

Supporting young carers in Norfolk

A toolkit for professionals

**VOLUNTARY
NORFOLK**

 **Caring
Together**
so that carers have choices



 **Norfolk**
County Council

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Introduction

“I am really pleased to support this important toolkit to help professionals and partners in Norfolk identify and support young carers. Whether you are working in health, education, social care, youth work, or a voluntary organisation that works with children, young people and their families, it is highly likely that you will encounter a child or young person who is taking on caring responsibilities for a family member or friend. From your contacts with them you may become aware that they are a young carer and are entitled to extra help, in which case this

toolkit will be a reminder of how to access the support available. In many cases though, young carers are invisible, under the radar and they take on their caring responsibilities privately, in silence, without support, which can have short and long term consequences on their mental and physical health, social opportunities, education and learning and future ambitions. It is incumbent on all of us working with children and young people and their families to make sure they are given the support they need to reach their full potential, so please take time to read this toolkit as part of your commitments to identify and support young carers in Norfolk.”

Philip Beck Head of Communities and Partnerships, Children's Services,
Norfolk County Council

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What is a young carer?

The Children and Families Act 2014 s.96 (part 3) defines a young carer as:
A child or young person under the age of 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person

This definition covers young people under 18 who are looking after or helping to look after a parent, guardian, grandparent or sibling who has a mental or physical illness, addiction or disability.

This care might include

- ◇ doing extra jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning and shopping
- ◇ helping someone get dressed, washed, take medication
- ◇ helping them get around in and outside of the home
- ◇ looking after a sibling while parents are busy
- ◇ acting as an advocate with health or social care professionals if parents or guardians have mental health issues or learning disabilities. Can also act as an interpreter when English is an additional language skills or lacks digital skills
- ◇ managing household budgets

Young carers in Norfolk

- ◇ It is estimated that in Norfolk there are over 6,000 young people under the age of 18 with caring responsibilities for a family member.
- ◇ As many as 1 in 5 secondary-aged pupils are estimated to be young carers (Source: University of Nottingham 2018)
- ◇ The average age of a young carer is 12.
- ◇ On average young carers are caring for at least 4 years before anyone offers any help (Source: Barnardo's)
- ◇ 600 young carers and young adult carers reported they provided over 50 hours of care a week (Source: Norfolk Insights 2017)



The law/rights surrounding young carers

Local authorities have a legal obligation to reduce excessive or inappropriate caring responsibilities

Section 2.50 of the Care Act 2014 states that:

Children should not undertake inappropriate or excessive caring roles that may have an impact on their development. A young carer becomes vulnerable when their caring role risks impacting upon their emotional or physical wellbeing and their prospects in education and life. A local authority may become aware that a child is carrying out a caring role through an assessment or informed through family members or a school. A local authority should consider how supporting the adult with needs for care and support can prevent the young carer from undertaking excessive or inappropriate care and support responsibilities. Where a young carer is identified, the local authority must undertake a young carer's assessment under part 3 of the Children Act 1989.

Young carers are legally entitled to an assessment of their needs

The Children Act 1989 s.17 amended by the Children and Families Act 2014 s.96 states that:

(1) A local authority in England must assess whether a young carer within their area has needs for support and, if so, what those needs are, if

- (a) it appears to the authority that the young carer may have needs for support, or*
- (b) the authority receives a request from the young carer or a parent of the young carer to assess the young carer's needs for support.*

The impact of caring

The impact of caring on education & health outcomes

Education

- ◇ Young carers miss or cut short on average 48 days of school a year because of their caring responsibilities *
- ◇ 39% said nobody in their school was even aware of their caring responsibilities
- ◇ On average young carers score 9 grades lower at GCSE and are twice as likely to not be in education, employment or training between 16 and 18
- ◇ 68% of young carers are bullied in school with 26% reported they are bullied purely because of their caring role *

Mental health

- ◇ 72% of young carers feel lonely and isolated during school holidays (Source: Action for Children and Carers Trust).
 - ◇ Just under half (48 %) of young carers said their caring role made them feel stressed and 44% said it made them feel tired *
 - ◇ 1 in 3 young carers have a mental health issue, with that increasing to nearly 1 in 2 amongst young adult carers (45%) *
- Carers Trust 2019

*Source

Covid has made life more difficult for young carers

- ◇ 74% of young carers said their ability to cope with their caring role deteriorated.
- ◇ 71% saw their mental health negatively impacted.
- ◇ 60% said their education has been negatively impacted.
- ◇ 74% said their ability to cope with their caring role deteriorated.

