

# Supporting Students with Caring Responsibilities:

A Resource for Colleges and Services  
to Help Young Adult Carers Succeed  
in Further Education





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A Resource for Colleges and Services to Help Young Adult Carers Succeed in Further Education



**NIACE** The National Voice  
for Lifelong Learning

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# Acknowledgements

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- Central College Nottingham.
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- York Carers Centre.

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To the best of our knowledge all information was accurate at the time of going to print.

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# Introduction

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**“I just couldn’t carry on [at college] because there was too much else going on. Mum was in and out of hospital and there was nobody else to look after her. I didn’t have any money for the bus as I had to spend it on going to the hospital, and I kept getting letters about problems with our benefits. So I just didn’t bother with college.”**

## **Young adult carer**

There are around seven million carers in the UK<sup>1</sup> and this figure is rising. Three in five people will be carers at some point in their lives in the UK. It is estimated by 2030 the number of carers in the UK will have increased by around 60% (Carers UK, 2001). The 2011 Census figures from England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland show there are more than 375,000 young adult carers in the UK aged 14–25, who are providing support and assistance to their families and friends. For a young person who has caring responsibilities, trying to transition to, through and beyond further education, can be extremely challenging and for some a barrier.

This practical resource has been expanded and developed from a shorter publication, produced in early 2015 by Carers Trust and NIACE. It is designed for use by managers and staff working in further education colleges. It will increase awareness and understanding of young adult carers and their specific needs. It outlines who young adult carers are, the challenges they face and how their caring roles can impact on their education. It draws together some of the good practice that is already being developed in a number of colleges, often in partnership with local carers services, and makes recommendations for how student carers can be supported to sustain their participation in learning, achieve their potential and succeed.

Throughout this resource, different terms have been used to describe the same student group; young adult carers, student carers and students with caring responsibilities. The term young adult carer has been used for all young people aged 14–25 with caring responsibilities. While this resource focuses specifically

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1 UK Census 2011. Source: Office for National Statistics licensed under the Open Government Licence v.1.0. The Census identified 6.5 million carers in the UK, including 178,000 young carers in England and Wales. However, we know from research that young carers are vastly under identified by the census – BBC research in 2010 suggested there may be 700,000 young carers under 18 in the UK. Carers Trust believes it is important to recognise young carers as they are too often invisible. We therefore use an estimate of in the region of seven million.

on young adult carers, many of the challenges experienced by older students who are carers will be similar.

We hope that this resource will further drive the momentum for acknowledging and supporting this student group within colleges. We hope that it will inspire and assist colleges to develop their own approaches and that the good practice already taking place will become more consistent and embedded across further education. This will ensure that students who are caring for others – who in many instances have overcome very difficult circumstances and who will have acquired extremely valuable skills along the way – are able to reach their potential and succeed.

**Daniel Phelps**, Project and Development Manager, Carers Trust  
**Nicola Aylward**, Head of Learning for Young People, NIACE

Although some sections within this publication are specific to England, many of the ideas and practice are relevant to colleges across the UK.

### About Carers Trust

Carers Trust is a major new 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.

We do this with a UK wide network of quality assured independent partners, through our unique online services and through the provision of grants to help carers get the extra help they need to live their own lives. With locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and 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.

Our vision is of a world where the role and contribution of **unpaid** carers is recognised and they have access to the trusted quality support and services they need to live their own lives.

### About NIACE

NIACE is the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, the national voice for lifelong learning. We are an internationally respected development organisation and think-tank, working on issues central to the economic renewal of the UK, particularly in the political economy, education and learning, public policy and regeneration fields. We campaign for the personal, social and economic benefits from lifelong learning, work to improve people's experience of the adult learning and skills system, and fight for all adults to have opportunities throughout their lives to participate in and benefit from learning.

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# Who are young adult carers?

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Statistics and research in this publication are based on young adult carers aged 14–25. These figures came out of the Carers Trust Time to Be Heard work. Carers Trust is now defining young adult carers as carers aged between 16–25.

Young adult carers are young people aged 16–25 who care, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction.

While there are no exact figures on the number of young adult carers in the UK, the 2011 Census figures from England and Wales, from Scotland and from Northern Ireland show there are more than 375,000 known young adult carers in the UK aged 14–25, who are providing support and assistance to their families and friends.

The range and scale of caring will of course vary greatly but may include:

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care, such as helping someone out of bed.
- Personal care, such as helping someone dress.
- Helping to give someone their medication.
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions.
- Helping someone communicate.
- Looking after brothers and sisters.
- Emotional support.

Providing emotional support, particularly where the person in need of care has a mental health condition or misuses substances, can be very challenging and often involves sporadic increased and unplanned peaks of caring responsibilities which are very difficult to balance with everyday commitments.

An infographic has been developed that pulls together these key facts which can be accessed via [https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/young\\_adult\\_carers\\_who\\_are\\_they\\_final.pdf](https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/young_adult_carers_who_are_they_final.pdf).

# Young adult carers – Who are they? What do they do?

## Who are young adult carers?

Young adult carers are young people aged **14–25** who care, **unpaid**, for a friend or family member who could not cope without their support.



## How many young adult carers are there?

- There are over 375,000 young adult carers in the UK.
- They are likely to be in every school, college, university and workplace.

Young adult carers care for someone:

- With an illness or disability.
- With a mental health condition.
- Who misuses drugs or alcohol.



**“I want college to understand I’m a carer.”**

## Being a young adult carer can have a big impact on the things that are important to growing up

- It can affect a young person’s health, social life and self confidence – over 50% reported a mental health problem.
- Many struggle to juggle their education, working life and caring role which can cause pressure and stress.
- Recent research on young adult carers who were no longer in education showed their highest qualifications were GCSEs grade D–G.
- 29% had dropped out of college/university because of their caring role. This is four times greater than the national average for degree courses.



## What might a young adult carer do?

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care, such as helping someone out of bed.
- Emotional support.
- Personal care, such as helping someone dress or go to the toilet.
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions.
- Helping to give someone their medication.
- Helping someone communicate.
- Looking after brothers and sisters.



## Young adult carers should have:

- Support that gives them the same opportunities as their friends such as being able to:
  - Go to school, college or university and complete their studies.
  - Get a job.
  - Have a social life and be independent.
  - Have support for the person they care for.



**“I lost over half of my hours at work because I care for my dad. Is that fair?”**



## Information and support

[www.youngcarersmatter.org](http://www.youngcarersmatter.org) [www.carers.org/timetobeheard](http://www.carers.org/timetobeheard) [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

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# Research on young adult carers

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Carers Trust commissioned the University of Nottingham and the expertise of Dr Joe Sempik and Professor Saul Becker, to undertake research to examine the experiences and aspirations of young adult carers aged 14–25 in relation to school, further and higher education, and work. This research formed part of a wider campaign by Carers Trust called Time to be Heard; a campaign to give young adult carers a voice to tell everyone who they are, what they do and why this awareness is important (see [www.carers.org/timetobeheard](http://www.carers.org/timetobeheard)).

An accompanying report, Time to be Heard: A Call for Recognition and Support for Young Adult Carers, draws on the findings of the research and sets out the key recommendations for Government and public bodies to secure a positive future for the UK's young adult carers (Alexander, C, 2014).

