



Woolton High School



Young Carers Statement 2020-21

Introduction

Young carers are children and young people under 18 who help to look after a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally ill or has a substance misuse problem. Helping out around the house is a normal part of growing up, but young carers regularly carry out significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility which is inappropriate to their age. Caring can involve physical or emotional care, or taking responsibility for someone's safety or well being. Many young carers spend a lot of time doing household chores or looking after younger siblings in addition to helping a sick or disabled parent with tasks such as administering medication, helping someone to get up and get dressed or helping someone use the bathroom. Some young carers help parents to look after a disabled sibling.

Most young carers are not known to be caring by school staff, so being a young carer can be a hidden cause of poor attendance, under achievement and bullying, with many young carers dropping out of school or achieving no qualifications. There are some simple and inexpensive steps that all schools can take in order to ensure that young carers don't place their education in second place to their caring responsibilities.

Most children affected by family disability, health problems or substance misuse do not become young carers and it is important to be wary of making assumptions about people with disabilities or other health issues and labelling young people or their parents. Support for young carers and their families should always aim to strengthen families and support parenting.

Identifying young carers

Education Welfare Officers/ Educational Social Workers and other attendance professionals are able to identify that a young person missing school is a young carer after a home visit.

Enrolment

Our pre-admission process for new pupils and their families attempts to establish:

- Does the pupil have parents or other family members who have disabilities or other long term physical or mental health problems?
- Does the pupil help to look after them and what impact does this have on his/her education?
- Is the family in touch with support services that could reduce the pupil's caring role?

Some families may choose to keep their problems secret, but offering signposting and information about other services at an early stage may make all the difference.

Warning signs

Young carers are not easy to spot and many actively try to conceal their caring role from teachers, pastoral staff and peers for fear of bullying or outside interference in their families. All of the warning signs below could be indicators of another problem. However, staff noticing these signs should consider asking the pupil if they are helping to look after someone at home.

- Regular or increased lateness or absence
- Concentration problems, anxiety, tiredness
- Under-achievement and late or incomplete homework: may be a sudden unexplained drop in attainment
- Few or no peer friendships; conversely the pupil may get on well with adults and present as very mature for their age
- Victim of bullying, sometimes explicitly linked to a family member's disability, health or substance misuse problem
- Behavioural problems, sometimes the result of anger or frustration expressed inappropriately
- Unable to attend extra-curricular activities
- Difficulties in engaging parents; parents not attending parents' evenings

Keeping young carers in school

It is vital that schools balance taking a supportive, flexible approach with giving the pupil a consistent message that their education is important. Most young carers say that when forced to choose between staying at home to look after a loved one and going to school, caring comes first. When more appropriate sources of caring are not immediately available to a family, schools can help pupils to balance their caring responsibilities with their education in several easy ways:

- Some young carers will meet the definition of a child “in need” under the Children Act 1989 and may be entitled to an assessment from Children’s Services. A small number will be at risk of significant harm. Where you suspect that this may be the case, the school’s child protection procedures should be followed.
- Ensure that there is a named member of staff that pupils can talk to and whose role is well understood by staff, pupils and parents. Ms S Powell
- Speak to pupils who you believe to be carers in private, not in class.
- Where possible, speak to the pupil’s parent: see “Adults’ Services” below.
- Offer disabled parents support with getting their children to school. Some parents have fluctuating conditions, such as MS, which mean that they can support their children to get to school on some days but are immobile on others. The implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act means that local authorities must provide adequate support to disabled parents with getting their children to school.
- Allow young carers to telephone home if they are worried about a relative.
- Consider giving lunchtime detentions rather than after school detentions.

- Education Welfare Services, Home School Liaison workers, Inclusion Officers and other attendance professionals can play a key role in supporting the family and seeking the involvement of other services.

Tackling stigma in schools

Much of the bullying experienced by young carers results from the stigma associated with some disabilities and health conditions such as mental ill health or substance misuse. Strong Bullying, Inclusion and Anti-discrimination policies can reduce this, as can teach pupils about disability and mental health problems in assemblies and PSHE lessons.

How can Adults' Services help schools?

Where education professionals become aware that a child they support could be affected by a family member's health condition or disability, they should attempt to signpost the family towards appropriate support services. The cared-for person may be entitled to an assessment of their needs.

The school should have made links with these services and understand their referral criteria:

- Adult Social Services
- Adults' Mental health teams
- Drug and Alcohol Services
- Citizens Advice Bureaux and other voluntary sector services.

Schools can offer leaflets and other information where a family is unwilling for school staff to refer them.

How can specialist Young Carers Services help schools?

Young carers can access information on disabilities and health conditions, support via email and moderated chat sessions at www.youngcarers.net which also has a section for Education professionals.

Funding sources

Schools and local authorities in some areas have allocated inclusion/attendance resources to identifying and supporting young carers who are at risk of missing substantial amounts of schooling, often in partnership with a voluntary sector organisation.

School Policy

At Woolton High School we believe that all children and young people have the right to an education, regardless of what is happening at home. When a young person looks after someone in their family who has a serious illness, disability or substance misuse problem, he or she may need a little extra support to help him or her get the most out of school. Our Young Carers Policy says how we will help any pupil who helps to look after someone at home.

Our school:

- Has a member of staff with special responsibility for young carers and lets all new pupils know who they are and what they can do to help. Ms S Powell.
- Can put young carers in touch with the local Young Carers Service. We can also put families in touch with other support services.
- Is accessible to parents who have mobility and communication difficulties and involves them in parents' evenings.
- Respects your right to privacy and will only share information about you and your family with people who need to know to help you.
- Will consider alternatives if a young carer is unable to attend out of school activities e.g. detention, sports coaching, concerts, due to their caring role
- Allows young carers to telephone home during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Complies with the Disability Discrimination Act by offering disabled parents support to get their children into school.

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