

A guide for practitioners

Recognising young carers



The Princess Royal Trust
Sunderland Carers Centre

Hello

and welcome to our professionals guide to Young Carers!

Sunderland Carers' Centre Defines a young carer as:

"Young carers are children and young people whose lives are in some way restricted because they provide care, assistance, or support to another family member.

Often on a regular basis, they carry out significant or substantial caring tasks and take on a level of responsibility which would usually be associated with an adult.

The person they care for is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent or other relative who needs care, support or supervision because of disability, chronic illness, mental health difficulties or problems with drugs or alcohol misuse."

Sunderland Carers' Centre includes in this definition of young carers young people who do not carry out specific caring tasks, but who are significantly affected emotionally by the presence of a relative in the family with care, support or supervision needs as described above.

Young Carers are found in families from all economic groups and areas, and can be from any social or cultural background. Some young carers are the main (or primary) carer, while others help someone else to care (secondary care).

This guide explains how you can help to recognise young carers and support their needs. It is everybody's responsibility to recognise and support young carers. Even if it is your professional role to work with diagnosing adults you are in a key position to identify any young people in the family and make sure they don't go unnoticed.

One of the many ways of supporting a young carer is to put them in touch with their local carers' project. Simply ask for their permission (and their parent/guardians if under 18) then give Sunderland Carers Centre a call on **(0191) 567 3232** and we'll get their details from you and arrange to visit them ourselves...It's that simple!

At Sunderland Carers' Centre we take a whole family approach to support carers, providing support wherever possible, whether it's a trip or activity to provide peer support or a one to one chat. We support families to ensure that they receive the full package of help that they require, making sure all of the relevant services are involved. This helps to ensure that young carers do not need to take on inappropriate levels of care.

Keep reading through this guide to find out more about young carers and how you can help. Don't forget if you have any questions or queries just give us a call on **(0191) 567 3232**.

Thanks!

Sunderland Carers' Centre.

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Introduction

This guide aims to raise awareness amongst professionals working with young people and their families of young carers and the issues facing them.

It explains who young carers are and the types of 'care' they may be providing, then explores the potential impact this can have.

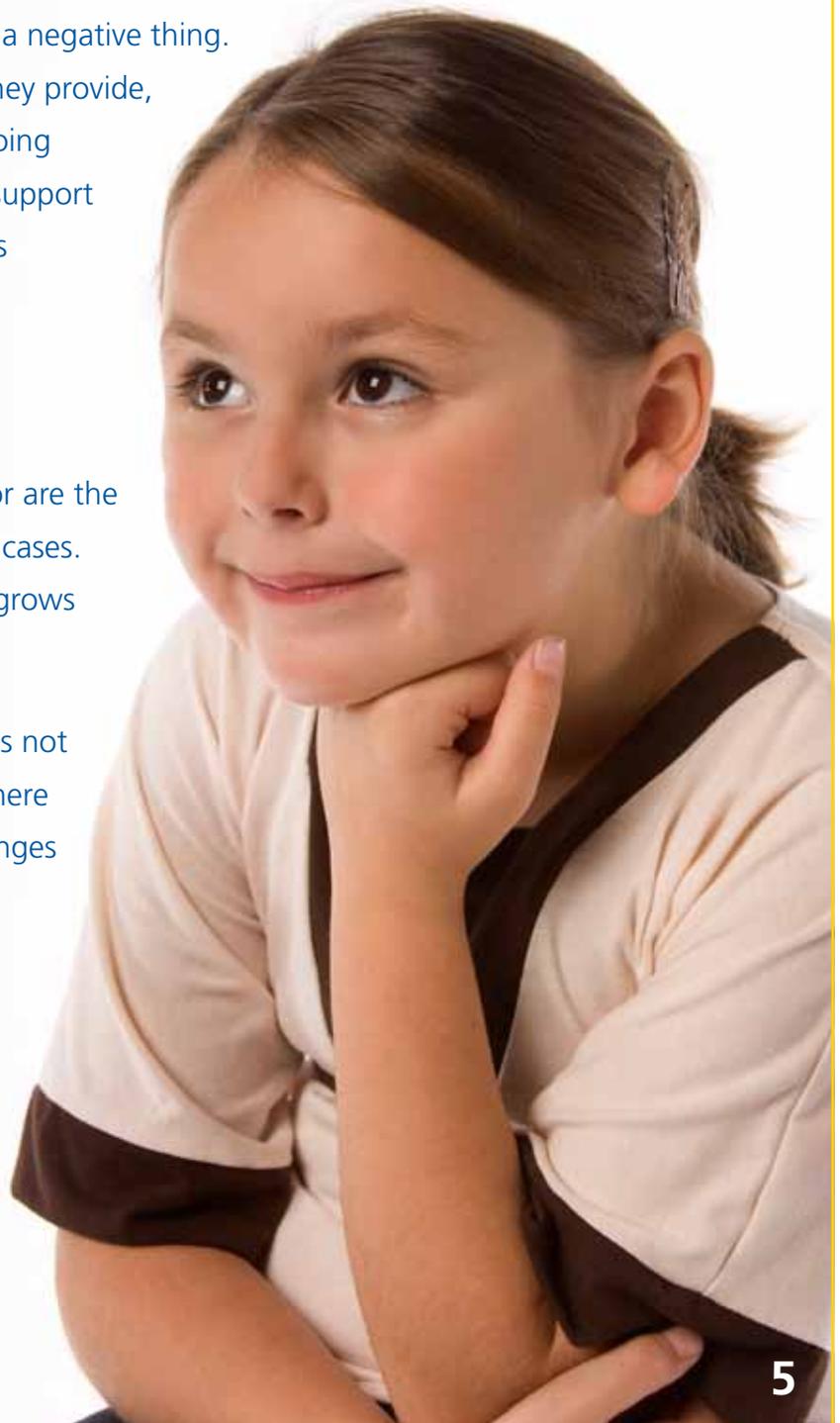
The guide then looks at how agencies can better support this often invisible and under-served group.

Having caring responsibilities is not necessarily a negative thing. Young carers are often proud of the support they provide, or in other cases do not realise that they are doing anything different from their peers. However, support must be available to avoid these responsibilities becoming an unwanted load, or putting the individual's emotional, physical, or personal, development at risk.

Young carers are not a homogenous group, nor are the reasons they are providing care the same in all cases. Caring often does not begin dramatically, but grows to meet the emerging needs within the family.

In many cases the caring role is managed and is not having any negative impact. However, even where this is the case, it must be recognised that changes to circumstance can lead to a crisis and may require the provision of emergency support.

The same is true where the support required is episodic. In such cases it is imperative that those providing care are aware of and able to access the necessary additional support.



Defining young carers

Young carers are children and young people whose lives are in some way restricted because they provide care, assistance, or support to another family member. Often on a regular basis, they carry out significant or substantial caring tasks and take on a level of responsibility which would usually be associated with an adult.

The person they care for is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent or other relative who needs care, support or supervision because of disability, chronic illness, mental health difficulties or problems with drugs or alcohol misuse.

Sunderland Carers' Centre includes in this definition of young carers young people who do not carry out specific caring tasks, but who are significantly affected emotionally by the presence of a relative in the family with care, support or supervision needs as described above.

