

Section 4: Identification and Support of Young Carers

Many young carers receive no (or very little) support during their childhoods. Part of the reason for this stems from the fact that many young carers are not identified, and therefore their needs are not assessed and supported by schools and partner agencies.

This section contains information on identifying young carers and how your school or agency can improve processes of identification. It is important to note that in order to effectively identify young carers, staff need to first have a sound awareness of the issues faced by them and the signs that a child or young person may be carrying out a caring role.

If you feel you need more background knowledge, it is recommended that you read sections 1 and 2 prior to this section.

In this Section you will find Information Related to:

- Identifying Young Carers
- Self Identification
- Good Practice in Identification
- Identification of Young Carers
- Assessment and Monitoring
- Additional Support Needs and GIRFEC
- Assessment Tools
 - Assessment Tool 1: Checklist for Possible Indicators of a Young Carer
 - Assessment Tool 2: Barriers to Learning: A Checklist to Use with Pupils
 - Assessment Tool 3: Manual for Measures of Caring Activities & Outcomes for Children & Young People

Identifying Young Carers

In the past, some pupils have struggled through the education system without being recognised as a young carer. Their needs and those of the person for whom they are caring are often only identified at crisis point. Even then, the extent of their caring role and the impact on their own development may not be recognised quickly or fully assessed.

Schools and partner agencies should be proactive in identifying young carers as soon as possible and not simply when tackling absence. It is the responsibility of all agencies who work with children and young people to play a role in identifying young carers. A secure environment should be created so that young carers and their families feel comfortable enough to self-identify. The earlier a young carer is identified, the less likely an inappropriate caring role will become engrained.

Self Identification

Young carers are not easy to identify and many will actively try to conceal their caring role. Before encouraging young carers to come forward, it is helpful to understand the reasons why they feel uncomfortable doing so:

- They worry that the family will be split up and taken into care.
- They want to keep it a secret and/or are embarrassed about the person they care for.
- They may not realise that they are carers or that life is different to that of their peers.
- They don't want to be any different from their peers.
- They believe that the school will show no interest in their family circumstances.
- School is different; they have a new or different identity.
- It's not the sort of thing that can be discussed with friends.
- There has been no opportunity to share their story.
- They are worried about bullying.

- They see no positive actions occurring as a result of telling their story.

Good Practice in Identification

Some young carers may tell their teacher about their additional responsibilities. A member of staff may be alerted to their caring role following conversation with the pupil or by direct information from parents or carers. Before your school actively seeks to identify young carers, it is strongly recommended that support for pupils should already be in place. In addition, it is important for pupils to see that it is readily accessible before they identify themselves as young carers.

Identification of Young Carers

Good identification stems from a whole-school approach. The following are practical ways of doing this:

1. Provide training to all relevant school staff which includes:
 - Reasons why young carers and their families do not wish to be identified.
 - Possible indicators of a young carer.
2. Publicise information about available support.
3. Raise awareness of the issues faced by young carers to pupils and staff.
4. Develop a secure and safe environment where pupils have the confidence to let staff know they are a young carer.
 - Implement a school lead and ensure that pupils know who that school lead is.
 - Promote positive images of disability, illness, mental ill-health and caring throughout the school curriculum and environment.
 - Develop policies and practice to prevent bullying, stigma and to raise the self-esteem of children who are young carers.
5. Provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to self-identify.
 - Publicise how pupils can access support effectively.
 - Offer discreet methods of communication for pupils to self identify. For example emailing the school lead, using a school post box or completing an internet questionnaire.

- Provide opportunities for identification following assemblies and PSE lessons.
 - Use an awareness raising event, such as Carers Week.
6. Create an environment whereby families have the confidence to inform your school that their child has caring responsibilities.
- Stimulate good communication between your school and families.
 - Ensure that your school meets the *Disability Discrimination Act (2005)*.
7. Adapt your admissions process to provide opportunities for pupils and families to inform schools that:
- The pupil has parents or other family members who have illness or disability, or who are affected by mental ill-health or substance misuse.
 - The pupil helps to look after them and what impact this has on their education.
 - The family is in touch with support services that could reduce the young carers role. (Some families may choose to keep their illness or disability a secret, but offering signposting & information about other services at an early stage can make all the difference).
8. Develop good partnership working with other agencies who may be involved with young carers.
9. Use GIRFEC and/or other assessment tools when a pupil appears to be a young carer, or is in need of extra support. See below for more information about these.

Assessment and Monitoring

Identification as a young carer is the first step to getting assessment and support. All young carers have a right to an assessment of their needs. The assessment process will vary depending on the needs of the individual child and family.

There are various tools that agencies can use to determine and monitor the extent of a child or young person's caring responsibilities. The outcomes of assessment and monitoring should inform any additional support.

Additional Support Needs and GIRFEC

Many young carers will have additional support needs. These needs may arise directly from their caring role or they may be unrelated and serve to compound or complicate their role as a carer.