The research found that young adult carers:

- Miss or cut short an average of 48 school days a year because of their caring role.
- Were four times more likely to drop out of college or university than students who were not young adult carers.
- Have higher rates of poor mental and physical health than the average young person.
- Rarely receive the assessments they are entitled to, with only 22% of those surveyed receiving a formal assessment of their needs by the local authority.
- Experience high rates of bullying – one quarter reported bullying and abuse in school because they were a carer.

**“Between the ages of 12 and 14 I missed a lot of school as my dad was in and out of hospital all the time. In some ways I feel like I’ve been left behind – I don’t know stuff that my friends know, because I simply missed being taught it at school. Like last week we were doing some simple maths work, but I didn’t know how to do it. I also struggle with computers a lot. It makes me feel really thick – especially as I don’t even know what I don’t know.”**

**Young adult carer**

## Services for young adult carers

The number of dedicated support services for young carers (pupils in primary and secondary school) has increased significantly over the last 20 years. Many of these services now deliver a whole family approach model and work within schools, in addition to providing respite opportunities, social opportunities and emotional support.

Conversely, support for young adult carers has been limited or entirely absent. However, this absence has been recognised by both the government and the voluntary sector and along with an increased understanding of the specific needs of this group has recently begun driving an increase in services for young adult carers. For example, the Carers Trust's About Time programme of work, funded by The Co-operative Charity of the Year, is grant funding the development of over 50 UK projects devoted to supporting young adult carers as they transition into adulthood.

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# Why it's important for your college to support young adult carers

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**“When I was at school, teachers knew about my mum, but they didn't do much to help me; I don't think they really believed what I did. Most of my friends didn't get it either. They took the mickey out of me, they thought it was a joke. So when I started at college I decided to keep it to myself. I thought no one would help me, so why bother telling them?”**

**Young adult carer**

There are likely to be significant numbers of students at your college who are carers; some will be unknown to services, some may have recently become carers and some will have been caring for many years.

While young adult carers can gain a range of positive skills, characteristics and capabilities as a result of their caring responsibilities, the difficulties young adult carers experience as a result of their caring role can have a significant negative impact on their health and wellbeing, relationships, education and future careers and life chances. Remaining and succeeding at college can therefore be a huge challenge.

## Retention

From an early age, caring responsibilities can impact on whether a young person can maintain their education. Research by The Children's Society found that around one in 20 young carers misses school because of their caring responsibilities (The Children's Society, 2013).

Research conducted for Carers Trust on young adult carers and employment, college and university (Sempik, J and Becker, S 2013, 2014 and 2014a) found that the drop out rate from degree courses among young adult carers was four times the national (UK) average. The challenges of remaining at university are seen in the findings from a study of student carers carried out by the NUS which revealed that only 36% of student carers felt able to balance their commitments (such as work, study and family/relationships), as compared with 53% of students who did not have caring responsibilities (NUS, 2013).

A report by the Audit Commission, found that the likelihood of young adult carers aged 16–18 not being in education, employment or training for six months or more, was twice that of their peers (Audit Commission, 2010).

## Achievement

Disadvantage can start early, with young adult carers having significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level. In Oxfordshire, the local authority collected data on the attainment and school attendance of pupils with caring responsibilities and found a clear educational attainment gap for young carers (Carers Trust, 2012). Research by The Children's Society found that young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers, that is, the difference between nine Bs and nine Cs (The Children's Society, 2013).

It is important therefore for colleges to understand the specific needs of this student group and the impact of caring upon their education if support is not in place. By ensuring the early identification of young adult carers in your college and implementing support across the student life cycle, those who may be more likely to drop out, or who are at risk of not fulfilling their potential, are much more likely to remain in college, succeed and make a successful transition into higher education, further training or the workplace.

## Government legislation<sup>2</sup>

It is useful for colleges to be aware that young carers and young adult carers in England have rights to care and support, either for themselves or for the person they care for. A college could refer a student who is a young carer or young adult carer to their local authority for assessment and possible support.

In this context, an assessment is a term used by local authorities to describe the process of finding out what the carer's circumstances are, and their need for support. Support can be provided directly to the carer, and some carer's support needs can be met by providing services for the person they care for.

Depending on the young carer's or young adult carer's age, these rights come under the Children and Families Act 2014 or Care Act 2014.

There is a duty on local authorities to ensure that all carers receive an assessment based on the appearance of their need for support. Whatever the age of a carer, the carer's assessment must consider whether the carer is willing, and able, to continue to care, and whether the carer is working, training or in education, or wishes to work, or take part in training or education. The assessment is free. Depending on their financial circumstances, some carers over 18, and the people they care for, may be charged for their support in some cases. A local authority must always carry out a needs assessment, before they carry out a financial assessment to see if someone is eligible to pay for support.

A college could be contacted by a local authority and asked to provide information about the young carer or young adult carer, as part of a carer's assessment. This could be as part of a transition assessment under the Care Act. This is to explore what support they may be entitled to after they are 18,

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2 This guidance applies to England only

and to look at helping them get ready for adulthood. This should help raise the young carer's aspirations and support them to achieve the outcomes that matter to them.

As part of the transition assessment, guidance issued under the Care Act states that where a young carer wishes to attend a higher or further education institution, local authorities should help the young carer identify a suitable institution as part of transition planning (if they have not done so already). So, your college might be contacted by a local authority. Once an offer has been accepted, local authorities should ensure the relevant institution is made aware – as soon as possible – of the young carer's needs and desired outcomes, and discuss a plan with that institution for meeting the young carer's needs. A young carer will have their own plan for meeting their needs or the needs of the person they care for. Under the guidance issued under the Care Act, local authorities must cooperate with relevant external agencies, including educational institutions. This duty is reciprocal. Colleges need to be aware of this reciprocal duty if they are contacted by a local authority.

For more information see <https://professionals.carers.org/new-rights-young-carers-england>.

### Carers' assessments

A carer's assessment is a carer's opportunity to tell social services about the things that could make caring easier for them. The assessment will help decide what services they could get.

See the Carers Trust booklet *Know your Rights: Support for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers in England* for more information about getting an assessment. Available to download from [www.carers.org/knowyourrights](http://www.carers.org/knowyourrights).

You can also find more information on [www.carers.org/carers-assessment](http://www.carers.org/carers-assessment) or contact your Carers Trust Network Partner for information.



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# Life as a young adult carer

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The following examples and case studies provide insight into life as a young adult carer. There is no typical example as all young adult carers will have a caring role that is particular to them and that fluctuates. However, these examples will be particularly useful to staff who have little knowledge or experience of caring, or of the practical demands that this places on a young adult's life.

## Jake

Jake, 20, has helped to care for his younger brother who is severely autistic and has epilepsy, since he was aged five. Jake is at university and is working part time so is not at home as much now, but he still helps out with his brother when he can.