Young Carers are found in families from all economic groups and areas, and can be from any social or cultural background. Some young carers are the main (or primary) carer, while others help someone else to care (secondary care).



Context

One of the barriers to providing support for young carers is the difficulty in gauging their number accurately. Below are some of the statistics which can be used to develop an impression of the potential numbers of young carers in the UK.

In the 2001 census **175,000** young carers were identified. However, as this was self-reported by parents who completed the survey numbers are likely to be higher.

In September 2004 the Princess Royal Trust undertook a survey of over 1,300 young people and found that 12% of 12-19 year olds were providing care. This would correspond to over **1,000,000** carers aged up to 19.

3,000,000 children live in families where a member has a disability.

The government estimates that **250,000** children live with a parent who misuses a class A drug and **920,000** children have parents with alcohol problems.

30% of families that include someone with a mental health problem also have children in the household.

Young people in families where there are issues around substance misuse, or where a family member has a disability or mental health problem, do not necessarily have care responsibilities. However, research completed by the NSPCC in 2000 suggests that **4% of children and young people** will have caring responsibilities during their childhood.

At Sunderland Carers' Centre we currently work with over **300** young carers however it is estimated that there are around **3000** young carers within Sunderland and many currently receive no support.



The 'Young Carers in the UK 2004' report surveyed 6,178 known young carers to gain a greater insight into their lives and a snapshot of the group's demography. It found:

Hours spent caring

- 50% of young carers provide 10 hours or less of care per week
- 33% provide 11-20 hours per week
- 16% provide over 20 hours per week with around 2% providing 50 or more hours per week

Period providing care

- 36% of young carers have been caring for 2 years or less
- 44% for 3-5 years
- 18% for 6-10 years
- 3% for over 10 years

Care receivers

- In single parent families, 70% of people with care needs were mothers
- In two parent families, siblings accounted for 46% of those receiving care

Types of care

- 82% provide emotional support and supervision
- 68% of young carers provide domestic help in the home
- 48% provide general and nursing type care
- 18% provide intimate personal care
- 11% provide child care

Demographics

- 56% were girls
- 44% were boys
- Average age was 12 years old
- 84% were White
- African Caribbean was the largest minority group
- 56% were living in lone parent families

Types of illness/disability

Those receiving care had a range of illnesses or physical or mental problems;

- 50% were of a physical health nature
- 29% were mental health problems
- 17% were related to learning difficulties
- 3% were sensory impairments



Types of Caring

Care provided by young carers can range across a variety of tasks both in and outside of the home. The main categories of care are:

Domestic Tasks

This category relates to household chores such as cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, shopping and gardening.

*Proportion of young carers providing = 68%
(Young Carers in the UK report 2004)*

General Care

Referring to tasks such as administering medication, changing dressings and assisting with mobility.

*Proportion of young carers providing = 48%
(Young Carers in the UK report 2004)*

Emotional Support

Refers to observing emotional state, providing supervision, trying to 'cheer up' the care recipient when they are depressed, talking and listening.

*Proportion of young carers providing = 82%
(Young Carers in the UK report 2004)*

Intimate Care

This category includes lifting, washing, dressing and assisting with toilet requirements.

*Proportion of young carers providing = 18%
(Young Carers in the UK report 2004)*

Child Care

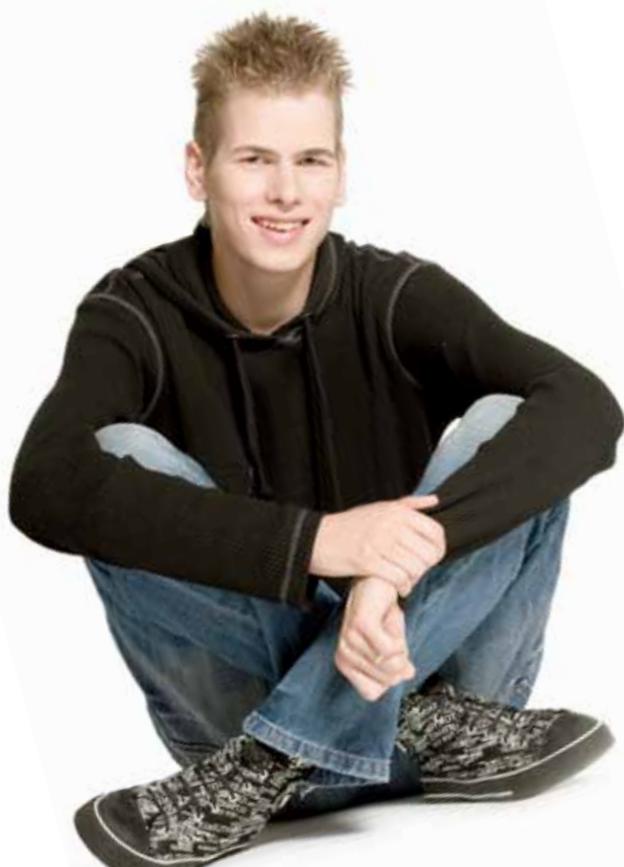
Refers to helping to care for younger siblings in addition to other caring tasks.

*Proportion of young carers providing = 11%
(Young Carers in the UK report 2004)*

Other Responsibilities

Refers to any other miscellaneous tasks such as bill paying, translating, or accompanying to hospital.

*Proportion of young carers providing = 29%
(Young Carers in the UK report 2004)*



Why do young people care?

The individual circumstances of each young carer are obviously different, but several factors are likely to influence the reasons young people become young carers:

- **The structure of the family unit**

A young person may become the carer because a parent requires support. This is obviously more common in single parent families. In other situations, the level of support required may be too much for one person to provide, requiring children to become secondary carers supporting the main carer. Other families may contain more than one member with care needs, thus increasing the responsibilities taken on by others. The support available from others, including the extended family, also has an impact on the level of care being provided by young carers.

