Going Higher for Student Carers:
Recognition Award

Acknowledgements

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About Carers Trust Scotland

Carers Trust Scotland is part of Carers Trust, a major charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

With locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

Background

There are student carers in every university, trying to complete their course to the best of their ability just like their peers. However, they often experience additional challenges because of their caring responsibilities. At the time of writing, there is currently no specific data collected and disseminated in Scotland on the number of carers who are studying at universities. They are a hidden group.

Research commissioned by Carers Trust found that student carers were generally providing a very high level of care, and that:

39%
rated their physical health as either 'just ok' or 'poor'.

45%
reported having mental health problems.

56%
were experiencing difficulties because of their caring role.

16%
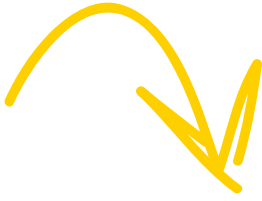were concerned that they might have to drop out of university.

75%
of respondents informed university staff of their caring role.

45%
said there was no-one at university who recognised them as a carer and helped them.

Student carers are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than students who are not carers.

(Sempik, J and Becker, S (2014), *Young Adult Carers at College and University* (Carers Trust) at Carers.org/sites/files/carerstrust/young_adult_carers_at_college_and_university.pdf).

Many student and young adult carers live on low incomes. Many student carers are juggling study, work and their caring responsibilities. They can rarely afford items beyond necessities and seldom have the opportunity to engage in student social life, unlike many of their peers.

Carers Trust Scotland's *Time to be Heard for Young Adult Carers, Bridging the Gap: Young Adult Carers in Scotland* 2015 report (Carers.org/sites/files/carerstrust/ttbh_scotland_report_-_final.pdf) highlighted recommendations for improved identification and support for student carers.

Thanks to funding provided by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ programme we have been able to produce the new Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition Award to help empower universities and professionals to better support student carers.

Carers Trust Scotland's Going Higher for Student Carers in Scotland initiative (Carers.org/going-higher-scotland) is calling for all universities to:

💬 **Identify** the number of student carers attending or hoping to study at their institution.

💬 **Support** all student carers throughout their education to ensure they maintain good health, complete their course and achieve the best grades possible.

💬 **Report** on student carer progressions and showcase student carers' achievements.

The Going Higher for Student Carers Recognition Award in Scotland

This award is only available to universities operating in Scotland. Universities in the rest of the UK should email Carers Trust at info@carers.org to find out about initiatives in their nations.

What is the Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition Award?

This award aims to make it easier for universities to support student carers and reward good practice. It incentivises and encourages universities to adopt a sustainable, whole institution approach to **identify**, **support** and **report** on student carers.

There is no cost in undertaking the award process. By taking part, universities will have access to the application process for the Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition Award, enabling universities to potentially gain recognition from Carers Trust Scotland for effective practice. They will be supported by Carers Trust Scotland staff to make the process as straightforward as possible.

By coming on this journey, universities will send a positive message to student carers that they are recognised, supported and will be given a fair chance to be successful in their institution. They will also make it clear to other institutions and to the wider student body that inclusivity and fairness is at the heart of its institution.

About carers

A carer is anyone who cares, **unpaid**, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.
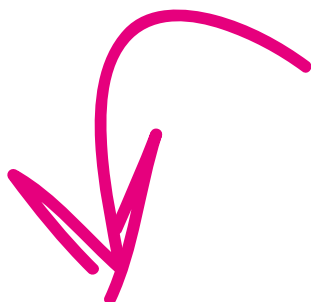
Action plan

Carers Trust Scotland promotes an inclusive approach to student carer developments in higher education institutions, including when creating or reviewing policies and procedures.

This award encourages consultation, participation and a holistic review of carer provision. However, changes will only come about if universities commit to implement and promote the award to make a real difference to the lives of carers. Development of carer support needs should be embedded into day-to-day practices to ensure these are effective. It is also important to have robust reporting and evaluation procedures. Like all new processes, Carers Trust Scotland encourages carer support developments to be monitored closely, and amendments made to ensure that they are successful.

The Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition Award consists of three separate principles. To gain the award universities will need to demonstrate that they are fulfilling and championing the following three principles:

1. **Identify:** Carers are being proactively identified and awareness is being raised throughout the university.

2. **Support:** Carers are being supported to give them a fair chance to be successful in their studies.

