?

Mesaeeel: I give them their medicine and my mum's eye drops. For my dad, I get his crutches for him, he has problems with his knees and his back so he can't move around very well or stand up for a long time. I help him move about. I fetch and carry and help around the house. I have a sister who helps me out. I just do it everyday, not really sure what else to say!

Mia: What do you do to look after yourself when you feel a bit stressed?

Mesaeeel: Mostly when I get stressed out I go to my room and read, this usually helps. I like Malorie Blackman's books, she is my favourite author. It helps me to escape. I get lost in the plot and its helps.

James: How has being a young carer impacted on your life?

Mesaeeel: A bit like James said really. I have problems school wise. Most homework requires me to sit still for a long time but my dad might need something and I'll have to leave it and get it and then I get a bit distracted. Homework I can do quickly like writing, is never really a problem. It is really tiring go up and down stairs! You don't realise! Social wise, my dad needs the most help. I stay at home and help. If there was something my dad needed and friends invited me to do something, I'd stay with my dad, if he had an accident...it is just easier to stay close. If you miss the first few sessions of something, like an afterschool activity, its hard to get into it. It is hard to get into the football team, everyone already knows each other and their position. Its hard to fit in.

Mia: What support have you had, Mesaeeel?

Mesaeeel: The Young Carers Project, trips with people who are similar to me – young carers. Its easier to talk to people about how you are feeling, what you are going through. The Young Carers Project have clubs. I go to boys club. Groups are quite small. You can play cricket or table tennis. Its much easier to socialise here. I made pinhole cameras at the museum and put them on top of the tower. It is enjoyable. If you get offered this chance you just have to take it! I've made friends. New people join all the time. People are nervous but everyone is friendly.

James: Who have you told about being a young carer and why?

Mesaeeel: The people at the Young Carers Project, children and workers. Some workers tell you what they've been through as young carers and they are always nice and listen to me.

James & Mesaeeel's Top Tips for Schools

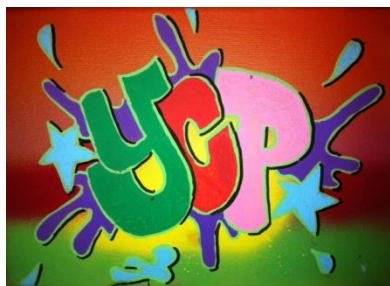
1. Some of your students are young carers – be aware of them & their individual needs
2. Everyone is different, everyone's needs are different – but you wont know what they are if you don't ask
3. Don't be afraid to ask – we might be embarrassed, but we might want to tell you
4. Be discreet – please don't ask us in front of our friends, maybe after school rather than after class is best
5. Don't rush us – it might take time for us to talk openly
6. We are 'young' but we are real – speak to us, not just our parents who might be too embarrassed to talk to you
7. Don't assume you know what is best for us – do things 'with us' not 'at us'
8. Help us make an action plan to tackle our homework / coursework
9. Have literature and information about young carers on notice boards
10. Be aware that we might need to phone home/the doctors/ the hospital – support us to make these calls, we might need our phones back

Further links & Resources

The Young Carers Project is part of the [The Carers Centre](http://www.thecarerscentre.org) for Brighton & Hove. You can call them for information or advice or to make a referral on 01273 746222 . You can also download a referral form from their website www.thecarerscentre.org



The Young Carers Project supports children & young people aged 8-25. They can provide:



- Needs assessment and review
- Social /fun activities with other young carers
- Supportive group work
- Individual sessions with a support worker
- Advice and advocacy around other services that can help
- Awareness training.

I wish that I had more support when I was younger because I didn't know I was a carer and I feel this would have helped later on in my life and even now in my adult life.

They also have a dedicated schools worker training staff and schools to identify, support and set up peer support groups for young carers.

Carers Week runs every June, and in 2014 young carers from Brighton & Hove were involved in comic making workshops, bouldering and a rock & ride adventure day at Blacklands Farm. Professionals in the city were invited to come along to some of the activities and talk to carers. The Young Carer's Project will emailing resources to all schools & colleges for those who would like to deliver a session about young carers to pupils, and their young adult carer support worker will be visiting colleges to raise awareness. Find out more about Carers Week at www.carersweek.org



The Children's Society's Include Programme's website www.youngcarer.com has lots of information and resources available around supporting young carers.



YCnet www.youngcarers.net is a site run by The Carers Trust, is a website & online support service for young people aged 18 who are carers. It is a place where young carers can find other young people in a similar position, chat to each other, share their stories and hear about each others' experiences in a safe environment. They also have Agony Aunt pages and young people can access help and advice via email and chat sessions with the Online Support team.



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Useful numbers:

Brighton & Hove LSCB office: 01273 292379 BHSCP@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Designated Doctor Safeguarding Children: 01273 265788
Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children: 01273 574680
Brighton & Hove Police Child Protection Team: 101
Local Authority Designated Officer: 01273 295643

