

Children & Families Service

Policy on Provision for Young Carers in Primary and Secondary Schools

1.0 What is meant by 'young carer'?

1.1 A young carer is under 18 years of age and helps to look after someone in their family (or a friend) who is ill, disabled or misuses drugs or alcohol.

Caring can involve physical or emotional care, or taking responsibility for someone's safety or well-being. The person being cared for may be a parent, sibling, other family member or friend and may not necessarily be living in the same house as the young carer themselves. The level of responsibility assumed by a young carer is often inappropriate to their age and at a level beyond simply helping out with jobs at home, which is a normal part of growing up.

1.2 A further definition is also helpful: **"A young carer is anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of a person who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, or is affected by substance use"** (Carers National Association, 1998). This includes situations when a young person has to assume caring responsibility for a sibling/ siblings due to the lifestyle or absence of one or both parents.

2.0 Statement for children or young persons and their families

2.1 Dundee City Council believes in supporting all children and young people to achieve and attain at the highest levels through education. It is our task to provide appropriate support to each child or young person so that they gain maximum benefit from the provision that is available to them.

2.2 When a young person looks after someone in their family, he or she may need extra support to help him or her get the most out of education. This Young Carers' Policy outlines how we will support any child or young person who helps to look after someone.

2.3 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended 2009) identifies young carers as a specific group that may need additional support for learning to overcome barriers to learning caused by their caring responsibilities.

2.4 In accordance with legislative requirements enshrined within the above act, a report by Scottish ministers to parliament in 2012 entitled 'Supporting Children's and Young People's Learning: A Report on progress of Implementation of the 'Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) clearly outlines that more needs to be done for children and young people with 'hidden' additional support needs, including young carers.

3.0 Each of our schools:

- have staff who will respect a young carer's right to privacy and will only share information with people who need to know in order to help the young carer
- has a member of staff with special responsibility for young carers (a) who is known to all pupils and other members of the school community and partner agencies and services, and (b) who lets all children or young persons enrolled in the school know what can be done to help young carers
- has access to a specific member of staff from the Dundee Carers Centre with whom they can liaise on general or specific issues about young carers
- will work with staff from the Dundee Carers Centre who are available to support schools or work with schools to deliver lessons/assemblies with the aim of raising awareness and identifying hidden young carers in the school environment
- can put young carers in touch with the Dundee Carers Centre
- can put families in touch with other support services for children, young people and adults
- addresses the challenges faced by young carers through the delivery of appropriate support within the Curriculum for Excellence including the use of personal, social development and health programmes
- has access to training materials and awareness raising tools provided by the Dundee Carers Centre (which can be adapted to meet the bespoke needs of schools)
- will consider alternatives if a young carer is unable to attend activities that take place outwith the normal school day due to their caring role (e.g. sports coaching, detention, concerts, excursions)
- where appropriate, allows young carers to telephone home during breaks and lunchtimes
- can give parents advice about how to get their children into school where transport is a problem
- will issue all young carers with a copy of this policy and, where required, will provide support to young people in their interpretation and understanding of the policy
- will display and actively promote young carers information.

4.0 Identifying a young carer

4.1 Unless the school is advised about a child or young person's home circumstances, young carers risk first being identified by negative aspects of their behaviour or work, or indeed remaining 'hidden'. Some young carers worry about bullying or interference in their family life and may seek to conceal their role from their peers and from teachers. Some of the warning signs that might indicate that a child or young person has unrecognised caring responsibilities include:

- regular lateness or possibly increasing rates of unauthorised absence
- tiredness in school
- erratic response to homework with incomplete or late returns or non-compliance with set tasks
- lack of concentration, anxiety or worry
- under-achievement for potential capability
- behavioural problems, especially inappropriate responses possibly resulting from anger or frustration
- few or no peer friendships but possibly having a good relationship with adults and presenting as very mature for their age
- victim of bullying, perhaps linked to a family member's disability, state of health or substance misuse problem, or young carer not being perceived by peers as dressing in the latest fashion
- lack of interest in extra-curricular activities - especially after school
- lack of equipment (e.g. PE kit) or absence notes
- apparent parental disinterest due to non-attendance at parents' meetings

4.2 The above may be indicators of a range of problems, some not associated with a child having a caring role at home. In dealing with any child or young person exhibiting any of the above signs, however, staff should consider asking the child or young person if they are helping to look after someone at home. Staff should also discuss their related concerns with colleagues with pastoral responsibilities for the child or young person.

