

# YOUNG CARERS: SHAPING OUR FUTURE

A guide for young carers thinking about the future

The  
Children's  
Society



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

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# INTRODUCTION

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Thinking about your future and making important decisions can be difficult to navigate as a young person. For those who have caring responsibilities it can bring added stress and worry, as well as less access to services and opportunities.

**If young carers don't receive the right support and guidance as they approach adulthood, they can end up with little or no support when they reach 18.**

This guide aims to help you understand what your rights and entitlements are as a young carer, and some of the issues you may face as you are thinking about your future. It will help you to think about how you feel about becoming a young adult carer, the help and support that you may need and what should be available for you.

This guide also includes helpful links to other websites, resources, booklets and other advice that you may find useful. You can use this booklet on your own or as a discussion point with a professional or support workers currently supporting you. You can use the reflective questions as much or as little as you would like to.



## WHO ARE YOUNG ADULT CARERS?

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There is no set age for when you become a young adult carer, but it is generally thought to be when you are between the ages of 16 and 25 years old. Reaching this age may not change your caring role, as you may be continuing to look after someone who has a long-term illness, is disabled, has a mental health condition, or an addiction problem.

It is important to recognise that if you are between 16 and 18 years old you should still be supported by services aimed at children and young people. It is also important that before you reach 18 years old, professionals and support workers help you to think about the support you may need as a young adult thinking about your future.

Support services  
are there to  
HELP YOU PLAN  
and prepare for any  
**CHANGES**  
before they happen.



# YOUR RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS

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If you are either a young carer or a young adult carer it is important that you understand your rights and what support you and your family are entitled to. This includes a number of different 'assessments' of what you may need:

## What is an assessment?

The word 'assessment' can sometimes be scary and sound like a test. However, it just means having a discussion with you to find out information about:

- \* Your situation and your caring role.
- \* How you are feeling.
- \* What support could help you and your family.

The aim of an 'assessment' is to find out if you are getting enough support. This may include the support that needs to be given to the person you care for, so that you can live your life, get involved in activities, go to school or other things that would give you the same chances in life as others. The assessment should be helpful and of benefit to you.

There are three types of assessments for young carers and young adult carers, depending on how old you are.

- \* A 'Young Carer's Assessment' is for young carers under the age of 18.
- \* A 'Transition Assessment' for young carers to think about their future transition to adulthood. There is no set age for this to be carried out, but it should be before you reach 18.
- \* A 'Carer's Assessment' is for all carers aged 18 or over.

## What is a 'Young Carer's Assessment'?

Young carers aged under 18 should be offered a young carer's assessment. This could be from your social worker, young carers support worker or someone else that helps you. The assessment could include what you do in your caring role, how you feel about it and whether it impacts upon other areas of your life – such as school or your friendships, or your own health and what worries you. After the assessment is finished you should be given a written report that is for you and your parent/guardian to know what was found that you need, what has been agreed will happen next and what help and support you and your whole family should receive. The assessment should enable you and your family to receive the support you each need, and should then involve other support services who could provide this.

**Have you had a young carers needs assessment?**

**If yes, what was the most helpful part of the assessment?**

## What is a 'Transition Assessment'?

A transition assessment is different to a young carer's assessment. As a child or young person under the age of 18, you may receive the support you need from services aimed at children. After you turn 18, the support you get would come from services aimed at adults. Transition is the time when you move from services aimed at children to those aimed at adults.

If you are a young carer you should be offered help to think about this change in a transition assessment meeting. This discussion could happen with your social worker, young carers support worker or another person who can help you think about your future and your aspirations. The discussion should particularly cover how your caring role may have an impact upon your future plans for after you leave school and after you turn 18.

There is no set age when this transition assessment should happen, but it should take place well before you are 18 so that there is time to discuss and plan what support you will need. Many young adult carers feel that it should take place between the ages of 14 and 16, however it has to take place at the right time for you and it should consider that you may not know what you want to do in the future yet, and that things may change for you as you grow older.