Jake went on to sixth form after his GCSEs before starting his teaching degree. His last year of sixth form was extremely demanding and it was tough balancing a heavy workload on top of his caring responsibilities. He has a very supportive family who were keen for him to do well. Teachers in the sixth form were also aware of his home situation, and outside school Jake had support from the local Carers Trust Network Partner:

**“I knew that they were there should I need anything and it's just nice to know that there's support there if you need it.”**

Since starting university, Jake has not needed to ask for help with any specific needs relating to his caring responsibilities. However, in a one-to-one session with the Head of Course he was able to talk about his caring role so that if, for example, he is late in or misses a deadline, his home circumstances can be taken into consideration by his tutors.

Outside university, his local Carers Trust Network Partner has helped Jake at various times. This has included providing him with a break from his caring role and a chance to do different activities.

It also helped him access opportunities to raise awareness of the issues facing young adult carers. Jake is involved with NIACE's national Young Adult Carers Policy Forum, which enables him to contribute to discussions about policy changes affecting carers, and is on the Carers Trust Media Panel (a group of young adult carers set up to raise awareness in the media).

## Carmel

Carmel is 17. She lives with her mum and dad, grandma and younger brother who is 13. Carmel's mum was diagnosed with liver cancer two years ago and her dad isn't coping well with looking after her mum and her grandma. He is unemployed and struggling to find another job. Carmel's grandma is elderly and struggles with her sight, hearing and mobility. Carmel takes on a large part of the caring role for her mum in particular. The family have few support networks as they moved to the area about five years ago. Carmel feels well supported by staff at the college where she is studying for a health and social care qualification at level 2 as well as GCSE English and maths.

- 6.30am** Carmel gets up, gets ready for college and prepares a packed lunch for herself, her dad and brother and a sandwich lunch for her mum and grandma.
- 7.15am** Carmel prepares medication for her mum with strict instructions about when to take tablets. She writes a reminder that her mum has a hospital appointment that day and that she will be home to go with her.
- 8.30am** Carmel leaves the house with her brother, having checked he has all his books and has finished his homework. She walks him to school and carries on to college.
- 9.00am** Carmel arrives at her first lesson. She struggles to concentrate because of worrying about the outcome of her mum's hospital appointment later that day.
- 10.00am** Carmel rings her mum just to remind her that she will be coming home at 2.30pm to go with her to the hospital. She speaks to her dad as well to find out whether he is going to the Job Centre later that day and whether her grandma will be alright alone.
- 12.30pm** Lunchtime. Carmel can't eat her lunch due to her anxiety about her mum's appointment today and what the doctors might tell them.
- 2.30pm** Carmel arrives home from college having had to leave halfway through a lesson. She had let the tutor know the day before and he was supportive. He offered to help with catching up later on.
- 3.00pm** Carmel sits with her mum while waiting to see the doctor who is running late. They talk about what Carmel did at college that morning and how supportive the tutor was.
- 5.00pm** Carmel and her mum arrive home. They are upset because her mum needs more chemotherapy. They have struggled through the first series of treatments and don't want to go through it again. Carmel doesn't know who to turn to for advice.

- 5.30pm** Carmel prepares dinner for the family. Her dad is despondent because there were no suitable jobs to apply for and they are threatening to stop his benefits. He is wrapped up in his own troubles and doesn't offer much support to Carmel's mum. Carmel sits with her mum and comforts her.
- 6.00pm** Carmel spends a lot of time explaining to her grandma what the doctors said. She's not sure whether her grandma has properly understood everything.
- 7.00pm** The family eat dinner in silence. Carmel's mum is depressed and Carmel doesn't know what to say and she is really tired. Because her grandma can't hear very well it is hard for her to join in. Carmel helps her grandma to eat her dinner by cutting it up and feeding her occasionally but her grandma likes to do it herself and gets angry with her.
- 8.00pm** Carmel helps her mum into bed. She undresses her and makes sure she is comfortable. She gives her mum her medication before she settles down.
- 8.30pm** Carmel talks to her dad about the Job Centre and what it was like going there today. He is very despondent but tries not to let on to Carmel. He's going again the next day to try again. He says to Carmel that they might have to think about finding a care home for her grandma as they can't cope with looking after her as well as Carmel's mum.
- 9.30pm** Carmel sits down to read the notes from the lesson she left early today. She starts the first homework assignment but falls asleep half way through it.
- 11.00pm** Carmel wakes up and goes to bed, after checking that her mum and grandma are both asleep.

## Craig

Craig is 17. He cares for his mum who has bipolar disorder and his dad who developed Parkinson's disease at the age of 35, a condition that has rapidly advanced. Craig has a younger sister who is 12 and he makes sure she goes to school and tries to discourage her from hanging around in the evening with a group of friends who might get her into trouble.

Craig has been caring for his mum from the age of 12 and more recently for his dad as his condition has worsened. He feels resentful, angry and tied down by his family responsibility. He is also lonely and sees his friends spending time together after college when he has to meet his sister out of school and come home and check that his parents have everything they need.

Craig's mum's state of mental health fluctuates greatly and although there is some pattern to it, every day is different in terms of her support needs. This has made it difficult for social services to provide effective care.

Craig is interested in construction and has started a study programme at his local college, beginning with a level 1 in plastering. He is reluctant to think about his long-term prospects as going to university would mean moving away from his family. He is studying for his functional skills level 2 in English and maths having failed these GCSEs at 16. He sees his failure as the result of his time away from school, looking after his parents. Being a carer has greatly affected Craig's attendance at school and ability to meet deadlines. He regularly tries to do his homework late at night and often falls asleep while doing so.

Although Craig's dad can manage his own medication, Craig likes to check with him every day that he has taken the right tablets at the right time. He helps him to dress, to wash and to eat his meals, as his father's hands shake so much. He feels responsible for both his parents' and his sister's welfare. He spends time every day talking to his parents about their day. He realises that his parents' struggle with their health is impacting on their relationship and worries that his parents might separate. He also realises that his parents feel guilty about relying on him. Craig is worried that he might inherit their mental and physical health difficulties as he grows up.

Craig finds it hard to stay positive about his future. He is enjoying his college course but can see he will still struggle to complete the work because of his responsibilities at home. However, the support at college seems better than at school. He feels they treat him more like an adult and show greater understanding of the impact of his parents' needs particularly on his college work.

**“I love my parents and my sister and I will do everything I can to make sure they stay well and safe but it's really hard. I'm tired a lot of the time and my college course is hard work. But I am really enjoying the course and knowing I'm learning some practical skills keeps me going, it gives me hope for the future, getting a job and being able to support my family as well as have more time for myself.”**

## Alice

Alice, now 25, first started caring for her mum, who has bipolar disorder and epilepsy, at the age of eight but it was when she was in secondary school that her mum's bipolar episodes increased and Alice took on more caring responsibilities. This meant she would often go into school stressed, agitated and annoyed because of what was happening at home. This inevitably affected her behaviour. She never completed homework, struggled to concentrate in class and was frequently excluded.

The school picked up that Alice was a carer in Year 9 and arranged for her to have regular counselling. From Year 10 things started to get better and her behaviour improved. She started her GCSEs but ended up getting quite low grades.

At 16, feeling she was starting from scratch, Alice began a Level 1 course in childcare at college. Information about her caring role was not passed from secondary school to college and she therefore had no additional support. As a result, Alice had a bad start to college. She was going in late, her behaviour deteriorated and she was asked to leave. It was only at this point that the college identified that Alice was a carer. She was offered counselling as a condition of coming back for the second year and Alice again found this really helped her.