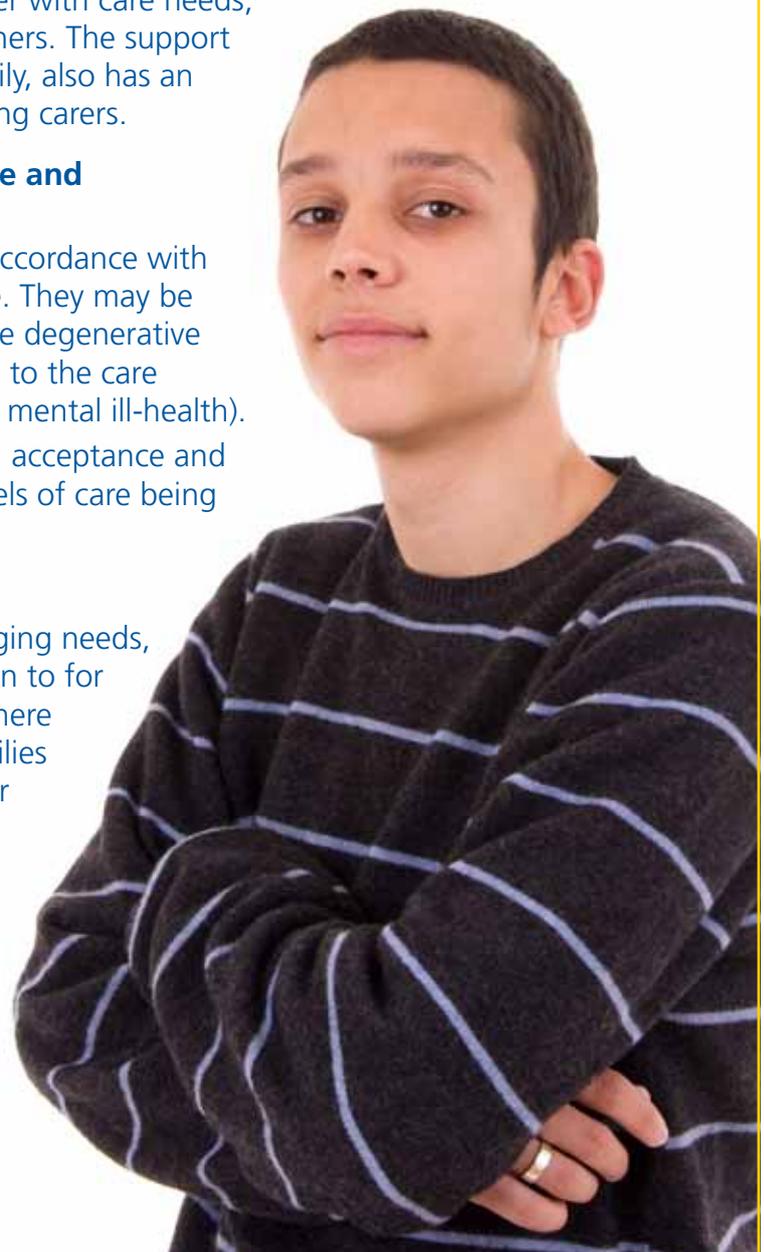
- **The type of illness/disability/substance misuse and perception of need**

The levels of support required can vary widely in accordance with the nature of an illness/disability/substance misuse. They may be stable and managed, or in other cases they may be degenerative or periodic, with sudden and unexpected changes to the care recipient's condition (common in MS, arthritis and mental ill-health). The common 'time-lag' between onset, diagnosis, acceptance and requests for support can lead to inappropriate levels of care being provided within the family.

- **Knowledge of the support available**

Whilst coming to terms with and managing emerging needs, families are not always aware of who they can turn to for support. This can be compounded in situations where families or individuals fear being stigmatised. Families can often lack information and knowledge of their rights and how to access available support.

The combined effects of these factors can lead to young people becoming young carers. In some cases this process is conscious and voluntary. In others it occurs through gradually taking on responsibilities as they arise, or having demands placed upon an individual to avoid interventions by 'strangers' or through fear of the family being broken up.



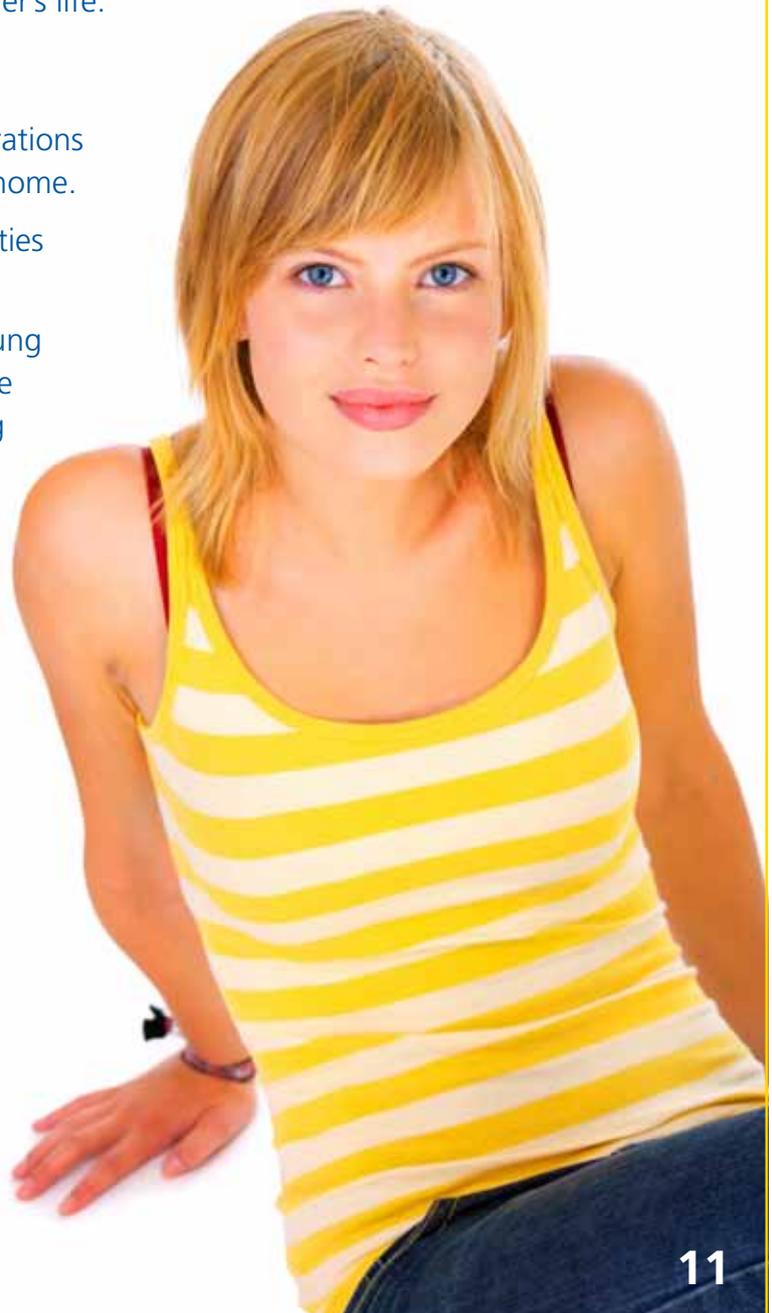
The impact of caring

Not all young carers experience a negative impact as a result of their caring responsibilities but, particularly where other support is absent or limited, the young carer is vulnerable to a range of negative effects.

Research has consistently shown that negative impact can occur across the personal, social, health, educational and employment aspects of a young carer's life.

Personal

- Young carers may have limited horizons and aspirations as a result of their reluctance to leave the family home.
- They are often limited in terms of their opportunities to take part in social or leisure activities.
- A fear of professionals is quite common, with young carers and their families often reluctant to disclose their situation for fear of judgement or the young person being taken into care.
- Young carers are often forced to grow up more quickly than their peers as a result of their responsibilities. This often results in them behaving in a more mature way, sometimes leading to isolation.
- Individuals may feel frustrated about their own needs and the needs of the person they care for. This may result in feelings of guilt.
- They may have low self-esteem. This can be compounded where their contribution is undervalued and they are excluded from discussion about the family's needs.



Social

- The different life experience between young carers and their peers can result in difficulties, due to restrictions on friendships and lack of empathy from those without caring responsibilities. This can result in bullying.
- The isolation from peers and feelings of being an outsider can also lead young carers to avoid discussion with adults regarding their caring role, resulting in their role going unnoticed.
- Young carers may also face bullying or other negative treatment due to the type of illness, or condition present in their family. This 'stigma by association' can be particularly prevalent where mental health or substance misuse are present.
- Cleanliness and hygiene can sometimes be an issue.

