

Shaping our future

Improving Assessment and Support for Young Carers' Transition into Adulthood



Department
of Health &
Social Care

The
Children's
Society

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Foreword

At a time when some young people need it the most, access to support structures, systems and guidance simply disappears. For young carers on the cusp of adulthood this leaves them exposed to new risks to face, new relationships to build and new responsibilities to shoulder, at the same time as making important decisions about their future.

This report looks at the needs of young carers in transition to adulthood. It has been powerfully informed by the lived experiences of 153 young adult carers from across the whole of England. Their honest reflections, lived experiences and acquired expertise has directly informed the findings and recommendations to ensure that improved support for young carers in transition to adulthood is underpinned by the voices of young adult carers who have directly experienced worry, stress and negative outcomes upon their well-being. Developments in legislation through The Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 significantly strengthened the rights of all young carers, those they care for and the whole family. The cross-Government Carers Action Plan 2018 - 2020¹ set out the Cross-Government's commitments to supporting carers; including a specific action to improve support for young adult carers recognising that young carers can experience poorer mental and physical

health, and miss out on opportunities in education and employment in the future as a result of their caring responsibilities.

The Children's Society has been commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care to identify and disseminate effective practices to support and enable Young Adult Carers to make positive transitions between the ages of 16-24, and identify the types of practical and emotional support that can enable them to achieve their full potential as they move from childhood to adulthood. All local authorities in England now need to adopt a whole system, whole council, whole family approach, coordinating services and support around the person needing care to consider the impact of their needs upon the whole family, including their children. The Care Act now makes integration, cooperation and partnership a legal requirement for local authorities and for all agencies involved in public care, including health services.

However, despite these changes in legislation, entitlements and recognition for young carers and despite the growing evidence of the need for improved support of all vulnerable young people as they transition to adulthood, young carers continue to fall through the gap between services, their receipt of and access to support is not being monitored effectively and so the scale of the issue remains unknown and the figures and statistics related to young carers are fragmented and patchy.

As every single one of us who has achieved adulthood knows, this period of transition is fraught with uncertainty and self-doubt. That is true for all of us – even those of us who have had all the support and advantages we could wish for in life. We know that this is a critical moment in life – crucial for building the foundations for a safe, happy and healthy future. Imagine then approaching this moment from a background of multiple disadvantage and finding the moment of transition littered with barriers and the withdrawal of support and assistance. This leaves some young people vulnerable and unable to consider or achieve their ambitions and aspirations. They are often let down by universal services and targeted specialist services.

What a terrible dereliction of our moral duty to help them to have the best possible start in life and fulfil their potential in society! So much more needs to be done to ensure that reliable and appropriate support is provided to vulnerable young people to achieve a smooth transition into adulthood, so that they can fully play their part in building a brighter future for us all.

Nick Rosevere
Chief Executive
The Children's Society

¹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/carers-action-plan-2018-to-2020





Chapter 1

Introduction



In 2018 The Children's Society highlighted the serious vulnerabilities of young people in transition to adulthood and the need to improve their support to ensure they reach their full potential.² The 'Crumbling Futures' report³ revealed the extent to which young people face multiple disadvantages across different areas of their lives. The report highlighted that 1 in 5 sixteen year olds experience five or more complex issues that can affect their health, safety or development. However, due to their age these young people often fall through the gaps between children's and adults services, meaning support can fall short at a time when they need it the most transitioning to adulthood. This support then often disappears entirely as they turn 18 years old. Our focused work with young carers has highlighted that these young people face particular and conflicting issues and disadvantages that impact upon their aspirations, positive life experiences and decision making as they approach adulthood.

The Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 outlined duties for young carers including support in transition to their adult life. These duties were welcome and necessary, and gave progress to recognising the need to improve young carers' transition to adulthood and outcomes for young adult carers. However, young carers still face barriers to accessing support and there is still a long way to go before the needs of young carers are met in their transition to adulthood. The issues young carers face are multiple and complex and can include:

- Juggling caring responsibilities alongside their own health and well-being.
- Being isolated and feeling lonely.
- Housing decisions and household management.
- Education.
- Employment.
- Living in poverty.
- Budgeting and financial management.
- Relationships with friends, family and partners.
- Planning for their future.

Detrimental to this is that often these young people feel they are managing all of their issues alone without any guidance or support and that they face significant barriers to accessing support.

Following the launch of the Carers Action Plan, The Children's Society has been commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care to identify and disseminate effective practices to support to enable Young Adult Carers to make positive transitions between the ages of 16 and 24. This commission includes identifying the types of practical and emotional support that can enable young adult carers to achieve a positive transition from childhood to adulthood. Specifically the programme included:

- An outline of current practice regarding young carers' transition to adulthood across nine regions of England.⁴
- Producing tools and resources for both young people and professionals based on any gaps in provision and services.
- Ensuring key professionals are aware of their duties, roles and responsibilities in ensuring transitional support is provided.

This report presents the findings from the programme delivered by The Children's Society which engaged with 153 Young Adult Carers aged 16 to 24 years in total to directly participate. We embedded their reflections and lived experiences at the centre of the learning and recommendations, and their valuable contributions have informed this report as well as online tools for multi-agency professionals.⁵

² childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/seriously-awkward-the-threshold-to-the-rest-of-their-life

³ childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/crumbling-futures-why-vulnerable-16-and-17-year-olds-need-more

⁴ East Midlands, East of England, Greater London, North East England, North West England, South East England, South West England, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber.

⁵ childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/youngadultcarers

The report highlights that there is a lack of support afforded to young carers as they transition to adulthood, and outlines the detrimental effects and disadvantages they face upon their well-being and future life chances as a result. Additionally, the programme engaged with key professionals to capture examples of current practice delivered by statutory and voluntary service providers, some of the challenges they face to providing good practice delivery and shares regional good practice models being implemented. The report is aimed at multi-agency organisations and professionals, from both voluntary and statutory service providers, including local authority children's and adult's services, education providers (including schools and further and higher education apprenticeship and employment agencies), health services, housing services and others – in particular those with responsibility for young carers and young adult carers across commissioning, leadership, management and practice level service provision. This report outlines steps for Government departments and agencies to improve transitions to adulthood for young carers and recommendations for multi-agency service providers, policy and decision makers.

Methodology

Engaging Young Adult Carers

- Initial consultation events were facilitated by The Children's Society engaging with over 30 young adult carers from across England to capture their experiences of 'transitioning to adulthood'. Discussions included their receipt of any transition assessments, pathway planning activities and their perceptions in hindsight of what would have improved these experiences and processes. Additionally they engaged in 'train the trainer' activities to develop skills in consulting with others and resilience building activities for their own well-being.
- The initial cohorts of young adult carers themselves then carried out a further 11 consultation activities with the peers. The activities gathered qualitative evidence of the experience of young carers in transition to adulthood from a further 123 young adult carers. In total, 153 young adult carers informed this work of their experiences of transition to adulthood as a young carer.
- Following the national consultation activities with Young Adult Carers, the representatives from across England came back to together to analyse key themes and issues faced by young carers that were highlighted throughout these consultation activities and prioritise recommendations for support.

Engaging multi-agency professionals

- Focus group workshops were held across England engaging with multi-agency professionals – including commissioners, directors of services, management and practice level service providers – to gather their experiences of current practice and any challenges in delivery of the duties outlined for young carers' transition to adulthood.
- Online surveys were sent to 152 local authorities and 265 young carer services across England regarding locality provision, strategies and support. A total of 38 responses were received from local authorities (a 25% response rate) and 31 responses from young carer services (a 12% response rate).
- A further 16 telephone interviews were carried out with Young Carers Services and with commissioners of young carers service provision. Where possible interviews were carried out with the service provider and the commissioner from the same regions in order to compare their understanding of local support and strategies being delivered.