Alice's mum hadn't worked for years because of her health, and so family finances were tight for Alice. In her second year Alice was unable to afford to continue at college and instead did a paid work placement before returning to do an access course in social care and guidance the following year. At this point her mum was particularly unwell and Alice found balancing her caring responsibilities and her college work extremely difficult. Once again, she received no additional support from the college to help manage her caring responsibilities.

It was the personal intervention of a tutor at college that turned things around for Alice. At first she just found it useful to have someone to talk to about the situation at home, but when she got behind with her work the tutor gave Alice extra teaching support and wrote to the exam board on her behalf to explain her situation and request extensions for her assignments. This helped her to achieve at college and progress onto university. She is now working full time as a support worker having graduated with a degree in social care.

**“I am very proud of myself ... I've been through a lot and I don't think a lot of people would do what I've done ... I did it, but it was very, very hard so I just hope that's not the case for everybody because ... in the end people won't be having good jobs and careers if they don't put the support in place.”**

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# Developing policy and a college commitment to young adult carers

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## Developing policy for young adult carers

It is important for colleges to embed as well as promote support for young adult carers. All colleges should have a clear policy for young adult carers, either in the form of a separate policy or by integrating student carers into existing policies. At Central College Nottingham for example, carers are cited in various college policies, including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Additional Learning Support Policy and the college Tutorial Policy where being a carer is cited as one of the indicators of students being potentially at risk.

The development of clear policies for young adult carers should lead to colleges implementing specific actions and processes that will enable them to support young adult carers effectively.

### Induction Questionnaire

Central College Nottingham is the biggest college in Nottinghamshire offering a wide range of provision including further education, higher education and apprenticeships. The college's Learner Achievement Coaches (LAC) team provides a variety of support to learners identified as educationally at risk, including around 60–80 young adult carers a year. The team reached the finals of the 2014 Times Educational Supplement FE Awards and has achieved the Carers Federation Quality Standard in Carer Support. The Carers Federation is a charity which provides support to carers, carries out research and advocacy work, and delivers training.

In 2010, the LAC team at Central College Nottingham introduced an Induction Questionnaire to identify young adult carers and ensure they are able to access the support they need as early as possible. Prior to this, the information collected through college enrolment and application forms was sufficient to identify some at risk groups but did not enable students to declare their caring responsibilities or ask questions to identify those who may not recognise themselves as a carer. The LAC team developed a short questionnaire to capture information about learners' backgrounds, for example their activities over the previous year and details of any support they received at school, home circumstances, particularly who they live with, their motivation for coming to college and what they hope to achieve.

In the first week of the academic year, the LAC team goes out to inductions in every curriculum area, delivering a short presentation and talking students through the questionnaire. This helps to allay any fears

that young adult carers may have about the college's reasons for distributing the questionnaire, as many are reluctant to declare their caring responsibilities, especially when other agencies, such as social services, are involved in their home life. The LAC team members seek to reassure students that if they tell them about their caring responsibilities they can help.

Once a young adult carer has been identified through the Induction Questionnaire, a one-to-one session is offered with a LAC. Working with the Carers Federation, the LAC team has developed an information sheet specifically for young adult carers which gathers more detailed information about the student's caring responsibilities. This includes who they care for, how much time they spend caring, what other support, if any, they are receiving and, crucially, how they think their caring responsibilities will affect their study.

If a student identifies that they need additional support, the team puts together an individual support plan with the learner incorporating the interventions and support they want. The team also carries out a six week review of the support plan to see how things are going. If it is working well, the plan is extended, or if additional support is needed a new plan will be agreed. If it is assessed that the current situation is unmanageable for the student, the plan may be a referral back to the Progression Team. Inevitably, some young adult carers do drop out. For these students, the main aim is to give them a good experience of education so that they are not put off returning to college when things become more settled for them.

The focus on identifying young adult carers as early as possible and working with them to develop individualised support plans means that they are able to access appropriate support from the start of their course, giving them the best possible chance of staying engaged, making progress and achieving in college.

## Crisis plans

For a young adult carer, a sudden change in home circumstances, such as deterioration in the health of the person they are caring for, can have a significant impact on their ability to continue with their learning. Central College Nottingham found that, in these circumstances, some student carers stopped coming into college and, by the time they made contact several weeks later and explained what had been happening at home, they no longer felt able to return.

To tackle this issue, the college's LAC team has adopted a proactive approach to crisis planning, working with student carers before problems arise and putting a crisis plan in place, so that if something does happen, they know what to do.

**“Quite often the issue is about anxiety. This will build up – ‘I’ve missed three weeks of work, I don’t know what I’m doing, the classes have moved on’ ... all those sorts of other things make it harder and harder for them to come back. It’s about saying ... when those things happen, make sure you get in touch and we’ll work with you to try and keep you engaged while you do what you need to do so that you’re in a better place to be able to come back.”**

**LAC Team Leader**

LACs aim to develop a relationship of trust with student carers so that they feel able to tell their coach about a sudden change in their circumstances. LACs also reassure young adult carers that if they need to take time out from their course, they will liaise with their tutors to explain the situation, get work sent home, and put any other support in place which will help them to remain engaged. The team can also defend young adult carers’ attendance levels to management to prevent them from being excluded. The LAC team works hard to respond to the type of support that young carers say they want and promotes these services throughout the college using a variety of media.

The fact that young adult carers have returned following crisis situations indicates that this approach is working. The retention rate for young adult carers is now consistent with that of all students at the college and, at 86% for the academic year 2014/15, compares well with national data on overall student retention. Since the introduction of crisis plans, some student carers have come back for a second year or progressed up a level, which is used as evidence to demonstrate that this support is having a positive impact on carers’ ability to continue with their studies.

## **A commitment to supporting young adult carers**

Developing a college commitment to young adult carers is a good starting point for the development of policy and support mechanisms and can be included in college promotional literature to highlight to students and potential students the support available for them.

## Calderdale College's commitment to identifying and supporting young adult carers

Calderdale Carers supports anyone over the age of 18 in a caring role and offers specific support for young adult carers aged 18–25. The project works in partnership with Calderdale Young Carers, which employs a specialist worker supporting young adult carers aged 14–18 to make a smooth transition between the two services.

Calderdale Carers has around 30 young adult carers registered with its service and 10–15 young people regularly accessing its activities and one-to-one support.

Calderdale College is the largest provider of further education (post-16) courses and work-based learning (apprenticeships) and the sole provider of higher education awards in Calderdale, a metropolitan borough in West Yorkshire. The college engages around 4,500 learners from sites across Calderdale.

Calderdale College recognises that learners who are young adult carers may wish to access support to ensure they achieve their maximum potential during their studies. To ensure this happens the college will provide the following support package to young adult learners who wish to participate:

- Provide a way for young adult carers to self-refer for support.
- Provide a named contact in the college Advice and Guidance Team.
- Ensure a Support Menu is available for young adult carers.
- Publicise the Support Menu on the college virtual learning environment.
- Maintain a confidential record of the individual support package.
- Provide an annual report on young adult carer destinations.
- Enable staff to access online training in the support of young adult carers.
- Develop a cross college support network for staff teaching young adult carer learners.
- Enable collaborative working with Calderdale Young Adult Carer Support Workers.
- Enable Calderdale Young Adult Carer Support Workers to work in college at events and enrolments.

