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YOUNG CARERS IN HERT- FORDSHIRE



YOUTH MANIFESTO PRIORITIES FOR 2015/16



CYBER BULLYING: HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF, SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF BULLYING AND SELF-ESTEEM POST BULLYING (2952 VOTES)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHTS: APPROPRIATE ADULT, CAUTIONS, DOMESTIC ABUSE, WORKING HOURS, PAY, SHARING OF INDECENT IMAGES, RIGHT TO BE HEARD, ETC. (2824)

HATE CRIME: WHAT IS IT? HOW TO REPORT IT? HATE CRIMES ARE CRIMES THAT ARE TARGETED AT A PERSON BECAUSE OF THEIR DISABILITY, RACE OR ETHNICITY, RELIGION OR BELIEF, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR TRANSGENDER IDENTITY (2494)

LGBT+ (LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, PLUS): TACKLING HOMOPHOBIA, REDUCING STIGMA, INCREASING UNDERSTANDING, SUPPORT FOR LGBT+ YOUNG PEOPLE (2299)

FINANCIAL HELP FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: 16-19 BURSARY, STUDENT GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS & BURSARIES, STUDENT & APPRENTICESHIP CARDS, ETC. (2127)



HERTS1125 WHO NOT WHAT (YOUNG LGBT+ COMMUNITY)

MENTAL HEALTH: SUPPORT, WHERE TO GO, CONSEQUENCES OF NOT GETTING SUPPORT E.G. SELF-HARM, SPECIFIC SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR YOUNG LGBT+.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT: UNDERSTANDING OF OWN SEXUALITY, ACCEPTANCE OF OWN SEXUALITY, EFFECT ON EMOTIONAL HEALTH, WAS/IS THERE SUPPORT FOR YOU, WHERE DO YOU/DID YOU TURN?



HERTFORDSHIRE YOUNG CARERS

IDENTIFYING YOUNG CARERS: HOW THIS CAN BE DONE CONSIDERATELY, AND THE NEED FOR YOUNG CARERS TO ACCESS SUPPORT AND INFORMATION IN SCHOOLS

LOCAL YOUNG CARER SUPPORT GROUPS: WHAT IS THE NEED FOR LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO YOUNG CARERS AND WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE AVAILABLE.

UPDATE ON HERTFORDSHIRE YOUNG PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO 2014/15

LAUNCHED OCTOBER 2014

Last year, Herts1125 launched the third Young People's Manifesto which over 4,100 young people took part. The top five priorities as voted for by young people were:

preparing young people for work, cheaper bus fares for young people during the school holidays, improving mental health services and education for young people, engaging young people to get their voices heard and tackling youth unemployment.

Since then Herts1125 and HertsUKYP have been involved in a number of changes seeking to improve things in Hertfordshire for young people.

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR WORK

- Herts1125 is now recognised on the national volunteering website vInspired giving young people who register, the opportunity to gain nationally accredited certification for their volunteering hours.
- Young people taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Herts1125 Youth Voice and National Citizen Service (NCS) graduates have the opportunity to have hours recognised to develop CVs and portfolios.
- New social media account @HertsYV set up to publicise local volunteering opportunities and benefits of taking part.
- Establishing partnership working to link in to local organisations including ProAction, to enable their members to access the opportunities offered by Youth Connexions.

CHEAPER BUS FARES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

- Hertfordshire Saver Card applications continue to be given out at key points throughout the year in schools.
- Reduction in price if applying online a welcome addition.
- Evidence from 2015 Manifesto shows that there is an increase in the number of young people who are aware of the discount card.
- Online School journey planner easy and accessible to use.

IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Fifteen young people from North Herts District and eleven from East Herts District completed their RSPH Mental Health Champions training in 2015.
- Fifteen young people from St Albans District are currently undertaking the Health Champions course.
- MindEd training delivered across county to professional workers from schools, county council and voluntary organisations, with priority to those who work directly with young people.
- Hertfordshire Health & Wellbeing Board leading Hertfordshire's Year of Mental Health for 2015/16 'Help us tackle the mental health stigma and discrimination'.
- Young people at centre of CAMHS review held early in 2015 leading to a number of actions to be taken forward including:
 - Planning services in equal partnership with children, young people and families.
 - Shaping of the local offer by both robust evidence and the wishes of children, young people and families.
 - A new model of delivery named by children and young people in the county to give it a clear and credible brand.
- Hertfordshire Young People's Manifesto 2014/15 and St Albans Youth Council reports 2010/2014 used as evidence in the CAMHS review
- Evidence from Hertfordshire Young People's Manifesto 2014/15 presented at the Youth Select Committee in July at Portcullis House to support UK Youth Parliament's national campaign.
- Herts1125 Who not What (WnW) established and consultations with self-identified young LGBT+ carried out to evidence specific support required. Results from the consultations published in this Manifesto.
- Welwyn and Hatfield Youth Council used the findings from the 2014/2015 Hertfordshire Young People's Manifesto to support work locally including securing funding for Mental Health First Aid training delivered to school staff.

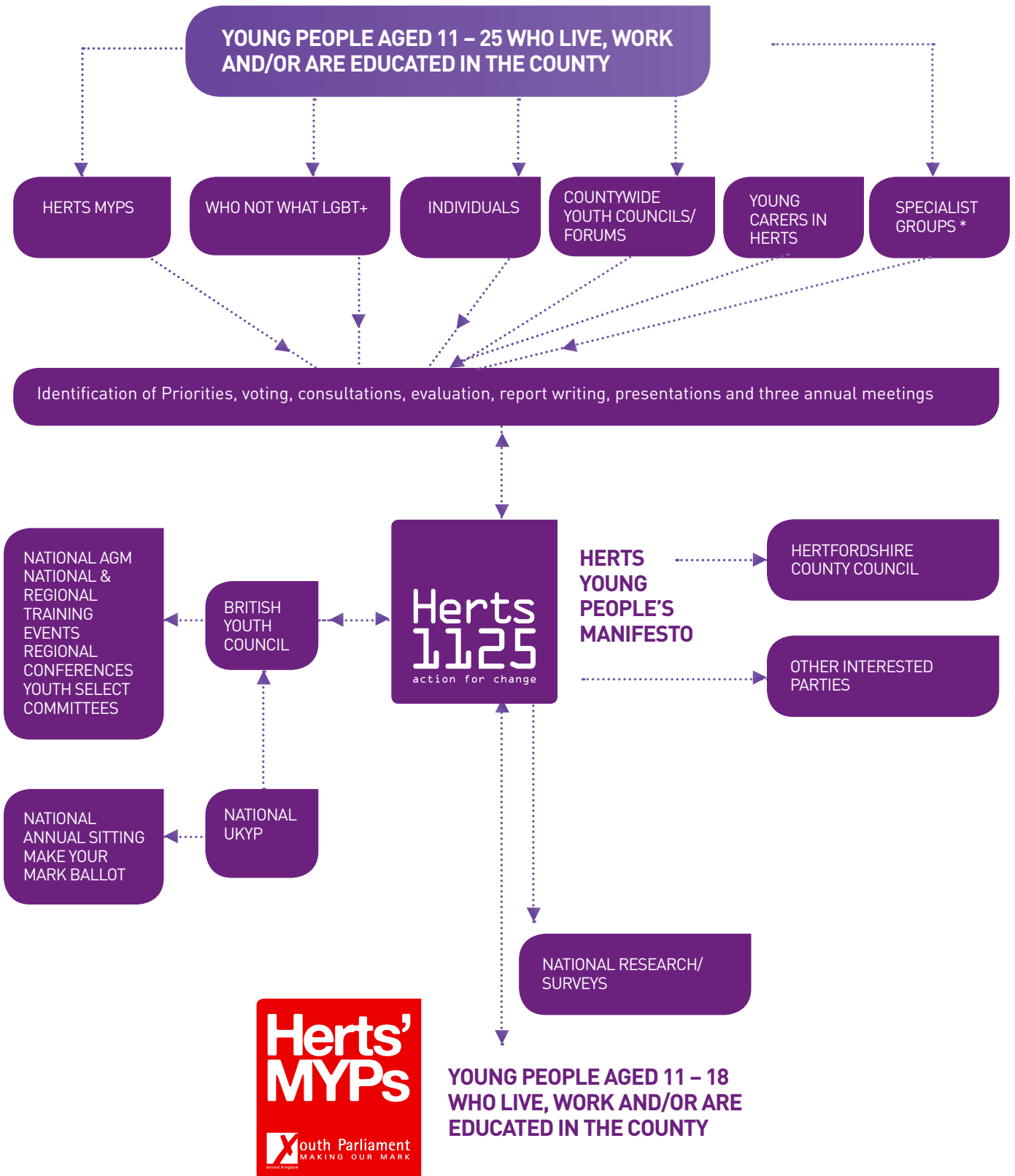
ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE TO GET THEIR VOICES HEARD

- Improved co-ordination of staff resources to support the engagement and participation of young people in the county and ensure outcomes from Manifesto taken forward.
- Local links with schools and voluntary organisations strengthening through increased promotion of opportunities.
- Engagement and participation has increased from 600 responses in the first Manifesto in 2012, 1600 in 2013, 4100 in 2014 to 9503 in 2015.