Chapter 2

Who are Young Adult Carers?



Although there is no legal definition for Young Adult Carers, they are often referred to as being young people between the ages of 16 and 25 years old⁶ (some definitions refer to them as being from 14 to 25 years old)⁷ who provide, or intend to provide, care for another person who has a long-term illness, is disabled, has a mental health condition, or an addiction problem. They may be caring for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other persons with care needs.

It is important to recognise that all young people under 18 years are still legally children and should have their needs met by services designed for children and young people and in line with relevant legislation. Statutory guidance outlines that '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 well-being and their prospects in education and life'. Additionally, provision needs to be in place to ensure that support does not rapidly fall away when they become an adult.

⁶ About Young Adult Carers. Carers Trust (2015)

⁷ Alexander C, Time to be Heard, A Call for Recognition and Support for Young Adult Carers. Carers Trust (2014)





According to the 2011 census figures, there are approximately 293,000 Young Adult Carers aged 16 to 25 years old in England.⁸ The Children's Society believes the actual figure is much higher, with many more young people in this age group having caring responsibilities either as a continuation of their caring roles from childhood or as new circumstances arise within the family.⁹

Young Adult Carers often fall through the gaps in support, and are hidden from services designed to support them. They tell us that they often have to choose between their own future aspirations or caring for their family, with significant impacts as they transition into adulthood.

These impacts leave them vulnerable to risks related to their safety, health and future opportunities and well-being later in life. These impacts include:

- Feeling anger, stress, guilt, and resentment.
- Becoming even more isolated as a young adult and experiencing loneliness.
- Not pursuing their future goals.
- Not achieving or reaching their potential in education.
- Feeling guilty if they do leave home for university or employment.
- Struggling with higher education, as they may miss days at their place of study or experience disruption due to their caring role.

- Feeling pressure to remain in the family home or at least close by.
- Experience negative impact on their well-being.
- Experience financial issues, living with low income or in poverty.
- Losing all support if it is dropped when they reach 18 years old.

In 2014 Carers Trust¹⁰ highlighted there was a need for more specialist support services for Young Adult Carers. Our research has indicated there has been positive, growing recognition of the needs of young adult carers since this research but that there is still a significant need for better, more joined-up support to be implemented. We learned that thousands of young carers fall through the gaps in services as they approach adulthood, and that nationally, current support is a postcode lottery and dependent upon individual workers recognising needs rather than systematic approaches being in place.

⁸ Wayman S, Raws P, Leadbitter H, (2016) There's Nobody is There – No One Who Can Actually Help? The Challenges of Estimating the Number of Young Carers and Knowing How to Meet Their Needs. Source: Census tables M205 CTO415, Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2015

⁹ Hidden from View: The experiences of young carers in England. The Children's Society. (2013)

¹⁰ Alexander C. Time to be Heard. A Call for Recognition and Support for Young Adult Carers, Carers Trust (2014)



Chapter 3

The policy context



Two landmark pieces of legislation — the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 — led to better, more consolidated rights for young carers, young adult carers and their families.

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to adopt a whole-system, whole-council and whole-family approach to the provision of support for those with care needs.

This means coordinating services and support around the person with care needs, and considering the impacts of care needs upon the whole family, including children. Responsibilities for identifying and supporting young carers are placed on the local authority as a whole and are set out in the Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Children and Families Act 2014 and under the Care Act 2014).

A collaborative, whole-family, whole-systems approach is where all services (including adult services, children's services, health, education and the voluntary sector) work together in a collaborative and preventative way to identify, assess and support the needs of the whole family.

The Children Act 1989 (Amended by the Children and Families Act 2014 Section 96) requires that all local authorities in England must take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are young carers within their area who have needs for support.

Young carers needs assessment

The Children and Families Act 2014 details the rights for young carers, including that local authorities must assess whether young carers within their locality have support needs and, if so, what those needs are. They can carry out this assessment if:

- They think the child has needs (the young carer or their parent doesn't have to ask).
- The child asks them to.
- The child's parent asks them to.

All young carers under the age of 18 have a right to an assessment of their needs, no matter who they care for, what type of care they provide, or how often they provide it. The assessment needs to consider:

- Whether it is appropriate for the young carer to provide, or continue to provide, care (for the person needing care).
- The young carer's needs for support, their other needs and wishes.

Local authorities must also assess what the young carer needs for their own education, training, recreation and future employment.

The young carers transition assessment

The Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to provide young carers with a transition assessment **before** they turn 18 years old and when it will be of 'significant benefit' for them to do so. 'Significant benefit' relates to the timing when the young person is ready to have an assessment and will get the most out of the process. Local authorities **must** also assess the needs of young carers as they approach adulthood regardless of whether they currently receive any services, but where it appears that the young carer is likely to have needs for support after they turn 18 and when they think that there would be 'significant benefit' to the carer.

Working with a young carer to prepare them for their transition assessment is important, particularly when they are considering options at school or for further education and employment, or if there are particular pressures at home. The transition assessment should allow for the young carer and the practitioner to plan together for the future – including what support may be needed beyond 18 – and plan for their transition from Children's Social Care Service to Adult Social Care Services.

Support

Both the Children and Families Act 2014 and Care Act 2014 require a whole family approach to ascertain if any of the young carers' needs for support could be prevented by providing services to the person cared for.

- a) The Children Act 1989 (Amended by the Children and Families Act 2014 Section 96 17ZC) requires that a local authority that carries out a young carer's needs assessment must consider the assessment and decide: whether the young carer has needs for support in relation to the care which he or she provides or intends to provide;
- b) if so, whether those needs could be satisfied (wholly or partly) by services which the authority may provide under section 17; and
- c) if they could be so satisfied, whether or not to provide any such services in relation to the young carer.

Additionally the Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 outlines that local authorities must also consider whether any of the caring tasks the child is undertaking are inappropriate. They should consider how supporting the adult with needs for care and support can prevent the young carer from undertaking excessive or inappropriate care and support responsibilities.

The Children Act 1989 Section 17: Provision of services for children in need, their families and others require every local authority: to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance: Issued under the Care Act 2014 (Department of Health, October 2014) states that as a *minimum, the process of developing a local plan should include opportunities to record, measure and assess the impact of services and outputs.*





Chapter 4

A focus on the young carers transition assessment



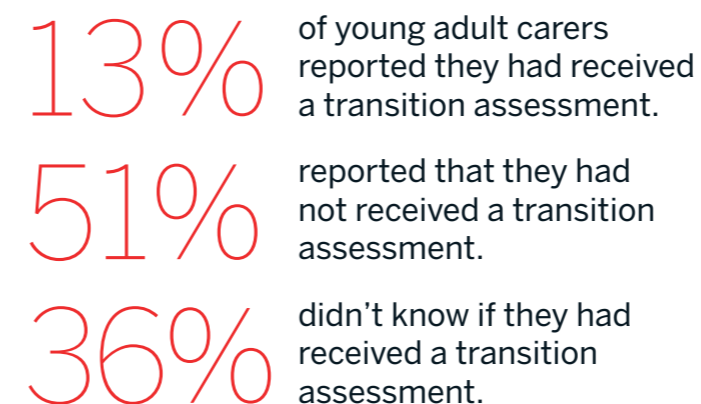
Transition: the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.¹¹

Within the context of this definition of 'transition' The Children's Society explored the experiences of young carers as they move from childhood to adulthood. We know transition is not simply a change that occurs as they reach their 18th birthday, but a process of change over time that begins early on. Knowing this enables us to recognise transition as a process that needs to be considered early on, as it is a period of time where young people have much to consider, reflect upon and make key decisions for their future. For any young person this transition is a challenging time, but for young carers it is particularly vital that during this process of change, they are not left alone to find the way forward for themselves, those they care for and their whole family. Support for young carers, in context with their whole family, is crucial as they move into adulthood.

