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Derbyshire All Age Carers Support Service



SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS IN YOUR SCHOOL

A Practical Starting Guide for Schools

Behind every
young carer
is a child
with dreams
for their
future.



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EVERY SCHOOL HAS YOUNG CARERS



Young carers are children and young people aged 5–17.5 years who provide care, assistance and support for one or more family members who have disabilities, long-term illnesses, mental health difficulties or who misuse drugs or alcohol.

Some are already known to staff. Others remain hidden.

Many young carers attend school every day without ever describing themselves as a young carer. Some continue to achieve well academically. Others quietly carry responsibilities that can affect attendance, wellbeing, participation, friendships and learning.

The good news is that supporting young carers does not require a complex programme or large budget. Small changes can make a significant difference.

This guide has been designed to help schools take their first steps towards becoming a young carer-friendly school. You do not need to do everything at once. Start where you are and build gradually.

STEP 1: CHOOSE A NAMED YOUNG CARERS LEAD

Every school should have a member of staff who coordinates support for young carers. This does not mean they provide all support themselves. Their role is to act as a point of contact, coordinate information and help ensure young carers remain visible within the school community.

Ask yourself:

- Do staff know who this person is?
- Do pupils know who they can speak to?
- Do parents know who to contact?
- Do external services know who to communicate with?

Notes:

STEP 2: BUILD STAFF AWARENESS

Young carers are often identified by adults who understand what they may be seeing. Staff do not need to become experts.

However, they should understand:

- Who young carers are.
- How caring responsibilities can affect education.
- Common signs that a pupil may be providing care.
- How to raise concerns or seek advice.
- How to respond with understanding and curiosity rather than assumptions.

Notes:

STEP 3: HELP YOUNG CARERS BECOME VISIBLE

Many young carers remain hidden because nobody has ever asked the question. Creating opportunities for families and pupils to share information is often one of the most effective things a school can do.

Consider:

- Adding a young carers question to admission and registration forms.
- Creating a simple process for staff to raise concerns.
- Including information about young carers in newsletters and parent communications.
- Talking about young carers through assemblies, tutor time or PSHE.
- Working with local young carers services.

Notes:

STEP 4: CREATE SAFE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUPPORT

Not every young carer needs intensive intervention. Many simply benefit from knowing that somebody understands.

Consider:

- Providing access to a trusted adult.
- Creating a safe space where pupils can talk, relax or decompress.
- Offering flexibility where circumstances make this appropriate.
- Ensuring young carers know how to access help if they are worried about someone at home.
- Supporting participation in wider school life.

Notes:

STEP 5: WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES

Families are often doing their very best in challenging circumstances. Approaching conversations with empathy and understanding is essential.

Ask yourself:

- Do families feel welcomed rather than judged?
- Do we explain support clearly?
- Do we work alongside families to find practical solutions?
- Do we signpost families to additional support when needed?

Notes:

STEP 6: MAKE YOUNG CARERS VISIBLE ACROSS SCHOOL

Young carers should not only be included in policies. Visibility helps children and families recognise that support is available.

Consider:

- Information on your website.
- Noticeboards or displays.
- Information for parents.
- Awareness activities.
- Staff reminders and guidance.
- Celebrating Young Carers Action Day.

Notes:

STEP 7: REVIEW WHAT IS WORKING

Schools do not need perfect systems. What matters is continuous improvement.

Reflect on:

- Do we know who our young carers are?
- Are staff confident identifying young carers?
- Do pupils know where to go for support?
- Are families aware of support available?
- What is our next small step?

Notes:

A SIMPLE REFLECTION

Becoming a young carer-friendly school is not about completing a checklist. It is about creating an environment where children feel seen, understood and supported.

Many schools begin with one conversation, one identified pupil, one trusted adult or one small change. Those small changes often make a lasting difference.

Seen.

Supported.

Succeeding.

Need support?

The Derbyshire All Age Carers Support Service Education Liaison Team can provide advice, training, resources, policy guidance and support to help your school develop its approach to identifying and supporting young carers.

Email us at education@derbyshirecarers.co.uk

Notes: