



Young carers in your school

A guide to help identify
and support young carers
in primary schools



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Young carers in Barnet

Barnet has an estimated 4,000 young carers. They are of all ages ranging from 5 through to 17. The tasks and level of caring undertaken by young carers can vary according to the nature of the illness or disability, the level and frequency of need for care, and the structure of the family as a whole.

Some young carers are known to their schools. Many more are invisible and only come on to the schools radar because of one too many absences or behavioural difficulties.

We have produced this guide for all professionals working in primary schools with the hope that it will help improve the identification of young carers, enhance the understanding of the issues that these children and young people face, and go some way to show how their needs can be met.

We believe that young carers can be supported to ensure that their education does not take second place to their caring responsibilities.

Best wishes

Becky

Becky Prangley

Young Carers Schools Liaison Officer

Who are young carers?

Young carers are children or young people aged between 5 and 17 who provide regular care to a family member, or are affected by the needs of a relative they are living with.

These often include:

- **Illness**
- **Mental health illness**
- **Substance or alcohol misuse**
- **Physical disability**
- **Learning disability**

Young carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. These can include:

- Practical tasks – cooking, housework and shopping
- Physical care – lifting or helping someone use the stairs
- Personal care – dressing, washing, helping with toileting needs
- Emotional support – listening, calming, being present
- Managing the family budget, collecting benefits and prescriptions
- Medication management
- Looking after younger siblings
- Helping someone communicate



Impact of caring

‘A young carer becomes vulnerable when their caring roles risks impacting upon their emotional or physical wellbeing and their prospects in education and life.’

Department of Health, 2014

Evidence shows that being a young carer can impact on school attendance, attainment, personal development and welfare.

Some of the impacts can be on a young person’s:

- **Socialisation:** Young carers often feel different or isolated from their peers and have limited opportunities for socialising. A quarter of young carers in the UK said they were bullied at school because of their caring role (Carers Trust, 2013)
- **Emotional wellbeing:** Stress, tiredness and mental ill-health are common for young carers
- **Physical health:** Young carers are often severely affected by caring through the night, repeatedly lifting a heavy adult, poor diet and lack of sleep
- **Stable environment:** Young carers can experience traumatic life changes such as bereavement, family break-up, losing income and housing, or seeing the effects of an illness or addiction on the person they care for

Some effects on young carers that help to care for a sibling:

- They may be reluctant to bring friends home
- If parents are finding it difficult to cope, this may have a negative impact on a sibling
- Siblings may suffer from anger and embarrassment at other people’s reactions
- Siblings may mimic the behaviour of a sibling
- School books and property may be damaged by a brother or sister

Impact on a young carers education

Caring responsibilities have a significant impact on a pupil's learning:

- Young carers may miss school regularly
- They may also be late, this could be frequently and for various reasons, including taking younger siblings to school
- Homework may suffer too, with rushed or incomplete work handed in
- Young carers may find it difficult to concentrate in class or suffer from tiredness, which may be reflected in the work they produce
- Young carers can suffer from emotions such as anxiety, stress and anger which may result in behavioural problems at school
- If left unsupported, young carers can continue to struggle with school and have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the difference between nine Cs and nine Ds (*The Children's Society, 2013*)
- By the time they reach 16 they are more likely than the national average not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) between 16 and 19 (*The Children's Society, 2013*)
- It may not be possible for young carers to join in with after school activities. Caring responsibilities may prevent them from attending school events that may benefit them
- Young carers may find it difficult to be part of a group. This could be because they may be more mature than their peers, or, conversely have less developed social skills

Between 13 % of primary school age and 27% secondary age miss school or experience educational difficulties. This increases to 40% where children miss school care for a relative with a substance misuse problem

(*Dearden and Becker, 2004*)

Young Carers in schools programme

Will there be young carers in every school?

It is likely that there will be many young carers at every school in England. The 2011 Census identified over 177,000 young carers in England and Wales, although this is widely believed to be the tip of the iceberg. 42% of young carers have said that nobody in their school was aware of their caring role (Sempik, J, Becker S, 2013).

The 2011 Census revealed that in Barnet there were just under 4,000 young carers. Today there are probably many more. Barnet Young Carers currently has 600 young carers registered as members (2019).

Why are many young carers hidden?

