

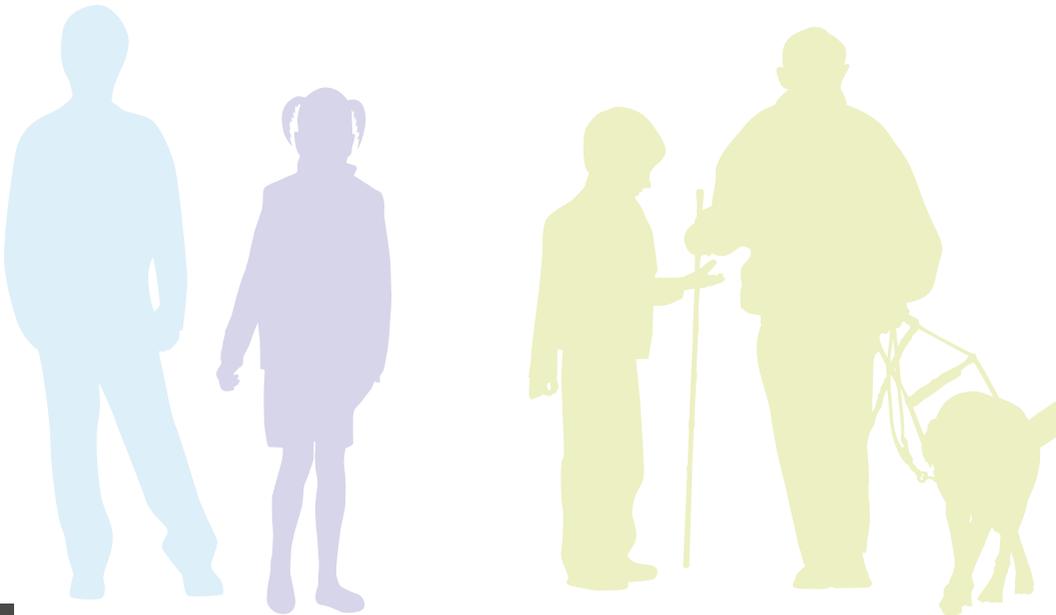


Young carers

Information for pastoral and
other support staff in schools



west
sussex
county
council





Contents

Who are young carers?	4
Difficulties associated with being a young carer	5
How does this affect education	5–6
How do young carers feel about school?	6
How can school staff help?	7
What can the West Sussex Young Carer's Team offer teachers and other school staff?	8
What else do we do?	8
Useful Links	11



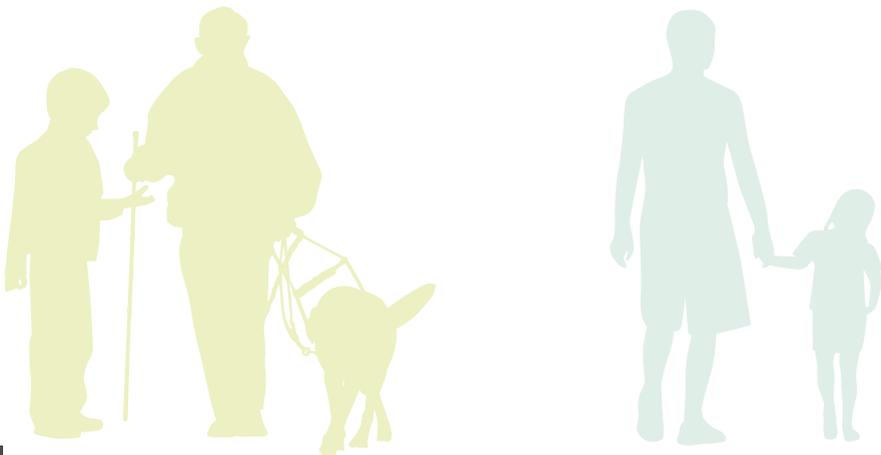
Who are Young Carers?