This commitment was developed by Calderdale College with support from Calderdale Carers. It is being promoted on the college's website so it is available to current students, prospective students and staff.

## Establishing partnership working between a college and a local carers support service

Calderdale Carers has worked hard to establish a good working relationship between Calderdale College and the local carers support services to ensure that young adult carers attending college receive a good level of support. The partnership has taken time to establish but is now working very successfully.

Some of the work carers services in Calderdale have undertaken in developing the partnership includes:

- Meetings between Calderdale Carers, Calderdale Young Carers and Calderdale College Safeguarding Coordinator, the initial lead on setting up the partnership, to discuss the aims and outcomes for the partnership. This was done by phone, email and face-to-face meetings. It was important to have realistic and achievable aims set out from the start and also to have an idea of the capacity of the local carers support service.
- Joint working to develop a college commitment for the identification and support of young adult carers. This has led to Calderdale College including a tick box on its admissions form to allow a young person to identify themselves as a carer and the development of a procedure on how the college will respond.
- Identification of a college lead for the partnership work whose role is to support young adult carers within college and liaise with the local carers support services to ensure the partnership is maintained. Having a named contact has made communication between the college and carers services much easier.
- Calderdale Carers and Calderdale Young Carers establishing a presence within the college. This includes putting up posters to raise awareness of the support provided by carers services, attendance at events such as the Freshers Fair to meet students and staff and holding a drop-in session for young adult carers who may require one-to-one support.
- Developing training opportunities for staff. Calderdale College has agreed to provide e-learning opportunities to staff who want to develop their knowledge about young adult carers and are planning to invite Calderdale Carers and Calderdale Young Carers to deliver face-to-face training for specific staff to provide them with information about what the local carers support services can offer.

As a result of this partnership, the specialist worker for young adult carers at Calderdale Carers now liaises regularly with the college lead and the college lead has started to make referrals to the carers service.

**“Before this piece of work came about I had tried and tried and tried to get into the college ... Having that named person has made a huge difference.”**

**Specialist Worker for Young Adult Carers**

## A college lead for young adult carers

Calderdale College understands how important it is to have a named person within the college to lead on implementing policy to support student carers and to advocate on their behalf.

The introduction of a college lead within Student Services has improved communication and increased partnership working between the college and Calderdale Carers. Young people coming into Student Services with an issue around caring are passed to the lead officer who then talks to the young adult carer about how the college can help to meet their needs. Once a young person has identified themselves as a carer on the college admission form, the lead officer records details of the student on a dedicated database for young adult carers. The lead officer then contacts the student to offer support. If it is assessed that the student will benefit from additional support, the lead can refer the young person to Calderdale Carers or other appropriate services.

Having a named contact makes it easier for Calderdale Carers to notify the college to ensure that support is put in place if they are working with a young adult carer who is about to start college. The college lead invites Calderdale Carers to events to raise awareness about the support it provides and Calderdale Carers keeps the lead informed about what it is doing, so that relevant information can be provided to students.

Calderdale College and Calderdale Carers, with input from a young adult carer, have developed guidance for a college lead for young adult carers. The college lead:

- Should be a named person within college that staff and students are made aware of. This person could be a member of staff already based within Student Services perhaps carrying out a similar role.
- Is responsible for identifying young adult carers and collating details on a database. They should be carer aware, be responsible for ensuring the commitment is translated into practice and be able to offer appropriate support.
- Must demonstrate good cross-college liaison skills.
- Needs to establish and maintain a good working partnership with local carer support services.
- Needs to be approachable and understanding.

**“It’s a huge thing for a young person to approach Student Services and say ... ‘I’ve got this going on at home’, but if they’ve got a specific person they can ask for ... that’s going to be the huge difference.”**

**Specialist Worker for Young Adult Carers**

## Raising awareness at a Freshers Fair

Having identified that it would be beneficial to young adult carers, Calderdale Carers and Calderdale Young Carers attended the Calderdale College 2014 Freshers Fair. At the fair, they provided information and were available to talk to students. A young adult carer who was already accessing support from Calderdale Carers was also present to offer peer support and share his own experiences of college.

Some of the young people who spoke to the team identified themselves as being in a caring role and others just wanted to take some information. Young people could put their name down and request a call back from the appropriate service, or book onto a drop-in session if staff felt a student could benefit from a longer, more private chat. Some young people were unsure what defined a young adult carer. Raising awareness with these students can help them to identify peers in caring roles and have a better understanding of their situation.

The team spoke with approximately 40 young people in total and handed out information to many more. They also spoke to a number of college staff. Some of the staff were aware of students in their classes that were young adult carers and agreed to pass on information about the carers service. Calderdale Carers also encouraged tutors to promote a drop-in session that it was planning to run at the college a couple of weeks after the fair. This would offer one-to-one appointments to students who could potentially benefit from its services.

At the 2015 Freshers Fair the stall was set up within Student Services, with access to two private rooms. The event was promoted through direct invitation to students identified on the college's young adult carers database, and to the wider student population and staff via the college intranet. Any student carers identified at the fair were invited to a social event for young adult carers, organised jointly by Calderdale Carers and Calderdale Young Carers.

## Identifying young adult carers through the admission form

From the start of the 2015/16 academic year, Calderdale College has been identifying young adult carers through its college admission and enrolment forms. This process was developed by Calderdale College and Calderdale Carers in response to feedback from a focus group with college representatives and young adult carers. The focus group included young people at different stages in their education, including students already at college, one about to leave to go to university and young people thinking about going to, or about to start college.

Experiences and concerns shared by the young people suggested it would be good for young adult carers to have an easy and private way of self-identifying as a carer. By ticking the box on the form the young person can let the college know they have caring responsibilities then it is up to them how much information they share with the college lead when they are contacted soon afterwards.

The college may be made aware of young adult carers in other ways such as referrals from external agencies or self referrals throughout the year, in which case it will follow the same process as below.

**A young adult carer ticks the box on the college admission and enrolment forms which identifies them as a carer.**



**The names of all those who have identified as a young adult carer will be collated on a database which is accessible by the college lead.**



**The college lead will contact all young adult carers (by email or phone) inviting them to a one-to-one meeting. During this meeting it will be discussed and agreed what support the young adult carer requires, such as identification on their ID badge and receiving the young adult carers newsletter. Any further actions, such as a referral to the local carers support service, will be entered onto the student log.**

## Staff training and development

For policies and process to be effective, college staff need to have a basic understanding of the needs and experiences of young adult carers, and how they can support them to stay in learning and achieve their potential.

### Staff training at Central College Nottingham

The LAC team at Central College Nottingham provides a menu of training for college staff. One of these courses, Working Together to Improve Retention, is designed to ensure that staff across the college are helping to support young adult carers to achieve. The main audience for this training is curriculum staff and it aims to raise awareness of the support available for young adult carers in college and help staff to recognise behaviour in their students that might indicate that they have caring responsibilities.