Health

- Health problems may develop for young carers due to their role. These may be physical health problems, for example back problems brought on by lifting, or mental health problems, due to the high level of anxiety and worry.
- Emotional well-being of young carers can also be negatively affected by seeing a loved one in pain or dealing with behaviour from a family member which may be irrational, unpredictable and hurtful. Bereavement and fear of bereavement can also impact on young carers.
- The presence of substance misuse within the home can skew young people's perception of safe practice.

Education/Employment

- Many young carers leave school with low grades or no qualifications. This can be the result of missing school, not completing homework, or being tired and distracted whilst at school. These behaviours can be misunderstood, resulting in them being negatively labelled as 'troublemakers', compounding social isolation and low self-confidence.
- Due to low self-esteem, reluctance to leave the family home and levels of achievement well below their potential, many young carers face major difficulties in making the transition into the world of work.
- Young carers have limited access to extra-curricular activities due to their responsibilities at home, which can hinder personal development.
- Caring often influences views of the future, leaving some with a reluctance to leave home or commit to study post-16.
- Many young carers use their experience to access employment in the care sector. However this must not be seen as the only option.
- Employment opportunities may be reduced due to caring responsibilities and the impact a wage may have on the household's benefit situation.



Bullying

There are many definitions of bullying, but most consider it to be:

- deliberately hurtful
- repeated, often over a period of time
- difficult for victims to defend themselves against

Bullying can take many forms, but three main types are:

- physical - hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- verbal - name calling, insulting, making offensive remarks
- indirect - spreading nasty stories about someone, exclusion from social groups, being made the subject of malicious rumours, sending malicious e-mails or text messages on mobile phones

Bullying can begin for a range of reasons

Often it stems from differences (either real or perceived) between the victim and the bully.

In their 1999 study, Crabtree and Warner found that young carers often feel they are seen as different or as 'outsiders'. This may be because they:

- have greater maturity than peers (and are not accepted as a result)
- lack some of the social skills of others
- have difficulty making and maintaining friendships due to other demands upon their time
- may be withdrawn
- may be over-sensitive - or perceived to be by peers
- may not be as tidy or clean in their general appearance
- have different family circumstances

In their study 240 young carers were supported by their projects in completing a questionnaire. The results from this showed 71% of young carers had experienced some form of bullying in school, rising to 80% of primary carers.

The types of bullying reported included:

- being physically hit or grabbed (51%)
- being called names (79%)
- being made to feel uncomfortable (64%)
- primary carers reported that they were bullied on most days (45%)
- 20% of respondents reported missing school as a result of bullying

The Children's Rights Director's Report (2006) brought out slightly different results through interviews with 16 young carers. When asked if they were ever bullied because they were young carers the group said 'no'. Those who had been bullied felt it was general bullying rather than due to their caring responsibilities. However, they highlighted the comments they had to endure from others about their disabled parents/siblings and the reactions and prejudices of the public, as a major stressor. This effect is further compounded in families where mental health problems are present.



Identifying young carers

Every young carer is an individual and each person's ability to hide their responsibility can be vastly different, as can their willingness to trust and confide in professionals.

However, some identifying features which may bring care responsibilities to the attention of professionals are:

- anxiety or concern over an ill or disabled relative - possibly linked to a fear of bereavement
- a need or desire to be in regular contact with home
- often late or missing from school/youth group
- secretive about their home life
- often tired, distracted, withdrawn or anxious
- low self-esteem and self-confidence
- isolated or victims of bullying
- poor relationship with peers
- may take on a caring role with younger children
- may demonstrate confidence when interacting with adults
- isolation and withdrawal, or behaviour to release pent-up frustration or stress which could be seen as challenging in a school or youth group setting but is the opposite of their behaviour at home
- a young carer may suffer back pain or other lifting related pain
- outbursts or amplified responses to events due to the emotional strain of a young carer's responsibilities

The sooner young carers are recognised the easier it is to prevent them from taking on inappropriate levels of care. Sunderland Carers' Centre aims to work with young people from the initial point of a long-term illness or disability being diagnosed within their family. We want to support young people before they reach crisis point and show them that there are options available.

In order to obtain this early identification we must work in partnership with health professionals so that as soon as they diagnose an adult with a long term illness they are able to ask if there are any young people in the family that may require support or advice. Passing on our information and raising the awareness of young carers.

Young Carers from Minority Ethnic Groups

Research suggests that there is often a lack of knowledge about services and support available in minority ethnic families. This can be further compounded by the stereotype of caring extended families held by some professionals, which can lead to needs being overlooked. In addition carers from some communities may have specific cultural and/or religious requirements that need to be considered when planning support.

These issues can lead to barriers preventing full access to welfare services. There may also be different cultural interpretations of disability causing a further reduction in the take up of support.

These issues are likely to increase the impact of caring responsibilities and reduce the visibility of this group of young carers.



Legislation & Policy Framework

The key legislation for working with and assessing young carers is listed below:

Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995

This act entitles carers of any age to request an assessment of their needs from Social Services that will assess their ability to provide care and identify any support they need to continue in their caring role. If a young carer requests an assessment under this role, the Local Authority must carry one out.

1989, 2004 Children Act - Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DOH 1999)

Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989 provides for the assessment of a child whose health or development is likely to be significantly affected or impaired without the provision of Local Authority services.

The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families 1999, highlights the importance of recognising the needs of the young carer (3.61 63). It states their right to a carers assessment which may lead to more community care services for the family. The central issue remains the duty to safeguard the child's welfare and development, achieved through an initial/core assessment leading to the identification of necessary services.

Caring About Carers - A National Strategy for Carers (DOH 1999)

Chapter 8 states - local authorities should take steps to identify children with additional family burdens and services must consider the needs of all family members, including the children.

The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004

This Act came into force in April 2005 and is intended to provide a firm foundation for better practice by councils and the health service. The Act requires Local Authorities to inform carers of their right to an assessment of their needs and for that assessment to include a consideration of the carer's outside interests (ie, work, study, leisure).

The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007)

The Children's Plan states services should adopt a whole family approach. This means that children's and adult services must have arrangements in place to ensure that no young person's life is unnecessarily restricted because they are providing significant care to an adult with an identifiable community care need.

Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities (HM Government, 2008)

Chapter 6 of the new National Strategy for Carers outlines the Government's vision that "children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve against all the Every Child Matters outcomes" Every Child Matters (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2003) set out the Government's approach to improve the well-being for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, and to have the support they need to: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic well-being.

Assessment

- assessing young carers and their families

Research and Policy

Young carers are largely hidden and it is therefore very difficult to give accurate figures about their numbers. In the 2001 census, 175,000 children and young people in the UK were identified as carers. Young carers are being increasingly recognised in government policy.

Research shows that being a young carer can have a detrimental effect on young people, including problems at school, health problems, emotional difficulties, isolation, lack of time for leisure, feeling different, pressure from keeping family problems a secret, problems with transition to adulthood, lack of recognition and feeling they are not being listened to.