Source: Caring Together June 2020

Further reading: *The lives of young carers in England*

A [study on the impact of caring](#) carried out by the
[Young Carers Research Group at Loughborough University](#).



How to recognise a young carer

Over 1500 young carers are already known to, and being supported by Norfolk County Council and other young carer specialist support agencies. However there are many more young people—believed to be up to 5000 more - who have caring responsibilities for a family member and who are currently an ‘invisible young carer’. It is essential all young carers are identified, so that they and their families get the full range of support that is available to them.

Potential indicators

Indicators that a child or young person may be a young carer include:

- ◇ Often late, or absent from school or college/further education with little explanation
- ◇ Falling behind on school/college work, handing in homework late or incomplete
- ◇ Stopping participating in youth groups, clubs or sporting activities without explanation
- ◇ Often tired, anxious, withdrawn or worried.
- ◇ Isolated from peers, struggles to attend extra-curricular activities and trips.
- ◇ Secretive about home life
- ◇ Showing signs of poor hygiene or diet
- ◇ Displaying disruptive behaviour.
- ◇ Refers to their parents/guardians/sibling as frequently being unwell
- ◇ Talks openly about family health issues often with more knowledge than might be expected of peers e.g. around medication.
- ◇ Becomes uncomfortable when addressing various health topics.

Young carers may also be identified through the circumstances and behaviours of their family members.

- ◇ Parents/siblings experiencing illness, disability, mental ill health or have a history of substance misuse
- ◇ Parents often missing appointments with school/other professionals
- ◇ Parents who are difficult to communicate with eg frequently do not respond to requests



Benefits of identifying and supporting young carers

Benefits for the young carer and their family

- ◇ Reduced risk of excessive or inappropriate caring by the young carer
- ◇ Multi-agency support ensures the whole family's needs can be met—medical, practical, emotional, financial
- ◇ Making young carers more visible
- ◇ Early identification of SEND - preventing children slipping through the net
- ◇ Improvement in education outcomes
 - ⇒ higher levels of engagement, attendance and attainment
 - ⇒ positive impact on the child/young person's friendships and relationships with peers
 - ⇒ more able to contribute to the wider school community
- ◇ Improvement in health outcomes
 - ⇒ Improved physical and mental health outcomes for young carer and the cared-for
 - ⇒ reduced likelihood of higher cost, re-active health interventions including acute care (hospital admissions)

Benefits for professionals and for service development

- ◇ Increased likelihood / early identification of safeguarding situations, reducing the need for higher- cost, reactive, child protection interventions later.
- ◇ Access to multi-agency, specialists to support clients' needs leads to more sustainable outcomes
- ◇ Working with the whole family can ensure their needs can be met in a way that will work for the them (*working with vs done to*)
- ◇ The more experiences of young carers and family situations we are aware of, the better it can inform and shape wider service improvements
- ◇ Improved outcomes for clients has a positive impact on professional's career satisfaction.



How you can help

Be professionally curious

Make every contact count by looking at the whole family and home environment. Try to understand what is and is not working for the child and their family; identify their challenges and concerns.

Pay attention

Listen to what the child/young person is telling you, and what they might not be saying, including through their other behaviours and demeanour and through understanding their home environment. Be alert to other indicators. (see page 6).

Dig deeper

It is always OK to ask. Don't assume that someone else knows. Triangulate with other professionals and those who know the child and their family well – do they see what you see? Build a complete picture.