4.3 Young carers themselves have a key role to play in raising awareness about young carers' issues and challenges. Opportunities and support should be provided by schools for young carers to present/discuss young carers matters with their peers through activities including: school assemblies, workshops, talks, lunch time drop - in sessions etc.

- 4.4 When there are concerns about a child or young person, school staff should also consider the possibility that a child or young person may be carrying out caring roles, especially when working directly with family members.
- 4.5 Concerns about a child or young person who may be considered as a yet unidentified young carer should be reported to the member of staff with responsibility for young carers or the child's designated Named Person. New information about identified young carers should also be passed to the school's Young Carers' Co-ordinator.
- 4.6 The member of school staff responsible for co-ordinating young carer support (Young Carers' Co-ordinator) is the key person in school through which relevant matters need to be passed. **All schools, on an annual basis (September), should inform Dundee Carers Centre of staff changes within school in relation to the Young Carers' Co-ordinator role.**
- 4.7 It is preferable to start from a positive base, therefore, our enrolment process will seek sensitively to establish if:
- the child or young person has additional support needs which may include having parents/relatives with disabilities or long-term physical or mental health problems
 - the child or young person has a responsibility for looking after that person over and beyond normal, interpersonal relationships within a caring family setting.
- 4.8 Information gained as a result of this process will be held securely and made available in the first instance to the designated member of school staff with responsibility for young carers. While we will respect the right to privacy, we would wish to establish if the family is in contact with a support service that could help reduce their reliance on the child or young person. We will only share information about young carers and their families with people who need to know in order to be able to help. Before sharing information with anyone else, we will seek consent from the young carer or, if they are not able to understand, from a parent.
- 4.9 To support a smooth transition for young carers between primary and secondary school, young carers' information held by primary schools should be passed to secondary schools. Such information should include details of the young carer's circumstances, additional support needs and successful supports/interventions.

5.0 Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

- 5.1 Most young carers will meet the definition of a 'child in need' under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and may be entitled to an assessment from Children's Services. In the event of any young carers being considered to be at risk of significant harm, the school's child protection procedures should be followed.
- 5.2 Getting it Right for Young Carers, The Young Carers Strategy for Scotland 2010-2015 highlights the value of the Getting it Right for Every Child approach in that without necessarily having been identified as a young carer, these young people can benefit from universal and more specialist services working together to ensure their well-being. In line with the national 'getting it right for every child approach' to support young people's wellbeing and achieve improved outcomes, Dundee Carers Centre, in partnership with schools, are committed to working within GIRFEC parameters and the associated legislation as outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to support young carers.

6.0 School support for identified young carers

- 6.1 A member of staff in each school will lead on our support work for young carers. This member of staff will be the point of contact for young carers and their families and will liaise with young carers' services. Their name and contact details will be made available in the school handbook, or by telephone, from the school office. For ease of reference, this person will be termed the **Young Carers' Co-ordinator**.
- 6.2 The Young Carers' Co-ordinator will champion all young carers matters in the school. Amongst other things, the co-ordinator, along with others, will ensure that all young carers receive the support they require to succeed at school. Importantly, the Young Carers Coordinator, following consultation with individual young carers, will ensure that all staff, as required, are fully aware of the young carer's circumstances and required supports/interventions
- 6.3 The Dundee Carers Centre has a named member of staff allocated to liaise with every school cluster in the city. Details of such 'named persons' will be updated annually within the Dundee Young Carers web site.
<http://www.youngcarers.co.uk>

- 6.4 School staff will talk to young carers in private and not in front of their friends unless the young carer asks for a friend to be present. **In preparing and reviewing this policy, young carers themselves identified confidentiality and sensitivity from teachers and support staff as key requirements.** Sensitivity to the needs of young carers includes being careful not to ask even well-intentioned questions about how the family members are when the young carer is in the presence of his or her peers.
- 6.5 Young carers will be given a 'phone card' to identify themselves to school staff, if necessary, so that they may have access to a telephone, where appropriate, to contact home if they are worried about a relative without having to explain their need (see Appendix 1).
- 6.6 Where possible, schools will negotiate deadlines for homework and the submission of coursework in advance of these being set (N.B. deadlines for some things cannot be changed, such as submission of course work as part of an external course assessment. The occasionally abrupt and significant changes to home circumstances that can occur highlight the need for deadlines to be set aside and/or re-negotiated on an individual basis. **A flexible approach is key.**
- 6.7 Where possible, schools should provide a quiet area for young carers to complete homework at the end of the school day.
- 6.8 When an identified young carer is given detention, schools should consider allowing this to take place at break and lunchtimes rather than after school.
- 6.9 When absence notes are not produced because of the known home circumstances of the young carer, arrangements are agreed for appropriately coding and recording absences.
- 6.10 Where young carers are absent as a direct result of their caring duties, the SEEMIS code Q (Exceptional Domestic Circumstances (authorised) should be used. Importantly, young carers will not always be in a position to evidence, other than by word of mouth, the reasons for their absence. In such circumstances the professional judgement of school staff is paramount. Use of the SEEMIS code Q is doubly important in connection with the award of educational maintenance allowances for older pupils/young carers.
- 6.11 Schools will liaise with support services to ensure that families can be advised where additional help may be available to them.