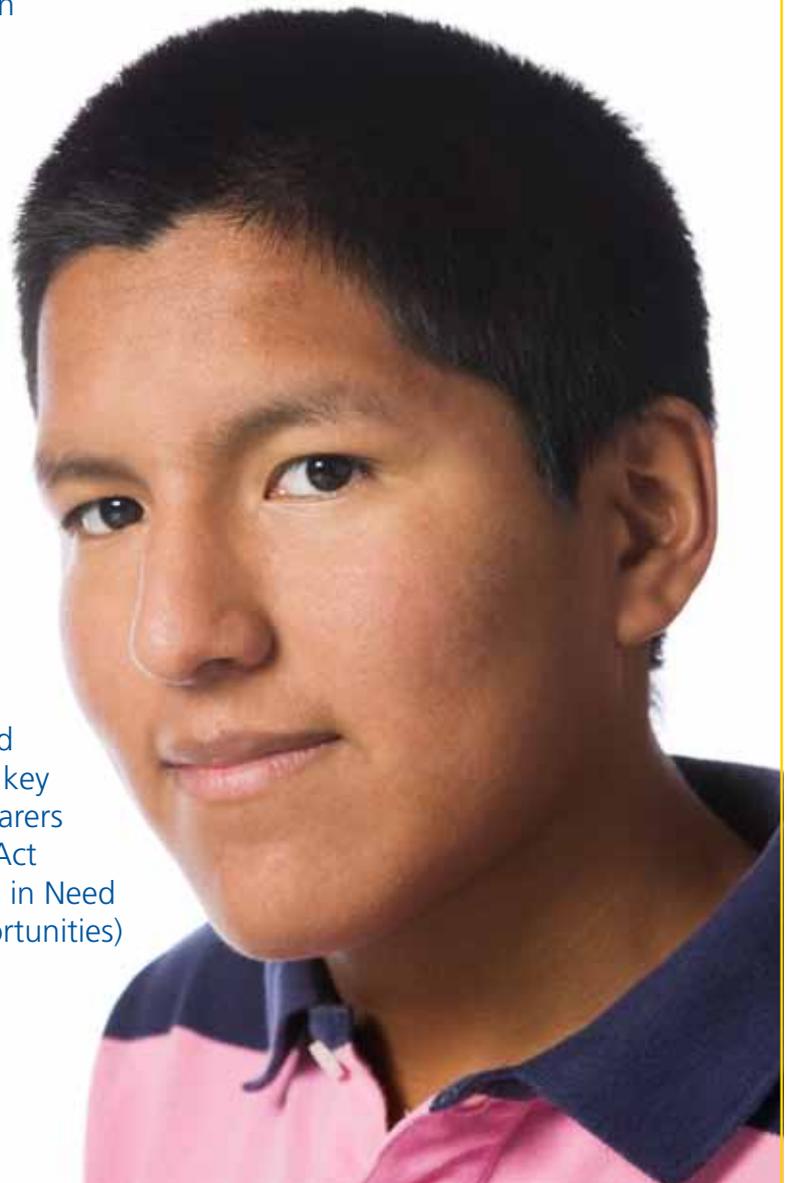
There is widespread agreement that children should not be undertaking regular and substantial caring responsibilities or inappropriate care tasks.

Problems arise when the level of responsibility taken on by the young person is inappropriate to their age and maturity.

Local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that the person needing care has appropriate services and this should include help with parenting tasks.

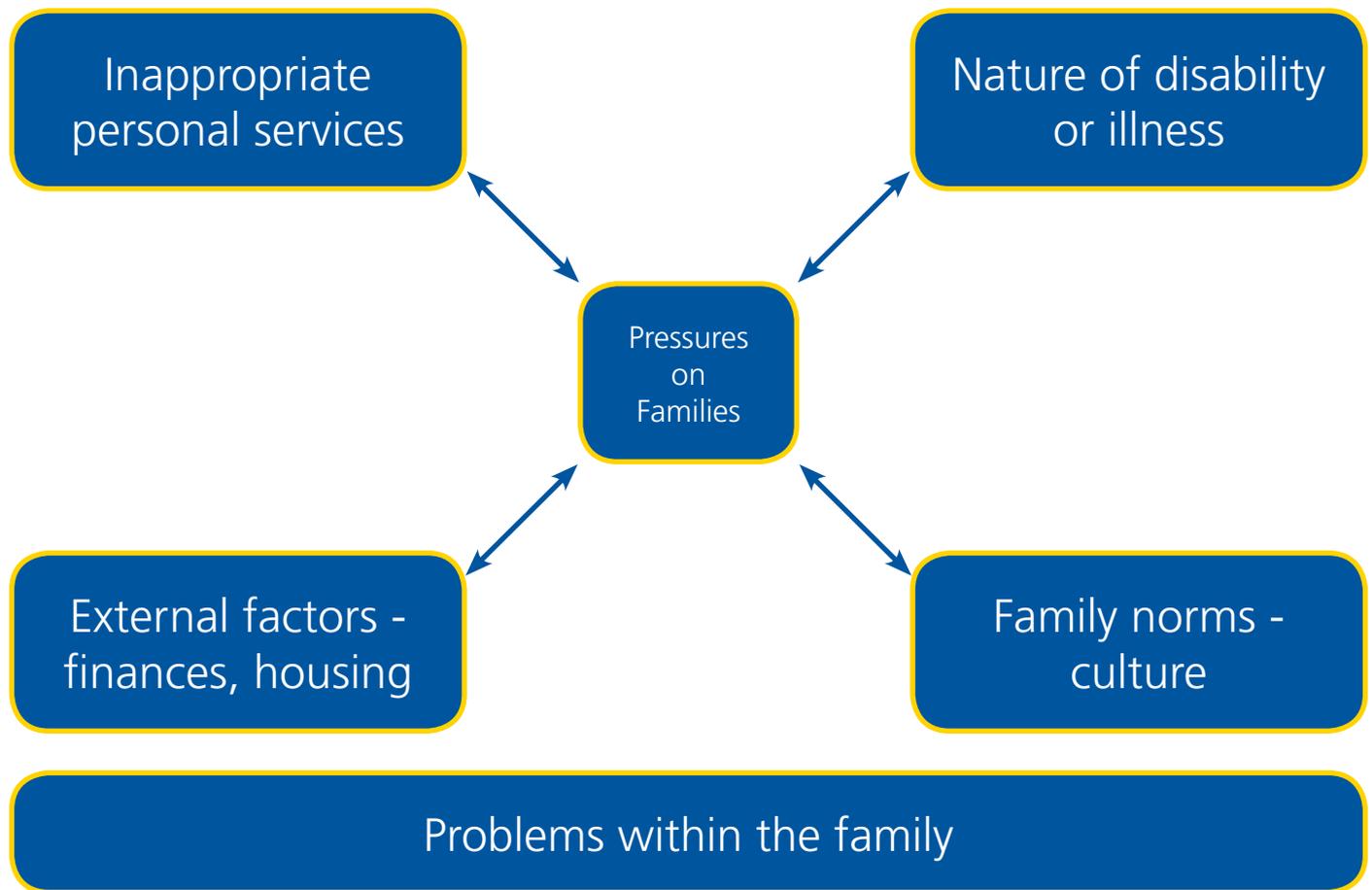
The family approach to supporting young carers highlights and promotes the needs of all family members where there are caring responsibilities present. It recognises that the lack of adequate high quality services is one of the major reasons why some children become young carers in the first place, why others have negative experiences of caring and that these factors are aggravated by poverty and low family income (Becker et al 1998).