TACKLING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

- Herts Jobs 16-19 website has been updated and there is a strong presence on social media promoting job opportunities in local services and businesses as well as regional and national.
 - The website was incorporated in the Youth Connexions website in 2014: page views are increasing year on year and the jobs and careers section is the most visited.
 - The website now includes a specific section on part time jobs available including information on working hours that is easy to find and accessible to all.
 - Herts Jobs 16 -19 twitter now has 2694 followers.
- Youth Connexions have established productive relationships across county in order to offer relevant and valuable work experience placements to young people, 7217 placements took place in 2014/15.

OUR STRUCTURE



HOW HERTS1125 MAKE DECISIONS

PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED
YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11 – 18 VOTE FOR TOP HERTS1125 PRIORITIES & HERTS MYP CANDIDATES ANNUALLY IN JANUARY/ FEBRUARY

HERTS1125 MARCH/APRIL MEETING
HERTS1125 DEBATE & DISCUSS THE DIRECTION OF EACH CONSULTATION

ONLINE CONSULTATIONS & PAPER QUESTIONNAIRES PREPARED

RESEARCH WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS & DECISION MAKERS

FOCUS GROUPS AND SEPARATE ISSUE BASED MEETINGS

APRIL/MAY
SURVEY DESIGN AND ROLL OUT

HERTS1125 JULY MEETING
HERTS1125 MEMBERS DISCUSS & DEBATE EVIDENCE GATHERED SO FAR, AND VOTE ON THE WAY FORWARD
LOCAL YOUTH/SCHOOL COUNCILS SHARE BEST PRACTICE

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER
HERTS1125 MEMBERS CONTINUE WITH MANIFESTO WRITING/EDITING/PROOFING/EDITING/PRINTING

HERTS1125 OCTOBER CONFERENCE
HERTS1125 MANIFESTO PRESENTED TO HERTS COUNTY COUNCIL AND MEMBERS DEBATE ISSUES TO BE PUT FORWARD FOR CONSULTATION IN UPCOMING UKYP ELECTIONS

HERTS1125 JANUARY REVIEW
FEEDBACK FROM HERTS COUNTY COUNCIL RECEIVED ON YOUTH MANIFESTO PRIORITIES

HERTS1125 JANUARY ONWARDS
INFORM YOUNG PEOPLE IN HERTFORDSHIRE ON RESULTS OF THE 2015 MANIFESTO AND CONTINUE TO WORK WITH HERTS COUNTY COUNCIL ON IMPROVING DESIGN & DELIVERY OF SERVICES

Young carers are defined nationally as children or young people who 'help look after a member of the family who is sick, disabled or has mental health problems, or is misusing drugs or alcohol'¹. Although this is useful as a broad 'catch all' term to describe young people with caring responsibilities, it is important to remember that first and foremost they are individuals with their own challenges and aspirations. They have the same rights as any other young person in the UK, e.g. the right to an education, to have their voice heard and to be safe, even though their particular circumstances may mean that they are in need of additional support outside of the home in order to exercise them.

The 2011 census identified 178,000 young carers in England and Wales but it is widely accepted that this number is likely to be much larger as many young carers go unnoticed and so miss out on support that could be available to them². In Hertfordshire, Carers in Hertfordshire estimate that there are at least 8000 young people with caring responsibilities³. Just to put this into context, this is roughly 10% of pupils attending state funded secondary schools in the county, based on information collected by the Department of Education in January 2015 for the school census⁴.

This year, for the first time, young carers have taken part in the Herts1125 Manifesto and used their collective voice to share the issues and concerns that affect them daily. The Young Carers Council and members of Young Carers Support Groups identified two major priorities for 2015/16 to consult with their peers on, which are:

1. Identifying young carers in school
2. Local young carer support groups

Teachers from a small selection of schools⁵ within Hertfordshire that support young carers also completed a short survey to share good practice and offer any ideas they have for additional support.

From here, the Young Carers Council has reviewed all the feedback from the 71 young carers who participated in the survey, the teachers' questionnaire and comments made by young carers during council meetings held during summer 2015 and made recommendations about things that Hertfordshire County Council and commissioned services can do to raise awareness, improve the support young carers receive and increase opportunities for education and employment.

1 http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/young_carers.htm

2 Hidden From View (The Children's Society, 2013)

3 <http://www.carersinherts.org.uk/home/contact-us/media-and-key-facts> based on the BBC survey in 2010

4 Number of pupils 80,971 figures supplied by the Department for Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2015>

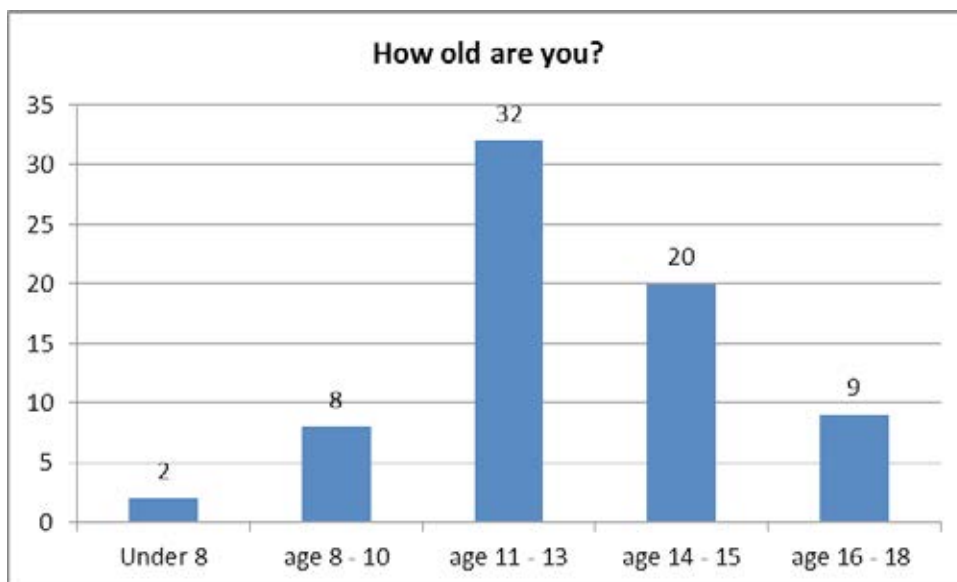
5 Teachers surveyed from St Josephs Catholic Primary, Hitchin Girls, Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School, John Henry Newman School, The Cavendish School and Hertswood Academy.

PRIORITY ONE

IDENTIFYING YOUNG CARERS: HOW THIS CAN BE DONE CONSIDERATELY, AND THE NEED FOR YOUNG CARERS TO ACCESS SUPPORT AND INFORMATION IN SCHOOLS.

THE ISSUES

According to Barnardos, the average age of a young carer in the UK is 12. This was supported by our local statistics with 86% of respondents aged 11-18, 11% aged 8-10 and a small minority of younger contributors (3%) under the age of 8. Of the 71 young people who completed the survey the majority are young women (62%:44), 37% (26) are young men and the final 1% (1) prefer not to be defined by gender.



As well as asking how old respondents were at the time of the survey (July 2015), we also asked at what age they actually began caring. This revealed that only 8 out of 71 (11%) respondents were aged 12 or over, meaning that although the national average age of a carer is 12, in Hertfordshire there are much younger children taking on responsibilities, in some cases long before they know what the term means.

'I CAN'T REMEMBER A TIME WHEN I WASN'T A CARER.'
FEMALE, 18, WEST HERTS

'I DIDN'T REALISE IT WASN'T NORMAL. IT ISN'T UNTIL YOU START GOING TO OTHER PEOPLE'S HOUSES THAT YOU SEE HOW DIFFERENT IT IS FOR THEM.' FEMALE, 18, THREE RIVERS