Many carers will be identified by the LAC team through application and induction processes, or will be returning students. However, there will always be new students throughout the year who have not declared caring responsibilities but may show signs of being a carer, for example being consistently late, regularly leaving the classroom to take calls, or reacting in an unusual way to a particular topic in class discussions. Identifying young adult carers who are living with family members who have mental health problems or are affected by substance misuse or alcohol can be particularly difficult as they are less likely to want to declare their situation to others. It is therefore crucial that all staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge to identify and refer young adult carers to the LAC team.

In liaising with tutors in their work across the curriculum areas, the LAC team found that some staff had limited knowledge or appreciation of the needs of young adult carers. Others were trying to deal with the problems of individual students themselves, unaware that the college has a dedicated team to support young adult carers. Through the training, the team works with staff to help them to spot potential signs and patterns of behaviour in their students that might indicate they are a young adult carer. The team also ensures that staff are made aware of the range of support the LAC team can provide for young adult carers and understand that they are not expected to deal with all of students' needs themselves, but to recognise that there is an issue and pass any concerns or information on to the LAC team.

Staff training has helped to increase referrals to the LAC team from this channel, ensuring more young adult carers are identified and can access support. Within the college as a whole, the training has promoted greater understanding among tutors of the issues faced by young adult carers and how they can help to support these students with their learning.

## **Training Calderdale College staff**

One of the ways Calderdale College is planning to raise awareness among staff of the needs of young adult carers is through an e-learning programme. The programme will be optional, but will be targeted at staff known to be working with student carers.

From the start of the 2015/16 academic year, the college has had a young adult carers database to record information about students who identify themselves as carers through the college admission form. From this database, the college lead for young adult carers will be able to identify which tutors have young adult carers in their class. The college lead will then flag this with individual tutors, explain the benefits to them of having a better understanding of the needs of student carers and what they can do to support them. They will be invited to complete the e-learning programme which will also be made available on the staff intranet for any other tutors wishing to further their professional development.

The content includes information about how to identify student carers and about the support available from local carers services. Calderdale College is also inviting local carers services, including Calderdale Carers, to deliver training to specific staff within the Information, Advice and Guidance team, Learning Involvement team, Student Services team and Admissions team. This training will complement the e-learning programme. It will offer information on a range of topics and a brief overview of possible issues facing young adult carers but will mainly focus upon what support is available from the local carers services. Other plans being considered include a possible drop-in session specifically for staff.

## **York Carers Centre online training tool for staff**

York Carers Centre – a Carers Trust Network Partner – has been an independent charity since 2009, supporting carers from the age of eight, and is divided into three services: young carers, aged 8–18; young adult carers, aged 18–25; and adults, aged 26 and over. The service supports approximately 140 young adult carers a year.

York Carers Centre is developing online training for staff to help identify and support young adult carers in further education colleges and university.

To address the drop off in statutory support once young carers reach the age of 18, the Young Adult Carers Service at York Carers Centre has established a network of agencies that support young adults in the city. The Young Adult Network Forum meets quarterly and is chaired by the Lead Young Adult Carer Worker. The network includes voluntary sector organisations working in a range of areas, such as domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health, as well as housing associations

and a sub-group of education providers, including the University of York. Through this network, York Carers Centre raises awareness about the services it provides for young adult carers and also gains access to information about other agencies, enabling staff to refer young adult carers to wider support, as appropriate.

Recognising that staff in colleges and universities may have limited time to allow them to attend network meetings, the Young Adult Carers Service has designed an online training tool to raise awareness of the needs of young adult carers. This enables larger numbers of staff to access training and includes information, advice and guidance to improve tutors' understanding of the needs of young adult carers and available support. It also features case studies of young adult carers, a quiz for college tutors on identifying student carers, and information about the services and support offered by York Carers Centre. See [www.ycctraining.co.uk/index.asp](http://www.ycctraining.co.uk/index.asp).

The training tool is being promoted through the Young Adult Network Forum and through university and college contacts. The University of York has added the tool to its existing package of online training for university staff.

## Using a video campaign to raise awareness

Action for Carers Surrey is a well established organisation in Surrey and a Carers Trust Network Partner. It works with carers of all ages across the county. The organisation is made up of a number of different services, the largest of which is Surrey Young Carers which works with carers up to the age of 18.

Action for Carers Surrey also has a Learning and Work service which specialises in working with 18–24 year olds, including running an 18–24 Network for young adult carers.

Young Carers Education Advisers at Surrey Young Carers work closely with head teachers, teaching staff and pastoral staff in schools and colleges to increase awareness of the needs of young adult carers and the impact of caring on their education. In addition to awareness raising, advisers work with staff in colleges to develop policies, promote support for families and help staff to put support plans in place that will be of benefit to, and meet the specific needs of young adult carers.

Seven young adult carers from Action for Carers Surrey's 18–24 Network have made a video – See us: Young Carers – to inform college staff about the impact that caring can have on learning and how they can support student carers.

The video was produced with the support of Fixers UK, a Big Lottery funded organisation that works with young people to produce media campaigns. It focuses on three key areas in which young adult carers tend to need

support in college – time to get their work done, information on bursaries and information and guidance on potential career paths. The video encourages colleges to get in touch with Action for Carers Surrey for advice on how to get started or improve their support for student carers.

One of the things that prompted Action for Carers Surrey to make the video was the difficulty they had experienced in delivering face-to-face training with college staff. A key part of the Education Adviser role is to raise awareness of the impact of caring and the needs of young adult carers among teaching and pastoral staff. Advisers achieve this by delivering assemblies, writing briefings and training staff in schools and colleges. These activities are relatively easy to carry out in schools, but in colleges tutors from different departments rarely come together as a group which makes it difficult to deliver training.

To help address this, a link to the video has been sent to colleges throughout Surrey and they have been asked to publish it on their college intranet. Young adult carers have also been actively promoting it through their own social media networks and feedback suggests positive interest from colleges. One of the young adult carers involved in the project has successfully negotiated with her college to show the video and deliver a talk about being a young adult carer. And a visit to Surrey University Students' Union is planned in direct response to the video launch.

Through the process of making the video, strong peer support developed between the young adult carers within the group, enabling them to build lasting friendships and giving them another source of support. The project also provided an opportunity for young adult carers to speak out about their opinions and feedback suggests that it has been an empowering experience for those involved. Young adult carers received a certificate on completion of the project.

**“Came home from the worst day at work to this certificate!!  
It’s the little things that cheer me up! I feel blessed.”  
Young adult carer**

Watch the video on YouTube at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLQ9WaxmvJU&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLQ9WaxmvJU&feature=youtu.be).



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# Developing approaches for supporting student carers

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## Multi-agency work and a whole family approach

Improved support for the student's family can help reduce caring responsibilities for the young adult carer. Colleges can assist by helping students to access support for their family from:

- Adult social care.
- Health services.
- Carers services.

Colleges can support students to request an assessment of their needs as a carer from their local authority which will take into consideration the needs of the whole family, including any siblings who are caring.

A local carers service will be able to offer support with assessing the student's needs in relation to their caring and if necessary, initiating support for their family.

Colleges can initiate or help students to access wider support from local services, for example a local young adult carers service, or counselling service.

**“When I was 16 I was doing a course at college. It was going okay, but then other things started to go wrong – I broke up with my boyfriend and I got in trouble with the police. I didn't know what to do so I just dropped out. Marie [at the young adult carers group] really helped me though. She helped me to sort stuff out, and came into college with me. I'm on another course now and it's going good.”**

**Young adult carer**

### **Action for Carers Surrey – Education Advisers and partnership working with schools and colleges**

A key part of the Education Adviser role at Action for Carers Surrey is to support young people to self-identify as carers. The advisers run sessions in schools and colleges to raise awareness of caring responsibilities and meet with young people to talk about their activities at home. Advisers also work hard to get personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education on the curriculum in schools. Although this is not a mandatory requirement,

Surrey Young Carers sees PSHE as crucial in making schools more carer friendly and giving every student in the school the opportunity to learn about caring issues. Using funding from the local authority, the Education Advisers team is converting the PSHE education materials that they have developed for use in schools and colleges, into e-learning packages.

**“The aim is to get not just young carers learning about young carers but all the students in the school learning about caring issues, and all the staff ... It’s part of the wider agenda of improving emotional and mental health within the school population. So many young carers struggle with emotional problems and mental health in schools is a big problem in general. Most people will be carers at some point in their lives so it’s entirely appropriate that schools are trying to equip young people on how to stay emotionally healthy and to take care of themselves and what it’s like for people who are trying to take care of others.”**

#### **Young Carers Education Adviser**

Schools and colleges using the PSHE packs have found them highly beneficial, particularly in prompting classroom discussions around caring issues. Alongside the production of the e-learning packs, the service has converted posters with information about Action for Carers Surrey and the 18–24 Network into a digital format so that they can be used on college plasma screens.

### **Barnardo’s CareFree Project – liaising with a young adult carer’s school and college when they are making the transition between the two**

Established in 1996, Barnardo’s CareFree project provides a range of services to young carers up to the age of 18 in Leicester and Leicestershire. CareFree also works with the parent or relative needing care to identify what support is needed, helps the family to access appropriate support, and reduces the caring role of the young carer. Barnardo’s supports around 400 carers across the city and county, over 100 of which are young adult carers receiving support via their youth service or the CareFree project.

CareFree is working in various ways to embed support for young adult carers in the policy and practice of colleges across Leicester and Leicestershire. One of the ways is by liaising with schools and colleges to support young adult carers to make successful transitions into further education. When CareFree is working with a young adult carer who is about to move from secondary school to college, the project worker, with the permission of the young adult carer, contacts the college to make sure

that staff are aware of the young person's caring responsibilities and to facilitate a transition meeting for the young adult carer with a mentor at the college. This can help to alleviate fears about confidentiality and ensure that a young adult carer gets access to the support they need to achieve at college.

**“What we know about young carers who then become young adult carers is that they’ve possibly already had quite a difficult experience in education, they’ve already got ... a fear of sharing information with education staff; they worry about lack of confidentiality. It’s about reassurance about how that information is managed and then being able to pinpoint in that college who is going to be the best person to meet their support needs and do the advocating on their behalf.”**

**CareFree Team Manager**

CareFree is also working to raise awareness and increase understanding of the needs of young adult carers in colleges by:

- Providing a resource pack for schools and colleges to use in teaching or assemblies.
- Working with NIACE to develop the College Network, a quarterly meeting which brings colleges and other stakeholders together and to share good practice and development opportunities for young adult carers.
- Delivering training for all college heads in the city and county.

In addition, some of the young adult carers from CareFree have been involved in a project with NIACE to design a series of posters, to be used in colleges and other learning environments, to encourage student carers to ask for help and get the support they need. Importantly, the posters tell students exactly who they can talk to at their college to get help. The posters have been a big success and distributed to around 300 colleges across the country.



Support to make the transition from school to college has made a tangible difference to the confidence of young adult carers in asking for help and in so doing has enabled many to continue with their learning. Many of CareFree's young adult carers start courses but struggle to stay engaged if they do not have access to appropriate support in college. The higher level of work and increased demands on students upon the transition to college can take its toll on young adult carers both mentally and physically. Providing opportunities for young people to talk and share any concerns, having specific support around transition, and having an identified person to go to for help at college, have a huge impact on keeping young adult carers well and able to manage their learning and caring responsibilities.

**“The biggest thing is for colleges to understand that you can have specialist services that understand young adult carers but that what young adult carers want is for their college to announce, big and bold ... that they get it, that they're not afraid of it. That if you have someone that's not well in your house, by all means come and talk to us and let's see what we can do to support you.”**

**CareFree Team Manager**

## **A family focused approach to learning**

Learning as a family and developing a family focused approach to learning are effective ways of engaging and motivating carers and their families, many of whom would not usually participate in learning.

A family focused approach to learning offers a holistic approach, taking account of the personal circumstances of individual young adult carers and the impact of engagement in learning on other areas of their life. It particularly recognises the wide range of caring responsibilities that young adults may face, including the amount of time that they care for a family member, the pattern of care, who they care for, the type of care that they provide and the impact that this could have upon their learning. It also recognises the distinct challenges faced by young adult carers as they make the transition to adulthood and independence.

In practice, this may involve a learning provider working with a family to identify a suitable course for a young adult carer, and putting arrangements in place to ensure that alternative care is available while the young adult is engaged in learning. Alternatively, it may look at the learning needs of other members of the family, or as a family learning together. This is a personalised approach that provides young adult carers and their families with choice, control and, crucially, flexibility.

## **Barnardo's CareFree work with young adult carers from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds**

Barnardo's CareFree project works with many young carers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds and offers support that is respectful of and sensitive to cultural differences.

For example, CareFree had been running a Saturday group for young carers under the age of 12, but its groups for young adult carers were held during the week, often at the same time that many young people attended mosque. The project was mindful that expecting these young people to come out of mosque to access its support was both unfair and disruptive to their studies. They also realised that some families would not ask permission for young people to come out of mosque as this would identify them as young adult carers and expose them to the stigma attached to having an illness in the family. As a result, some young adult carers from BAME backgrounds were missing out on vital peer support. To address this, the project worked with Leicester City Council Youth Service to provide a Saturday group for carers over the age of 12.

CareFree has found that information about support services is often shared by word of mouth in BAME communities. As a result, the project works hard to be as accessible as possible for this group of young adult carers and is developing a strong presence in the local community. The key feature of CareFree's support for young adult carers from BAME backgrounds is flexibility, understanding that some families might find workers' involvement in the family quite intrusive. Flexibility may include, being flexible about where project workers meet with young people, and talking to young adult carers about how much information is shared with their parents and when.

For example, one young adult carer who was receiving support from the project initially requested that her family was not involved and that all communication only went to her. This enabled the young person to find the right time to tell her mum about CareFree and why the support was important to her. The project also worked with this young adult carer's support worker at college to ensure that they understood her family circumstances and that their communication was respectful.

Barnardo's CareFree project has found that BAME families can be reluctant to ask for help, partly through fear that services will not appreciate their family circumstances or understand cultural differences. Through their positive experience of contact with CareFree, families have developed a better understanding of the support that is available to them and are encouraged to access other services.

## **Peer support**

It is also important to provide opportunities for young adult carers to support each other and have access to informal drop-in sessions.