¹¹ https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/transition_1.

The Care Act 2014 and The Children and Families Act 2014 place duties upon the local authority to carry out both young carers needs assessments and young carers transition assessments before the young carer turns 18 years old and when it would be of 'significant benefit' to the individual young people.

The data gathered from the Young Adult Carers informing this project told us that:



There needs to be **clearer communication** between professionals and us as **young carers**. I thought I had a **transition assessment** but apparently that was just a **young carers assessment** and then I had an assessment last year but that was a carers assessment **'cos I am over 18 now**, so I have no idea what happened to the transition assessment.

Young adult carer

I had an **assessment**, I am **unsure** if it was a **transition assessment** or not – **but nothing came of it** anyway.

Young adult carer

Those who had received a young carers transition assessment reported positively about the outcomes in ensuring they could pursue their future aspirations and reducing negative impacts of their caring roles. Key to this was the inclusion of relevant topics for themselves, the interrelation of their caring roles and the needs of their whole family.

After having **what I now know to be a transition assessment** my family had a **care needs assessment**. This meant support was put in place **to help me and my family** so I can **go to university**.

Young adult carer



Yes, I had an assessment, **it was very helpful**. It wasn't **labelled as a transition assessment**, but was all encompassing. It looked **at the negative impacts**, but also **what I wanted to change**, emotional well-being **future goals**, access to **financial help** which helped me **reduce negative impact** of caring. I got a free gym pass – this **helped my health, stress and emotional well-being**.

Young adult carer

My worker carried it out and **we review** and **update** it every six months but I am also able to **review it any time** and can amend it.'

Young adult carer

The data gathered from the surveyed local authorities showed a piecemeal response to the implementation of duties for young carers nationally. Predominantly the survey responses showed local authorities to be commissioning the completion of young carers' needs assessments to the local young carers service providers. However, the commissioned contract activities were found to be inconsistent in the approach to the young carers transition assessment:

- **70%** of the contracts commissioned to the young carers services included the statutory young carers' needs assessment.
- **31%** of these contracts also included the young carers transition assessment.
- **42%** of the professionals – both service providers and commissioners – who attended workshops and focus groups also reported having no specific provision for transition assessments included in the commissioned service within their locality;
- **36%** reported they didn't know if this was happening.

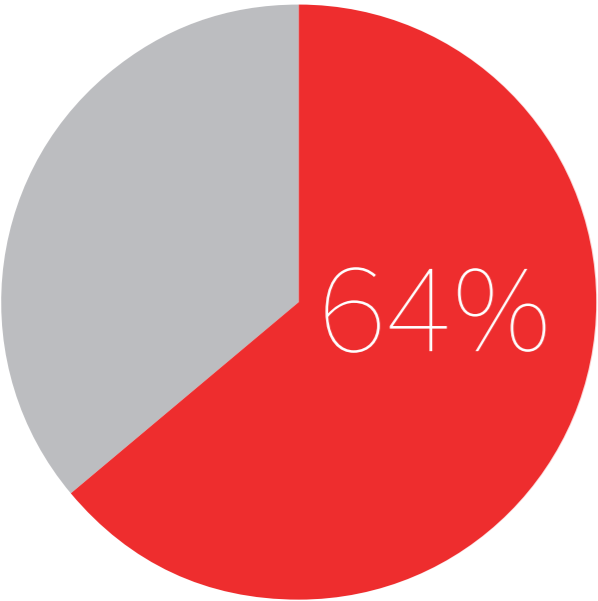
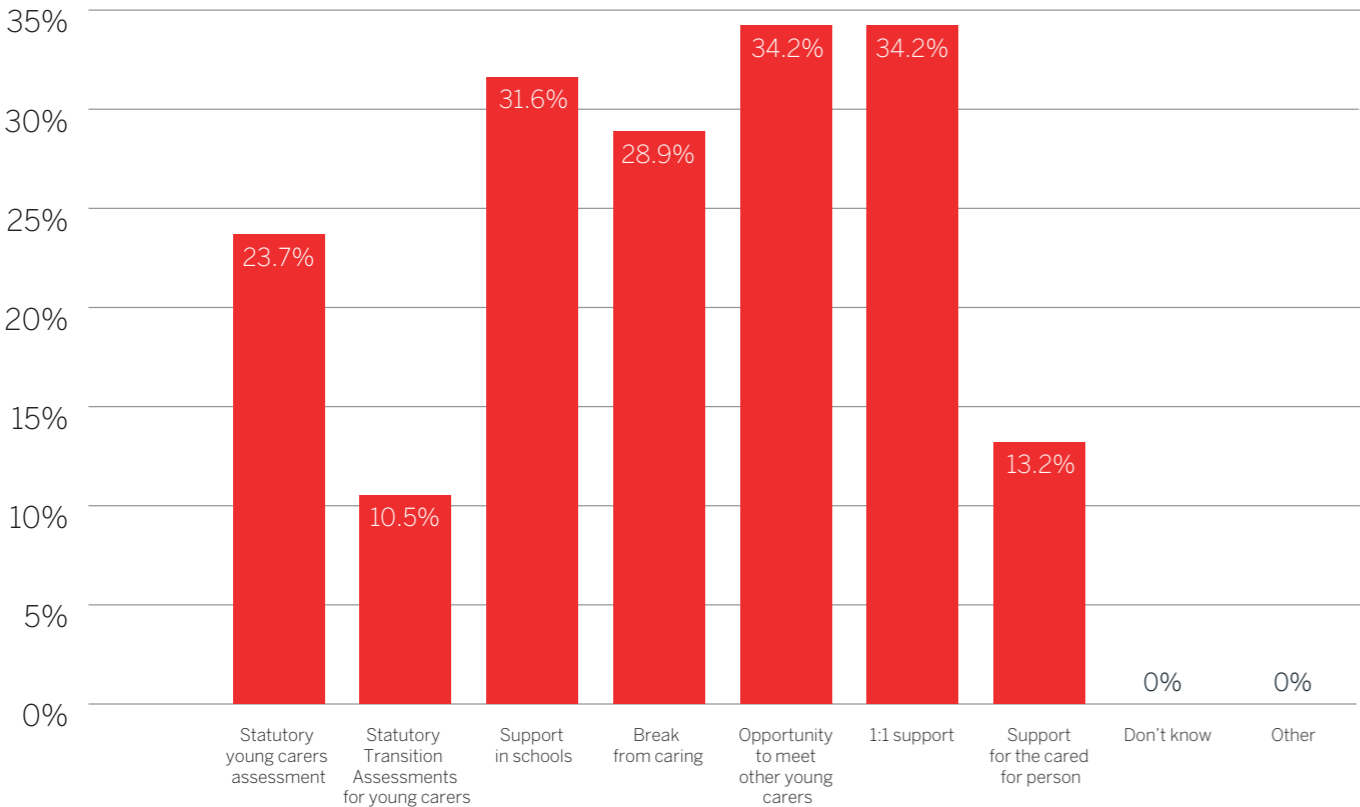
The data gathered from the local young carers services showed:

- **44%** of young carers' service providers said they felt they held responsibility for completing young carers' transition assessments.
- **23%** had been formally commissioned by the local authority to complete the young carers transition assessment.

- Despite the legislation and guidance outlining the duties for local authorities to carry out young carers transition assessments before they turn 18 and when it is of significant benefit:
- **35%** reported this was completed by adult services after the young person has reached adulthood, which is in fact a carers assessment and not a transition assessment.
- **35%** reported they didn't know when they were supposed to complete them with the young person.

Additionally, the data gathered through focus groups and interviews highlighted confusion regarding the correct terminology for the transition assessment under the Care Act 2014, also known as the 'young carers needs assessment'. Practitioners and families seem unsure as to how this assessment is different, when it should take place and whether it can be integrated into the young carers' needs assessment. The local authority surveys, interviews and focus groups outlined that it is often perceived that the pathway to statutory assessment for young carers is in place and adequate. However in reality frontline practitioners and external service providers making referrals find it challenging to navigate the system and complete an assessment for a young carer early enough for adequate support to be provided, or at all.