- Young carers do not realise that they are a carer or that their life is different to their peers
- The condition of the person they care for is not obvious so people don't think that the young person needs any help
- They don't want to be any different from their peers so they don't draw attention to their caring role
- They want to keep their identity at school separate from their caring role
- It's not the sort of thing they feel they can discuss with their friends
- There has been no opportunity to share their story
- They are worried about bullying
- They worry that the family will be split up and that they will be taken into care
- They want to keep caring a secret and/or are embarrassed
- They see no reason to tell their story and don't believe that any positive action will occur as a result of doing so

Young Carers in Schools Programme

It is vital that schools take a whole school approach to identifying and supporting young carers, and all school staff have the knowledge and confidence to identify and support pupils with caring responsibilities.

By taking part in the Young Carers in Schools programme, schools will be able to show that they are meeting the needs of a particularly vulnerable group of pupils (specifically mentioned in Ofsted's Common Inspection Framework, 2015). Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society, Barnet Young Carers team are working in partnership to promote the programme in Barnet.

The Young Carers in Schools Programme supports schools to adopt a whole school approach to identifying and supporting young carers, in which schools:

- **Have assigned members of staff for young carers** so that a member of the schools' governing body and senior leadership team has responsibility for leading and championing the school's provision for young carers, and there is a clearly identifiable lead, responsible for day-to-day implementation
- **Give staff information they need to identify young carers**
- **Promote positive images and information** about disability, illness and young carers
- **Consult and listen to young carers**, ensuring they have time and space to talk
- **Embed young carers in existing school systems**, monitoring and tracking their attendance, attainment and wellbeing
- **Support and signpost young carers and their families**

This commitment and capability is essential because one of the main reasons young carers say they do not access support is stigma. A positive whole school ethos where young carers and their families are respected and valued by pupils, staff and the wider school community is crucial to ensuring young carers and their families feel safe and confident to access support.

Schools can find out more about the Young Carers in Schools Programme, get involved and get resources to support young carers by visiting <https://youngcarersinschools.com>

Identification of young carers

Many young carers remain unidentified and schools can play a pivotal role helping to identify them and then referring them on for support. There are a wide range of indicators that might point towards a child being a young carer. The signs that a child or young person may be a young carer may of course also be indicators of many other issues.

However, knowing these signs can help staff to build up a picture of a pupil and ask the right questions to reveal that a pupil is a young carer.

Is the young carer:

- Often late or missing days or weeks off school for no reason?
- Often tired, anxious or withdrawn?
- Having problems socially or with making friends? Conversely, do they get on well with adults and present as very mature for their age?
- A victim of bullying?
- Depressed?
- Finding it difficult to concentrate on their work?
- Having difficulty in joining in extracurricular activities or unable to attend school trips?
- Isolated?
- Not handing in their homework/coursework on time, or completing it late and to a low standard?
- Anxious or concerned about an ill or disabled relative?
- Displaying behavioural problems?



- Having physical problems such as back pain (perhaps from heavy lifting)?
- Secretive about home life?
- Showing signs of physical neglect or poor diet, for example hungry, thin or lacking clean uniform?
- Listed as a Child in Need, subject to a Child Protection plan, or Looked-after Child Plan where parental ill health or addiction issues are involved?
- A sibling of a pupil at your school who is registered with disabilities or ongoing health problems, including mental ill health? (Refer to your SEN Disability Register and School Census data).

Are parents (or another relative):

- Disabled or do they have an illness or addiction problem? (It is worth noting that not all children who have a family member who is ill or disabled or has an addiction problem is a young carer).
- Difficult to engage with?
- Not attending parent's evenings?
- Not communicating with school?
- On low incomes, and unable to afford school related expenses? This may be because of disability related unemployment.

Support from Barnet Young Carers

Barnet Young Carers or BYC for short, is the team responsible for supporting young carers.

We work closely with the local authority and are currently contracted to help identify, register and support young carers throughout the London Borough of Barnet. We currently have about 600 young people registered with us (2019).

The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 outline that young carers have the right to:

- Be identified;
- An assessment of their needs;
- Have their future needs considered;
- A 'whole family approach'.

We take a whole family approach, working closely with schools, social services and other agencies to provide young carers with the help and support they need. Our Family Support staff work closely with Children's Services and lead on Early Help Assessments. They also support Child in Need and Child Protection plans, and provide advice and information to parents.

At the point of registration, Barnet Young Carers conduct Young Carers Assessments and a Family Assessment to identify the impact caring is having on the young person and the different areas of need within the family. We then create a support plan to address the needs within the family, and refer or signpost to other services where necessary.

Barnet Young Carers provides young carers a chance to have a break from their caring role, a chance to talk to someone, socialise with others in similar situations and most importantly have fun and get back some of the childhood that they are missing!