While adequate services (and financial resources) for parents with ill-health or disability will benefit the whole family, many young carers express a need for recognition and services in their own right. The key legislation for assessing young carers is the 1995 Carers (Recognition and Services) Act, the 1989 Children Act and the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families (DOH 1999), Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004. The Social Services Inspectorate (1996) outlined a set of factors that should be taken into consideration in assessment.



Young Carers Making a Start

(Department of Health Social Services Inspectorate, 1996)
Outlined...



In England and Wales, agencies are increasingly applying the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DOH 1999) to young carers and their families. This is based on research findings about parent-child relationships, child development and risk/protective factors. Although the primary emphasis is on within-family circumstances, it adopts an explicit ecological approach and pays attention to external environmental influences and the part played by service agencies individually and co-operatively.





Family and Environmental Factors

The three domains represented in the sides of the triangle are each divided into several components.

Child's Developmental Needs	Parenting Capacity	Family and Environmental Factors
Health	Basic care	Family history and functioning
Education	Ensuring safety	Wider family
Identity	Emotional warmth	Housing
Emotional and behavioural development	Stimulation	Employment
Family and social relationships	Guidance and boundaries	Income
Social presentation	Stability	Family and social integration
Self care skills		Community resources

Although developed specifically to cover 'Children in Need' as defined in Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, the Framework does not have to be confined to children classified in that way. The Framework report covers a wide range of children and situations, but does include a short section on young carers:

"An assessment of family circumstances is essential and services should be provided to parents to enhance their ability to fulfil their parenting responsibilities.

Practitioners need to be aware that the children and adults may have different perceptions about what level of caring responsibility is appropriate, which require resolving by joint work between adults' and children's services."

Dearden & Becker (2001) make explicit use of the framework's 3 domains.

Domain	Application to Young Carers
Child's Developmental Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young carers have the same needs as all children• Additional needs may include difficulty in attending school, doing homework, isolation, feeling different from peers, lack of time for recreation, specific anxieties related to their parent's condition and embarrassment from giving intimate care
Parenting Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parenting capacity is related to the nature of parent's illness or disability• It is important to recognise parent's strengths• Parenting may be affected by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited mobility or strength• Reduced or changeable responsiveness owing to mental health problems• Poverty and stigma
Family and Environmental Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low income• Inadequate housing• Lack of community support• Prejudice and discrimination



When assessing young carers, a useful tool is the checklist set out in the SSI practice guide to the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. The checklist seeks to combine individual attention to the child with a 'whole family approach'.

SSI Checklist

- Listen to the child or young person and respect their views.
- Give time and privacy to children who may need this in order to talk about their situation.
- Acknowledge that this is the way the family copes with disability or illness.
- Acknowledge the parent's strengths.
- Beware of undermining parenting capacity.
- Consider what is needed to assist the parent in her/his parenting role.
- Consider the needs of the child(ren) arising from caring responsibilities.
- Consider whether the caring responsibilities are restricting the child's ability to benefit from his/her education.
- Consider possible impairment of the child's emotional and social development.
- Remember children must be allowed to be children.
- Provide information on the full range of relevant support services, young carers' groups and contact points for further advice or information on specific issues.

Another useful set of guidelines for assessments on young carers is as follows:

- See the young person separately for part of the assessment.
- Explain the purpose and nature of the assessment.
- Listen carefully to carers.
- Avoid jargon.
- Avoid assumptions about gender, age, ethnicity, etc.
- Encourage the young carer to relay their wishes.
- Explain any time limits if these apply to service provision.
- Ask family for feedback after assessment is completed.

Common Assessment Framework

The CAF for Children and Young People is a key part of the strategy to shift the focus from dealing with the consequences of difficulties in children's lives to preventing things from going wrong in the first place. It is a nationally standardized approach to conducting an assessment of the needs of a child or young person and deciding how these needs should be met.

The CAF promotes more effective, earlier identification of children's additional needs and improves multi-agency working. It is intended to provide a simple, non-bureaucratic process for a holistic assessment of a child's needs, taking account of the individual family and community.

The CAF has been developed by practitioners in all agencies so that they can communicate and work more effectively together. The CAF encourages greater sharing between practitioners, where consent is given. More information about the CAF can be found at www.dcsf.gov.uk.



Who can help?

Education

The education setting offers a range of opportunities for the identification and support of young carers, but can also be the backdrop for a multitude of difficulties.

School in particular and, later in life, college or work based learning, makes up a large part of every young person's life due to the time they spend there. This time may also provide feelings of stability and normality in their lives and provide a break from their responsibilities at home.

The extensive range of pastoral services within these settings can also provide the opportunity to develop relationships and receive support where a young person is facing difficulties, either personally or in achieving their educational potential.

However, before they can be supported, young carers need to be identified, a task which can be made very difficult due to the fear of disclosure common amongst this group.

Caring responsibilities can have a negative impact on performance at school. This may be as a result of poor time keeping, shortened attention span (due to tiredness and/or anxiety), problems keeping up to date with homework, absence, bullying, or isolation. These problems are not uncommon in other young people, but in the case of young carers they are most likely brought about by their caring role.

The possibility of caring responsibilities should always be considered in such cases as, in many situations, small changes can result in huge benefits to the young person.

In **Sunderland**, the carers' centre has been working with the Children's Services Directorate of the local authority to implement a Young Carers Card to be carried whilst in school.

The initiative was developed in response to issues raised by young carers from their experiences in school. The young people explained how their responsibilities at home often impacted on their school life, for example leading to them receiving detention for being late, or getting into trouble because they needed to use their mobile phone to maintain contact with the person they cared for. When asked "What would make things easier in school for you?", the group came up with the idea of the Young Carers Card. They suggested it should have their picture and school logo on one side and on the other a short explanation of their requirements, co-signed by the Head Teacher.

Young carers have been involved throughout the development of the scheme, which has been successfully launched across the city.

School Card leaflets should be available in every school, for further information please contact your local education authority on 0191 561 5601



Staff right across the education setting may be able to provide this support and one of the strengths of the sector is the range of staff within it, each of whom can form supportive relationships:

- Teachers
- Learning Mentors
- Playground staff
- School Health Advisers
- Connexions Personal Advisers
- Pupil Referral Unit staff
- College lecturers
- Work-based Learning tutors
- Education Welfare Officers

The type of support a young carer may require will be dependent on the needs of the individual and will change over time, in some cases being episodic. Examples include:

- Providing information about support available outside the school
- Explaining and maintaining confidentiality
- Support with issues of bullying
- Help in keeping up with school work, including the provision of homework clubs
- Providing a safe space to discuss feelings
- Allowing access to a phone or use of a mobile
- Raising the profile of related issues, such as disability and substance misuse, through the PHSE curriculum

Health

Sunderland Carers' Centre is always working to improve links with the health sector to develop their potential to identify and support carers. All NHS trusts in Sunderland are members of the Young Carers Multi-Agency Partnership and have signed up to the revised Multi-agency carers strategy which has recently been launched.

