

How to Identify Young Carers

Every school (indeed every classroom) has pupils affected by disability and illness in the family. A 'young carer' is a young person who provides care to a member of the family or a friend who has one, or a combination, of the following conditions:

- a physical or learning disability
- a sensory impairment
- a chronic condition
- a terminal illness
- a mental health problem or illness
- a drug or alcohol addiction

By 'care' we mean:

- **Domestic tasks** (e.g. cooking, cleaning, shopping). Normal tasks, but the *amount* may exceed normal expectations for a child
- **Supervision and management** (e.g. watching over someone; acting as 'guardian'; dealing with money issues)
- **Communication support** (e.g. interpreting; answering phone or door)
- **Personal care** (e.g. helping with lifting, moving, washing, dressing, giving medicine)
- **Emotional support** (e.g. providing company and a 'listening ear')
- **Sibling care** for a disabled or a non-disabled sibling, where the parent is unable to provide this care because of their own disability.

Please note:

For the purposes of identification and support, we include pupils who are simply **affected** by having a relative with the conditions above. A caring role may be hidden from your view (and even denied). If they are not providing care right now, they may be in the future. Either way, the home situation may still have a visible impact on their wellbeing and their education. See overleaf for a list of the signs, to help you identify these pupils.

Sharing information with teachers and teaching assistants is essential to supporting young carers. These pupils require flexibility and extra support, but this cannot be offered or given if information on home issues is kept within the pastoral team or SEN team, or is simply a note on a file. *Where consent is given*, please keep teachers and teaching assistants updated with minimal information on family situations – it makes a real difference to how problems are handled.

There are, on average, two pupils in every classroom in Surrey affected by these issues

TOP TIPS

- Designate a member of staff to lead on support for young carers, and develop a support strategy
- Promote your school's support for young carers with regular newsletter articles, ParentMail, the Home-School Agreement, and posters and leaflets for services in the reception area
- Include a statement of support and questions about home issues on the school's Enrolment Form
- Run staff briefings on young carer issues in INSET and ask teaching and reception staff for their insights on pupils
- Send out a pupil questionnaire to identify carers and the support that they need (after an assembly talk or PSHE lesson is best)
- Record details on pupil files, SIMS, IEPs and CTF (Common Transfer Files)
- Share minimal information on affected pupils with teachers and teaching assistants

Surrey Young Carers can provide material, advice and assistance on identification and support.
Information and contact details on www.surrey-youngcarers.org.uk

Signs to Assist Identification

Please work through the questions below to help you draw up a list of pupils who are providing care, or are affected by a relative's disability, illness or addiction. Some of the information that you need will be recorded on pupil files, and some of it will be unrecorded. Some of it will have already been used for the annual School Census. Some cross-referencing will be required. It is worthwhile to consult with teaching and support staff, reception staff, pastoral staff, the Child Protection Officer and the School Nurse during this process.

Please follow your school's data protection and confidentiality policies when recording and sharing information.

- Do you have any parents with the conditions listed overleaf, including mental health problems?
 - Are you aware of what the parent's care needs are, and who meets these needs?
- Do you have any pupils with the conditions listed overleaf, including mental health problems? (Refer to your SEN Disability Register and School Census data)
 - Do they have any siblings at your school (or arriving soon), who might be looking after them or affected by their sibling's condition?
- Do you have any parents with drug or alcohol problems?
 - Do you have any pupils where there are concerns of neglect or abuse, pupils listed as Child in Need, subject to a Child Protection plan, or Looked After Children where substance misuse issues are involved?

Whilst many young carers thrive within the school structure, between a quarter and a half of them have problems in their education because of their home situation. The following issues are common signs pointing towards difficulties at home – *some* of which will be related to disability and illness within the family.

Which of your pupils:

- Regularly arrive late for school?
- Regularly miss days of school, marked as authorised or unauthorised absence?
Some young carers miss school to stay close to the cared-for person
- Appear physically neglected – missing breakfast, lacking clean uniform, etc?
- Appear to be regularly tired?
- Regularly complain of aches and pains?
- Regularly appear withdrawn or anxious?
- Regularly challenge adult authority?
Some young carers struggle with switching between being the adult at home and the child at school
- Appear more emotionally mature than their peers?
- Have regular problems in concentrating upon their work?
- Regularly fail to complete homework on time?

Which of your parents:

- Regularly do not respond to school correspondence?
This may be because of a communication problem
- Regularly do not attend parent's evening?
This may be because of an inability to attend
- Are on low incomes, and unable to afford school related expenses? (Refer to your Free School Meals Register) *This may be because of disability or illness related unemployment*