Young Carers are young people under the age of 18 whose lives are affected by the care needs of someone they live with. This is usually a parent, sibling or grandparent.

The person they care for could have physical disabilities, learning difficulties, mental health issues or problems with drug and alcohol use. Sometimes they may be affected by domestic violence.

Young carers may help to provide practical and personal care and it is also important to realise the emotional impact of living with someone with disabilities or long-term illnesses, and that this is often more difficult to understand.

Some tasks a young carer may undertake may be expected for someone of their age (e.g. babysitting or domestic chores) but the level to which a young carer is relied on to do this is often a lot higher than would be normal for a young person of their age. Some tasks may be considered inappropriate for a young person to undertake, especially in the case of personal care.





Difficulties associated with being a young carer

Being responsible for managing finances, attending hospital appointments, administering medication or being a shoulder to lean on is likely to put huge pressure on a young person. They may find it difficult to concentrate at school on top of everything else.

Differences in roles, responsibilities, routines and issues with finances are more likely in families in which someone has a long term health issue or disability. This can affect relationships and some young carers can appear much older than their years.

Some young carers experience difficulties with their personal health and may develop problems with their own mental health, because of their caring roles and high levels of stress and anxiety.

How does this affect education?

Attendance: as well as missing school, some young carers may find it hard to get to school on time. This may be due to their caring roles, transport issues and other difficulties. Young carers may miss school trips and outings, especially if there is a cost involved or if they will be away from home for longer. Young carers are less likely to stay after school for clubs/sports, etc. This leads to further isolation from their peers and communities which could cause low self-esteem.

Behaviour: some young carers may find it difficult to mix with their peers, who may have very different lifestyles. Young people deal with stress differently, some may be quiet and withdrawn, whereas others may be disruptive. Some young carers think of their school time as their chance to be 'normal' and so may not want to draw attention to themselves at all.

70%

of young carers have experienced bullying associated with caring

Transition times can be particularly difficult times

One fifth of young carers miss school due to their caring responsibilities

The average age of a young carer is 12

Young carers are less likely to enter further education

40%

of young carers affected by drug and alcohol misuse miss school



Achieving: busy home lives, problems concentrating, lack of time to complete homework and their own stress and fatigue are all factors which may affect a young carer's chances of reaching their full potential. Many young carers underachieve.

Home – School Liaison: some parents with disabilities and longterm illnesses may find it difficult to come into school for consultation evenings/parent-teacher meetings and other events. They may find it difficult to read letters or reports sent home, which further reduces their involvement in their child's education and makes it harder for staff to make links between a young person's difficulties and their caring role.

Transition: these times (primary, secondary and leaving school) are particularly challenging for some young carers. They may have received a great deal of support at primary school, and don't know who or how to tell about their situation at their new school, where they may feel anonymous and they no longer have one teacher who can get to know them.

Schools can help by making sure that relevant information is passed on at the point of transition. It may also be a good to ask a young person, at the point of admission into your school, if anyone in their family has a disability or long-term health issue.

Young carers may benefit from being part of special transition groups for children who need extra support when leaving primary education.

Leaving secondary school and deciding what to do next may also be difficult as a young carer may feel trapped by their caring role or feel that they should become a full-time carer and can not continue their education. These young people may need advice and support to think through their options so they don't feel restricted and can make choices which suit their situation, or they may need information about benefits or other support services.

I want the teachers to know, but not make a big deal about it!

Sometimes I feel like I've done a day's work before I even get to school..

If I have to stay after school, people at home may go without the care they need.