What age do you think it would be helpful for you to have a transition assessment and why?

## What might be included in the transition assessment?

There are no set questions for the transition assessment although there is guidance<sup>1</sup> for those who carry this out with you. But it is important to discuss what you want to do in the future, what interests you and how you think your caring role now and in the future may affect your planning and decision making for what you want to do. This might include what support your family and those you care for may need in the future so you can follow your own goals and aspirations.

## The transition assessment should also focus questions around:

- \* Your education now and in the future.
- \* Your job and career aspirations, work and employment.
- \* Housing, including where you may live or want to live.
- \* Your own mental health and well-being.
- \* Financial support that you may be entitled to.
- \* The needs of your family and the support they may need.



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<sup>1</sup> [scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/transition-from-childhood-to-adulthood/young-carer-transition-in-practice/transition-assessments-under-the-care-act-2014.asp](https://www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/transition-from-childhood-to-adulthood/young-carer-transition-in-practice/transition-assessments-under-the-care-act-2014.asp)



## What should happen following the transition assessment?

After the transition assessment a written report should be provided for you and your parent/guardian. The report should outline the points covered within the assessment, the next steps and ongoing support plan for you and the person you care for.

If you want to explore your rights further, The Children's Society has created a 'Know Your Rights'<sup>2</sup> pack to help you understand what you are entitled to. The pack details your human rights, your legal rights, and your rights to access things like benefits, support and advice—it also contains information about the different professionals that you or your family might be in contact with.



<sup>2</sup> [childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/DownloadableResources/know\\_your\\_rights.pdf](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/DownloadableResources/know_your_rights.pdf)

# THINKING ABOUT:

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## What I need at school

There are many challenges that you may face as a young carer during your time at school. School should be a place where you feel able to achieve and plan for your future. However many young carers and young adult carers face challenges at school and may have a poor experience there, which means they are not able to achieve what they feel they should.

If you are struggling at school because of your caring role, it is really important that you talk to your school and let them know what is happening at home. You could ask your parent or guardian to talk to the school, or talk to a teacher or member of staff that you get on well with and ask them for help with your schoolwork and deadlines. You can let them know about the Young Carers in Schools Programme<sup>3</sup> that can help them put the right support in place for you and other young carers at your school.

**If you are still at school, what support do you feel you need to enable you to achieve?**

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<sup>3</sup> [youngcarersinschools.com](http://youngcarersinschools.com)

## College and university

Going to college or university can open up many opportunities for you to be able to follow your career and life goals. You can gain many of the skills you need to help you achieve the job you would like and then earn more money during your working life. There are recommendations available for colleges and universities to recognise and support young carers in further and higher education.<sup>4</sup>

### COLLEGE AND FURTHER EDUCATION

Going to college or sixth form can be an important step towards further or higher education, vocational training or job opportunities. But as with school, young carers may face challenges in achieving and completing their assignments and college courses alongside caring responsibilities. You could talk to your college or sixth form when you apply or when you start and let them know about your caring role. Lots of colleges have good support in place for young adult carers, so try to talk to someone either before you begin your course or when you start.

### UNIVERSITY OR HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education and going to university may or may not be what you want to do, but as a young carer if you want to go to university you may worry that it isn't going to be possible. This may be because of financial concerns, worries about keeping up with your studies alongside your caring role, or who will provide this care if you move away. Your caring role shouldn't be a barrier to you applying for and going to university. You could discuss a plan for this in your transition assessment to ensure that you, your family and the person you care for receive the appropriate support, and you can go to the university of your choice.

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<sup>4</sup> [professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/young\\_adult\\_carers\\_at\\_college\\_and\\_university.pdf](https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/young_adult_carers_at_college_and_university.pdf)

Find out what is  
**OFFERED**  
by your selected  
**UNIVERSITIES**  
before you apply.