3. **Report:** Student carer progressions are showcased and evaluation tools are used to celebrate achievements and make improvements.

The award is points based and in order to gain the award a university must demonstrate that it has achieved 50 points, which is two-thirds of the total number points (75 points) available for the award.

Our points weighting structure can be found under the Award criteria section on page 9 of this guidance.

Applying for the award

To qualify for the award, a university must supply evidence to show how it is holistically implementing each principle.

Each application will be reviewed by at least two team members at Carers Trust Scotland. Carers Trust Scotland is able to work with any institution that has applied and has not fulfilled enough of the criteria to receive the award, to assist it in strengthening its future submission. Carers Trust Scotland will respond to all institutions that submit an application – both those who have and have not successfully fulfilled the criteria for the award – to suggest ways to further improve student carer support.

Submitting evidence:

To apply for the award, applicants will need to complete the submission checklist which can be found at Carers.org/going-higher-scotland.

Please remember to:

- Tick the relevant box on the submission checklist to show which criteria the university has submitted evidence for.
- Write a brief description of the evidence provided in the boxes on the submission checklist.
- Mark each piece of evidence with the name of the university and the criteria number linking it to the description provided on the submission checklist.
- Ensure that all evidence submitted is anonymised, with no identifiable factors for any carer.

The application should be submitted on a USB stick/CD in electronic format, including a completed signed submission checklist and each piece of evidence should be labeled with the criteria number, university name and description (for example – 1.1 University of Carers, Pre-baseline survey) and posted to:

FAO Going Higher for Student Carers Initiative
Carers Trust Scotland
Skypark 3, Suite 1/2
14–18 Elliot Place
Glasgow
G3 8EP

We regret that we cannot accept applications via email.

Further information

If you have any queries about the application process, please get in touch with Carers Trust Scotland. Call 0300 123 2008 or email scotland@carers.org.

The award process

Get in touch with Carers Trust Scotland to find out more about the award process.

Review the university's existing student carer support provision.

Develop any new student carer support provision, as deemed necessary.

Collect relevant award criteria evidence and complete the application process.

Submit award application.

Carers Trust Scotland will be in touch regarding the outcome of the application.

Award criteria

Below we have provided information about the different award criteria and made some suggestions about possible evidence sources. However, evidence is not restricted to these suggestions, and we welcome and encourage other evidence sources.

Points available will be awarded on the extent to which it has been demonstrated that the criteria has been fulfilled. Full available points for each criteria field will only be awarded when the institution has demonstrated that it has holistically exceeded the criteria.

Principle 1 – Identify

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
1.1 Pre-baseline survey completed	This will provide the university with an opportunity to reflect on its understanding of student carer issues and consider its provision of support for student carers at the start of the process. The interactive Pre-baseline survey can be accessed at https://carerstrust.wufoo.com/forms/prebaseline-survey/.	• Copy of completed Pre-baseline survey. • Confirmation email of completed Pre-baseline survey.	1
1.2 Carers Support Working Group established	A group appointed to review student carer support at the university and make recommendations to improve such support. Carers Trust Scotland would advise a full institution approach to the Carers Support Working Group and encourages cross-departmental representation; including management team, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and student body representation.	• Job titles of those on the Carers Support Working Group. • Evidence that the Carers Support Working Group has been established, and the opportunity to participate, has been promoted to university staff and the student body.	3

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
1.3 Carers Support Working Group meeting/s and remit	The frequency and duration of meetings will be dependent on the aims and remit of the group. A Terms of Reference for the group may help to clarify the remit and purpose. Carers Trust Scotland would advise that the Carers Support Working Group meetings take place at least bi-annually.	• Agendas/Minutes/Actions. • Copy of the Terms of Reference for the Carers Support Working Group.	3
1.4 Carer definition established	A definition is established and endorsed by the university which clearly explains the university's understanding of who is an **unpaid carer**. Carers Trust Scotland encourages institutions to adopt the Carers Trust definition: 'A carer is anyone who cares, **unpaid**, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.'	• Copy of the university's carer definition. • Screenshot/link to the definition of a carer on the university's website.	1
1.5 Statement of Intent to Support Carers	A short statement highlighting what the institution's ethos and approach is to supporting student carers.	• Copy of Statement of Intent to Support Carers. • Screenshot/link to the Statement on the university's website. • Evidence of widely promoting the Statement across the university. • Evidence of promoting the Statement to relevant organisations.	2