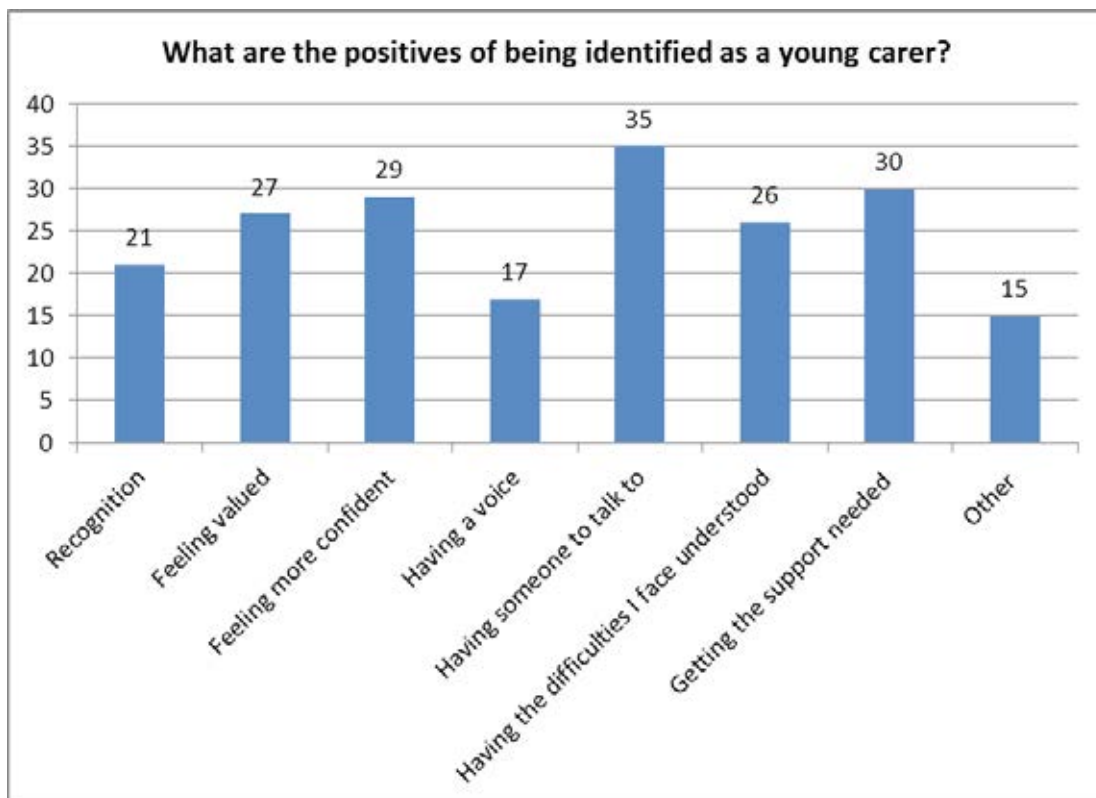
Most young carers look after one of their parents or care for a brother or sister⁶ but some young people in Hertfordshire care for multiple members of their family, including those from different generations. However the actual amount of care, support or physical lifting varies greatly as the levels of support required often 'changes from day to day', making it difficult to define an 'average day'. Some young people believe that this creates a **'two tier'** response from teachers, friends and professionals, dependent on the relationship you have to the person you are caring for and the level of disability the person has, for example caring for a wheelchair user rather than someone with a learning disability, a parent rather than a grandparent. This can result in being treated differently, even though the actual hours spent caring and the levels of responsibility involved might be the same.

'MY SCHOOL HAS THE IDEA THAT YOU HAVE TO BE LOOKING AFTER SOMEONE IN A WHEELCHAIR TO BE COUNTED AS A YOUNG CARER.' MALE, 15, WELWYN & HATFIELD

'MY TEACHER CALLS ME A 'CARING BROTHER' RATHER THAN A 'YOUNG CARER' AS MY BROTHER HAS A MENTAL DISABILITY.' YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS' COUNCIL

'MY TEACHER THINKS THAT TO BE A YOUNG CARER YOU HAVE TO CARE FOR A PARENT, NOT A SIBLING.' YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS' COUNCIL

⁶ <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/young-carers-rights.aspx>



Unsurprisingly, as most of the young people who took part in this survey have links to Carers in Hertfordshire or attend young carer groups, many of the positive comments about the value of being recognised as a young carer relate to either the Young Carers Council or support groups. As well as enjoying feeling **‘a part of something’** and **‘getting days away’** from the stresses of home life, many young people say that they like being with other young carers, whose experiences are similar and where they don’t have to explain how they feel, and what it is like to care for someone else.

‘(IT’S AN) OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE TIME TO MYSELF.’ FEMALE, 16-18, LUTON

‘KNOWING THERE ARE OTHERS IN THE SAME SITUATION.’ MALE, 16-18, ST ALBANS

The majority of the 71 young people surveyed (87%: 60) said that they are happy to tell others, including friends and other peers, about their caring role, although of this group 51% (35) say they have some reservations about it being made common knowledge. This is mainly to do with not wanting to be perceived as different from their peers and fears about being seen as an outsider.

'IT MEANS THAT I WOULD HAVE TO EXPLAIN WHAT I DO AND WHY I DO IT IN DETAIL AND THAT IS SOMETIMES HARD FOR ME.' FEMALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

The final 13% (9) are young people to whom the term 'young carer' can be applied but who do not want to reveal their role. This reinforces the suggestion by Carers in Hertfordshire that there could be hundreds more 'hidden' young carers in Hertfordshire schools who are not identified and possibly not accessing the support on offer.

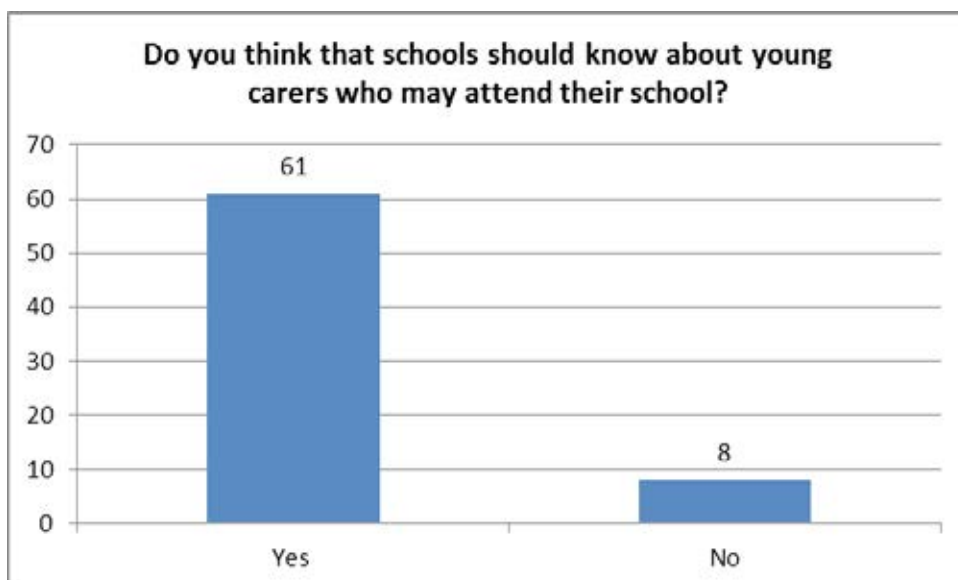
The reality for those consulted is that even when people do know, being a young carer has a huge impact on all aspects of their life, whoever it is they care for. This is more than the physical aspect of moving around equipment, lifting and handling or simply being there whenever needed, but also the emotional strain, worry and anxiety that comes with caring for someone you love.

'PEOPLE THINK I'M JUST LIKE THEM BUT THEY DON'T KNOW MY LIFE AT HOME.' YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS' COUNCIL

'PEOPLE SOMETIMES JUST THINK IT'S LIKE A BABYSITTING ROLE AND SAY 'OH, I DO THAT – DOES THAT MEAN I'M A YOUNG CARER TOO?' FEMALE, 17, EAST HERTS

As one young person described it, being a carer for her mother means that she **'has to be her second body,'** and even when not physically present she is **'always there in your mind, the physical, emotional and mental caring you do is 24/7'**. This can result in young people feeling stressed and anxious, whilst feeling misunderstood by the people around them.

'I THINK EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS THAT YOU HAVE A DISABLED BROTHER, BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS.' MALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS



We asked if schools should know about young carers who attend their school and 88% (61 out of 69) who responded said, **'yes'**, with only a small but adamant proportion of young people saying they definitely do not want their school to know.

'(SCHOOLS SHOULD KNOW) BECAUSE SOME CARERS COULD BE UNDER A LOT OF STRESS. THIS COULD MAKE THEIR GRADES DROP OR ATTITUDE BECOME POOR AND TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW THAT IT ISN'T THE PUPIL'S FAULT.' FEMALE, 11-13, BROXBOURNE

'SOME YOUNG CARERS ARE IN BAD POSITIONS AND ARE STRUGGLING. AND KNOWING THAT THEY CAN TALK TO SOMEONE AND FIND SUPPORT IS A GREAT HELP' FEMALE, 14-15, HATFIELD

57% (4) of the teachers who completed the companion survey for this priority reported a small increase over the last two years of people coming forward to self-identify as young carers, which hopefully means that barriers are being broken down and young people are feeling more confident about receiving support⁷. However, the top reasons given for not identifying as a young carer were fear of being treated differently by peers and / or members of staff at school and embarrassment.

