

Young Carers Interim Strategy 2024

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Background and Context

The Hampshire Young Carers Strategy was reviewed and updated for 2017-2020. Following this, there was a full relaunch of the Hampshire Children and Young People's Plan, which reviewed the needs of Young Carers following engagement with young people, their carers, professionals and partnership consultation.

The Young Carers commissioned service is due to be recommissioned in 2024, therefore this interim strategy has been developed prior to a full revision which will be conducted in partnership with the new commissioned service, when operational.

Who are Young Carers?

A 'young carer' is a person under the age of 18 who provides (or intends to provide) care for someone else. This is usually a family member with an illness, disability, mental health issue or addiction. Evidence shows that having a caring role can impact on a child's physical and mental wellbeing, social relationships, education, and employment prospects. Early identification is crucial to providing support before a child becomes vulnerable.

In 2023, the school census recorded 38,983 young carers in England. This is fewer than half of the 96,757 young carers aged 5-16 identified in the 2021 census. The true figure is likely to be far higher. The 2021 census identified that there are 2,690 young carers in Hampshire however, it is likely that this number is a misrepresentation, as trends locally and nationally indicate that the number of young carers is under-reported.

Data from the young carers' projects across Hampshire records that as of March 2024, there were a total of 3,360 young carers open to their services, with 1,741 'active' young carers who are engaging with groups and support mechanisms. A major aim of this strategy is to improve the identification, assessment, and support of a greater number of young carers.

Our Vision

Within Hampshire there remains a strong and ongoing commitment by statutory agencies and voluntary sector organisations to continue to work with, and support, young carers, and their families.

The aim is to reduce and prevent the need for children to undertake a caring role due to the associated impact upon their own health, well-being, and life chances. As professionals working with children who are young carers, it is incumbent upon us to understand children's caring roles and understand the difference between caring for someone and caring about someone.

Support for young carers and their families is delivered through several organisations and agencies in a wide range of ways. Early identification and intervention by professionals is key, as is the need to adopt a whole family approach when assessing the needs of a family.

Young carers continue to share their views and we continue to listen to ensure the services being commissioned and provided within the community best meet the identified needs. A multi-agency response continues to be the best way forward in terms of taking further steps to reduce and prevent harmful impact on children due to them undertaking inappropriate caring roles within their family.

Our Statutory Duty

The Children and Families Act 2014 (HM Government, 2014), outlined the requirement for local authorities to take reasonable steps to identify young carers and give all young carers under the age of 18 (regardless of the type of support they provide) a right to an assessment of their needs.

Moreover, the Children and Families Act 2014 together with the Care Act 2014 (HM Government, 2014b), set out a preventative focus on supporting children through a 'whole family approach' (Department for Health, 2017).

The rights of young carers were further enhanced by the Health and Care Act 2022.

Across these three areas of legislation, the obligations on both adults and children's social care are laid out, along with the responsibilities of Integrated Care Boards and NHS Trusts.

Who is this Strategy for?

This strategy has been produced for all those who have a responsibility for, and interest in, supporting young carers and their families. This could be within health, education, social care (both adult's and children's services) or voluntary organisations.

It is important that our local partnership working, via Local Children's Partnerships (LCPs) and with the Children's Trust reflects our commitment to young carers and their families that they will receive a comprehensive assessment of their needs to enable adequate support to be provided to them. Across our partnership, we want all young carers and their families to feel confident in accessing support services as well as ensuring they have a voice in the development of services.

What Young Carers Say

Young carers identified four areas of support as particularly important, as set out in the Children's Commissioner's report of December 2016 (The Support Provided to Young Carers in England):

- 1. To be able to be a child**
Young carers stated that they value the opportunity to escape and be a 'normal' child or young person.
- 2. To listen and take their views into account**

Young carers felt that services supporting those they are caring for did not recognise them as the main carer and the expert on their condition. They felt that their views were not accepted or respected.

3. To have someone they can talk to

Young carers want to be able to speak with a trusted professional person who can listen, provide advice and emotional support. Young carers felt it was important that the person they talk to keeps their information confidential, only sharing to help get the support they need.

4. For professionals to be aware and understand them.

Young carers highlighted that professionals such as GPs and teachers are often not aware of the challenges they face, the types of support available, and the best way to support them. They also feel that more should be done to raise awareness among professionals about young carers and the support they require. Furthermore, young carers also felt that more could be done to raise awareness with their peers to tackle ignorance and bullying.