Young carers can receive extra support at university but you will need to identify yourself as a young carer first and let them know. You can contact the student support, welfare or finance team at the university and ask their advice about how to do this.

Financial support is available to young adult carers through some university bursaries, grants and scholarships. But this does depend on the specific university you attend, and it can also change year to year. When applying to the university of your choice, you can contact them in advance to discuss what support they provide to young carers.

Some universities offer taster days for young adult carers so you can see what university life might be like and some may make adjustment entry offers through their outreach schemes. Many universities have support in place to help those students with caring responsibilities such as academic help, financial guidance and support, health and well-being support, or Carers Passport schemes<sup>5</sup> so you don't have to share your story lots of times. Different universities may offer different support and you could find out what is offered by your selected universities before you apply.

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<sup>5</sup> [carerspassports.uk/](http://carerspassports.uk/)

## HINTS AND TIPS:

- Research the support offered to young carers at the universities you are applying to.
- Inform the university of your circumstances as a young carer.
- Use your personal statement to highlight your strengths and skills.
- Discuss the practicalities and support you will need in your transition assessment before you go.

The UCAS website provides some helpful tips for young adult carers who want to go to university. For further guidance on these tips, visit the UCAS website.<sup>6</sup>

Would you like to go to university?

What support would be helpful in applying for and attending university?

<sup>6</sup> [ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/students-caring-responsibilities](https://ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/students-caring-responsibilities)

## Apprenticeships and vocational training

An apprenticeship<sup>7</sup> allows you to combine practical training in a job with study. As an apprentice you would work alongside staff who are experienced and you will gain job-specific skills. You will also earn a wage and would be entitled to holiday pay, and also be given time to study in relation to your role. You need to be at least 16 years old to join an apprenticeship scheme. Generally, apprenticeships are for 30 hours a week, however in some cases they may require fewer hours – for example if you have caring responsibilities or a disability. The apprenticeship should be extended to take account of any specific needs you have, and ensure that you are able to complete the required hours.

**Is an apprenticeship something that you would like to pursue?**

**What do you need to know and what would help you to complete an apprenticeship?**

<sup>7</sup> [gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-apprenticeships](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-guide-to-apprenticeships)

## Going to work:

Deciding what sort of job you would like can be difficult, though some people may already have ideas about what job they want to pursue. It is important to consider a range of different options and look into what is out there, what your interests are, what you enjoy and how you can use your knowledge and skills. It can be a good idea to get advice from a careers advisor. Some schools and colleges may provide this support, or you can find lots of helpful information at [nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk)

When you do decide which job you would like, telling your employer about your caring responsibilities may be difficult. However, if you are able to speak to them about it, you may be able to talk about flexible working, attendance and absence in relation to your caring role so they better understand your situation and support you.

Carers Trust have written a really useful guide on access to employment for young carers, which provides lots of information and things to consider when thinking about your future career.

[carers.org/sites/default/files/media/employment\\_booklet\\_a5\\_leaflet\\_version\\_4\\_final.pdf](https://carers.org/sites/default/files/media/employment_booklet_a5_leaflet_version_4_final.pdf)

Employers for Carers<sup>8</sup> have written useful guidance and information for employers about employment rights for carers and how to support them in employment. This is aimed to get the best from you as employees in a supportive and understanding environment.

When discussing your role and responsibilities as a carer with your employer, you could share this resource with them.

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<sup>8</sup>[employersforcarers.org/](https://employersforcarers.org/)

What job would you like to have?

What steps do you need to take to work in that role?

What support do you need to apply for a job?