⁷ 57% of 7 teachers who completed the young carers teacher survey in July 2015

'I DIDN'T TELL PEOPLE AS YOU GET BULLIED AT SCHOOL FOR BEING A YOUNG CARER. I DIDN'T WANT PEOPLE TO THINK I'M WEIRD OR A FREAK.' MALE, 15, NORTH HERTS

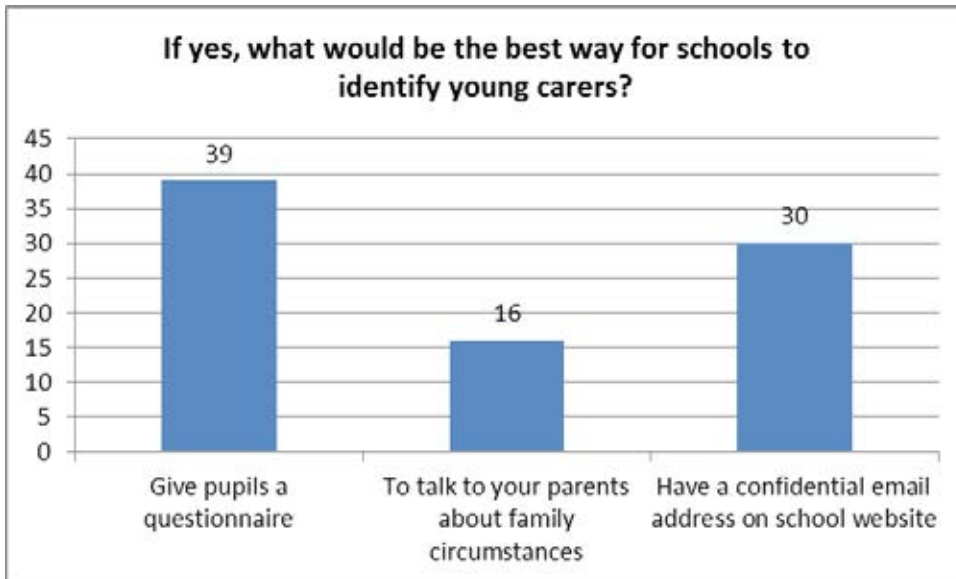
'NOT EVERYONE IS NICE AND NOT ALL YOUNG CARERS WANT TO BE KNOWN ABOUT.' FEMALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

'I DON'T MIND PEOPLE KNOWING, JUST THE FACT THAT I MIGHT BE TREATED DIFFERENTLY THAN OTHER PEOPLE IN MY CLASS.' FEMALE, 14-15, HATFIELD

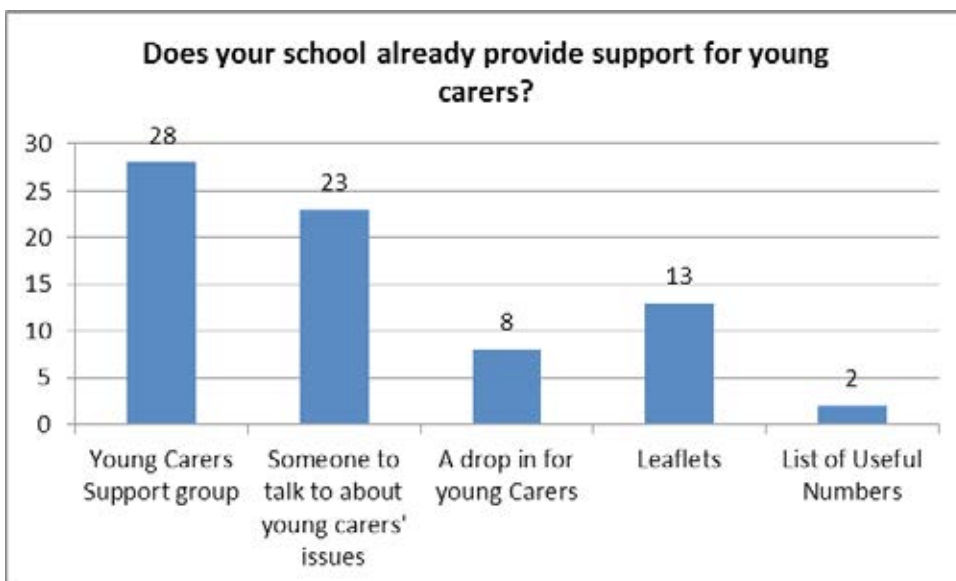
To access additional pastoral support and opportunities like young carers support groups through school, young people need to self identify. There are divided opinions about how young carers feel recognition should take place and the existing practice in schools appears to vary. A questionnaire to be completed in school is the most popular suggestion in this survey, gaining 46% (39) of the vote. Members of the Young Carers Council told us that some schools already do this once during a Year 7 assembly, which was further evidenced by comments made in the teachers' survey: **'I have done an assembly for Year 7 and identified young carers via a follow-up questionnaire.'** The only issue highlighted here, and not made clear from the teachers' survey, is that to their knowledge this is never followed up over later school years when situations can and do change.

'IF A SITUATION CHANGES, LIKE AN ACCIDENT OR SOMETHING, HOW WILL THE SCHOOL KNOW?' MALE, 15, NORTH HERTS

Another very good point made was that whilst some school surveys are anonymous, presumably to encourage pupils to be open and honest, the reality is that once all of the surveys are collected in there can be no way of knowing which young people ticked 'yes' to questions asking if more support or immediate help is required. This appears to be a major flaw in the recognition process, which young carers would like to see resolved.



The next most popular idea for how to find out who the young carers are in a school (35%: 30) is for young people to self-report using a confidential email address on the school website. This would inform the relevant teachers but keep information on a need-to-know basis, thus satisfying some of the worries expressed about **'everyone'** finding out.

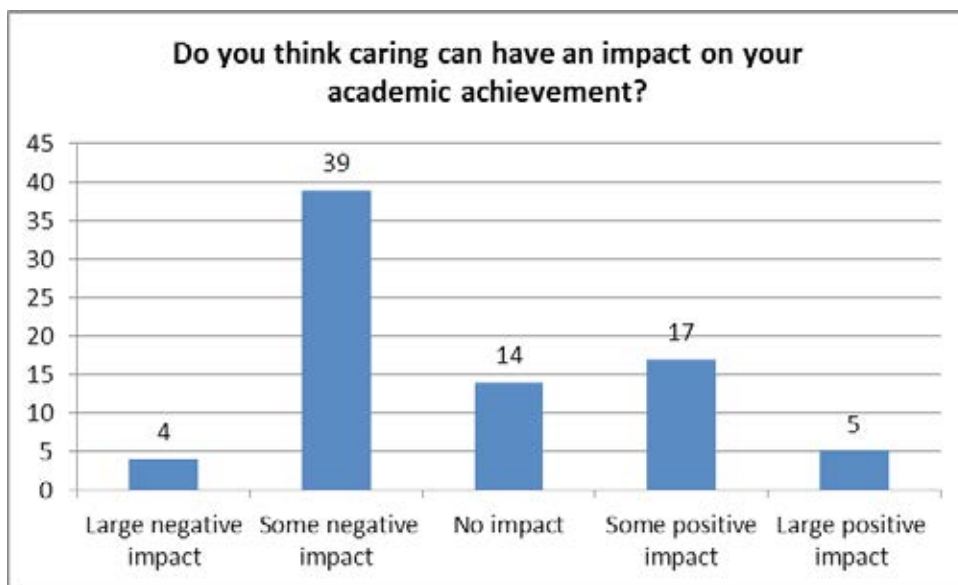


In addition to ticking the box for the question above, some young people took the opportunity to make positive comments about the additional support they have been offered / given once teachers know.

'(SANDRINGHAM SCHOOL) IS EXCELLENT AT DEALING WITH YOUNG CARERS! :)' FEMALE, 14-15, ST ALBANS

As well as feedback from young people on this topic we asked teaching staff to tell us about some of the good practice they have in their school:

'TOGETHER WITH ANOTHER SCHOOL WE HAVE YC LUNCHES ONCE A MONTH WITH TREATS, PICNICS, OUTING INCLUDED AND THANK THEM FOR THE CARE THEY GIVE.' SCHOOL SURVEY COMMENT



The majority of young carers (49%: 39) told us that their caring responsibilities have 'some negative impact on their studies' and an understanding that the school environment can make a huge difference when things at home are tough. This is especially so if teachers know about the pressure young carers may be under at different times, as it enables them to effectively support them in their studies and homework.

'SCHOOLS SHOULD KNOW BECAUSE WHEN MY MUM IS ILL AND I AM FEELING DOWN AND NOT MYSELF, THEY WILL KNOW WHY.' MALE, 11-13, HERTSMERE

'YOU CAN BE OVERWHELMED AND STILL HAVE TO DO THE WORK EXPECTED OF YOU.' FEMALE, 16-18, NORTH HERTS

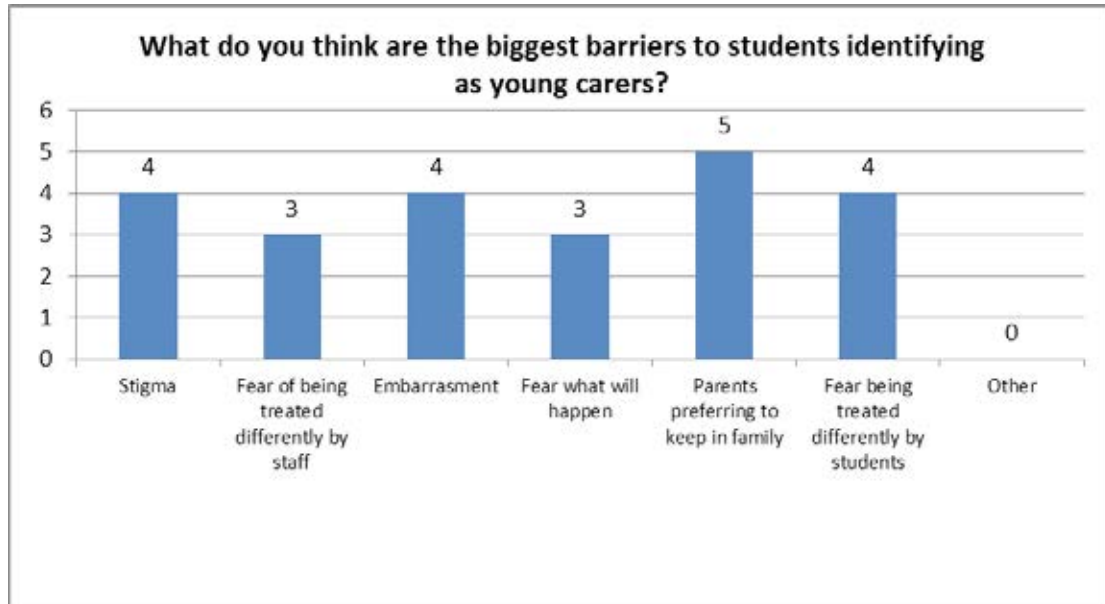
At the other end of the scale, five young people said caring experiences have a large positive impact on their academic achievements, not just in terms of curriculum subjects but also in building things like patience and tolerance and improving concentration.