What does the commissioned contract include?



The local authority survey data outlined that the majority of commissioned contracts focus on respite and social support for young carers to ensure they feel less isolated. **Sixty four percent** of young carers’ services reported they had not been formally commissioned to deliver young carers transition assessments but were informally providing this support anyway. However, the limited resources and capacity of young carers’ service providers often prevented them from offering consistent support provision.





Monitoring and reporting of local authority duties to young carers and young adult carers

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 (Department of Health, October 2014) states that *‘as a minimum, the process of developing a local plan should include opportunities to record, measure and assess the impact of services and outputs.’*

However, as this is guidance and not currently a national requirement, data monitoring is given different levels of planning and prioritisation by local authorities across England.

- **60%** of local authorities reported they monitored the completion of statutory young carers needs assessments.
- **50% of local authorities** reported they do not monitor the young carers transition assessment.
- 45% of local authorities reported they didn't know if young carers transition assessments were being monitored.
- 0% of local authorities that responded to this survey reported they were monitoring of the outcomes of any assessment.

This data illustrates that nationally the delivery and monitoring of the statutory young carers needs assessment specifically is being recognised. Albeit further research suggests that in practice it is piecemeal, with only 1 in 5 young carers actually receiving their needs assessment.¹² Additionally, the young carers' transition assessment is often overlooked altogether in commissioning and practice delivery.

Recommendations from young adult carers

- The Young Adult Carers recommended the Young Carers Transition Assessment should be completed between the ages of 14 and 16.
- The assessment should take account of choices related to their post-16 future and help them to plan for this future. Leaving this until just before they turned 18 was too late for them to receive appropriate support.
- The assessment should not just focus on the current needs of the young carer and their family, but also on the likely ways in which these needs will change over the coming years as the young person transitions to adulthood.
- The transition assessment should be the start of the bigger transitional support process and be ongoing, taking account of changes in need, young carers isolation in the community and their aspirations.
- Having a specific guideline for professionals completing the assessment process with young people would reduce ambiguity.

Transition assessments should be **an ongoing process**, not a **one-off assessment**.

Young adult carer

¹² The Office of the Children's Commissioner (2016) The Support Provided to Young Carers in England, 2016



What should be included?

The young carers transition assessment **should** include an indication of how any care and support needs for the person(s) they care for would change as a result of the young carers change in circumstance. This includes an explicit requirement which states that children's and adult services must cooperate for the purposes of transition to adult care and support.

- Local authorities **should** consider formally designating a named person to plan for transition across different agencies and coordinate young carers transition assessments specifically.
- Local authorities **must** cooperate with relevant partners – including GP practices, housing and educational providers where needed – and this duty is reciprocal.
- Local authority commissioners to clearly stipulate that the young carers transition assessment is a requirement of the contract if this is intended.
- If young carers services are being formally commissioned to provide young carers needs assessments and transition assessments this should include pathway planning and support recommendations following the assessment. Staff capacity for young carers services should be considered within this and resourced appropriately.
- Guidelines and or recommendations to support the completion of the young carers transition assessments should be disseminated nationally.

The young carers transition assessment should include a range of questions to explore the young person's current needs and how they impact upon their own well-being, and what needs they may have post-18 – including any current and future aspirations regarding employment or further education.

The Young Adult Carers recommended that to achieve adequate support planning for young carers through the transition assessment it would be vital to include the following:

- **Employment and work** – 'Help us make practical steps to "get there" and earn money.'
- **Education** – 'Help us apply for college or university and for courses that we want to do.'
- **Our future** – 'Help us to consider our future plans? How can we get there? What are our personal goals?'
- **Financial support** – 'Help us to understand benefits for us and for our family and give us the skills to manage our money.'
- **Housing** – 'Consider our living arrangements. What support is available for us to do this? The impacts upon my family if this were to change.'

- Mental health and well-being, past feelings, present feelings, feeling lonely and our future aspirations.
- 'Ask how we are and how we feel.'
- Short and long term overall goal setting. 'Help us to consider timelines for short and long term goal planning.'
- 'Make sure it is all followed up and that support plans are reviewed regularly once in place.'

Following the young carers transition assessment, a written report should be provided for the young carer and parent that outlines the points covered within the assessment, the next steps and ongoing support plans for the young carer and the person they care for. It should also note any other services that might be able to help provide them with support and if any referrals have been made to other services.

■ The **transition assessment** should **support the young person** and their family to **plan for the future**, by providing them with information about what they **can expect**.'

Social Care for Excellence, 2015

Local authorities recommendations

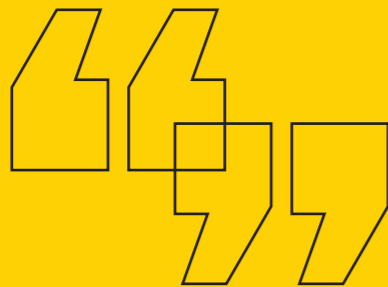
- Local authority children's and adult services should establish effective strategic leadership and work together, communicating their duties and roles with both one another and with young people. They should ensure that young adult carers are clear about their next steps and their transition into adulthood is effectively facilitated.
- Local authorities should ensure transition assessments are being carried out in a way that is beneficial to the Young Adult Carers. They should identify who is best placed to carry out transition assessments, whether this is internally or through external services.
- Local authorities should ensure there is sufficient follow up and pathway planning in place for young adult carers to review and update their plans and goals, and that the assessment is not a one off exercise. This forms part of their transitional journey across services and into adulthood.
- Local carers strategies should include monitoring requirements for young carers and young adult carers. Mechanisms should be devised where local authorities can identify the numbers of known young carers, their receipt of a needs assessment, their receipt of a transitions assessment and how pathways and planning are being implemented to meet the needs of the whole family to reduce or prevent negative impacts upon children.
- Benchmarking standards for transition plans should be provided to ensure young carers have improved access to high quality and consistent information, advice and support as they approach the point at which they will have to leave children's support services into adult support services.
- Both adult and children's services should implement training on local whole-family approaches, ensuring it is embedded across workforce development of all agencies. This training should cover the vulnerabilities of young carers' transition to adulthood, their needs as young adult carers, and contain guidance for completing young carers transition assessments and pathway planning before they turn 18 years.
- Children's and adult services should implement a jointly owned Memorandum of Understanding based on 'No Wrong Doors: working together to support young carers and their families.' This memorandum should include the development of a broad multi-agency strategy or steering group that ensures the voices of young carers are heard through a local young carers' forum, council or other mechanism. This should be reviewed regularly and include joined up thinking and working between adult and children's services to implement young carers transition plans locally.
- Local authorities should follow the Care Act Guidance and ensure transition assessments take place at the right time for the young person or carer, and when there is significant benefit to the young person or carer in doing so. They should form part of a broad spectrum of transition support. This should be a priority area for all local authorities and funding should be allocated to ensure their effective implementation.
- There should be sufficient funding to adequately meet the needs of young carers as they transition into adulthood, including provision for preventative services to support those who do not meet escalating thresholds for statutory social care services.





Chapter 5

The lived experiences of Young Adult Carers



Do we have a choice?

No. If we are a young carer but want to get on with our lives and go to University, get a job or whatever we feel we can't cos there is no choice- least that's how I feel.'

Young adult carer

Case Study: David¹³

One Young Adult Carer (aged 20) talked about his experiences of education and employment. As the sole carer for his mum throughout his childhood, and as the person responsible for family finances, he had dropped out of school at 15 years old to find work to pay the bills and manage the household budget. He found work in a warehouse stacking boxes and organising supplies. He still works at the same company and drives a forklift in the warehouse but says this isn't the career path he would have chosen or been interested in. He spoke of how there is no career progression within his company and he can't get work elsewhere as he doesn't have any formal qualifications.

