

Young Carers Fact Sheet

Who is a young carer?

A young carer is someone who is under 18 and who provides or intends to provide care for another person. The concept of care includes practical or emotional support, and 'another person' means anyone within the same family, be they adult or child. This does not include children providing care as part of contracted work or as voluntary work.

A young carer may be caring for one or more of the following conditions;

- A mental illness
- Substance Misuse
- Learning disabilities
- Sensory impairment
- A physical illness such as epilepsy or diabetes
- A Physical disability
- Terminal illness.

Duties

They may do duties around the home to help their cared for, such as;

- Housework
- Food shopping and preparation
- Supporting siblings with special needs
- Taking care of siblings when parents are unable to
- Providing practical care or emotional care
- High risk duties including babysitting
- Handling medication
- Lifting and manoeuvring someone
- Reaching for high items
- Preparing hot food or using sharp implement

Duties are **in addition** to chores expected for a child that age and are considered caring duties if they are **excessive** or **inappropriate** for their age or capacity.

Young Adult Carers

A Young Adult Carer, is a young person aged 16-25 who provides or intends to provide unpaid care for someone in their family and is transitioning into adulthood. Like young carers, they carry out duties to care for their relative, including emotional and practical support, child-care or financial support. Young Adult Carers are eligible for an Adult Carers Assessment when they are approaching 18 or over, which can provide additional care and financial support to the family.

Impact of Caring

Research carried out by The Children's Society in 2013 found that being a young carer has a significant, long-term impact on the child's life.

- Young carers are more likely to have a special educational need or a long-standing illness or disability.
- They can be caring for more than 15 hours per week
- They often miss school because of their responsibilities
- They have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level
- They are more likely to be from black, Asian or minority ethnic communities and are more likely to not speak English as a first language.
- The average annual income for the family is lower than those who do not have a young carer
- They are more likely to be NEET between 16 and 19 years
- They are no more likely than their peers to come into contact with support agencies.

For young adult carers, the negative impacts of caring on young adults, often increase as they grow older, and this can have a negative and enduring impact on their own physical health, mental health, education and employment opportunities.

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What does the legislation say?

The legislation regarding young carers is cited in The Children & Families Act 2014 and The Care Act 2014.

The Local Authority is expected to:

- take 'reasonable steps' to identify young carers and whether they are in need of support.
- carry out an assessment if it appears that the young carer has the need for support.
- consider the level of care the child is providing and whether it is inappropriate or excessive.

For young adult carers, the Local Authority should:

- consider how to support young carers prepare for adulthood and raise and fulfil their aspirations
- support them to think about their own outcomes and aspirations, regarding their potential in education, employment and life
- discuss plans for further and higher education.
- provide a person-centred transition plan, including milestones to achieve, decided in discussion with the young carer,
- identify if they are eligible for support after they turn 18
- look at how care needs may change if the young adult carer begins work or university.

What the assessment involves?

The Young Carers Assessment should be a whole family assessment that is appropriate and proportionate to the needs and circumstances of the young carer and must be carried out by an appropriately trained practitioner with sufficient knowledge and skill to carry out the assessment. The assessment must regard the young carers circumstances, including age, gender and understanding and consider the differences of opinion between the young carer, their parents and the person cared for. An assessment should also consider what the desired outcome is for the young carer.

Carrying out the assessment—The Local Authority Responsibilities

The Young Carer's Needs Assessment must consider the impact of the needs of the whole family on the well-being of the young carer, in particular, on their education and personal and emotional development. It can be combined with another assessment or a previously carried out assessment of the needs for support of the young carer.

It should determine how much care is being provided and of what nature, how much the family rely on the young carer for the care they are carrying out and whether it impacts on their well-being, education or development.

Furthermore, the assessment must determine whether the tasks are excessive or inappropriate for the young carer's age, sex, wishes and feelings. During the assessment the local authority should consider whether the care provided by the young carer could be prevented by providing services to the person cared for, or another member of the young carer's family. It must also consider the support needs of the young carer if they were relieved of some or all of their duties and whether any other assessment should be carried out.

If the assessment relieves the young carer of some or all of their duties, this should include looking at friends and family members to consider how they can contribute. The local authority must consult with relevant professionals with expertise and knowledge as part of the assessment process.

The family should receive a written record of the assessment which should be sent to anyone else at the request of the young carer or their family.

Refusing an assessment

It is a statutory requirement to offer a young carers assessment, but it can be refused if the young carer does not appear to have needs for support. If the local authority has carried out an assessment previously and circumstances have not changed since then, it can also be refused.

Where a Young Carer appears to be at risk of **Significant Harm**, then the appropriate safeguarding procedures must be followed immediately.