'IF I GET NO SLEEP DUE TO BROTHER, MY WORK GOES DOWN. BUT IT HELPS ME TO UNDERSTAND SUBJECTS LIKE PSYCHOLOGY BETTER I THINK.' 14-15, BROXBOURNE

Some of the Young Carers Council did express a fear of stigma being attached to being a carer for a relative and shared examples of previous bullying or unkind behaviour from their peers at school.

'PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND AND ARE NOT COMPASSIONATE ABOUT THESE THINGS.' FEMALE, 14-15, NORTH HERTS

Others admitted to being pressured by parents to keep family information hidden from outsiders. This last concern extended to fears about social care interventions that might result in children being 'taken away' from their homes and families if their caring commitments were reported by a teacher, even if there is another adult present within the home who shares this responsibility.

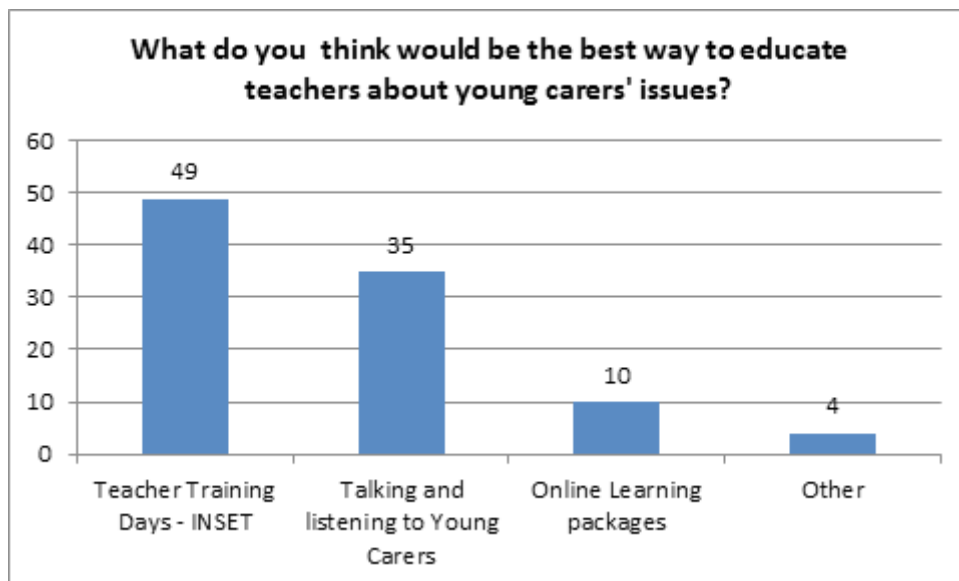


This disparity between being open about a caring role and not being happy to share information about home life was reflected in lots of the comments made. One young woman was adamant that she was not really a carer, **'just doing what any family member would do for another'**⁸ despite meeting all the criteria for membership of a young carers' support group and attending the Young Carers Council meetings. Seemingly unhappy with what she sees as **'people trying to take over'** she said she would prefer no one to know, which was echoed by others who talked about a fear of pity and the daily irritation of having to answer questions posed by peers and/or adults who understand nothing about their life.

Whilst accepting that other young people might not know a lot about the huge responsibilities and restrictions of being a young carer, we were surprised at the high number of young carers who said they believe that teachers and school staff are also not fully aware about the commitments of being a young carer.

'MORE TEACHERS NEED TO BE INFORMED OF THE IMPACT THAT BEING A YOUNG CARER HAS.' 14-15, BROXBOURNE

We asked young carers how they felt teachers and school staff could best be made aware of the responsibilities that face many of their students and the response was making use of the teacher training inset days whilst also hearing from Young Carers themselves about the reality of balancing home and school life.



⁸ Comment made by participant at Young Carers Council meeting, Hemel Hempstead 12.08.15

Another key issue raised is the impact that one person's additional needs can have on the whole family. Although many of the young people consulted are not the sole or primary carer as there are adult carers living at home, e.g. a parent or older sibling, they are still offering a level of emotional support and practical help around the house, e.g. shopping, cooking and cleaning that is much greater than the responsibilities of their peers. Several young people spoke about the fact that wherever they are and whatever they are doing they are **'always worrying about what is happening at home.'**

'WHEN I GO TO A FRIEND'S HOUSE AND SEE WHAT LIFE IS LIKE FOR THEM IT IS LIKE ENTERING A DIFFERENT WORLD, ONE WHERE YOU ONLY HAVE TO DO THINGS FOR YOURSELF AND NOT ALWAYS COME LAST.' MALE, 15, WELWYN & HATFIELD

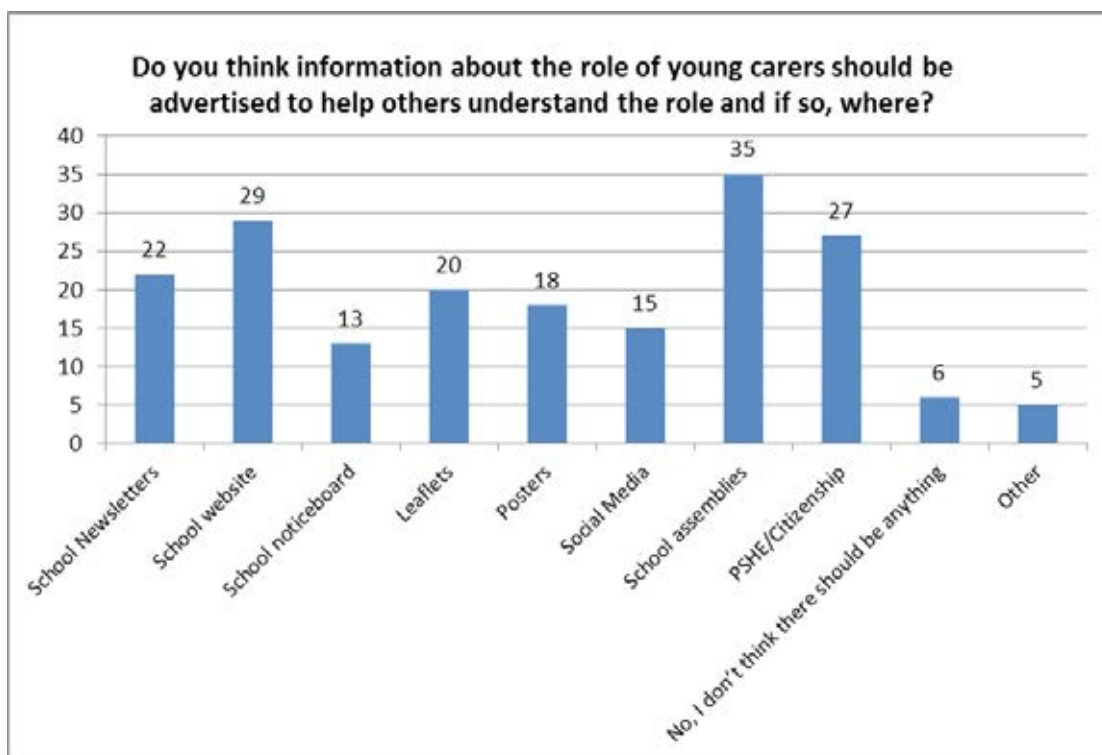
This difference means that the opportunity to have friends to tea or to stay over is limited to times when respite is available and simple pleasures that most teenagers take for granted, e.g. going to parties, shopping or spontaneous treats, become difficult or impossible.

CHANGES WE WANT TO SEE

The majority of young people consulted think that schools should know which of their pupils are young carers. This should be confidential, to reassure young people that this information will not become common knowledge which could make them targets for bullies, but NOT anonymous. There should also be an opt out box for young carers who do not want any help and another for those who do not need any at the current time but may need additional support in the future.

'THE SCHOOL SHOULD SUPPORT THE CARER AS THEY MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THEIR WORK WHICH RESULTS IN GETTING IN TROUBLE.' YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS' COUNCIL

Young carers believe that many of the difficulties they have in school are due to their peers' lack of knowledge and understanding about what a young carer is and how it impacts on life both in and outside of school. This includes bullying and stereotyping, e.g. expecting all disabled people to be wheelchair users. They would like to see this challenged by an HCC countywide campaign to raise awareness through events, workshops and training similar to the national campaigns for mental health issues.