¹³ Name has been changed

I need **Maths** and **Science** because **nobody will recruit me** without these so I am stuck.'

Young adult carer

He has a keen interest in science and technology and would like to go to college to sit these exams, but he can't afford to leave work or attend college. He said that if there had been support at age 15 for both him, his mum and their finances, it could have been a different story. He mentioned that if he had previously had access to a transition assessment to help him think about his future and what he would need, then his situation could have been a lot more positive, but this didn't happen for him.

Including David, 153 Young Adult Carers from across the nine regions of England informed this report and its recommendations. Through consultation activities delivered by The Children's Society, they shared their experiences of moving into adulthood as a young carer. They identified key factors that had caused them extreme stress and worry during childhood, and told how managing this alongside their caring responsibilities had prevented them from fulfilling their aspirations. The Young Adult Carers told us about the many challenges and barriers they face in key areas such education, employment, housing, mental health and financial capability. All young people need the opportunity to make choices about their future, including education, career and life choices – and yet young carers are less likely to have access to guidance and

¹⁴ www.youngcarersinschools.com

support in making these decisions, and the opportunities to act upon the decisions they make. The young carers who participated wanted to improve the current support offered and ensure that other young carers receive timely help and effective guidance to enhance their transition to adulthood. They highlighted the transition points when they felt more support would have been of benefit, and shared their recommendations for improving support for young carers in the future. Some of their experiences and their recommendations are outlined in this chapter.

School and education

There is already a substantial body of evidence demonstrating the challenges young carers face at school, outlining they are more likely than their peers to persistently miss out on school.

Young carers can miss or cut short approximately 48 school days a year due to their caring role, ultimately having a negative impact on their learning and achievements throughout their school life and beyond.¹⁴

The Young Adult Carers felt that school should have been a vital place for them to be able to achieve and plan for their future. However they reported poor experiences of school, including teachers and school staff not taking them seriously. This left them feeling demotivated and affected their mental health and well-being. Many of them had either not achieved their potential in school, not achieved the exam results they had aspired to or not sat their exams at all as they had 'dropped out' of school to care for their family.

My **safeguarding officer** at school told me that due to **being poor** and a **young carer**, I was statistically **unlikely** to get into **college** or **university**.'

Young adult carer

The Young Adult Carers recommended that every school, including primary, secondary and pupil referral units, should be doing more to identify and support young carers and should be held accountable for their pupils' aspirations and achievements. They said that Ofsted should ask specific questions within their inspections about whether the needs of young carers are being met. They also said young carers should be proactively identified within the school and appropriately supported and helped to make decisions about college or other future goals.

Recommendations:

- There should be effective partnership working and collaboration between schools, colleges, universities and with local young carers services, young adult carers services, local authorities and employers. This would help and support young adult carers to transition smoothly between services.

- Education providers such as schools, colleges and universities should ensure a holistic approach in identifying young carers and raising awareness throughout the institution. Good practice shows that this involves having appropriate policies in place which ensure young carers are receiving consistent support, alongside staff training and senior management commitment.
- Education providers should engage with their local young carer services to explore opportunities to raise awareness, arrange training, and provide tools and resources around identification, impacts and experiences of young carers.
- Schools should explore the 'Young Carers in Schools' programme¹⁵ which includes a range of tools and resources to help identify and support pupils who are young carers, implement a whole-school approach, and respond to their needs.
- Schools can have a positive impact for young carers, both in identifying issues they are facing to achieve at school, providing support and engaging other agencies.
- Young carer services should have ongoing relationships with schools, colleges and universities to raise awareness of young carers and support their identification, as well as ongoing and continued support for those already identified within these education providers.

Further and higher education

Young Adult Carers face limited options post-16 as they are often left to choose between what they would personally like to achieve, where they would like to work or study alongside practical considerations such as location and how far this is from the family home. They will often choose courses closer to home rather than their preferred college or university course.¹⁶ Compounding this is limited access to financial support and bursaries. Young carers are not outlined as a vulnerable group in the 16 to 19 bursary scheme and therefore aren't entitled to financial support. The 21 hours rule can mean many young adult carers have to choose between their education and receiving support. Young adult carers aged between 16 and 18 years are twice as likely to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET).¹⁷

Through this programme the Young Adult Carers highlighted their concerns about their access to college and higher education, and said that worrying about their future whilst still at school had further compounded their aspirations and well-being. Not receiving support in school to progress had left them feeling stuck or trapped and unable to see a future. Transitioning from a structured school environment to a more fluid environment at college, or other post 16 social mobility pathways into employment, can be challenging for some young people who may need additional support to navigate this period.

I want **to go to university** but the best one for my course is **the other end of the country** to where I live. I am **just not sure** that my **mum would cope** if went that far.'

Young adult carer

I feel **too guilty** to leave **my caring role** and go to university, there is no one to look after **brother** and my mum has **mental health issues**.'

Young adult carer

The Young Adult Carers did also outline positive experiences of support from specific Universities which enabled them to attend:

My university in Leeds has **got good support services** – they arrange and pay for a taxi to uni for me. My **well-being** was taken into account **so I feel supported** to learn and **achieve**. I think they should have a **universal policy** across all universities so **everyone gets this**.'

Young adult carer

¹⁵ www.youngcarersinschools.com

¹⁶ Aylwood, Klenk, Robey, Wolkind (2018) Barriers to Employment for Young Adult Carers.

¹⁷ The Children's Society (2013) Hidden from View



Recommendations:

- Support services should be fully integrated into colleges, ensuring that colleges are able to implement a whole-college approach to supporting young carers.
- Staff training and resources should be provided to colleges to understand and implement the whole college approach to supporting young carers and young adult carers. Not all young carers will have an EHC¹⁸ plan and so college staff should be equipped to identify young carers, be supported to have conversations about the impacts of their caring responsibilities upon their college progress and achievements and their plans for the future, and have a clear referral pathway plan to support.
- The Department for Education should increase funding for colleges to help them meet young people's, including young carers, additional needs to ensure whole college approaches for vulnerable pupils.
- Designated widening participation teams within universities should coordinate support with local young carers services and children's social care teams to enable more young adult carers to access and thrive at university.

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help>

Vocational training opportunities

The Governments T-Level Transition offer – a vocational qualification equivalent to the academic A-Levels – should be tailored and flexible to the needs of young people, including young carers. Employers offering work based opportunities and practice placements for T-Levels, Apprenticeships and other vocational training qualifications should be provided with guidelines regarding 'carer-friendly' employment approaches ensuring employers are implementing Carers Employment Rights.¹⁹ A 'transition into employment offer' should be developed to ensure young people are supported effectively to achieve. For apprenticeships to be a viable option for young carers, wages must be considered. The recent creation of a bursary for care leavers during the first year of apprenticeship is a policy development that could be easily applied to young carers, who share many of the challenges around low income that led to the creation of the bursary for care leavers.

¹⁹ <https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/other-rights-at-work>

²⁰ <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/>

Employment

Research from the Learning and Work Institute outlines that almost half of young adult carers struggle to find work close to home or that is flexible to manage alongside their caring role.²⁰ The Young Adult Carers informing this programme outlined their experiences and barriers to employment, feeling in particular they didn't even know where to begin when looking for work. Those who have managed to find work still find it hard to juggle their caring role and their work life. Employers not understanding what it means to be a young adult carer had put the young person in difficult situations and some had struggled to stay in consistent employment.

Circumstances can **change** for us at **short notice**, employers need to **have better understanding** and awareness of caring roles and **be flexible**.'

