

Young Carers Well-being

The
Children's
Society

No child
should feel
alone

Being a young carer can often have a significant impact on a young person's health and well-being. Young carers may be investing a lot of time and energy into looking after a family member or friend and therefore not finding enough time for themselves. Many young people who have caring responsibilities notice a long term negative impact on their physical and mental health and well-being.

Young carers often say how stressed and tired they are, as they find it hard to juggle their home lives with school, college or a job. Alongside this, young carers may experience other life changes such as family break-ups, bereavements, and lack of income which add to the constant pressures they face. They can often feel alone and isolated which can have a negative effect on their own mental health and well-being.

Research by Carers Trust and the University of Nottingham found that almost a third of young carers surveyed (29%), reported that their own physical health was 'just OK', whilst 38% reported having a mental health problem.¹

Lots of young carers have told us that they find it really difficult to make time for themselves, and they don't want to worry other people with how they feel. Sometimes young carers can feel down and a bit low about themselves. It is understandable that looking after someone else can have an emotional effect on the young person and that is why it is so important that they can ask for help and support. Often, young people with caring responsibilities may not have been identified or know they are a young carer, and this can mean support is not in place and they do not know who to turn to.

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.'

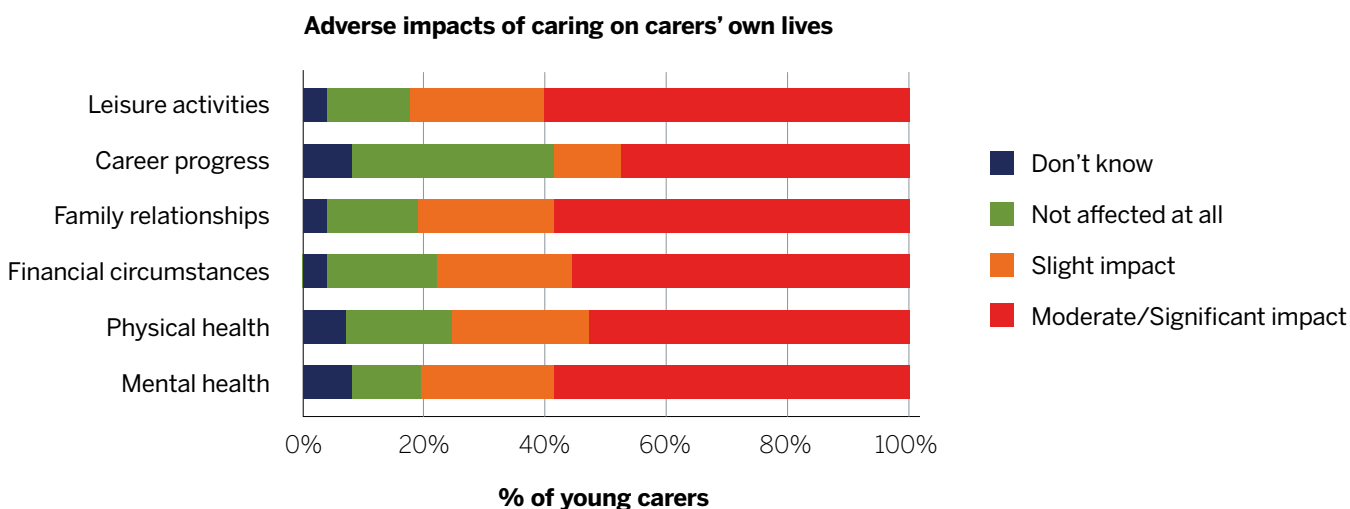
The **Care Act 2014** and the **Children and Families Act 2014** introduced a number of reforms to the way that care and support for adults with care needs are met. It requires local authorities to adopt a whole system, whole council, whole-family approach, coordinating services and support around the person and their family, and considering the impact of the care needs on the whole family; including children.

This means that both Children's and Adult's services **must have arrangements in place** to assess the impacts of inappropriate caring responsibilities upon children and young people to ensure that no young person's life is unnecessarily restricted because they are providing care to someone in their family.

¹ www.carers.org

What are young carers telling us?

Young carers tell us that their caring role has an impact on many aspects of their lives and their mental health is one of them. In 2012, Rethink Mental illness highlighted the impacts of caring upon young carers.² This graph outlines the different areas that the young people felt were affected. We can see from the graph that almost 60% of those interviewed said that their caring role had a significant impact on their mental health.



'It's not just the caring that affects you...what really gets you is the worry of it all. Having a parent who is ill and seeing them in such a state.'

What works?

Through our Young Carers in Focus programme (2012–2016) we worked alongside other organisations to enable young carers to have a voice. We provided workshops and training events around mental health and well-being, and gave young carers tangible and transferrable skills which enabled them to share their ideas and opinions about the issues they face. Through creating video content, writing online blogs,

'My mum won't accept support as she thinks she is ok, but it is me that ends up with it all.'

speaking to decision makers, being interviewed by the media, training their peers and much more, the young carers felt valued and empowered, increasing their sense of self-belief and confidence. Participation has a strong part to play in the well-being of young carers: if the young people feel like they are being heard, that they are making a difference, and their opinion is valued, then as a result they feel more positive about themselves. For more about participation, see the 'Involving young carers' leaflet.

Support

Providing appropriate and relevant support for young carers is really important for their health and well-being. Many young carers talk about how important it is to have someone they can talk to about what they are facing; someone that will listen to them without judgement.

Young Carers Services are often vital in providing the support that the young people need, and they feel safe to share within this environment. To find out where your local young carers service is visit youngcarer.com/young-carers-services

Rethink mental illness provide support and resources for young people around mental health and well-being. They have worked with The Children's Society to produce practical tools and tips for young carers on how they can look after their own well-being.

- **Young and Caring – Accessing Support:** This guide is here to help make sure you can access the right support for you. rethink.org/media/1535514/young_and_caring_accessing_support.pdf

- **Young and Caring – Caring for Someone with a Mental Illness:** This guide is to help make sense of caring for someone with a mental illness. rethink.org/media/1535519/young_and_caring_for_someone_with_a_mental_illness.pdf

Young Minds website offers information and advice to young people about mental health and emotional well-being. youngminds.org.uk

Know your rights pack – This pack aims to make you aware of your rights: your human rights, your legal rights, and your rights to access things like benefits, support and advice. childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/DownloadableResources/know_your_rights.pdf

The Mix is here to take on the embarrassing problems, weird questions, and please-don't-make-me-say-it-out-loud thoughts that people under 25 have in order to give them the best support through their digital and phone services. themix.org.uk

² www.rethink.org/carers-family-friends/support-for-young-carers