



Hazelwood Schools

Young Carers Policy

Reviewed April 2010

Policy Statement

We want children to be healthy, at the centre of everything we do so that they can make a positive contribution, have fun and enjoy growing up. We want to build a community for them that keeps them safe, supports their creativity and enables them to meet their potential.

This statement sets out our aspirations for all our pupils. Some children will need more support than others if they are to achieve their potential. We believe that young carers are amongst this group and we strive to ensure they are supported within school and by all agencies to help them live happy, safe fulfilling lives.

What is a Young Carer?

A young carer is anyone up to the age of 18 who is affected by care responsibilities within the home, where the person being cared for is disabled, has a long term illness, mental health issues or difficulties resulting from substance and or alcohol use.

Young carers may be primary carers i.e. caring for a parent or carer, or a secondary carer ie. helping to care for a sibling or older relative.

Definition of Caring

Caring responsibilities are defined not just in terms of practical support, such as carrying out practical tasks, for instance, shopping, cooking, cleaning etc. but also in terms of emotional support and the emotional impact on young people of care needs within a family.

Aim of the policy

- The aim of this policy document is to raise the awareness among school staff about the needs of young carers and to support them in establishing a whole school approach to address the issues that may arise within a school setting.
- The policy will hopefully provide teachers with a range of referral routes, also enabling them to provide young carers with information and advice on where to seek assistance.

Under reporting

Recent research has indicated an under-reporting of Young Carers in Britain. Young carers are frequently a 'hidden group of carers and less likely to be identified than adult carers due to a number of factors.

- Young people frequently hide their caring responsibilities in an attempt not to be seen as 'different' by their peers.
- Families frequently do not admit to the amount of care being provided by children and young people for fear of repercussions and a

perception that agencies will judge them negatively, rather than provide support.

- Young people often feel embarrassed to talk about their caring responsibilities, particularly if the care need arises from poor mental health or substance and alcohol use.
- Agencies concerned with care for adults, who may be working with disabled adults or adults with long term health issues, may not be picking up on the needs of the family group and may not be linking effectively with agencies tasked with the provision of social care for children and young people.
- The needs of secondary carers will rarely meet the thresholds for support by statutory social care agencies, despite the fact that secondary carers are frequently subjected to the same demands- emotionally and physically- as primary carers.

Background

According to a recent study undertaken by Dearden and Becker, it is estimated that 86% of Young Carers are of compulsory school age. One in five miss school because of their caring responsibilities. 28% of young carers have some kind of educational difficulty that has come to the attention of Local Authority Services. This rises to 35% of young carers in secondary schools.

We should also be aware that where a parent has a disability, mental health or substance abuse issues, the child might well be the carer whilst showing none of the following signs.

Possible impact on child's education

Caring responsibilities can impact on young people's education in a number of ways.

- **Lateness**- many young people may be late for school on a regular basis as a result of caring duties within the home or as a result of over-tiredness causing them to oversleep.
- **Tiredness**- many young carers will have interrupted sleep patterns or be over-tired as a result of having to complete household tasks.
- **Non-attendance**- some carers will take time off school because they are worried about the person they are caring for, or because they are carrying out caring tasks that prevent attendance at school.
- **Late/no submission of homework and assignments**- many young carers will find it difficult to find time to complete school assignments and may also have no one at home who can offer assistance with more difficult assignments.
- **Lack of participation in extra curricular activities and school trips**- many families of young carers will be totally dependent on benefits and activities may be difficult to afford for many families. Many young carers will also be unable to stay at school or access other activities if they have to rush home to support family members.

- **Challenging behaviour**- some young carers will exhibit challenging behaviour in environments away from the home setting, to offset the fact that they have to take on adult responsibilities and behave in an adult fashion within the home.
- **Difficulties in establishing friendships**- many young carers will be unable to develop school friendships outside school, as they may not be able to invite other children home or visit friends in their homes. As a result of poverty or caring responsibilities, they may also have restricted access to out of school clubs and activities that other children take for granted.
- **Poor health**- many young carers are carrying out tasks for which they are physically ill equipped, which in turn impacts on their overall health. In addition to this, long term caring responsibilities can impact significantly on the mental health of young people. Both aspects can affect school attendance.
- **Poverty**- many families will be dependent solely on state benefit for their income, affecting their ability to afford clothing and materials for school and the ability to access school trips.
- **Family isolation/involvement**- parents will often be unwilling or unable to attend school functions and parents evening, thus becoming more isolated from the school environment and unaware of issues and problems their children may be experiencing.
- **Poor education/career choices**- young carers will often not achieve as well as they could at school and may have poor initial exam results. They will also often feel that they are good at caring and should therefore automatically go into a care profession, without thinking through the implications of this choice.

We are listening schools and support for young carers is part of our personalisation agenda. We wish to develop:

- A supportive environment for young carers by establishing a whole school approach to the identification of need and the establishment of an appropriate referral mechanism and network to meet the individual support needs of young people with caring responsibilities.
- Identify a named member of staff, DHT Inclusion Jo Cuttell, with responsibility for ensuring that carers are identified and their needs met and to link with the Young Carers Project.
- Ensuring that school records identify the support needs of individual young carers and that these support needs are reflected in records accompanying children and young people within any transition to other educational providers while ensuring that the appropriate confidentiality procedures are in place to cover the necessary information sharing.
- Inset training for staff to include training on the possible identification of young carers, issues impacting on education and support/referral mechanisms available via external agencies/
- Promotion of additional links with adult care agencies, who may be able to support families and relieve care responsibilities of young people and maintenance of an up-to-date referral manual.

- Offering privacy to young people when investigating frequent lateness or non-attendance at school.
- Offering young carers the facility to stay in contact with the person they are caring for during school hours by means of the most appropriate communication methods.
- Allowing appropriate leeway and extensions to young carers for completion of homework or coursework.
- Allowing appropriate leeway with regards punctuality and attendance at school to take into account unavoidable caring responsibilities.
- Providing a trusted adult within the school setting with whom the young carer feels comfortable in addressing difficult issues arising from their situation. This may not be the same person as the named person with responsibility for carers.
- Supporting parents with mobility and/or access issues to facilitate and maintain regular contact with the school.
- Support young people in maintaining telephone access to their families during the school day.
- Including issues on caring within the PSHE curriculum can help to develop a holistic understanding of caring needs and responsibilities.