In addition to adult-led workshops, young carers would like opportunities to volunteer as Health Champions and be trained by Youth Connexions workers to co-facilitate these workshops and share some of their experiences. It is important to young carers that those who work with them have some training in the issues of young carers so that they are sensitive to their needs. Topics for workshops could include looking after a long-term sick sibling or parent, how to support a friend who is a carer, becoming a carer and coping with additional responsibilities at home.

They would also like specialist INSET training offered for those teachers that are directly supporting young people, either as a named worker or co-ordinating support in school. The teachers who took part in this survey agree with this suggestion, explaining that although their current knowledge is good they would like joint training held with teachers from other schools to share practice and to learn about specific topics during more focussed workshops, e.g. research into the impact caring has on learning.



IN SHORT

- Schools should conduct regular surveys that are confidential, not anonymous, to identify the young carers in the school before offering appropriate support, information and guidance.
- These surveys would provide Carers in Hertfordshire and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) with more accurate data so that the true number of young carers in the county is known and appropriate support can be developed to reflect this.
- Young carers should have the option to refuse any support, where appropriate, but have the opportunity to easily opt-in if things change at home or they feel less able to cope alone later on.
- Because young carers provide care and/or emotional support to a family member (or guardian) they need additional emotional and practical support to access the same opportunities as their peers. This includes teachers trained in young carers' issues who can support and empathise, without the whole school having to know.
- Any bullying of young carers should be treated with the same level of seriousness as other forms of bullying and discrimination in schools and inappropriate language by pupils should be challenged immediately.
- HCC should provide training and support for teachers so that they have a wider understanding of what it means to be a young carer and therefore be better equipped to support their students. This should be identified by a partnership of young carers, Carers in Hertfordshire and teachers, along with Youth Connexions workers, and then sourced from specialist trainers.

- Schools should promote positive images of people who have been young carers and gone on to achieve life goals to motivate and inspire current young carers and show other young people it can be done. This could also encourage those not yet recognised within school to come forward and self-identify, providing a gateway to the additional support they can access.
- There should be awareness raising days in schools, e.g. Carers Rights Day in November and Carers Week in June, and learning about young carers should be incorporated into the PSHE curriculum.

PRIORITY TWO

LOCAL YOUNG CARER SUPPORT GROUPS: WHAT IS THE NEED FOR LOCAL SUPPORT GROUPS, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO YOUNG CARERS AND WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE AVAILABLE.

THE ISSUES

One of the main issues for young carers is the impact their caring responsibilities at home have on their performance and attendance in school and later college / university. This is true for young people throughout their school career, resulting in them trying to balance practical jobs like cooking, cleaning and shopping with good attendance records, active learning and homework. One young man explained that he was basing his university choice on the one nearest to home rather than the one best for the course and career he wants.

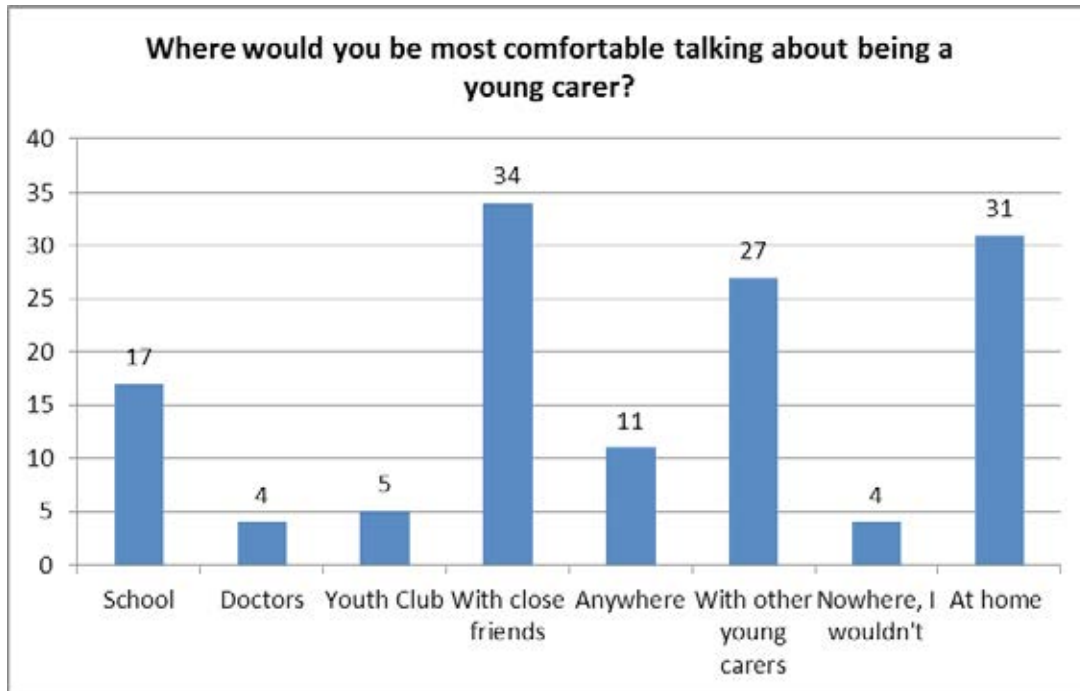
This does not stop when the school day ends and many of those consulted shared concerns about their inability to do homework or meet deadlines for coursework.

‘SOMETIMES MY DAD (WHO I CARE FOR) ASKS ME TO DO THINGS FOR HIM AND THAT SOMETIMES INTERRUPTS ME DOING HOMEWORK.’ FEMALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

‘I HAVE BEEN A CARER FOR NINE YEARS, FROM A CHILD TO NOW, AND IT’S PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL CARING 24/7. THEY COME FIRST, WHATEVER I’M DOING AT SCHOOL. IF I HAVE TO GO HOME, I GO.’ YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS’ COUNCIL

‘IT MAKES ME FEEL I HAVE TO WORK HARDER TO MAKE MY MUM PROUD (IN A GOOD WAY) BUT I MISS DAYS OFF SCHOOL.’ MALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

Our survey asked young carers to tell us about where they feel most comfortable talking about their caring role and the people who supported them best. The majority of support was overwhelmingly accepted from close friends and family, which was the answer we had expected to hear.



However, we were surprised that support in youth clubs was rated very low so we took the opportunity to ask more about this during our meeting with the Young Carers Council.

'SOCIAL LIFE? WHAT SOCIAL LIFE? I DON'T HAVE A SOCIAL LIFE!' YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS' COUNCIL

Only one member of the Young Carers Council expressed concerns about joining a mainstream youth project:

'I WOULDN'T GO TO A NORMAL YOUTH CLUB AS I WOULD BE AFRAID THAT WHEN PEOPLE FOUND OUT ABOUT ME THEY WOULD GIVE ME SYMPATHY – I REALLY DON'T WANT SYMPATHY.'⁹

This attitude is concerning as this particular young person does attend a voluntary sector youth club for young carers in Hitchin and has high praise for it. We think that this should be a trigger for an awareness raising campaign specifically targeted at young carers to inform them about what's on offer in their area and the support that youth workers can offer to complement young carers support groups. However, this also needs to go hand in hand with support to access these groups.

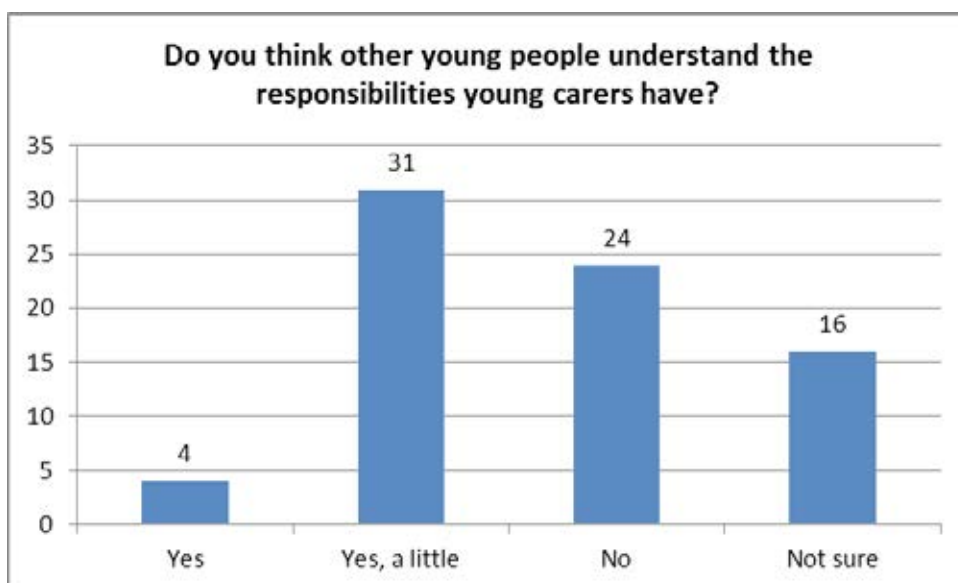
⁹ [Comment made at Young Carers Council meeting, Ware 26.09.15](#)

However, that aside, for young people to enjoy a similar social life to their peers, young carers told us that they need more practical financial help with things like entrance money and snacks from the tuck shop or vending machine. At the Young Carers Council meeting several young people told us that as their family is reliant on disability benefits, budgets at home are tight and there is not much cash available for non-essentials. They feel that not having money sets them apart from their non-caring peers, as well as the overwhelming priority need for someone to take over at home to relieve them of some of their caring duties to enable them to participate. This is particularly so for several of the young people who sit on the Young Carers Council who live alone or with a young sibling and the adult they care for.

