

What is a Young Carer?

Young carers are young people between the age of five and 18 who care for a family member with a long term illness, disability, mental-health condition or substance misuse issue. This could be a parent or sibling. The young person may be a primary (main) carer or secondary carer for the person. The experiences and needs of each young carer are unique. The amount and type of care they provide can vary greatly, and this can affect their health and wellbeing in different ways.

Key principle:

'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.'

Care and Support Statutory Guidance. Issued under the Care Act.
DH 2014. Paragraph 2.49

Why is it important?

Being a Young Carer can have an impact on a young person's life. It may affect their:

Emotional health - Young people may feel:

- Stress
- Worry
- Embarrassment
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Anger
- Guilt
- Isolation
- Happiness
- Pride

Physical Health - Young people may experience:

- Tiredness
- Physical injuries
- Unhealthy lifestyle (diet/exercise)

The educational achievement and life chances of young people may be affected by:

- School absence/lateness
- More likely than their peers to have a special educational need or disability.
- Significantly lower attainment in GCSEs
- More likely to not be in education, employment or training between 16-19 years of age

The type of responsibilities a young carer may have are:

- Household chores
- Personal care
- Emotional support
- Household administration
- Supporting someone to communicate
- Support with medication
- Childcare

Signs that a Young Person may be caring for someone:

- Regular late arrival at school/college - this may suddenly start happening
- Unable to complete homework and assignments on time
- Concentration difficulties
- Behavioural difficulties, sometimes the result of anger or frustration expressed inappropriately verbal/physical

- Anxiety, being withdrawn or oversensitive
- Tiredness/fatigue and concentration problems
- Clothing or appearance may not be clean/tidy, lack of self-care
- Low self-esteem
- Underachieving at school
- Ill health, for example, stress-related illness, back problems from heavy lifting, anxiety, depression
- Have few friends/have difficulty mixing with peers, or may get on well with adults and present as very mature for their age
- Have difficulty attending off-site activities and trips (especially residential) and after-school/college activities
- Being bullied, sometimes this is linked to a family members disability, health or substance misuse problem
- Parents non-attendance at school/college events, for example, parent evenings
- Financial difficulties
- Reluctant to discuss home circumstances

How do we do it?

Young Carers Assessment: Young carers have the right to a Carers Assessment, which will help determine the amount of care the young person is undertaking and the positive and negative outcomes of the caring on the young person

What type of support can help?

- Opportunities to have a break from their caring role - youth groups, clubs, Portsmouth Young Carers Service (PYCS)
- Identifying other family members (community) who can offer help and support?
- Support from school might be - flexible detentions, access to a phone during the day, access to a supportive wellbeing team or having a young carers noticeboard.
- Access to the Portsmouth Young carers Service

Portsmouth Young Carers Service - Work with young carers across Portsmouth and access to activities is only possible once the young carer has been referred to the service by a parent/carer or a professional and have attended a meeting with the service. If you introduce a young carer to the PYCS when you begin working with a family, they can then work with you to establish a relationship with the young person and their family (don't leave it until you are closing the case).

Currently the service offers:

- Weekly groups for young carers (eight to 14 year olds and 14-18 year olds);
- School holiday activities (for five to 18 year olds);
- One-to-one support (to support engagement and individual needs);
- Support during professional meetings
- Awareness raising, advice and support

What Young Carers tell us can be a barrier when working with professionals:

- Feeling that the professional does not understand the importance of their role
- A feeling of loss when they perceive that they are not needed when support is put in place (loss of identity)
- Feeling that they are not being listened to and that professionals are only working with the cared for person
- Strong sense of loyalty to their family - don't want to let them down or get them into trouble or be taken away from their family
- Lack of awareness that what they are doing is inappropriate for someone their age - it's always been that way



One Minute Guide Working with Young Carers



'Supporting young carers and their families' - The Children's Society - identified the following messages for professionals from young carers and their families

- Make regular family visits and talk to everyone
- Provide counselling when needed
- Make sure extra help for young carers is given at school
- Help the young carers to be recognised as carers
- Help the young carer to understand the cared for person's illness
- Help parent(s) attend school events and meetings
- Ensure professionals work restoratively with the family
- Give them information and support to carry out their tasks safely when some caring remains

For more information:

Contact the Portsmouth Young Carers Service: youngcarers@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Access The Children's Society's Supporting Young Carers and Their Families Introductory Guide [here](#)

Visit The Children's Society website - <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/>

Visit the Carers Trust website - <https://carers.org/>