Young adult carer

The Young Adult Carers highlighted they also worried they would lose their jobs because of their caring role, due to being late to work or having to leave early. They also found it difficult to tell employers about their caring responsibilities as they may not understand and could affect their future job security or opportunities to progress.

...unauthorised absences can **lead to job loss**. But it's **not easy** to plan ahead of time when my **family will be in crisis** and **need me**.'

Young adult carer

Our **hours get reduced** or our **jobs are lost** because of **caring** – it feels beyond our **control**.'

Young adult carer

Employers **don't understand** – it does depend on the job I guess but for example if I told them **I am a young carer** they would most likely **sack me**. I **have to lie** and **say I am sick** rather than say I need to be at home today because **my family need me**, otherwise I wouldn't have job. But then I **get questioned** about all the time I take off sick.'

Young adult carer

Recommendations:

Employers should have awareness raising sessions and training to develop their own understanding of young adult carers and the issues they face regarding employment. This could be carried out by local young carer and carer organisations or upscaled and delivered by larger organisations.

- Employers should be young carer-friendly, having policies in place for them to ensure they are able to fully engage with their job whilst understanding there may be times when they are unable to attend work.
- Provide young carers with the skills and employment opportunities they need, so they can be supported to fulfil their potential.

Poverty and financial support

Young carers are statistically more likely to be from low-income families, The Children's Society's 'Hidden from View' report²¹ found that the average annual income for families affected by ill health and disability and where there is a young carer is £5,000 less than other families. It is difficult for young people to financially support themselves to live independently. The minimum wage for those under 21 years is £4.20 per hour compared to £7.38 for those above. Those in apprenticeships are paid a lower wage of £3.70 per hour.

Although young adult carers have some benefits entitlements, such as carers allowance when they turn 16, they can only access this if they are in education or employment for less than 21 hours a week. This then means young adult carers are wrestling with and weighing up whether they should stay at home to get the carers allowance or study or work and then not be eligible for the benefit. This can be a huge burden on the young adult carer, especially if they are from low-income family and feel a responsibility to bring in money for the family.

Carers allowance – this can be **hindrance to access education** – we are being asked to **choose** between **college** or quit and **get carers allowance**, **what do we do?**

Young adult carer

The young adult carers felt they had been forgotten about when it came to the 16 to 19 bursary fund for vulnerable students. Those in care, care leavers, people on income support or disabled young people are all automatically entitled to the full annual award – but carers are excluded. If young adult carers were entitled to this bursary it would enable many of them to stay in education.

It is **unfair for us**, we don't even get the **16 to 19 bursary**, it is like we don't even exist. If we had **access to this**, it would **help us SO much!**

Young adult carer

Recommendations:

- Young adult carers should be identified as a vulnerable group to give them access to the 16 to 19 bursary. This would help them to improve long term outcomes for young carers, enabling them to stay in education which will improve their future aspirations as well as their mental health.
- Decision makers should investigate giving an exemption to the 21 hour rule in carers allowance for young adult carers. This would prevent young adult carers from choosing between their caring duties and education or employment.
- The Children's Society recommends aligning apprenticeship rates with the minimum wage for under 18's of £4.20 per hour.

²¹ <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/publications-library/hidden-view>

Housing and accommodation

Moving out of home is an aspect of transitioning into adulthood that can be an exciting time for young people. The Young Adult Carers highlighted significant barriers to considering this as an option for them. These included:

- Worrying about what the options may be for themselves.
- The care needs of their family if they were to move out and who would provide this.
- The feelings of guilt they experienced even from thinking about their own futures.
- Whether they would be able to live independently from their family.
- Their financial situation creating significant barriers to making this move.

“We need **more information** on the types of housing, what is **appropriate for me** and also for my family like social, assisted, warden controlled or any others. Also **how we can even move...** housing and moving out in the future definitely **needs to be included** in the transition assessments to help us.”

Young adult carer

“I want to **feel ok** that I can leave my mum and **set up home on my own** or with housemates and **not feel guilty** about this. There needs to be **support in place** for my whole family as well as for me to be able to **actually** do this.”

Young adult carer

Some Young Adult Carers informing this programme highlighted that problems within their family and breakdown of family relationships – as a result of considering their own future needs – had been drivers which lead to them leaving without suitable options in place and becoming homeless or subsequently living in hostel accommodation, but still returning to the family home each day to carry out caring roles.

Homelessness or unstable housing conditions can leave young adults particularly vulnerable. When young people aged 16 or 17 leave the family they may be offered housing accommodation by the local authority. The local authority have a duty to ensure that all children under the age of 18 years have accommodation. However young people are not always aware of their rights and may try sofa surfing or, when options run out and appropriate support is not provided, may be forced into sleeping rough.

Too often young people presenting as homeless do not receive an assessment of their needs, or if they do their needs as a young carer are not often taken into account.





Gaps between housing services, children's services and voluntary sector agencies often respond to the immediate housing issue being addressed – but no recognition is given to the wider support needs of the young person or their family.

Recommendations:

- Housing associations and providers should improve their awareness of the needs of young adult carers as they transition to independent living by linking with local young carer support services. This will ensure timely effective support.
- Housing services should be integrated into a holistic approach by the local authority and included in transitional support, providing signposting and guidance to young adult carers.
- Housing services should develop a space where young adult carers can be listened to and influence the experience of transition into independence for them and for others.
- The Children's Society has called upon the Government to amend the statutory guidance so that all young people who present as homeless or at risk of homelessness – irrespective of whether the threat of homelessness is imminent – are assessed as a child and clear reasons recorded for the outcomes of the assessment.²² This assessment should take account of any caring responsibilities taken on by the young person and any unmet needs in the family impacting upon relationships and accommodation needs that should be addressed.

Mental health and well-being

Everything I went through impacts upon my mental health'

Young adult carer

The issues that young carers face in their transition to adulthood can impact upon their mental health. In recent years there has been increased recognition of mental ill health issues among teenagers and young people. Appropriate mental health support can increase their positive mental health and well-being. However, often thresholds are too high or waiting lists are too long and don't respond to the needs of young people as they transition to adulthood. The NHS long term plan 2019²³ committed to creating a comprehensive offer for 0 to 25 year olds, reaching across mental health services for children, young people and adults. Additionally we know that, as a group, carers are particularly susceptible to experiencing loneliness, and overcoming this should be considered within any mental health strategy or offer. The Children's Society's Loneliness in Childhood report²⁴ found that children who often feel lonely have lower mean mental health and well-being compared to others.

The young adult carers we spoke to highlighted that their own mental health was an issue they all struggled with and a key theme they wanted to discuss. However, the issue of mental health wasn't something they felt was 'stand-alone' issue. It was interwoven with the other experiences and worries they faced as young carers.

²² <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/crumbling-futures>

²³ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/>

²⁴ www.childrenssociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/our-blog/exploring-loneliness-and-well-being-among-10-and-17-year-olds.

Their caring roles, putting the needs of the cared for before their own, trying to manage their education, thinking about their future, housing, finances and other issues outlined previously were all influencing factors upon their own mental health and left them feeling isolated and alone.

Subsequently, their mental health needs often left them experiencing low moods and feelings of guilt, resentment and loneliness. In turn that affected their own confidence, self-esteem and well-being and left them feeling unable to deal with and resolve the other challenges they faced. They outlined that mental health is a 'cyclical issue' for young carers – it was influenced by and also influenced their ability to thrive and achieve.