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
1.6 Widening access/ participation includes carers	Carers are listed as a prioritised group in the university's Widening Access/Participation Strategy to ensure additional support is available to improve carers' successful participation at the university.	• Copy of the university's Widening Access/Participation Strategy or statement. • Screenshot/link to the university's listing of carers as a widening access/ participation priority group on its website. • Evidence of widening access/participation support information specifically developed for carers.	4
1.7 Contextualised admissions highlights carers	Carers are highlighted as a priority group under contextualised admissions procedures/policies. Through undertaking **unpaid caring** responsibilities, carers can gain many skills and qualities. However, time spent caring can negatively impact on their education attainment and this could result in them not meeting entry requirements. UCAS is working to add a question to its application form to allow candidates to disclose carer status, and is aiming for this option to be built into the UCAS Apply form being re-launched in September 2018. Although there is currently no formal mechanism for self-identification in the UCAS application, student carers can be identified through information given in the personal statement and reference. However, many people with **unpaid caring** responsibilities do not recognise themselves as a carer and this can present a barrier for self-identification of carer status.	• Copy of the university's contextualised admissions policy/procedure. • Screenshot/link to the university's listing of carers as a contextualised admissions priority group on its website. • Evidence of admissions support information specifically developed for carers.	4

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
1.8 Annual enrolment/ matriculation identification	Anyone can become an **unpaid carer** at any stage in their life and their caring status can change over time. Also, a student's caring role may end during their time at university. Asking students annually about their carer status does not only provide data to inform the university about the carer demographic in the student body, but also helps to tailor personalised and relevant support.	• Copy of the university's annual enrolment/matriculation form/s and the inclusion of a method for carers to identify themselves. • Data report of the number of student carers at the university.	3
1.9 Student carer applicants identified	Carers Trust's commissioned research (Sempik, J and Becker, S (2014), *Young Adult Carers at College and University*), found that student carers are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than their peers who do not have caring responsibilities. Putting systems in place to proactively identify carer applicants could result in adequate support being in place for the student entering the institution and this could give the carer a fairer chance to be successful in their studies.	• Name and designation of carers' lead for candidate enquiries and link/screenshot of where this contact and support information is available on the university website. • Evidence that courses administered by the university – such as most postgraduate courses – enquire about carer status on the application form. • Copy of posters developed to encourage student carers/ applicants to disclose caring status. • Evidence of admissions support information specifically developed for carers. • Evidence that the institution has completed Carers Trust Scotland's Putting Student Carers On the Map information resource at Carers.org/putting-student-carers-map-scotland.	3

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
1.10 Student carers at the university identified	Having systems in place to actively enquire about the caring responsibilities of existing students could enable appropriate support to be offered and the students may be less likely to get to crisis point as a result of juggling study and their caring responsibilities. It is important to remember that anyone can become an **unpaid carer** at any stage during their life and students who do not enter university as a student carer may become a carer during their time there. Therefore, Carers Trust Scotland advocates for universities to be able to identify student carers at all points in their academic journey. Three in five people will be carers at some point in their lives. At least one in ten people are currently undertaking **unpaid caring** responsibilities.	• Evidence of posters/leaflets on campus targeting student carers. • Evidence that the university has a dedicated information and support section of the website for carers. • Evidence of an internal flagging system, which includes a student carer flagging option.	2
1.11 Carer status criteria	By establishing recognised and flexible criteria for confirming carer status, the university can make it easier for carers to disclose that status. This might include a carer's identification/authorisation card, service letter, self-declaration statement or letter from GP surgery.	• Evidence of accepted carer status criteria. • Copy of Student Carer Support Policy with carer status criteria highlighted. • Screenshot/link to the university's information about affirming carer status of applicants or enrolled students.	3
1.12 Links to carers services	By establishing working relationships with carers services in the local area the university can open up access to further expert support for its student carer body and encourage local carers to apply to university.	• Evidence of the university engaging in local carer services events. • Evidence of carer services attending university events such as fresher fairs.	3