Professionals in the health services regularly support a range of individuals who receive care from family or friends. As such they are ideally placed to identify these carers as part of their needs assessment.

Whilst the demands on professionals are already very high, the opportunity to reach carers and young carers cannot be underestimated.

Through greater identification, effective referral and information sharing, systems could be developed to ensure appropriate support is made available and relevant agencies are informed. A range of health professionals could contribute to this, including:

- GPs
- Community Mental Health teams
- Drug and Alcohol teams
- Occupational Therapists
- District Nurses and Health Visitors

The provision of accessible information may also be of huge benefit to young carers whose knowledge and understanding of the condition they are providing support for is often self-taught and incomplete.

GPs in particular are ideally placed to identify situations where the young people in a family have caring responsibilities.

The sooner young carers are recognised the easier it is to prevent them from taking on inappropriate levels of care. Sunderland Carers' Centre aims to work with young people from the initial point of a long-term illness or disability being diagnosed within their family. We want to support young people before they reach crisis point and show them that there are options available.

In order to obtain this early identification we must work in partnership with health professionals so that as soon as they diagnose an adult with a long term illness they are able to ask if there are any young people in the family that may require support or advice. Passing on our information and raising the awareness of young carers.

Children's Services and Adult Services

Social workers have a key role to play in identifying and supporting young carers. Key to this is ensuring that assessments are holistic and take a whole family view on support needs.

The provision of accessible information and inclusion of young carers in planning discussions would also be a positive step in many cases.

Young people and parents may be afraid to speak to social workers about their situation through fear of becoming involved in the care system. However unjustified this view may be, more must be done to remove this barrier.

Social workers must acknowledge young people within the family and the role they take, identifying young carers from the initial point of commencing work with a family can help them to gain support they need and prevent them from taking on inappropriate levels of care.

Young Carers Projects

Young carers projects are greatly valued by the young people who access them and by their families. A diverse range of approaches has been developed in response to the local needs identified and also to the individual needs of each young carer.

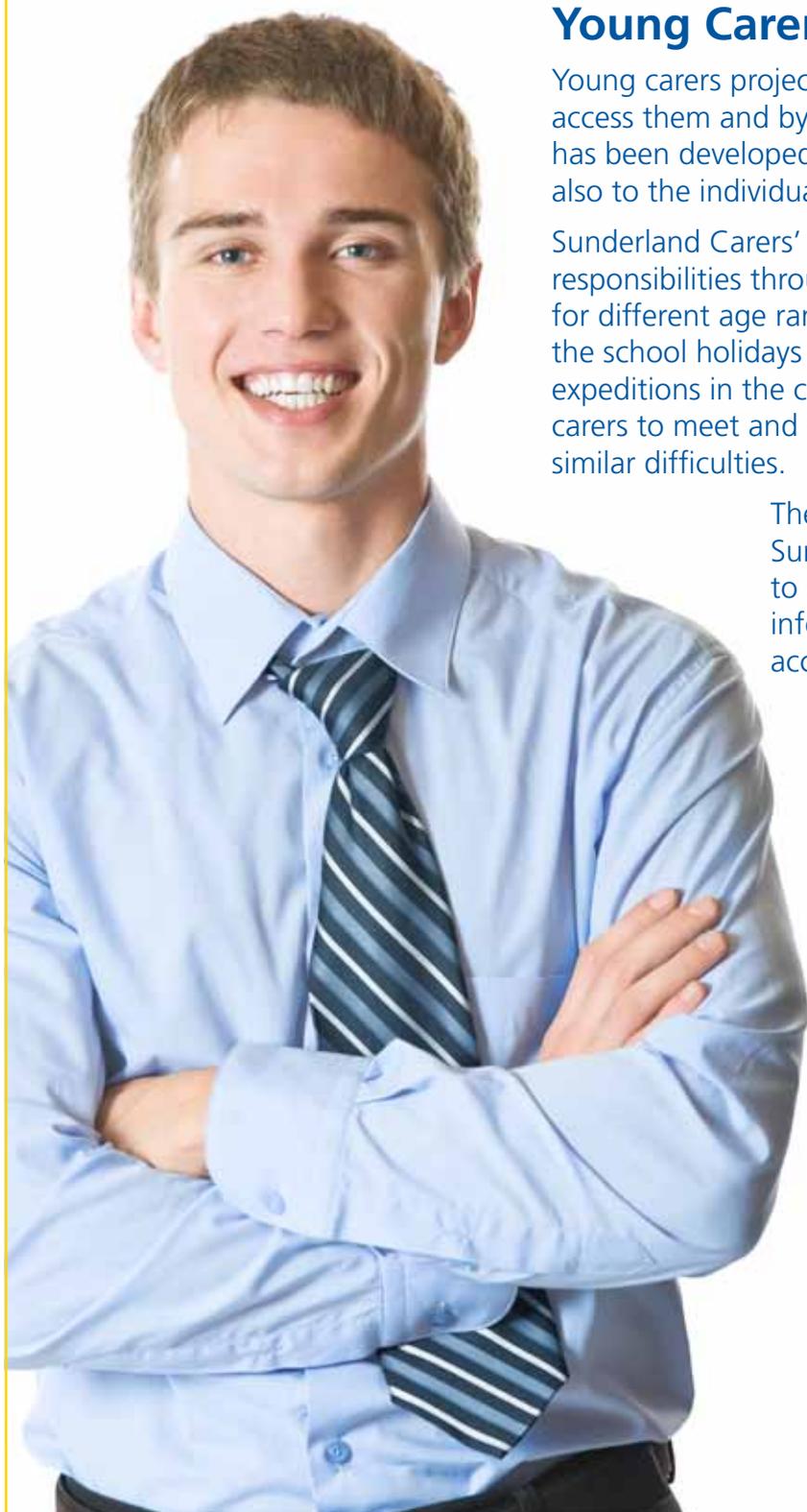
Sunderland Carers' Centre provides respite from caring responsibilities through activities. We run several weekly groups for different age ranges and also have trips and activities during the school holidays which range from first aid training to camping expeditions in the countryside. These are an opportunity for young carers to meet and spend time with peers who are experiencing similar difficulties.

The Young Carers Development Workers in Sunderland give young carers an opportunity to explore their feelings and provide advice and information to help individuals and their families access relevant help and support.

We take a whole family approach when working with young carers, ensuring that the family has the necessary package of support in place to prevent young carers taking on too many responsibilities. Sunderland Carers' Centre also works with professionals to raise awareness of young carers, our young carers development workers can be contacted for advice and information on 0191 567 3232

Other Professionals

Any professional working with young people and/or their families may be working with young carers and should therefore receive training about the issues and how to provide appropriate support, for further information on training opportunities contact your training section or Sunderland Carers' Centre on 0191 567 3232



Sources of help & information

The following pages contain information about the main people and places that provide information, advice, support or services to young carers and their families.

Princess Royal Trust Sunderland Carers' Centre

12 Toward Road, Sunderland, SR12QF

Telephone **0191 567 3232**

E-mail **youngcarers@sunderlandcarers.co.uk** or **info@sunderlandcarers.co.uk**.