## My finances

**Managing your money can be difficult for any young person, but financial support is available for young adult carers.**

If you are interested in continuing your education and need some financial support you may be eligible to apply to the '16 to 19 Bursary Fund' to help with some studying costs such as equipment and travel expenses. The bursary is paid directly by the school, college or training provider, and they will decide how much is paid and when you will receive the payment. You should contact your school or college for support to make an application. Being a young carer or young adult carer doesn't automatically mean you will receive the bursary, but it is worth exploring this option as other circumstances may mean that you are eligible. Visit [gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund](https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund) to find out more.

As a young adult carer you may also be entitled to carer's allowance. Again, this allowance is dependent on your situation, so it is worth looking into whether you meet the criteria. You need to be over 16, not in full time education and not studying for more than 21 hours a week. You can find out more about carer's allowance and if you are eligible here: [gov.uk/carers-allowance/eligibility](https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/eligibility)

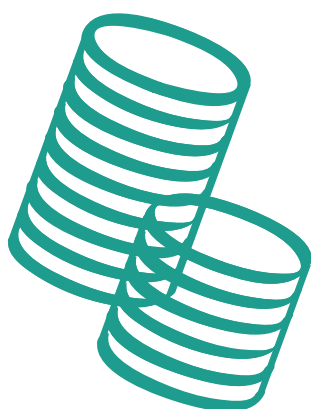


## My finances cont.

As a young adult carer you may be also be looking for financial guidance with your own money and budgeting to ensure you are managing your money in an effective way.

We have spoken to young carers about what advice you might need to manage your money now and to help you be more financially independent in the future. You can find out more about what financial support is available here: [childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-young-people/financial-support-young-carers](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-young-people/financial-support-young-carers)

The Children's Society's advice hub also has more information about how to manage your money, including choosing a bank account, budgeting, saving, moving into your first home, and much more. You can access the advice hub here: [childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/)



## Where will I live?

Whether you are renting or buying, living independently for the first time can be exciting. But it can also be daunting and expensive.

Planning and working out how much money you will need in advance can save a lot of stress and strain later. To help with this, you can visit our advice hub and find out more about housing at [childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/money-matters/buying-and-renting](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/money-matters/buying-and-renting)

It is worth doing some research and seeing if there are any schemes or organisations in your local area that offer support. There is also an organisation called Move On Up which is a unique flatshare option for people aged 18 to 25, who have previously or currently care for someone. You can visit their website at [quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/your-house-and-home/move](https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/your-house-and-home/move)

If you are considering moving out of the family home due to factors which mean you are no longer able to stay there, it is important to understand that the local authority have a duty to ensure that all children under 18 years old have suitable accommodation and you should not end up homeless.

You can include your thoughts and planning about where you will live in your transition assessment to help you. If you think you are at risk of being homeless or are close to leaving your family home, you could also mention it in your young carers assessment. Support should be provided to you following this conversation.



## My mental health

**Your mental health and well-being is very important as a young carer.**

Everyone can suffer from poor well-being and mental health. In fact, 1 in 4 people will suffer from mental ill health at some point in their lives, so it is nothing to be embarrassed about.

Sometimes as a young adult carer you might face extra pressure and struggle to look after yourself alongside your caring role and making key decisions. However, it is important to take the time to look after your own well-being.

There are some really useful resources for young carers and young adult carers co-produced by Rethink Mental Illness and The Children's Society. These resources can help you think about your own well-being, and support you to reflect on how you feel and what can you practically do to feel better. Using self-help apps and tools can be really beneficial to some people – however it is also really important to talk to someone you trust about how you feel, so that you can get the right support.