- 6.12 If a parent is unable to travel to parents' meetings due to family circumstances, school staff will try to make alternative arrangements. The young carer or parent may request this.
- 6.13 Schools will provide advice about how children can get into school where transport is a problem.
- 6.14 School staff and services will be available for any child/young person, parent or family member who wishes to discuss their family circumstances so that we can help the child/young person to achieve their potential
- 6.15 Schools will take an active role in seeking to identify and provide support to hidden young carers.
- 6.16 Schools are encouraged to make full use of Dundee Carers Centre staff in all relevant pupil and parent/carer engagement events including: parents' evenings, transition events and lunch-time drop in sessions with the aim of raising awareness and providing information of Young Carers Services in Dundee.

7.0 SQA Examinations and Exceptional Circumstances

- 7.1 In line with all other pupils, schools can submit an exceptional circumstances request to SQA following an examination for those young carers they believe have suffered an exceptional circumstance e.g. a domestic circumstance where they had no option but to take on caring duties as opposed to attending an examination/arriving late for an examination. As with all other pupils and in accordance with Children & Families Service Presentation and Assessment Guidelines, schools require to submit alternative evidence of demonstrated attainment before results are published. This 'alternative evidence' will take the form of coursework, class assessments or prelims.

8.0 Further information and useful contact details

- 8.1 The Council's current 'Carers Strategy' will be available on both the Dundee City Council and Dundee Carers Centre websites.

- 8.2 All young carers can ask for an assessment, no matter how old or young they may be. This is also the case for young carers aged 16-18. A young carer can ask for an assessment if he or she cares for an adult or a child. The Community Care and Health Scotland Act (2002) states that young carers under the age of 16 can ask for an assessment without the consent of their parents. For more information please see: <http://professionals.carers.org/young-carers/articles/assessments-for-young-carers-scotland,3187,PR.html>

In moving forwards, implementation of the Carers Act (2018) will embed such practice and the articulation of 'young carers statements' within the single child's planning process.

8.3 **Contact details**

Dundee Carers Centre
Seagate House
132-134 Seagate
Dundee
DD1 2HB

WEB: <http://www.youngcarers.co.uk>

TEL: 01382 200422

EMAIL: enquiries@youngcarers.co.uk

8.4 **Other helpful websites**

<http://www.cool2talk.org/>

Local support available to young people from Cool2talk

<http://www.youngcarer.com>

National site for young carers

<http://www.riprap.org.uk>

For young people with a parent who has cancer

http://www.barnardos.org.uk/young_carers.html

Barnardo's is a national charity that works with young carers

<https://babble.carers.org/>

National site for and about young carers

<http://www.nacoa.org.uk>

Site for children of alcoholics

www.carersuk.org

National carers site. Links to national research: Young Carers in the UK: the 2004 Report

www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/surgery/

This health-related website also covers issues of family relationships and identity

Carers Scotland Act 2016

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Unpaid-Carers/CarersBill>

Local Support

<http://alcoholtayside.com/youth-services/>

(Tayside Council on Alcohol - for young people caring for people with alcohol issues)

Housing (homelessness/couch surfing is an issue for young carers)

<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/in-your-area/services/youth-support-and-leaving-care/dundee-youth-housing-service/>

http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/local_services/dundee

Policy approved: October 2009

Policy updated: March 2013, January 2017

Review and renewal date: January 2019 or sooner if circumstances dictate

Responsible Officer: Education Manager

Appendix 1

Sample young carer's card to facilitate telephone use

Children and Families Service

School Session: 2016-17

Name Here

needs to use a school/personal phone to contact home
Please allow him/her to do so on request.

Signed:

Appendix 2

SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources for use by schools in raising knowledge, understanding and awareness of young carers with children and young people

<http://youngcarers.co.uk/resources>

In addition to the above, the Dundee Carers Centre can tailor a workshop session for use within schools to meet the needs of a group or class.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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