These are aligned to the themes identified at the Hampshire Young Carers Forum, facilitated by the Hampshire Young Carers Alliance in early 2024:

- Find out the best way to communicate with us
- Respect my individuality
- Provide more support for me and my family
- Provide opportunities for me to take part in activities and enjoy new experiences
- Opportunities to spend time with other children and young people and have a break from my family
- Don't be afraid to ask us how we are or what we want
- More understanding and recognition for young carers in schools. We have aspirations for our futures too, support our learning needs in education
- For the NHS to understand the role of a young carer and acknowledge it
- Raise awareness of the young carers' role in the community
- Achieve a happy life outside of the responsibility attached to being a carer and recognise our own personal interest to be happy long term

While developing the 2022-2025 Children & Young People's Plan, a wide-ranging engagement exercise was undertaken. This included ensuring the voices of young carers were heard through Young Carer focus groups. The Children's Trust partnership recognises the impact of being a young carer, and has committed to supporting children as part of its current plan. Children and young people reported that they want their needs as young carers to be recognised and they want to be supported to cope with these. The partnership is committed to achieving these outcome by:

- Raising the profile and awareness of young carers amongst education settings
- Expanding the reach of young carer support groups
- Improving the identification of young carers by partner agencies

Success will be measured through:

- The number of schools who have engaged with young carers services (referrals, assemblies, drop-in sessions etc.)
- Carers Star outcome tool – feedback from children and young people
- Hampshire schools identifying young carers and addressing their needs
- Increased referrals from wider partner agencies to young carer service

Aims of the Strategy

1. Effective identification and assessment of young carers with increased awareness across the partnership

- Increased profile and awareness amongst education settings (CYPP priority)
- Improved identification of young carers by partner agencies (CYPP priority)

This will be achieved through:

- Identifying and supporting young carers – Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) webinars
- Training of designated safeguarding leads in schools
- Young Carers in Schools Award Scheme - engagement by schools
- Working with Health Commissioner and providers across Hampshire to promote increased recognition of young carers and engagement with them in their caring roles
- Promoting clear referral pathways across the partnership workforce

Success will be measured through:

- The number of schools engaged with services for young carers (referrals, assemblies, drop-in sessions etc.) (CYPP measure)
- Increased referrals from wider partner agencies to young carers service (CYPP measure)
- Hampshire schools identifying young carers and addressing support needs (CYPP measure)
- Referral numbers to the commissioned young carer's service
- Referrals from Adults Social Care to Children's Services and/or Young Carers services
- Referrals from Health agencies to Children's Services and/or Young Carers Services
- Increased number of schools engaging with the Young Carers School Award

2. Provision of effective, coordinated support for the whole family

- Promotion of the whole family, multi-agency approach through the Family Help model
- Provision of a commissioned young carers service providing young carers with the opportunity to widen their social networks and access activities with other young people who share similar experiences - offering a break from their caring role and responsibilities while receiving emotional support from professionals and peers
- The inclusion of the family voice in support – with a focus on support needed
- Support young carers using a strengths-based approach, to achieve lasting change
- Hampshire-wide young carers offer providing equitable access to young carers across the county while retaining the flexibility to meet local needs

This will be achieved through:

- Effective re-commissioning of the service – with the provision of support groups, mentoring, activities and 1:1 support across the local authority area
- Expanding the reach of young carer support groups (CYPP priority)
- Promotion and utilisation of the Local Children’s Partnership to support the delivery of CYPP objectives, identify local needs and promote the support needs of young carers
- Using a whole family approach to support for families with effective plans co-developed with the young person and their families at the centre and identifying the appropriate range of support services to address the family needs.
- Embedding the Family Help model to ensure staff across Family Help teams are aware of the local offer – both through commissioned services and the voluntary and community sector in the local community

This will be measured through:

- Referrals from Hampshire Young Carers Alliance into Children’s Social care.
- Successful outcomes achieved for families on the Supporting Families Programme, where a support need relating to a child’s caring circumstances has been identified
- Quarterly Local Children’s Partnerships reporting to the Children’s Trust Executive Board
- Carers Star outcome tool outputs (CYPP measure)
- Commissioned services data including – participation, young carer feedback and family engagement, and school holiday events data.

3. Data and Governance

- Effective information sharing mechanisms to enable effective assessment and the identification of needs and risks
- Continued commitment from strategic leaders across the partnership (in particular Adults Social Care, Children’s Social Care and Health) to deliver whole family responses to young carers and promote co-ordinated support within their respective organisations
- Using data effectively to identify young carers and support decisions and commissioning of support.

This will be achieved through:

- The Hampshire Joint Carers Strategy
- Commitment of partners in the Early Help Hub, Local Children’s Partnerships and through development of individual Family Plans
- Improved utilisation of the schools’ census data
- Young carer services representation within the Children’s Trust to promote awareness of the challenges faced by young carers and promote young carers rights

This will be measured through:

- Increased number of transition assessments completed with young carers aged 16 and 17, to support into adulthood
- Attendance at Early Help hubs

This strategy will be reviewed and refreshed during 2025.