You can find helpful information and resources for young carers and young adult carers on our website.<sup>9</sup>

**What are some of the things that make you feel worried or stressed?**

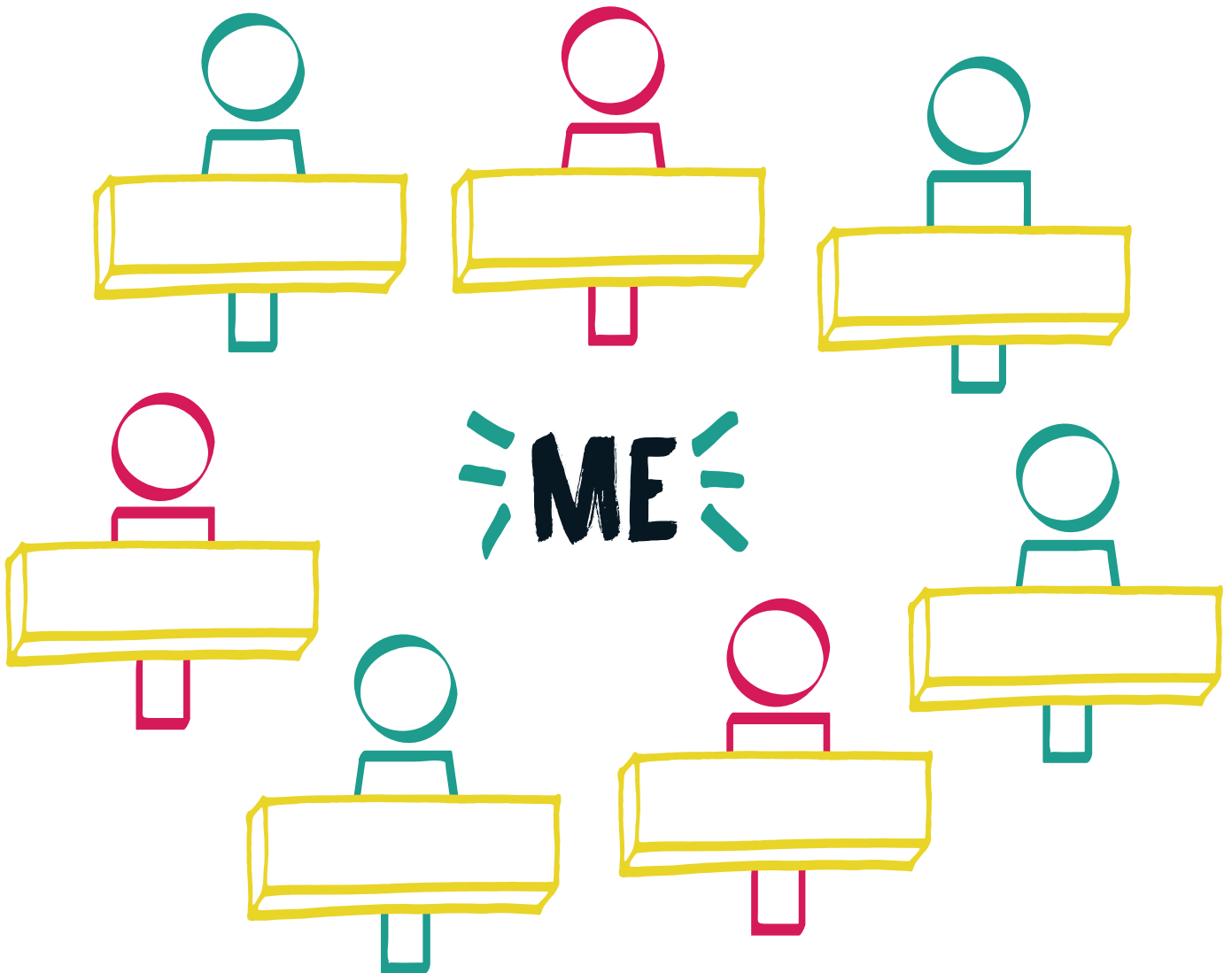
<sup>9</sup> [childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-young-people/well-being-and-mental-health](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-young-people/well-being-and-mental-health)

Now think about some of the things you do 'or can do' to help you cope with the difficulties you have listed on page 20.

As a young carer – and as you transition into adulthood as a young adult carer – you will have lots of things going on and stresses to deal with. It is important that you are aware of what makes you worried or stressed and that you think of ways to help you when this happens. You should also take time to think who else can help and support you when you face these challenges.



