

Who are Young Carers?

A young carer is someone under 18 who provides care and support to a family member, usually because of illness, disability, addiction or mental health issues.

We know from the Carers' Trust that there are some 700,000 young carers in the UK; that is 2 in every classroom. All schools have a responsibility to identify and provide support for Young Carers and work alongside services which support young carers. The school works with 'Carers in Herts Young Carers' and the local authority 'Young Carers' services who provide training for staff, themed assemblies for pupils and ensure that pupils are identified and recognised.

What activities might their caring role involve?

The tasks and level of caring undertaken by young carers can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of need for care, and the structure of the family as a whole.

Young carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. These can include:

- practical tasks – cooking, housework and shopping
- physical care – lifting or helping someone use the stairs
- personal care – dressing, washing, helping with toileting needs
- emotional support – listening, calming, being present
- managing the family budget, collecting benefits and prescriptions
- medication management
- looking after younger siblings
- helping someone communicate

Why are many young carers hidden?

- The condition of the person they care for is not obvious, so people don't think that the young person needs any help.
- Young carers do not realise that they are a carer or that their life is different to their peers.
- They don't want to be any different from their peers, so they don't draw attention to their caring role.
- They believe that the school will show no interest in their family circumstances or supporting Young Carers in Schools.
- They want to keep their identity at school separate from their caring role.
- It's not the sort of thing they feel they can discuss with their friends.
- There has been no opportunity to share their story.
- They are worried about bullying.
- They worry that the family will be split up and that they will be taken into care.
- They want to keep caring a secret and/or are embarrassed.
- They see no reason to tell their story and don't believe that any positive action will occur as a result of doing so.

What impact can caring responsibilities have on a pupil's achievement and wellbeing?

Caring can affect a young person's:

- **Physical health:** Young carers are often severely affected by caring through the night, repeatedly lifting a heavy adult, poor diet and lack of sleep.
- **Emotional wellbeing:** Stress, tiredness and mental ill-health are common for young carers.
- **Socialisation:** Young carers often feel different or isolated from their peers and have limited opportunities for socialising. A quarter of young carers in the UK said they were bullied at school because of their caring role (Carers Trust, 2013).
- **Stable environment:** Young carers can experience traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, losing income and housing, or seeing the effects of an illness or addiction on the person they care for.
- **Pupil's learning:** 27% of young carers of secondary school age in England experience educational difficulties or miss school (Dearden and Becker, 2004). If left unsupported, young carers can continue to struggle with school and have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the difference between nine Cs and nine Ds (The Children's Society, 2013). Young carers are more likely than the national average not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) between 16 and 19. Of these, 75% had been NEET at least once (compared with 25% of all young people) and 42% had been NEET for six months or more.