Barnet Young Carers provides support for young carers in the following areas:

- Socialisation
- Educational attainment, school attendance/punctuality
- Emotional well-being

Registered young carers can access the following services:

- Group activities
- Support to access activities in the London Borough of Barnet (via partnerships)
- Peer support groups
- Educational support and workshops
- School support
- Advice, information and advocacy
- Barnet Leisure Pass

Our Young Carers Team staff can attend professional meetings to support or advocate on behalf of the young person and offer support in school. The School Liaison Officer also offers support to professionals working with young carers.



Working with Schools

Barnet Young Carers works with schools to raise awareness and identify 'hidden' or 'invisible' young carers.

Working with Barnet Young Carers can help your school meet the Healthy Schools Initiative targets, meeting outcomes for Every Child Matters. For part of the Healthy Schools bronze award, schools will need to demonstrate that they are identifying and supporting young carers. We also work closely with the Resilience in Schools Programme.

With an identified young carers' lead within school, we can help young carers to build strong support networks and participate fully in school life.

We can support with the following:

- Helping develop early recognition and identification of young carers
 - Assemblies - Providing children a better understanding of who young carers are and the support that is available to them. This can be delivered by a member of the BYC team or schools can use the assembly video link available on the Barnet Young Carers website. This video link can also be used in PHSE lessons along with other resources.
 - Inset day / Teacher training. This can be delivered by a member of the BYC team or schools can use the professionals video link on the Barnet Young Carers website.
- Support with access to lesson plans / resources
- Parent coffee mornings / information sessions
- Support the school to run an in-school young carers group, allowing young carers to meet new friends who share similar experiences.
- Advocating for, and facilitating a young carer's assessment
- Referring to, and working with us to support young carers

Referral process to register a Young Carer

Young Carers must be a resident in Barnet to register to access Barnet Young Carers services between the ages of 5 – 17 years.

To make a referral online, please scan the QR code below or use the URL. You can also email the Young Carers Team for a form to be sent to you.

Once we have the referral we will contact the family to arrange an assessment. We will then register the young person who will then have access to our services.

For more information about our services, any advice or queries please email the Young Carers Team or contact our School Liaison Officer for any support you may need in your school to raise awareness and identify young carers.

Please email:
youngcarers@barnetcarers.org

<http://barnetyoungcarers.org.uk/refer-a-young-carer/>



Other resources

School programmes

Healthy Schools Healthy Schools London is an awards programme which recognises schools' achievements in supporting pupil health and wellbeing. Schools in Barnet have been applying for the scheme since September 2013 and any school can apply.

- *Tanya Barney - tania.barney@healtheducationpartnership.com*
- *Andrew Pembroke - andrew.pembroke@healtheducationpartnership.com*

Resilience in Schools Programme

The Resilient Schools programme provides a framework for schools to assess and improve mental health and wellbeing support to pupils, parent and carers and all staff within the school.

- *jayne.abbott@barnet.gov.uk*
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Carers Support Services

Adult Carers Support Team

Support for Adult Carers - Barnet Carers Centre offers a wide range of services to support unpaid informal carers in Barnet.

- *www.barnetcarers.org*
- *adultcarers@barnetcarers.org*

Barnet Home Carers

Barnet Carers Centre provides social and personal care in the home and community, 24 hours a day, seven days a week with professional, experienced care staff who are kind, caring and compassionate as well as reliable and fully trained in a wide range of areas of support.

- *www.barnethomecarers.org.uk*
 - *donia.arnall@barnetcarers.org*
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Safeguarding

MASH Team

MASH in Barnet is the single point of entry for all referrals regarding concerns for a child or young person (unborn - 18 years) or where it is felt they would benefit from additional support. Referrals will cover all thresholds of need from child protection to early help.

- Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm: 020 8359 4066
- Emergency Duty Team (out of hours): 020 8359 2000

School Attendance / Careers

Education Welfare Team

The EWT works with schools to identify families for early intervention support where pupils' attendance patterns indicate they are at risk of becoming persistent absentees from school, and encourages schools to work closely with parents on all matters affecting attendance.

- Telephone: 020 8359 7684

BEETS

The BEETS Team (Barnet Education Employment and Training Support) works to support young people in Barnet between the ages of 13 and 19 by providing high quality Information, Advice and Guidance (Careers Guidance) regarding Post 16 Options, and for those aged up to 25 with EHC plans.

- <https://www.barnetlocaloffer.org.uk/pages/home/information-and-advice/preparing-for-adulthood/education-training-and-employment/careers-advice>





barnet young carers

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