The other major barrier to joining a local youth group or sports club is a lack of transport and inconvenient opening times.

‘IF YOU CAN’T GET A LIFT, YOU CAN’T GO.’ YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS’ COUNCIL

Young people agree that it is the provision of free transport that enables them to participate in Carers in Hertfordshire events, and we were told that this is also offered by the charity that supports the young carers group in Hitchin.



When it comes to ongoing support, we were told that although family members try to help out, they do not always live locally, meaning that the support and practical help they can offer is extremely limited. Interestingly some young people said that the person who offers them the most emotional support is the person they care for.

'MY MUM'S SISTER HELPS OUT WHEN SHE CAN, BUT SHE WORKS AND HAS KIDS OF HER OWN SO IT IS DIFFICULT FOR HER TO COME ROUND AND HELP US.' MALE, 16-18, WELWYN HATFIELD

Equally, friends are frequently unable or unwilling to offer the support young carers need from them in school.

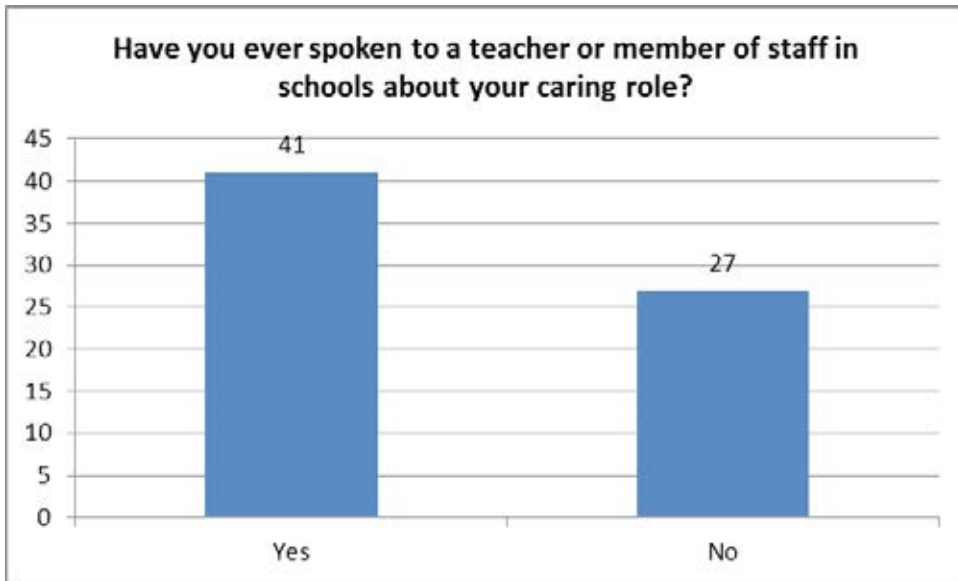
'MY FRIENDS DON'T FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENED. WHEN I TRY AND TALK ABOUT IT, THEY CHANGE THE SUBJECT.' FEMALE, 14-15, NORTH HERTS

Alongside this, young people talked a lot about their caring role being 'normal' or simply something they have become accustomed to over time. This is especially true where levels of care have changed due to someone's deteriorating health or after an accident, meaning that the fabric and pace of family life has expanded or shrunk to accommodate altering needs. This process could account for why some of the young people said that they do not want or need a support group.

'(SUPPORT GROUPS) SOUND VERY HELPFUL BUT I PREFER NOT TO BE INVOLVED.' FEMALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

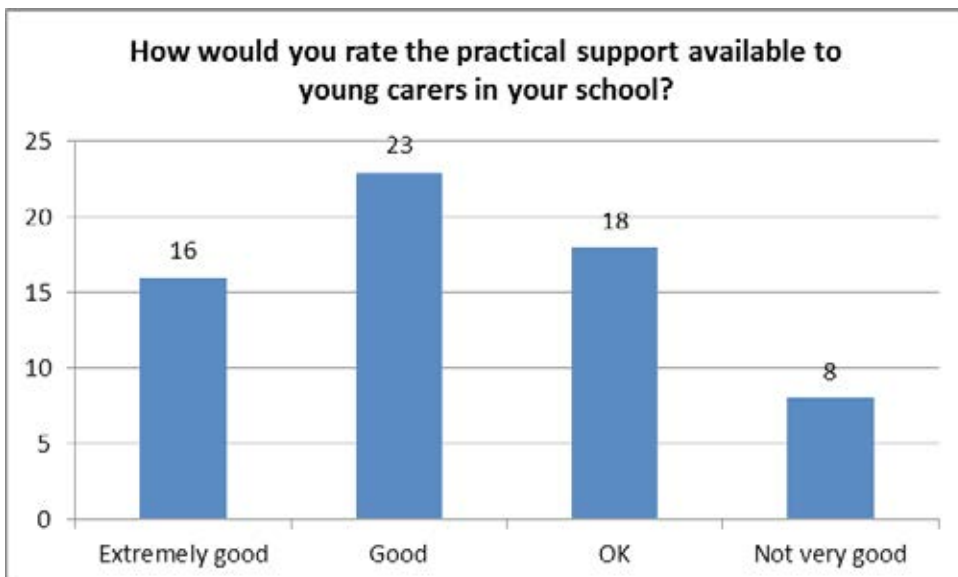
Although our survey showed that many young carers feel that teachers have little understanding about what it means to be a young carer, a large majority still admitted to having spoken to a teacher or member of staff about their caring role at some point. Some teachers seem to have made an outstanding contribution and young people were keen that they have some recognition for this.

'MY HEAD OF YEAR ALWAYS SAYS HER DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN IF I NEED TO TALK TO HER.' FEMALE, 14-15, EAST HERTS



Not all experiences were positive though with some young people saying they feel that teachers do not know enough about caring issues, or have a close enough relationship to understand their caring role, to be truly helpful.

'WE WERE GIVEN SOMEONE TO TALK TO IN SIXTH FORM ONE-TO-ONE BUT I NEVER KNEW THEM CLOSE ENOUGH TO TELL ANYTHING COMPLETELY PERSONAL THAT WOULD SOMETIMES WORRY ME.' FEMALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS



This question also produced some extreme responses with high praise for the support offered in some school and indignation and anger about experiences in others.

'(MY TEACHER OFFERED ME) TO SPEAK TO HER WHENEVER I WANTED TO. PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING, TO TALK TO MY PARENTS, ADVICE ON HOW TO SLEEP.' FEMALE, 14-15, EAST HERTS

'WHEN THINGS AREN'T GOING VERY WELL AT SCHOOL THERE IS NO ONE TO TELL. YOU TRY AND TELL THEM AND THEY GET CROSS AND BLAME ME. EVEN WHEN PROFESSIONALS TELL THEM THEY'RE SCREWING IT UP THEY JUST GET ANGRY AND TWIST WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON. THEY DON'T LISTEN TO MY MUM EITHER. I WOULD LIKE SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T WORK FOR THE SCHOOL THAT I CAN GO TO WHEN THE SCHOOL ISN'T GETTING IT RIGHT. THEY JUST WANT TO TELL EVERYONE THAT THEY ARE PERFECT AND DON'T CARE HOW MUCH UPSET IT CAUSES.' MALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

Some young people report feeling that teachers 'don't believe them' or think that young people use caring responsibilities as an excuse for not getting work in on time or for not doing homework.

'I TRIED (TO GET SUPPORT IN SCHOOL). VERY UNHELPFUL. FELT I WAS JUST TRYING TO GET OUT OF THINGS.' FEMALE, 16-18, NORTH HERTS

Whilst this may not be intended, it was certainly a strong feeling amongst the Young Carer Council¹⁰, so we feel it needs to be addressed.

Changes we want to see

Young carers recommend that the existing good practice shown in some schools is expanded throughout the county so that each one has an in-school support group on a weekly drop-in basis, during lunchtime. This should be as well as, not instead of the one-to-one support suggested in Priority One, in recognition of the fact that not all young carers feel comfortable sharing their private information in a group. Offering it as a drop-in group with a rolling programme will help young carers balance the demands of homework, which is often done in school time due to distractions at home, and caring, where young people may have to come out of school to go home to help at short notice. It will also help the group be inclusive of those who don't want support at the moment, but may do in the future.

