

Young Carers: Information for healthcare professionals

A caring role can have significant impacts on a young carers own health and well-being

- Boys under the age of 24 who are young carers are twice as likely as their peers to report 'not good health' and girls are over **2.5 times** as likely to report 'not good health'. Young people providing over 50 hours of care a week are up to five times as likely to report 'not good health'.¹
- Young carers are **1.5 times** more likely than their peers to have a special educational need or disability.²
- **38%** of young adult carers reported having mental health problems.³

One local authority found that 11% of young carers had sustained an injury due to their caring role with less than half having told their GP they were caring for anyone. 35% said they thought their health had worsened due to their caring role, while 35% also experienced the symptoms of an eating disorder⁴ or other stress related impacts.

Young carer's experiences:

'I quite often go in with my mother when she goes to the doctor, but they still don't recognise the fact that I'm a young carer and still don't pay attention or give time to that matter.'

'[Doctors] should ask about our caring role and check in on how things are going regardless of why we are accessing the service.'

'We are living one day at a time, there is no time to think about the future.'

'They (health professionals) need to understand the things we do and how they can help us, also where we can go to get help.'

'[Doctors need to know] how home life can have an effect on our mental health and health in general.'

¹ Census 2011: National Bureau of Statistics

² The Children's Society (2013) Hidden from View: the experiences of young carers London

³ Sempik, J and Becker, J (2013) Young Adult carers at School: Experiences and Perceptions of Caring and Education (London: Carers trust)

⁴ Hustings, D. Surrey Young Carers Health Survey Report 2013. Guildford and Waverly CCG

A '**young carer**' is defined in section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 as: '...a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person'.

This relates to care for any family member who is physically or mentally ill, frail elderly, disabled or misuses alcohol or substances.

The **key principle** is 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.'

The **Children and Families Act 2014** amended the Children Act to make it easier for young carers to get an assessment of their needs and to introduce 'whole family' approaches to assessment and support. Local authorities must offer an assessment where it appears that a child is involved in providing care.

Children Act 1989: Section 17ZA 1(a) [inserted by section 96 Children and Families Act 2014] If any child or young person is identified as carrying out a caring role, this should result in an offer of a needs assessment for the adult requiring care and support, and the local authority must consider whether to undertake a young carer's needs assessment under the Children Act 1989. Refer to our 'Supporting Young Carers and their families' introductory booklet for more information.

Healthcare professionals include all professionals that support people with health or care needs such as General Practitioners, Community Health professionals and hospital staff.

When prescribing medication for your client, consider whether a young carer may be administering it. Does the family need more support to prevent this from happening?

Health services are likely to be the first place that families turn to for help with illness or disability, meaning they are ideally placed to identify and support young carers and their families.

Health professionals can identify situations where there might be young carers by asking their patient about their family situation, who is providing their care and the impacts their condition has on their wider family.

It is also important to consider people's care needs and the potential impacts on any children in the family when creating care plans for ongoing health needs and when patients leave hospitals/treatment services or in-house mental health support.

A full list of questions to consider is available on the **'checklist for support and signposting young carers'** as part of The Children's Society General Practice pack.

'Local authorities must carry out their care and support responsibilities with the aim of joining up the services provided, or other actions taken, with those provided by the NHS and other health-related services.'

(Care and support statutory guidance (issued under the Care Act 2014))

NHS England and its partners have developed 'An integrated approach to identifying and assessing Carer health and wellbeing toolkit' which covers new duties on NHS organisations brought about by the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. This toolkit includes numerous examples of positive practice that are already making a difference to carers, including young carers, and their families.

england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/commitment-to-carers/carers-toolkit/

Support

The Children's Society's Include Programme's introductory guide for professionals on supporting young carers and their families sets out key legislation and best practice guidance. Further resources are available from the Include Programme website. **childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/resources-for-professionals**

The Children's Society's General Practice Pack (endorsed by the NHS) contains a 'A guide for supporting, identifying and signposting young carers in your practice', a poster for a waiting room, two posters for a staff room and an information leaflet for young people with a family member with an illness. **childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/health-and-mental-health**

'The Whole Family Pathway' is an online resource signposting practitioners to the support for families. It is also a useful map for families to follow to inform their choices. **childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/whole-family-pathway-2018.pdf**

Queens Nursing Institute Carers Resource Project The QNI has developed three free online resources to support nurses who work with carers, including one specifically for nurses working in general practice, to enable them to work effectively with carers who are supporting friends or family. **qni.org.uk/nursing-in-the-community/supporting-carers/**

The 'Supporting Carers in General Practice' Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) e-learning module provides information and guidance for GPs and other community healthcare professionals to enable them to build carer involvement and support into their everyday practice. **rcgp.org.uk/learning/online-learning/ole/supporting-carers-in-general-practice.aspx**

You're Welcome Pilot 2017. All young people are entitled to receive appropriate health care wherever they access it. The You're Welcome quality criteria for making health services young people-friendly lay out principles that will help health services – community and primary care, secondary care and wider health services – to 'get it right' for young people. **youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/yourewelcome**

Making a Step Change: Key Learning. The 'Making a step change for young carers and their families programme' aims to support the effective implementation of the duties required under the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014. This page relates to the key theme of Health Services, including key messages, tools and resources. **makingastepchange.info/?s=key+learning**