Principle 2 – Support

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
2.1 Named carers lead	By establishing a named carers lead contact the university can make it easier for student carers and carer candidates to make enquiries and access support information.	• Name and designation of carers lead for carer enquiries and information. • Link/screenshot of where carers lead contact and support information is accessible on the university website. • Evidence in Student Carers Support Policy of a carers lead.	1
2.2 Action Plan	A student carer plan should highlight the actions that the institution is committed to take forward to improve student carer identification and support.	• Copy of the Action Plan.	4
2.3 Student Carers Support Policy	A holistic overarching policy for the university should clearly explain practice and procedures for identifying, supporting and reporting on carers. Such policies can include specific detail around many areas including definition, confirming status, admissions, widening access/participation, enrolment/ matriculation, absence, extenuating circumstances and student services.	• Copy of Student Carers Support Policy.	5
2.4 Student Carers Support Policy launched	A public launch of the Student Carer Support Policy can help promote it. Ideas for launching could include a Carers Week event (Carers Week takes place every year in June), online promotion or information sharing via all student and staff email.	• Evidence of launch of Student Carers Support Policy – such as photographs, screenshot of online posts, copies of email communications or copies of press release distributed.	2
2.5 Other relevant policies	Relevant policies should make direct reference to carers and their specific considerations/support needs. Such policies may include – but are not limited to – anti-bullying and equality and diversity policies.	• Evidence that university policies take specific reference to and account of carers and their needs.	2

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
2.6 Publications/ resources	Specific publications, such as leaflets and posters, can help promote support for carers, reach out to carers and improve identification.	• Copies of publications/ resources developed. • Evidence of how these have been promoted/displayed.	2
2.7 Website information	A dedicated website section can provide details about student carer support and other information.	• Link/screenshot of the dedicated carer section on the university website.	2
2.8 Acknowledging carers	A promotional activity is a great way to acknowledge the contribution carers make. This could be for example, a campus carer awareness campaign, a Carers Week event or a fundraising stunt for a carers service.	• Evidence of activities undertaken to acknowledge carers.	3
2.9 Referral and signposting	Establishing procedures for referring or signposting to relevant carer support services can make it easier for carers to get support.	• Partnership agreement/s. • Evidence of signposting arrangements.	3
2.10 Student Association/s' participation	Student Association/s' participation can play a key role in institution planning for identifying, supporting and reporting on carers.	• Copy of Action Plan specifically listing Student Association/s' involvement and actions. • Student Association/s' Student Carer Support Policy. • Evidence of Student Association/s' membership on Carers Support Working Group.	4

Principle 3 – Report

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
3.1 Promoting local, national and UK wide carer services	The university can promote carers services by, for example, displaying carers services posters and adding links on the website to Carers Trust Scotland, Carers Trust's online services matter.carers.org (for young adult carers) and Carers Space at space.carers.org (for adult carers), and other relevant carer support services.	• Photographs of posters on display. • Link/screenshot of carers services promotion on the website.	2
3.2 Data	Data gathered on student carers engaged with the university should be shared with staff, the student body, Carers Trust Scotland and other relevant organisations.	• Copy of data report. • Evidence on how this data has been communicated.	3
3.3 Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition Award journey	Promoting the university's journey in undertaking the award is a good awareness raising activity. This could be promoted across the campus to students and staff, to relevant local organisations/institutions and other relevant partners.	• Evidence on how the journey has been communicated. • Copy of all staff email. • Copy of all student email. • Link/screenshot to website promotion. • Link/screenshot to social media promotion.	2
3.4 Showcasing the Action Plan	Promoting the university's intended actions for student carer provision can raise awareness. This could be achieved through the production of a summary document which is then widely circulated. These actions can be summarised also on Carers Trust Scotland's On the Map digital resource.	• Evidence on how the Action Plan has been showcased.	2
3.5 Promoting Student Carer Support Policy promotion	The Student Carer Support Policy should be widely promoted to staff, students and relevant organisations.	• Copy of all student email. • Copy of all staff email. • Copy of external communications promoting the policy. • Link/screenshot of website promotion. • Link/screenshot of social media promotion.	2

Criteria	Description and information	Possible evidence	Possible points available
3.6 Carers Support Working Group review	The group should have established ongoing evaluation and monitoring plans. This could include the Action Plan and remit and impact of the group.	• Evidence of review structures in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Carers Support Working Group.	3
3.7 Post-baseline survey completed	The completed Post-baseline survey will provide the university with an opportunity to reflect on its understanding of student carer issues and consider its provision of support for student carers at the time of submission. The interactive Post-baseline survey can be accessed at https://carerstrust.wufoo.com/forms/postbaseline-survey/.	• Copy of completed Post-baseline survey. • Confirmation email of completed Post-baseline survey.	1

supporting student carers in higher education

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