

NHS & Young Carers from Armed Forces Families



Who is a young carer in armed forces family?

A **young carer** is a person under 18 who provides care for another person. A young carer might look after someone because they have a disability, neurodivergence, a long-term illness or mental health condition, or a substance dependency. This also includes emotional challenges that are impacting on an individual's functioning and ability to care for themselves.

Young people who care and have a parent, stepparent, sibling or carer who is or was a member of the armed forces are a **young carer within an armed forces family**.

Right to Assessment and Consultation

Let young carers know about [their rights](#):

- **to be consulted about their needs and experiences**
- **to have a separate needs assessment, independent of the person they care for**

Where it appears that a child or young person may be undertaking a caring role, the local authority has a duty to offer an assessment. This assessment must consider the impact of the caring role on the young person's well-being, physical and mental health, education, and overall development. It should also explore whether the child is undertaking inappropriate or excessive caring responsibilities for their age.

NHS staff should be mindful of these rights and ensure that young carers are identified, listened to, and appropriately referred for assessment and to safeguarding team where needed.

For more children's and young people rights, please signpost [here](#).

Caring responsibilities

All children and young people who care will have different responsibilities, but they are likely to include some of the following:

- Practical tasks; cooking, shopping and cleaning
- Emotional support; reassurance, hugs, a listening ear
- Overseeing medication, accompanying medical appointments, collecting prescriptions, giving or reminding about medication.
- Managing the budget; collecting benefits, working a part time job, paying bills
- Looking after younger siblings
- Physical care; lifting, helping with stairs, physiotherapy
- Personal care; dressing, washing, helping with toileting.

Impact

Taking on caring responsibilities can have a negative effect on young people and can severely impact on their interpersonal relationships and loss of childhood:

- Caring responsibilities linked to injury, long term conditions, or mental health needs: e.g. anxiety, stress, exhaustion, becoming ill or suffering an injury when lifting or dressing someone
- Social isolation and unmet health needs
- Developing emotional problems due to family separation or caring responsibilities
- Frequent relocation and disrupted support

What do young carers in an armed forces family want other people to know?

- ‘Don’t understand how tricky it can be; friends in school don’t understand it.’
- ‘It’s really hard.’
- ‘Parents can be disabled and still be in the army.’
- ‘How annoying moving around can be.’
- ‘A lot of people think you’re just moving away from somewhere, but it’s really hard to build up a life and have to move away.’
- “I made so many good friends and now I have to leave them all.”

At the same time, many young carers say it can be positive, too. They might value the closeness they have with the person they care for, and feel resilient through meeting the challenges they have experienced

For more information, please see our [professional pack](#)

[How to identify within healthcare systems](#)

Young carers are often under a lot more pressure than other children in their age group. Health professionals are ideally positioned to identify if a child or young person is providing care for the patient under their care. You can support the identification of young carers by communicating with:

1. Someone who requires care

- Speaking directly with the person who requires care is especially important
- NHS professionals should routinely ask whether a child or young person may take on caring responsibilities, especial when an individual is:
 - diagnosed with a new condition
 - attends their first appointment

Health services should routinely ask children and young people whether a parent, carer, or sibling is currently serving or has previously served in the armed forces. This information should be recorded, along with whether the child or young person has a caring role, within their health record.

2. Child/young person you suspect of having caring responsibilities

- Regularly attends appointments with a family member
- Takes responsibility for communication or care tasks
- Appears tired, anxious, or overly concerned about home

[Watch our video](#) for healthcare professionals on how you can help identify and support young carers.



www.childrenssociety.org.uk/nexus

How to engage

These [resources](#) offer guidance and support to those working with young carers and their families. Resources include various toolkits as well providing information on the [young adult carers pathway](#), a critical transition point for young carers as they enter adulthood.

Our young carers advise starting a friendly and open conversation with someone you think might be a young carer. Some openers might be:

- “How has your day been?” “What did you do at the weekend?”
- If you know someone in the family requires care, ask how they’re doing and how the child or young person is getting on.

Ask gently and without judgment or labels:

- “Do you help look after anyone at home?”
- “What does a normal day look like for you?”
- “Is there anything you worry about when you’re not at home?”
- “Who supports you when things feel difficult?”

How to help & signpost

Some young carers may not be aware of the support on offer to them in their local area. You can therefore support them by making them aware of these services and/or referring in where appropriate and where you have the young carers consent.

- Find your local [young carer support services](#)
- Find your [local army forces services](#)
- Display information [poster](#) about support & services
- Inform young carers about their [rights](#)
- Promote the [NHS online guidance](#) and [phone app](#) to families so they are aware of their rights and national support service



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Law, Legislation & Government Guidance

[The care act and whole family approaches](#)

[The Care Act 2014](#)

[The Children's and Families Act 2014](#)

[The Health and Care Act 2022](#)

Information for Professionals

[The Whole Family Pathway](#)

[No wrong doors](#)

[NHS OpCourage](#)

[Young Carers National Youth Voice](#)

[Guidance for professionals working with young carers within armed forces families](#)

[Young Carers Alliance](#)

[Young cares in Bunny Land](#)

[The Naval Children's Charity](#)

[SSAFA](#)

[Royal British Legion](#)

[Deployment resource](#)

[Little Troopers](#)

Support children and young people

[The Children's Society Young Carers Page](#)

[SIBS](#)

[Little Troopers](#)

[Education and Care of Service Children](#)

[KOOOTH Online Mental Health Support](#)

[Guidance for young carers from armed forces families](#)

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