

Gaining Understanding on Young Carers

1. Key information

The tasks and level of care undertaken by young carers vary depending on the illness or disability, the need for care, and the family structure. Young carers often handle practical and emotional responsibilities usually expected of adults, such as:

- **Practical tasks:** cooking, housework, shopping
- **Physical care:** lifting, helping with stairs
- **Personal care:** dressing, washing, toileting
- **Emotional support:** listening, calming, being present
- **Finances:** Managing the family budget, collecting benefits
- **Healthcare:** Medication management or collecting prescriptions
- **Childcare:** Looking after younger siblings
- **Interpreter:** Helping someone communicate

Who are young carers?

A young carer is a person **under 18** who provides or intends to provide care for another person who is ill, disabled, has a mental health condition, or addiction problem.

2. Will there be young carers in every school?

It is likely that there will be many young carers at every school in England.

The 2024 School Census identified 54,000 pupils across the UK as being Young Carers. With an estimated two Young Carers in every classroom across Oxfordshire, BFYC help schools break down stigma barriers, improve attendance and support the difficult daily challenges Young Carers face to enable them to succeed.

Secondary schools had the highest rate of pupils known to be young carers at 0.9% (32,500 pupils). 0.5% of primary pupils (21,000) were known to be a young carer. (School Census 2024).

3. What impact can care responsibilities have on a pupil's achievement and wellbeing?

Caring can impact a young person's:

- **Physical health:** Night-time caregiving, lifting a heavy adult, poor diet, and lack of sleep can severely affect their health.
- **Emotional wellbeing:** Young carers often experience stress, tiredness, and mental health issues.
- **Socialisation:** They may feel different or isolated from peers and have limited social opportunities. A quarter of young carers in the UK reported being bullied at school due to their caring role (Carers Trust, 2013).
- **Stable environment:** Young carers may face traumatic changes such as bereavement, family break-up, loss of income and housing, or witnessing the effects of illness or addiction.

As a result, caring responsibilities have a significant impact on a pupil's learning:

- (Lives of Young Carers in England Omnibus Research Report) Young carers did have significantly higher levels of absenteeism from school than those in the comparison survey. Nearly three out of four (74%) had been absent at least a few times in the last year compared with around half (49%) of young people in the comparison group.
- If left unsupported, young carers can continue to struggle with school and have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the difference between nine Cs and nine Ds (The Children's Society, 2013).
- Young carers are more likely than the national average not to be in education, employment or training (NEET) between 16 and 19. Of these, 75% had been NEET at least once (compared with 25% of all young people) and 42% had been NEET for six months or more (compared with 10% of all young people) (The Children's Society, 2013).