Know where to go for help/advice

If you do not know what the solution or support might be within your organisation, seek support from the [Young Carers & Families Service](#) (see p12)

Embed knowledge/good practice across your organisation

Share your knowledge and experiences with colleagues. Sign up to the [Carer Friendly Tick Awards](#) (see p12) and Norfolk County Council's [Family Support Process Training](#).

Useful resources

‘A day in the life of’ tool

This tool has been developed by Norfolk County Council family support practitioners to support assessment with children and young people that may have been identified as a young carer. This is always shared with the child/young person and wider family with the child/young person’s consent so we can consider what support or assistance may then need to be considered and put in place. Download the template from the [Resources Page](#) of the Young Carers Matter Norfolk website.

Young carers needs assessment

Any child, young person or family member can request a young carers needs assessment by contacting [Young Carers Matter Norfolk](#) or by phoning Norfolk County Council on 0344 800 8020.

Making an emergency plan

Planning ahead can help young carers and their families manage unexpected changes, such as if the cared-for person’s health deteriorates, or if the young carer themselves are unwell and unable to provide care. Emergency plans help the family be prepared and know what to do and, if necessary, who to ask for help. The plan works best if it involves everyone who would normally support the child and their family. An Emergency Plan template can be downloaded from the [Resources Page](#) of the Young Carers Matter Norfolk website.

Young Carers Animation for 4-8 year olds

This [animated film](#) has been designed to raise awareness of young carers and can be used in assemblies or circle time. It is supported by a Resource Pack for Schools (EYSF and Key Stage 1) to help pupils understand who young carers are and to encourage them to be more open about talking to someone if they have worries. Contact [Caring Together](#) for further details.

Just One Norfolk

[ChatHealth](#) is a secure NHS approved text messaging service for 11- 19 year olds. All Norfolk young people aged 11 – 19 year olds can text 07480 635060 to start a conversation with a trained health professional.

Case studies

Sienna's story

My name is Sienna I am 15 years old, and I care for my mum who has epilepsy and quite bad mental health. I have been caring for my mum since I was around two or three years old. I would always help her by reminding her about taking pills cooking tea, washing up, and would help when she was having a seizure, sometimes it would take longer for mum to come around and get back to her normal self, so would sometimes mean I would need to help her on the toilet and help to wash her as well.

“At the moment I’m in year 10 and I have started studying for my GCSEs. I am still going into school each day so I am still able to have my respite, but if I need to take a day off school to look after my mum I will do so. My school are fantastic and are also aware of my situation, so they are really understanding if I need to stay home and look after mum. I have always been very good with keeping up with schoolwork and catching up as well.

“With the first lockdown last year in 2020, I struggled, and I felt so isolated. Mum was really ill and had such bad anxiety that she wasn’t able to open the front door to stand out on the porch for at least three months. Not being able to have my respite and have that support, I felt that I was on my own.

“I have been having counselling for three or four years. I struggled with mental health and I found it hard talking about my feelings. Once I was able to talk to my counsellor I was able to share everything I was feeling. I know it is not ideal for everyone, but I have found it helpful. I believe it would be helpful for counselling to be made available to all young carers and young adult carers.’

James' story

A powerful film by Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital Foundation Trust in which young carer James describes his experiences of caring for his mother and why health professionals need to recognise and work with young carers. www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjXvROXEa3I

Molly's story

A day in the life of Molly a young carer showing how she cares for her dad during Covid. www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nm6tCXgMRL8

Jasmine's story

Jasmine, who cares for her mum who has fibromyalgia and her brother who has autism, describes the effects this has on her school life and education. www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-ON2m3htEY

Lynne's story

Lynne talks about the impact of caring for her adopted sister who has epilepsy, ADHD, foetal alcohol syndrome and global developmental delay. www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFGjkVGV4qQ

Case study: Helping schools identify and support young carers

By Belinda Jones, Carer Awareness and Voice Co-ordinator, Caring Together

“Following a Year 2 ‘bubble’ assembly about young carers, a teacher asked if he could have a conversation with me in private. He explained that he was aware of a student in his class who has a brother who has a disability. This student never talks about or mentions her brother and would avoid the subject if anyone attempts to open a conversation about her with him. The teacher said that during the assembly, they had seen this student looking increasingly more uncomfortable the more I spoke.