Sometimes it **all just gets to you**, I have my **own dreams** as well, but **what about my family?**

Young adult carer

My **caring role stresses me out** as it is, let alone trying to **navigate jobs**, uni, money and moving out... I want to be **asked about me too.**

Young adult carer

Please ask us...**am I ok?** Sometimes we are **invisible.**

Young adult carer

Recommendations:

- Mental health and well-being should be included in the transition assessment, including how the other factors and themes for consideration in the assessment with impact upon mental health needs of the young carer.
- The Children's Society has recommended that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) should be extended to the age of 25 years in all areas.
- CCG's should improve coordination between mental health service providers and other key agencies to provide support for young people aged 16 to 25 who are transitioning to adult mental health services.
- NHS England should test and evaluate emerging service models to address issues around transitions, to ensure that they are effective for all children and young people. This includes young carers, paying specific attention to transition into adulthood.
- There is more to learn about young carers' experiences of loneliness and how it is related to their well-being. The Government's Carers Action Plan includes an action to recognise and support carers in the wider community and society. There should be specific focus on young adult carers being better connected in order to tackle the loneliness they experience.

Young carer services

Specialist young adult carer services **can significantly improve** well-being [of young carers]...accessing specialist services **increased their confidence (72%)**, their feeling that they have friends (60%) and **their grades and attendance** [at school] (26%).²⁵

The Young Adult Carers informing this programme highlighted their local young carers' service as having been the main or only place they had received support when considering their aspirations for the future. They outlined it as being 'what had got them through' their transition to adulthood and said it had been fundamental to their well-being. With many young adult carers not being aware of their rights and entitlements, young carers' services can provide them with appropriate and accessible information and guidance about their legal rights, especially the right to a transition assessment from the local authority.

Recommendations:

- Young carers services should include transitional support within their service, and consider including support around access to employment and education, housing, financial support, and well-being. Alongside this, services should integrate practical help and sessions around these areas – eg CV writing, budgeting – into the programme for young carers and young adult carers at age appropriate times.
- Young carer services should to work together with young adult carer services and adult carer services to ensure a seamless transition between support services.

Young carers need a consistent, trustworthy, flexible, responsive, non-judgemental specialist worker who knows them, can advise them or advocate on their behalf, and in whom they can confide or just talk to whenever necessary.

²⁵ Alexander C, Time to be Heard, A Call for Recognition and Support for Young Adult Carers, Carers Trust (2014)



Chapter 6

A spotlight on good practice case studies



The programme gathered examples of practice that young carers felt worked well for their needs in transition to adulthood. Nationally, there are a number of models beginning to address the needs of young adult carers which we can learn from. This is a snapshot to outline a range of good practice examples and approaches. It is recognised that there are other examples of good practice and working models being implemented across England that may not be referenced here.

Commissioning transition assessments

In **Liverpool** the local young carers service is contractually commissioned to complete young carers transition assessments, known locally as the 'Young Adult Assessment'. They have full involvement in ensuring there is a smooth transition for these young people and believe that it works as a model. The young people stay with the service up to the age of 25 years old and receive support, guidance, information and signposting. The 'young adult assessment' is usually completed when the young person is 16 years old, but can be completed from 14 years old if it's seen to be of 'significant benefit'. Following the assessment, the young carers are provided with a support plan which offers one-to-one support, and these support plans are reviewed every six months, with follow up support also being offered.

The Liverpool service is providing a holistic approach to transitional support, involving other teams and organisations such as social

care, CAMHS, housing, higher education and further education, job centres, private landlords, advisory services. Working together means that they try and make sure young people have aspirations and these are achievable with the right support in place. In this area, the service benefits greatly from having a commissioner who is a 'driving force' and committed to ensuring young carers and young adult carers are appropriately supported. In Liverpool, the young carers service works with many other agencies, including the local universities, as part of the pathway support and action planning for the young adult carer. If, for example there is a young adult carer attending university in Liverpool but who isn't originally from the area, they can be referred back to their own local young carers service for continual care, as well as receiving support from the service in Liverpool and the university itself.

This example of joined up working ensures young adult carers are supported to achieve at university no matter where they are from in the country. The service also supports young people's access to employment by introducing them to local employers at different events such as job fairs, and holding drop-in groups at job centres across the city.

In **Lincolnshire** the local authority commissions the young carers service and adult carers service to collaborate with the local authority Early Help team around transition. The young carers service is provided directly by the local authority and a young carer is invited for a transition assessment at 16 years old. Transition assessments are carried out using a number of tools, including an early help assessment, a well-being summary and then pathway planning with each of these constituting the transition assessment. Following this there is a support plan in place with the young people which sets out clear actions – this is then reviewed after 16 weeks and then again annually, or sooner if needed. The service also engages with local schools, colleges, universities and pharmacies to provide referral pathways and to provide information to young adult carers regarding transitional support and assessments. There is overlap between the young carers service (up to 19 years old) and adult carers service (from 16 years old). Although there isn't a specific young adult carers service, the local authority and carers support service all collaborate and work together to ensure as many young adults as possible are supported and don't fall through the gaps.

Young people's transition to adulthood pathway planning

Next Steps in Southampton provide a specialist support service for young adult carers as part of a wider organisation which supports young people from a variety of backgrounds with complex needs. The assessment tool is for use with all young people, but one which can be tailored to the needs of young adult carers. The project worker uses the assessment form as a framework and guide as they discuss the elements with the young person. The assessment is tailored to the needs of the young person to identify their support needs. They carry this out as part of the young person accessing their service (at age 16), but also monitor this using a progress wheel to set goals and review them every three months until they reach a planned closure. These assessments are carried out at the service's centre, during home visits, in the young person's college or within the community to accommodate the young person's lifestyle and increase the access to support.

Without this assessment I wouldn't know where I am now'

Young adult carer



Mental health services

Camden's Minding the Gap Transitions team works with a young people's board to develop a transitions protocol and training programme for CAMHS workers, developed 'transition champion' roles in adult services, and set up a fortnightly multi-agency panel to improve transition to adulthood for young people locally.²⁶

Access to employment

Carers First in Lincolnshire have an Employers for Carers project which asks employers to sign up to a charter and become more 'carer aware.' The service then emphasises the many attributes the carers have to employers. They have support workers in place who link with employers and carer champions in local businesses who can provide information to the carers.

Housing

'Move On Up'²⁷ in London provides a supportive shared housing scheme specifically for young adult carers. They provide four properties in East London for 12 young adult carers to use as their first base after leaving the family home. The young adult carers can live there for up to two years, learning key skills and independence as well as building relationships with others in similar situations.

The project aims to give them a living space where they feel safe, supported and independent, and give them a chance to consider what they want to do in their future. The project supports the young adult carers to deal with the practicalities of maintaining tenancies, alongside practical help and support regarding their future goals, financial guidance and building healthy relationships. They are encouraged to progress towards their own future goals and ensure support is in place when they move on.

²⁶ <https://www.candi.nhs.uk/services/camden-minding-gap-transitions-team>

²⁷ <https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/your-house-and-home/move>



Chapter 7

Conclusions and policy recommendations



This report has outlined the wide ranging experiences and expertise of young adult carers. It shows that transitioning to adulthood can be difficult across multiple areas of young carers lives as they juggle a range of challenges and face multiple disadvantages when planning and achieving for their future. Young carers are not always afforded the protections and support they need for their own well-being as they transition to adulthood. There is a lack of understanding of the vulnerabilities young carers face and there are misconceptions about their resilience and capacity to keep themselves safe from harm and safeguard their own well-being needs. As such, at times professionals fail to follow due process and procedures, and do not provide adequate responses to needs of young carers, including planning for transition to adulthood.

The Young Adult Carers informing this report outlined specific factors that impact upon their transition to adulthood and have negative implications for their future aspirations, attainments and overall well-being. There are key transition points where support is crucial to ensuring young carers in transition to adulthood have the best chance in life. These key points should be taken into account as part of the service received by young carers. They outlined that young adult carers have complex needs and face a multitude of decisions that require joined up services from a range of different agencies, including statutory services, education and employment to mental health and housing. But often the support young carers receive is a postcode lottery and thousands of young carers in transition to adulthood have their needs overlooked, and young adult carers in our communities receive little or no support.