¹⁰ Discussed at Young Carers Council meeting, Hemel Hempstead, 12.08.15

'I JUST WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE TO BE NORMAL, BUT I KNOW MY PARENTS TRULY UNDERSTAND SO I TELL THEM I KNOW HELP IS AT STUDENT SERVICES BUT I DON'T NEED IT FOR NOW THANKS.' FEMALE, 14-15, ST ALBANS

Young people also said that they would like a named teacher in each school who leads on young carers issues. This person must be fully trained and understand the issues involved in being a young carer, as well as being able to co-ordinate in-school and community events, e.g. awareness raising projects and work in partnership with social care and other agencies to ensure all young carers get the help and support they are entitled to at all stages of their school life, e.g. the 16-19 bursaries.

This teacher will facilitate the informal weekly drop-in sessions for young carers from any school year that wish to be identified. There should be no pressure to attend and it should be promoted as a place to relax, socialise with other young carers and give and receive peer support. It will additionally provide somewhere to make new friends with people who are more likely to understand the issues involved in caring for a sick or disabled family member.

'A SUPPORT GROUP IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO PEOPLE IN A SIMILAR SITUATION, YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN BECAUSE THEY KNOW.' YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS' COUNCIL

'THEY CAN GIVE SUPPORT AS YOUNG CARERS MAY FACE BULLYING OR BE A TARGET.' YOUNG CARER, YOUNG CARERS' COUNCIL

As well as the social aspect of the groups, we would also like weekly topics related to young carers and opportunities to raise self-esteem, confidence, keep safe and develop assertiveness skills, including accreditation opportunities for things like First Aid, which are useful at home but also enhance a CV for the future. This would reflect the best practice in some schools already outlined in the previous section (Priority One) and formalise what individual teachers have been offering on an ad-hoc basis.

'THEY CAN HELP THE STUDENTS KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT ALONE.' MALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

'I THINK OUR SCHOOL SHOULD OFFER MORE RANGE OF SUPPORT AND ACTIVELY HEAR WHAT WE FEEL AND WHAT WE WANT, NOT JUST DO WHAT THEY THINK IS BEST.' MALE, 11-13, ST ALBANS

The carers support group should be promoted widely within the school through assemblies, social media and PSHE lessons so that all pupils know what is on offer and can access it easily without having to 'tell everyone else'. This also provides an opportunity to give out a factsheet (developed by young carers and professional adults) that explains more about the role of a young carer to all pupils to further raise awareness.

Whilst having a young carer support group in school is a key recommendation for this Manifesto, we also want to address the distinct lack of time young carers spend outside of the family home socialising with friends. We have already been told how caring responsibilities can make it hard for young people to go out in the evening and over the weekend, particularly those who live outside of the towns and cities in Hertfordshire. For young people to have equality of access to the social and leisure activities that their peers enjoy, young carers need additional support in terms of respite and cover so that they can leave the house without worrying about what is happening at home.

As a solution we would like to recommend a young carers project in each district of the county, possibly to be held in a Youth Connexions building. These weekly projects, delivered at a time most suited to the needs of young carers, will be a project, developed with young carers, Youth Connexions and Carers in Hertfordshire in equal partnership.

The projects will operate like youth clubs and offer life skills, job skills and art/craft based activities as well as offering a safe, supportive environment in which to meet new friends and develop relationships. All of this would be within the usual boundaries of confidentiality. We would like rolling programme of activities and issue based workshops so that young people can attend as often as their caring duties allow, and not feel awkward about missing sessions if there is a problem at home. Programmes should include practical skills like learning First Aid, combating bullying / how to report bullying, advocacy and offer opportunities for accreditation, e.g. the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Professionals, including teachers and youth workers, need to liaise and work together to offer integrated support for young carers. This would be to support young carers during important transitions including work experience, support to visit colleges or university and support making career choices.

Young carers told us that work experience is an area that at the moment they feel they do not get the widest opportunities in, often because in order to get the most out of it they need to plan far in advance, to include respite if the work is outside of school hours, and have placements that understand the issues surrounding young carers, though not necessarily each individual's situation in depth.

Whilst on work experience each young carer should have a named professional, either a Youth Connexions PA, school link worker or support worker from Carers in Hertfordshire (whichever is most appropriate/suitable for the school) to support and mentor the young person.

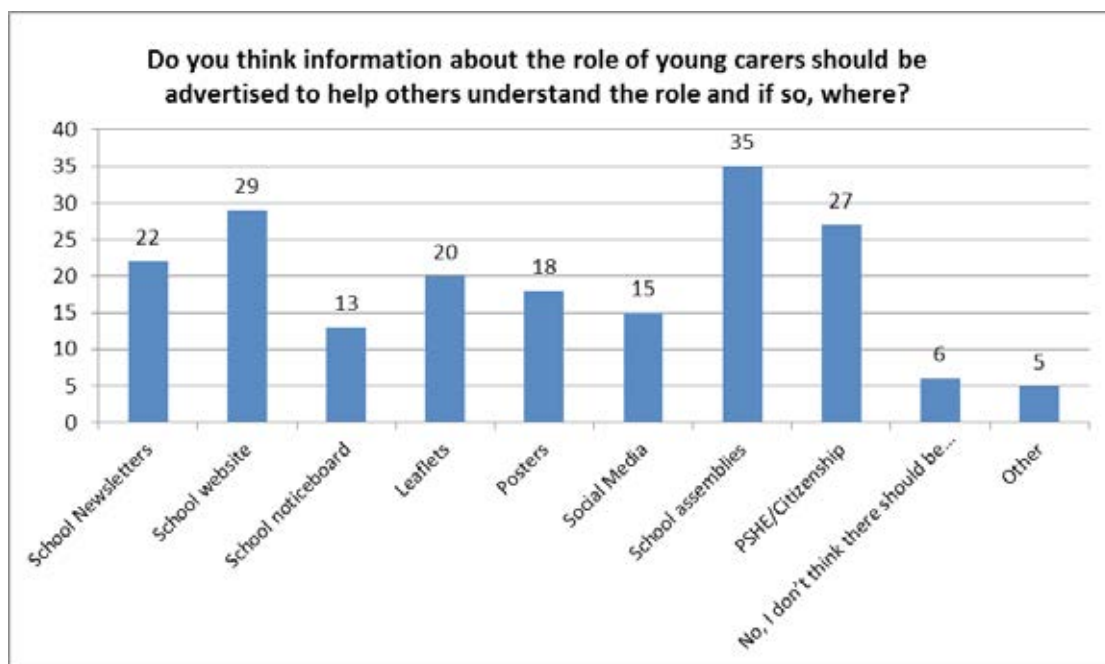
Although face-to-face meetings are a great way of building a relationship, we feel that a regular text conversation or Face-time call will suffice for some pupils. This person should be the one contacted to liaise with the work placement should things become difficult at home and a young carer either can't come in or has to leave early.

The manager of Carers in Hertfordshire explained:

'WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT ALL YOUNG CARERS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A POSITIVE WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT.' (CAROLE WHITTLE, 29.09.15)

The final comment on work experience is about transport. Without it being organised and paid for by HCC, any work experience outside of a short walking distance of a young carer's home is unlikely to happen.

Finally, we think there should be more information about support for young carers, young carers rights and who to contact for advice and guidance on everything from budgeting, advocacy and benefits on the Youth Connexions and ChannelMOGO websites.



Paper copies of all these should also be available for those who do not have wide access to social media or online. This includes in all GP surgeries and hospital waiting areas, alongside child-friendly information packs about different illnesses and conditions that can help young carers gain a basic understanding.

IN SHORT

Following the consultation of Priority Two, young carers would like to recommend that:

- Hertfordshire County Council provides more information, advice and support to young carers and their families so that they know what is available, what they qualify for and how to access it.
- Teachers should be trained to become more aware of what it means to be a young carer and each school to have a trained, named teacher who can act as the first point of contact for young carers, from reporting that they are tired due to a bad night at home through to providing weekly informal catch-up meetings. This teacher would also liaise with outside agencies to ensure all support possible, including financial, is in place.
- Young carers would like a weekly support group set up in each school, facilitated by a trained, named teacher. Here they can take a break from their caring responsibilities and spend time with other young carers to share experiences and take up opportunities to work on accredited rolling programmes..
- So that young people get more than just support, Young Carers are asking HCC to develop a young carers project in each district, within a Youth Connexions project where possible. This will enable young carers to meet new people and gain peer support, participate in a wide range of projects and have the opportunity to work towards accredited awards, e.g. Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- HCC needs to provide respite cover at home for the person cared for so that young people can participate in extra-curricular activities, like their peers do, without feeling guilty or too worried to enjoy anything.
- Wider work experience opportunities are needed, which take into account the difficulties young carers often have with transport and spending additional time outside of school hours away from home.
- Young carers need additional support during transition periods, e.g. leaving primary, moving on to secondary education, and help when choosing further or higher education, provided by somebody who is fully trained and with an awareness of what life is like as a young carer.
- Young carers would like more dedicated information available to them on the Youth Connexions website and more 'child-friendly' information in GP surgeries, made freely available to all young people who require one.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE AND GET INVOLVED?

To make the Hertfordshire Young People's Manifesto as inclusive and representative as possible we need everyone to have their say in influencing decisions that affect them.

If you are reading about Herts1125 or HertsMYPs for the first time and would like to know more, or find out how to get involved in the 2016/17 Manifesto, please get in touch with the Youth Connexions Youth Workers who support our work and enable us to represent young people across Hertfordshire.

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