Think about who you can talk to, those people that can listen, support and guide you. This could include friends, family members, a project worker or a teacher. Who else could you connect with that could help you as a young adult carer?



Navigating your way through decisions alongside your caring role can be difficult. But getting as much support as possible can really help you and your family receive the right assistance, so that you can follow your own dreams and aspirations for the future.

# WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP AND SUPPORT?

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Throughout this booklet we have suggested websites and resources which may be able to help you further. We have outlined them all in this section, along with some extra links which may be helpful.

The '**Know your rights**' pack helps make you aware of your rights: your human and legal rights, and your rights to access things like benefits, support and advice. The pack also contains information about the different professionals that you or your family might be in contact with. [childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/DownloadableResources/know\\_your\\_rights.pdf](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/DownloadableResources/know_your_rights.pdf)

**Young Carers in Schools** is an England-wide programme that helps schools identify and support young carers and awards good practice. [youngcarersinschools.com](https://youngcarersinschools.com)

[ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/students-caring-responsibilities](https://ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/students-caring-responsibilities) Many universities and colleges have initiatives or support programmes in place to help students with caring responsibilities.

[nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk](https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk) provides information, advice and guidance to help you make decisions on learning, training and work.

[carers.org/sites/default/files/media/employment\\_booklet\\_a5\\_leaflet\\_version\\_4\\_final.pdf](https://carers.org/sites/default/files/media/employment_booklet_a5_leaflet_version_4_final.pdf) Getting into Work: A Guide for Young Adult Carers in England from Carers Trust

[childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-young-people/financial-support-young-carers](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-young-people/financial-support-young-carers) gives details on the financial support available for young carers.

This **Advice Hub** aims to answer any questions you may have about problems in your life and provide you with the right information to get help when you need it.

[childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub)

**Manage your Money** the Money Matters advice section is designed to help you manage your finances and better prepare for your future. [childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/money-matters](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/money-matters)

[childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/money-matters/buying-and-renting](https://childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub/money-matters/buying-and-renting) provides advice hub on all things housing.

[quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/your-house-and-home/move](https://quakersocialaction.org.uk/we-can-help/your-house-and-home/move) is a unique flat-share option for people aged 18 to 25, who have previously or currently care for someone.

**childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/advice-for-young-people/well-being-and-mental-health** provides advice on your own mental health and well-being.

**gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide** is a guide to apprenticeships combining practical training in a job with study.

**carers.org/sites/default/files/media/employment\_booklet\_a5\_leaflet\_version\_4\_final.pdf** a guide to getting into employment for young adult carers.

**carersuk.org/forum/support-and-advice/young-adult-carers** is a place for those 18 to 35 to chat about all things caring.

**moneyadvice.service.org.uk/en/articles/financial-support-for-young-carers** details financial support for young carers.

**citizensadvice.org.uk/** offers free, confidential information and advice to assist people with money, legal, consumer and other problems.

**themix.org.uk/** provides information and advice to young people under the age of 25 on things such as mental health, relationships and money. You can also call the Mix on Freephone: 0808 808 4994 (4pm-11pm, seven days a week).

**youngminds.org.uk/** offers information about looking after yourself, coping with mental health issues, feelings, symptoms and conditions. Young Minds has a free 24-hour crisis messenger if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.

**kooth.com/** provides free anonymous online support for young people. You can read articles written by young people, speak with a counsellor and access support from the Kooth community. Available: Monday to Friday: 12pm-10pm and Saturday and Sunday: 6pm-10pm.

**lawstuff.org.uk/** provides free legal information to children and young people.

**The Office of the Children's Commissioner** has an advice and assistance line. They can help with questions you have about your rights, welfare and safety. Email: [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk). Freephone: 0800 528 0731 open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm (the phone number is free from a landline, but may cost from a mobile).