The teacher asked my opinion as to whether or not he should try and open up a conversation with her about the fact that she is a young carer. I suggested leaving it for a day or two to let everything I had talked about sink in and settle, and to then try to gently have that conversation with her. I called the teacher a week later to ask if he had had the conversation with his student and if he was happy to share the outcome with me.

He said that he had left it for a couple of days, and then during a 1-2-1 intervention session with this student he had asked her what she had thought about the young carers assembly? Again, looking uncomfortable she had put her head down and said it was ‘good and interesting’.

He explained that he had asked her if she thought she might be a young carer. He told me that the student nodded and she then went on to say that some of her friends had said to her that she might be a young carer, but she had already known that she was before they had said it to her.

The teacher said he had then reiterated all of the things that I had talked about in the assembly – about how you should feel ‘proud’ to be a young carer, how you are never alone and that there are other young carers in the school too. The teacher said he had asked if she thought she might like to join the young carers group in school when it starts running.

It was lovely to hear at this point she looked more relaxed and smiled and said that she would really like that. She had then gone on to talk about her brother and his disabilities, something she had never done before. The teacher told me she had skipped out of their intervention session and was relaxed and happy in class for the rest of the day.

This was a good example of the impact an assembly can make in raising awareness, raising the profile of young carers, and in reducing stigma around being a young carer. It is so important allowing young carers to feel more comfortable in talking about their caring role. It also shows the positive impact it can have when peers are able to identify fellow students who are young carers and teaches them to be supportive and kind to friends with a caring role.”

Young Carers Awareness Videos

- ⇒ [A 10-minute film](#) designed by young carers to raise awareness of the nature of young caring roles and the challenges faced, particularly in education.
- ⇒ *Out of the Woods* - An [animation by NHS England](#) to raise awareness of Young Carers.

Sources of support

For the young carer and their family

Young Carers Matter Norfolk



- ⇒ Commissioned by Norfolk County Council
- ⇒ A partnership comprising The Benjamin Foundation, Caring Together, Great Yarmouth & Gorleston Young Carers, Holt Youth Project, MTM Youth Services, Norfolk & Suffolk Care Support, Voluntary Norfolk and West Norfolk Carers
- ⇒ Anyone (professional, parent, young carer, family member, friend) can make a referral/self-referral
- ⇒ Once referred, a Family Carer Practitioner will make an assessment about the whole family situation
- ⇒ They will identify what support the young carer needs/wants, eg Young carer groups, social activities, practical equipment, advocacy, transition assessments, emergency plans, grants, support around school and college, mental health support
- ⇒ They will work with the family to identify and access other support for the cared-for, including financial support, peer support groups, practical help, equipment in the home

Further information: www.youngcarersmatternorfolk.org/

Make a referral: www.youngcarersmatternorfolk.org/advice-for-professionals/make-a-referral/

Contact: info@youngcarersmatternorfolk.org 0800 083 1148

For organisations

Caring Together



Caring Together can help organisations identify and support young carers through their accreditation programme, the Carer Friendly Tick Awards. There are specific programmes tailored for education, employers, communities and health organisations.

Further information: www.caringtogether.org/professionals/carers-friendly-tick-award

Contact: carerfriendlytick@caringtogether.org 01480 499090

This toolkit was supported by



Caring Together

www.caringtogether.org



Just One Norfolk

www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk



Norfolk County Council

www.norfolk.gov.uk/children-and-families/early-help-and-family-support



Voluntary Norfolk

www.youngcarersmatternorfolk.org.uk

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The latest version of this toolkit is available to download at

<https://www.youngcarersmatternorfolk.org/resources/>