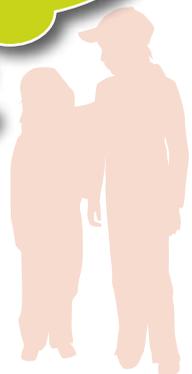
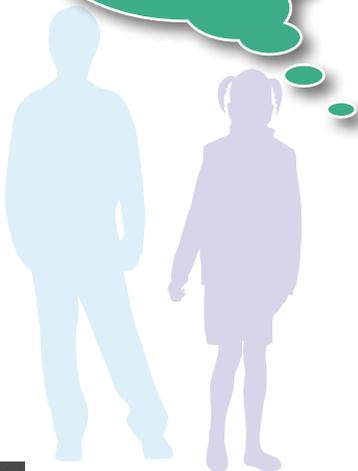
I worry when I'm at school... If I'm not concentrating, it's for a reason..

Some days I just want to stay in the background in class.

I need my mobile on. I feel better knowing I can be contacted straight away.

I just don't get chance to do my homework, then I get a detention which puts even more pressure on me...

It's difficult to explain things to the teachers, there's never a good time or place.





How can school staff help?

(Remember we are here to support you with this!)

- Speak to your school's leadership team about young carer's issues being discussed in lessons and assemblies (see additional pack)
- Make it clear to young carers that they (or their families) will not be in trouble because they are helping to look after someone.
- Have a key person/named contact in school who keeps up to date with young carer's issues and services in West Sussex so that they can signpost young carers to appropriate support. Our website has useful, up-to-date information. Please go to www.westsussex.gov.uk/youngcarers
- Provide a school noticeboard displaying information on community projects, support and resources available to young carers and their families including the school's named contact.
- Consider a multi-agency response if there are complex issues affecting the young person or their family.
- Consult with identified young carers about their school experience and find out/learn what else your school could put in place.
- Key members of staff could undertake our online training module 'Young Carer Aware' and the Healthy Schools e-learning Young Carers Module.
- Consider additional support in transition times, for example with the move from primary to secondary school or with College/University applications.
- Provide flexibility with homework deadlines and offer additional support if necessary.
- Use 'Young Carer's ID cards' to enable young carers to identify themselves without having to explain their situation.

- If parents can't make it into school, find other ways to communicate such as by email. Make sure meeting rooms are accessible.
- Provide access to a telephone so that a young carer can call home during the day and alleviate worry.
- Make space for young carers to meet together in school for peer support and to discuss the issue they face.

What can the West Sussex Young Carer's Team offer teachers and other school staff?

We have lots of experience of working with young carers and their families and can assist schools in supporting their young carers by:

- Providing consultations to discuss the needs of a particular young carer and find ways to support them.
- Provide information and training sessions as part of INSET days.
- Helping to find resources for assemblies, primary and secondary PSHE lessons.

Our aims

It is important that we:

- make sure the young carer is safe and being looked after;
- reduce the amount of caring a young person has to do if it is too much for them, by thinking about the needs of the whole family;
- help the young carer to get more support at school or college;
- make sure that the young carer gets a regular break and time for friends and fun;
- check that the young carer is supported by other adults and professionals in their lives;



- make sure that the young carer has someone to talk to when things are difficult;
- check that the family are receiving all the support or financial benefits available to them; and
- improve the life opportunities of the young carer.

Useful links

Online information, advice and support for young carers in the UK:

- www.carersuk.org
- www.youngcarer.com
- www.sibs.org.uk

For professionals

- **Whole Family Pathway: A Resource for Practitioners** – a free online resource for all practitioners working across all sectors including Adults and Children’s Statutory Services, Health and Education. (www.youngcarer.com/pdfs/Whole%20Family%20Pathway.pdf)
- www.carers.org/professionals/young-carers
(Information about supporting young carers)
- www.westsussexcarers.org.uk

How to contact us

To get information about training and information sessions, as well as for individual case consultation and general advice, please email us at youngcarers@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk

To make a referral to the team in order for a young carer to be considered for additional support, please see contact details on the back of this booklet.

Anyone, including parents/guardians can make a referral. If a professional makes a referral, the family’s permission is needed.

Contacting us

 **01903 270300** Young Carers Service

 www.westsussex.gov.uk/youngcarers

 youngcarers@westsussex.gcsx.gov.uk



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