When a young carer is identified as having additional support needs they are entitled to support under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act (2004, 2009). Again the nature and extent of this support will vary depending on levels of need and individual circumstance. For many young carers single agency assessment, support and monitoring will be appropriate, for example school based monitoring and support for education e.g. extra time for homework.

When a young carers needs are complex and require multi-agency planning or support, the local *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)* consent and assessment process should be followed. This process will allow for a full assessment of needs and if necessary a *Child's Plan* to be written with supports and interventions identified as well as clear processes for review and monitoring.

Assessment Tools

A number of assessment tools have been included in this resource. These can be used to assess, monitor and support young carers within your agencies and to assist with GIRFEC assessment and planning.

As every young carer and every situation will be different, it is expected that staff will use their professional judgement to decide which of these tools are most appropriate, depending on a young carers situation and level of understanding.

If a young carers needs are complex or multiple agencies become involved, GIRFEC processes should be followed. The following assessment tools have been included at the end of this section:

- **Assessment Tool 1: Checklist for Possible Indicators of a Young Carer**

This checklist contains a list of possible indicators that a young person may be carrying out a caring role. Many of the points can be indicative of other issues too. The checklist is intended to support staff to build a profile of a pupil, which in turn with further appropriate questions, may lead to a pupil letting you know they are a young carer.

- **Assessment Tool 2: Barriers to Learning: A Checklist to Use With Pupils**

The aim of this checklist is to aid assessment and highlight any specific barriers a young carer might be facing, in order to inform what support needs to be put in place and what should be included in a personalised plan.

The questions are not intended to be used in a quick 'one-stop questioning session', and instead careful thought needs to be given as to when and how, and by whom the questions are used.

- **Assessment Tool 3: Manual for Measures of Caring Activities & Outcomes for Children & Young People**

This manual contains a range of tools relevant for assessment and evaluation work with young carers. It is intended to complement what is already known about a young person and their family, including existing information gathered in the course of more informal assessment processes.

Assessment tools available in the manual include:

- The caring jobs I do.
- How caring affects me.
- What I like and dislike about caring.
- Me and my young carers project.

Possible Indicators of a Young Carer

Is the pupil....	✓
Often late or missing days or weeks off school for no reason?	
Often tired, anxious or withdrawn?	
Having problems socially or with making friends? Conversely, do they get on well with adults and present themselves as mature for their age?	
A victim of bullying? This is sometimes explicitly linked to a family member's disability, health or substance misuse problem?	
Depressed?	
Finding it difficult to concentrate on their work?	
Having difficulty in joining in extra-curricular activities or unable to attend school trips?	
Isolated because of their family situation or because they lack social skills with their peers (and yet they may be confident with adults)?	
Not handing in homework/coursework on time, or completing it late and to a low standard?	
Anxious or concerned about an ill or disabled relative?	
Displaying behavioural problems?	
Having physical problems such as back pain (perhaps from heavy lifting)?	
Secretive about home life?	
Showing signs of neglect or poor diet?	
Sick, have a disability, illness or	

Are parents (or another relative)....	√
Sick, have a disability, illness or substance misuse problem? (Remember that not all children who have an ill or disabled family member is a young carer).	
Difficult to engage with?	
Not attending parents' evenings?	
Not communicating with school?	

Barriers to Learning: A Checklist to Use with Pupils

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review	Yes	No	Notes
<p>Do you have problems attending school, or being late for school?</p> <p>Is this because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Your caring role or as a result of your caring role? ➤ Difficulties with transport to school? <p>You don't want to come to school? - Can you say why?</p>			
<p>Are you able to go to after school clubs and activities?</p> <p>Is there any after school club or activity that you would like to go to, but you are unable to?</p>			
<p>Are you able to concentrate and focus on your school work?</p>			
<p>Do you feel isolated at school?</p>			
<p>Do you feel different from other pupils?</p>			
<p>Do you feel there is anybody who understands your experiences and who listens to you?</p>			
<p>Do you have friends at school?</p>			
<p>Do you feel supported at school?</p>			
<p>Are you motivated to do your school work?</p>			
<p>Do you feel confident to share with other pupils about your caring role?</p>			

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review	Yes	No	Notes
Do you feel tired at school? Is this because of your caring role at home?			
Are you stressed or worried about someone's safety or health?			
Are you able to concentrate during exams?			
Do you feel confident talking to staff?			
Do you feel angry at school?			
Do you want to go on to college, university or further training?			
Are you being bullied?			
Are your parent (s) able to attend parent's evenings and other school events?			
Do you have difficulty in completing homework or coursework due to your caring role?			
Do you have a room or space to study at home, free from disturbances?			
Do you have a computer to work on at home?			
Are you tired at home because of your caring responsibilities?			
Is someone able to support you with your work at home?			
Are you getting support from your parent/carer (s) around the choices you have to make when you leave school - such as going to college/university/getting a job?			

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review	Yes	No	Notes
Do you feel able to do what you really want when you leave school?			
Are you missing out on Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) due to your caring responsibilities and home situation?			
Is there anything else you can think of that's getting in the way of your school work?			