This report has highlighted the need for young carer transition assessments to be carried out within a wider programme of transitional support. Young adult carers have told us that without these transition assessments, ongoing support and guidance, they face disadvantages that set them aside from their peers in reaching their potential and fulfilling their aspirations for the future. The frustration lies with a lack of effective pathways to support and guidance being in place, and services ending when the young carer reaches 18.

These findings support previous research and consultations with young carers and young adult carers. However this report highlights the pertinence of the transition assessment being a vital pathway to ongoing support and the current lack of

understanding and implementation of this. When young carers are left unsupported in the transition to adulthood, they face heightened barriers, challenges and vulnerabilities with little hope of overcoming them; therefore the transition assessment is a vital part of ongoing support for young adult carers.

This evidence gathering has revealed that whilst certain services or settings are best placed to lead on supporting young carers in their transition to adulthood, the issues they face are complex, and cut across all aspects of their lives. Responding to this requires a coordinated and cross-departmental approach. The Children's Society has recommended that the Government forms a cross-departmental taskforce to look into transition planning for teenagers as they move into adulthood, to ensure the best outcomes for vulnerable young people – including a focus upon young carers. The scope of this review needs to be broadened and cross-government departments, local authorities and other agencies highlighted in this report need to engage and commit to embedding the duties of young carers with the intention of meeting their needs. These bodies should work to ensure that every young carer can engage in an assessment of their needs that takes into account their transition into adulthood: the young carers transition assessment.

However, no single Government department or agency can take on this challenge by working alone. A solution to addressing multiple disadvantage in young carers lives will require a co-ordinated response. Further work is needed to fully understand the whole picture and to further identify how young

adult carers can be supported at this crucial stage. Implementing a joint approach can be challenging and some local authorities have not made as much progress as others. Some rely heavily on a voluntary sector young carers service to drive change and instigate and coordinate the delivery of whole family approaches rather taking a strong and strategic lead. Local authorities are also facing competing demands with other vulnerable groups, not just young carers and their families, and many of the changes required involve shifting large systems and require significant time. High level strategic leadership, commitment and coordination are vital. Across the council there will need to be leadership and commitment to a whole-family approach, with protocols in place across a wide range of local partnerships to enable services to be coordinated and responsive to the needs of young carers in their transition to adulthood.

As support for young carers is now a specific statutory obligation, local authorities should be better at monitoring and recording the numbers of young carers in the locality, their needs for support on receipt of an assessment, and the support plans for both the young carer and the whole family. Within this, a system for tracking how young carers and young adult carers are identified is required.

This research has highlighted that there is a gap in knowledge of the types and levels of support being commissioned by local authorities. Further research into this would enable more focused work on ensuring the transition assessment and transitional support is carried out. A national review involving both statutory and voluntary sector agencies is needed. It should look into the disconnect between children and adult support service frameworks – including local monitoring systems – and transition for all vulnerable young people (including specific focus for young carers).

In line with recommendations outlined in The Children's Society's 'Crumbling Futures' report, local authorities need the appropriate resources to provide holistic young carers needs assessments and young carers transition assessments.



Resources and further reading

This section outlines resources available for young carers nationally and professionals.

For young carers

Shaping Our Future

childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-youngpeople

A resource to help young carers be aware of their rights in transition to adulthood and providing guidance for supporting them during this time.

The 'Know your Rights' Pack

childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-youngpeople

This pack aims to make young carers aware of their rights, including human rights, legal rights, and rights to access benefits, support and advice. This pack also contains information about the range of professionals that might be in contact with young carers and their families.

The 'Influencing Change' Toolkit

childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-youngpeople/rights-and-social-change

This resource includes a video, information, templates, activities and quizzes designed to help young carers start an 'influencing change project' safely and within the law in their local area. As well as improving the lives of young carers and their families, young carers can develop confidence and skills too.

Looking after Myself: Young People's Wellness Plan

childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-youngpeople/well-being-and-mentalhealth

This booklet helps young carers think about and develop some useful ways of coping. It can remind them where to go when things aren't going so well, and to realise it is okay to ask for help or support. It helps young carers explore their caring role. This resource is designed to be used by young carers with support from a trusted adult or professional (such as a teacher, social worker, young carers' worker, family member or friend).

Young and Caring: Accessing Support

rethink.org/carers-family-friends/support-for-young-carers

A guide to supporting young carers to think about the practical and emotional support they need, who can help them when they are struggling, and providing tools and resources to help work through these questions.

Young and Caring – Caring for Someone with a Mental Illness

rethink.org/carers-family-friends/support-for-young-carers

This guide is to support young people caring for someone with a mental illness. This leaflet helps young carers make sense of things and to get the help they need. It also contains advice and stories from young carers about what has helped them.

The Children's Society's 'Do you have a family member with an illness or disability? Supporting young people information booklet'

An information booklet for young people who have a family member with a disability or illness to support them to look after themselves, plan meetings with doctors and nurses and get some helpful advice.

For professionals

The Whole Family Pathway

Our Whole Family Pathway tool is a resource for all practitioners who have contact with young carers and their families. We have developed this Whole Family Pathway, to ensure that however a family (parent or child) in need of support first makes contact with an agency, the same key points are followed

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/home>

Supporting young carers and their families: An introductory guide for professionals. The Children's Society (2017)

youngcarer.com/sites/default/files/supporting_young_carers_and_their_families.pdf

The Children's Society's General Practice Pack

A guide for supporting, identifying and signposting young carers in your practice. This includes a poster for the GP waiting room, two posters for the staff room and an information leaflet for young people with a family member with an illness or disability

childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/health-and-mentalhealth

School Nurse Programme: Supporting implementation of the new service offer: Supporting the health and well-being of young carers

gov.uk/government/publications/school-nursing-public-healthservices

A pathway setting out the key messages for services and professionals to meet the needs of young carers. This is of interest to all professionals providing ongoing care where a child or young person may be involved in caring duties. It is particularly aimed at school nursing services and will be of interest to professionals and provider organisations and commissioners.

'An Integrated Approach to Identifying and Assessing Carer Health and Well-Being Toolkit'

To implement duties on NHS organisations brought about by the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 to create multi-agency approaches for young carers to promote their health and well-being. england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/commitmenttocarers/carers-toolkit/

Schools

Young Carers in Schools

youngcarersinschools.com/

A free England-wide initiative that makes it as easy as possible for schools to support young carers, and awards good practice. Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society, the initiative works with schools across England to share good practice, provide relevant tools and training, and to celebrate the great outcomes that many schools achieve for young carers.

Local young carers' services

The Children's Society's website features a map and details of young carer projects around the UK. youngcarer.com/
youngcarers-services

References

www.gov.uk/government/publications/carers-action-plan-2018-to-2020

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NHS Integrated Toolkit England. [Nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/commitmentto-carers/carers-toolkit](https://nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/commitmentto-carers/carers-toolkit)

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Audit Commission (2010). *Against the Odds: Re-engaging Young People in Education, Employment or Training*

Aylwood, Klenk, Robey, Wolkind (2018) *Barriers to Employment for Young Adult Carers*.

Social Care Institute for Excellence (2015) *Transition assessments under the Care Act 2014*

childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/seriously-awkward-the-threshold-to-the-rest-of-their-life

childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/crumbling-futures-why-vulnerable-16-and-17-year-olds-need-more

gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help

carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/other-rights-at-work

learningandwork.org.uk/

childrenssociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/our-blog/exploring-loneliness-and-well-being-among-10-and-17-year-olds.

Right now in Britain there are children and young people who feel scared, unloved and unable to cope. The Children's Society works with these young people, step by step, for as long as it takes.

We listen. We support. We act.

There are no simple answers so we work with others to tackle complex problems. Only together can we make a difference to the lives of children now and in the future.

Because no child should feel alone.

Find out more at
childrenssociety.org.uk

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