Sunderland Carers Centre supports Carers of all ages. We offer practical help, emotional support, information, advice and a range of activities and opportunities to meet other carers.

The Children's Society

The Children's Society National Young Carers Initiative provides information, advice and training to anyone who works with young carers and their families.

Click onto **www.youngcarer.com**.

YCNet

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers website, offering a supportive online community for young carers.

Click onto **www.youngcarers.net**.

Benefits and Welfare Rights

Welfare Rights

The Cornhill Centre, Goschen Street, Sunderland, SR5 2LR.

Telephone 0191 553 5303

Sunderland Welfare Rights holds free sessions for carers at Sunderland Carers' Centre every Wednesday afternoon by appointment only. Please contact Sunderland Carers' Centre for more information.

Jobcentre Plus (for people aged under 60)

For your local office visit **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**.

Jobseeker Direct

Telephone 0845 6060 234

This service is available to anyone who is looking for work 8am - 6pm weekdays and 9am - 1pm Saturdays. Calls are charged at local rates.

The Pension Service (for people aged 60+)

Telephone 0845 606 0265 or Textphone 0845 606 0285, Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm

Benefits Enquiry Line

Telephone 0800 882 200

Bullying

Childline

Telephone 0800 1111

Children and young people can call this helpline about any problem, at any time, day or night. Also visit the website at www.childline.org.uk.

Kidscape Bullying Helpline

Telephone 020 7730 3300

Support for parents who have a child who is being bullied.

Bullying Online

Bullying Online is the UK's leading anti-bullying charity and their website has information for parents, children and schools. Visit www.bullying.co.uk.

Cancer

Rip Rap

Rip Rap's website has been developed especially for 12-16 year olds who have a parent with cancer. Click onto www.riprap.org.uk.

Multiple Sclerosis

Young MS

A website from the MS society to support children and young people affected by MS. Click onto www.youngms.org.uk.

MS Society

Information and advice about MS, visit www.mssociety.org.uk.

Connexions Direct

Connexions Direct offers quick access to information and advice on a wide range of topics. Connexions Direct Personal Advisers are on hand to listen to young people and can offer confidential advice and practical help by telephone, through web chat, via eh-mail or text message.

Connexions Direct Advisers are available from 8am right through to 2am, seven days a week.

Call free on 080 800 13 2 19 text on 07766 4 13 2 19 or visit www.connexions-direct.com.

Connexions

Connexions Personal Advisors offer advice and information on health, leisure, jobs and learning, bringing together services for young people aged 13 to 19 (and aged up to 25 for people with disabilities). Young people can call their local office to make an appointment or simply drop-in, the Sunderland offices are:

City Library and Arts Centre 1st Floor, 30-32 Fawcett Street, Sunderland, SR1 1RE

Opening times: Monday – Friday 9:30am – 5pm

Telephone 0191 4432950

66 Newbottle Street, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 4GB

Opening times: Monday and Friday 10am-4pm

Tuesday and Thursday 9am-5pm

Wednesday by appointment only

Telephone 0191 4432972

The Galleries, Washington

Opening times: Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays 10am - 5pm,
Fridays 10am - 4pm,
Tuesdays by appointment only

Telephone 0800 073 8700

Counselling services

Counselling can help people to talk through issues that are facing them. Counselling services are confidential. Examples of places where counselling is available:

- some schools have counselling services
- people can sometimes get counselling through their local doctor
- CRUSE, for young people who have experienced loss. Telephone 0808 808 1677 Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm, or visit www.rd4u.org.uk
- Youth Information Services - some youth information services provide counselling for young people

The Samaritans

Samaritans provides confidential non-judgemental support, 24 hours a day for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide. Telephone 08457 90 90 90 or visit www.samaritans.org.

Drugs and alcohol services

NECA (North East Council on Addictions) provides confidential information, advice, support and counselling to anyone under the age of 25 who has issues concerning alcohol, drugs, other related substances or gambling and for family and carers who support them. Visit www.neca.co.uk for links to area offices.

Adfam - families, drugs and alcohol

Information for families affected by drug and alcohol misuse. Click onto www.adfam.org.uk.

Frank

The national drugs helpline. Free information on drugs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Telephone 0800 776 600 or click onto www.talktofrank.com.

Drinkline

Telephone 0800 917 8282

YDAP- Youth Drug and Alcohol Project

Provides young people with information, support, help and advice. Telephone 0191 5663159 or click onto www.ydap.co.uk.

Health

NHS Direct

NHS Direct is a service staffed by nurses and professional advisers, giving confidential healthcare advice and information 24 hours a day. Telephone 0845 46 47 or visit www.nhsdirect.com.

Rethink

Information about severe mental illness including treatments, benefits, legal rights and living with mental illness. Telephone 020 8974 6814, 10am - 3pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10am - 1pm Tuesday and Thursday, e-mail advice@rethink.org or visit www.rethink.org.

YoungMinds

A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people. Telephone 020 7336 8445, e-mail enquiries@youngminds.org.uk or visit www.youngminds.org.uk.

Homelessness

Ashkirk Homelessness Unit

5/6 Ashkirk, Lakeside Village, Sunderland, SR3 3DT. Telephone 0191 5220096.

The Keys Project

Provides Housing support for young people aged 16-25. Anyone requiring further information can contact the Keys Project, Services for Young People: 11 John Street, Sunderland, SR1 1HT. Telephone 0191 566 3150. E-mail: Keys@ssd.sunderland.gov.uk.

Shelter

Click on to www.shelter.org.uk.

North East Nightstop

2nd Floor, Union Chambers, Grainger Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE1 5JE
Telephone 0191 261 8881 or e-mail nightstopne@aol.com

North East Nightstop provides safe emergency accommodation for homeless young people aged 16 - 25 exclusively in the homes of approved volunteers until appropriate permanent housing is secured.

City of Sunderland Council Website

www.sunderland.gov.uk

Youth Services

Princes Trust

Support for 18- 30 year olds about business and employment, opportunities for training and advice. The Prince's Trust North East Regional Office, Units 9 & 10 Enterprise House, Kingsway North, Team Valley Trading Estate, Gateshead, NE11 0SR. Telephone 01914 973 210, fax 01914 973 211, e-mail webinfone@princes-trust.org.uk

Sunderland Youth Development Group

The Award Centre, 270A Hylton Road, Sunderland, SR4 7XJ
Telephone 0191 5617410

The Youth Development Group provides youth provision for 13-19 year olds in Sunderland.

Please note: the services and websites listed in this section have been contacted to ensure their details are accurate at the time of going to print. However, please bear in mind that information can change quickly, particularly on the internet. Sunderland Carers' Centre cannot take responsibility for the quality of services or the content of websites listed in it or any resulting loss, damage or distress.





The Princess Royal Trust
Sunderland Carers Centre

Sunderland Carers' Centre
12 Toward Road
Sunderland
SR1 2QF

Tel: 0191 567 3232

Fax: 0191 567 8536

Email:

info@sunderlandcarers.co.uk
youngcarers@sunderlandcarers.co.uk

Website: www.sunderland.nhs.uk/carers

This information pack can be made available in large print,
braille, audio and other languages.