## Peer mentoring at Central College Nottingham

Central College Nottingham is working on ways to encourage and develop peer support for young adult carers. Previously, the college has facilitated a variety of support groups for student carers around different themes such as bereavement. The groups brought together students from different curriculum areas and courses who had similar circumstances or shared experiences but may not otherwise have mixed. It was noted that after the initial support to help the groups get going, most had become self-supporting and students had taken the groups in their own direction.

To develop and build on this type of peer support, the college brought in the Carers Federation to deliver mentor training to a group of 12 young adult carers. As a result, some of these students have gone on to be mentors with the Carers Federation and support other young adult carers. The LAC Team Leader noted that all of the students who took the training had benefited personally from their involvement and recognised how their experience of caring had equipped them with skills they could use beyond their time at college.

**“It really opened their eyes about what they do and gave them a real opportunity to explore ... their qualities, their strengths, their skills, how they can support other people; that was a real eye opener for some of them, because they hadn’t looked at themselves in that way.”**

### LAC Team Leader

The college is spread over a number of sites across the city and the county so the main challenge in developing peer support to date has been the logistics of bringing student carers together, regularly, in one place. Consequently, the peer mentoring support for young adult carers has not developed in the way the LAC team had hoped. To try to address this, the college will be organising a Carers Week with the Carers Federation during which they will ask student carers at each college site for feedback on the type of support they could offer to each other and how they think this peer support should work. From this, the college hopes to develop something more bespoke for each of the different centres. The college is also setting up a closed Facebook group for young adult carers that students can access in their own time and should eventually be able to manage themselves.



## York Carers Centre drop-in at York College

York College is a college of further education and higher education, serving the needs of a wide range of learners, including Year 10 pupils, students on 16–19 programmes, and adults of all ages. The college is the largest provider of 16–19 education in the region, offering a wide range of A-levels, vocational programmes and apprenticeships in addition to higher education courses, both full and part time, and adult education classes. About half of its students are from the city and the rest commute from across Yorkshire and out of the county. The college supports around 100 young adult carers at any one time.

On the first Thursday of every month during the academic year, York Carers Centre holds a drop-in at York College for young adult carers. Staff from the carers centre set up a stand outside the main catering facility, the busiest place in the college, from morning break through to lunch break. Staff are available to talk to students and take referrals, as well as offer support to any college staff with caring responsibilities. Student carers already known to the centre may stop for a chat with the staff but other students often come forward to ask for advice and refer themselves to the support at the centre. If students live outside of the local area, staff have information to make sure they get connected and can access support where they live.

The idea for the drop-in sessions was developed by York College and York Carers Centre following a Young Adults Network Group meeting in York. This group includes the local authority, the carers centre and representatives from local schools and colleges and reflects a desire on the part of the carers centre to work more closely with further and higher education providers. The carers centre also runs events at Askham Bryan FE College, the University of York and York St John University to enhance its profile in York and drive forward support for young adult carers in schools and colleges across the city.

York Carers Centre has been running the drop-in sessions at York College for the last two years and the take-up has been good, with new young adult carers identified at every session. The college encourages young adult carers who are known to them, but who might not be registered with the carers centre, to call in at the drop-in session so they can access more immediate and wider support. The drop-ins not only provide an additional referral route to enable young adult carers to access support on their course but provide a regular reminder for both staff and students that the carers centre is there and that support is available.

**“Students are seeing that the carers centre is available and referring themselves when they might not have told their tutors, they might not have ticked our boxes ... it just gives the students another opportunity to identify themselves as a carer and get some additional support if that’s what they need.”**

**Welfare and Funding Adviser**

## York Carers Centre raising awareness with York College and the University of York

In addition to the drop-in at York College, York Carers Centre uses a variety of channels to raise awareness about the needs of young adult carers and promote the services available to support student carers at college and university. These include:

- Information about the centre on provider websites. The University of York has information on, and a link to, York Carers Centre on its website as part of the ongoing relationship building between the two organisations. This has also raised awareness within Student Services of the importance of identifying young adult carers and the support that both York Carers Centre and the university can offer to student carers. Information about York Carers Centre is also available on the York College website.
- Posters and leaflets to make it easier for students to identify themselves as carers and encourage them to seek support if they need it.
- One-off events to raise awareness of carers and their needs. For example, in November 2014 York Carers Centre held an event at York College for Carers Rights Day. The college allowed centre staff to use its catering facility, providing sandwiches at an informal session which was well attended by both young adult carers and staff. The college worked with staff from York Carers Centre to promote the event, including the Graphic Design department which produced a poster for the occasion.
- Activities with college staff to increase their understanding of the specific needs of student carers and their knowledge of available support. This helped tutors to better support existing student carers and to identify more young adult carers. For example, a tutor approached staff at the monthly drop-in session in relation to a student who did not see themselves as a carer but was known by the tutor to have caring responsibilities. York Carers Centre was able to contact the student and offer them direct support, as well as speak to the pastoral team to ensure they had access to ongoing support within the college. As a result of these activities, a two way working relationship has developed, with the pastoral team referring students to the Young Adult Carers Service and the service, with permission, making pastoral workers aware of students they are working with.
- Delivering lectures about young adult carers as part of the content for degree courses, for example Occupational Therapy and Social Work. This increases students' knowledge of the issues faced by young adult carers and influences future professionals.

The enthusiasm of the Head of Student Services at York College to develop the support offer for student carers has been particularly significant in developing the relationship with York Carers Centre. Building on the success

of the drop-in sessions for student carers at York College, the Young Adult Carers Service has recently started a similar programme of support at the University of York. It has been supported in this by the Students' Union which promotes the drop-in sessions through Twitter.

The awareness raising done by York Carers Centre in partnership with York College and the University of York helps to give young adult carers the confidence to pursue learning opportunities and to access support to sustain their learning.

**“[The support] is another little bit of security to enable them to go to college and to get their opportunity ... to develop their own life outside of caring.”**

**Lead Young Adult Carers Worker**



## A whole organisation approach

Colleges are comprised of a number of departments and deliver their provision through a range of policies, processes and approaches. A whole organisation approach seeks to ensure that the needs of young adult carers are actively considered and catered for at all levels, across all departments and by all staff within a college.

By developing a whole organisation approach, the needs and experiences of young adult carers will be actively considered and catered for at all stages of contact and engagement – from recruitment and marketing, through to enrolment, support, delivery and progression.

### York College Young Carer's Card

In addition to the monthly drop-ins with York Carers Centre, York College organises a range of support for young adult carers including a young adult carers group which includes social time and peer support; using its discretionary fund to support young adult carers financially; and offering pastoral support from tutors and other staff, including one-to-one sessions and access to a free confidential counselling service.

One of the key elements of support which the college provides is the Young Carer's Card. This is a City of York initiative which was instigated by the Youth Council. Having been identified at college, young adult carers are given a card which they can show to their tutors or other support staff.

This helps staff to recognise that the student may require additional support and flexibility around deadlines, without the carer having to explain their story multiple times. This is crucial in enabling young adult carers to access the support they need and has helped some carers to overcome fears about declaring their caring responsibilities to staff.

## Financial support for young adult carers

Anecdotal evidence shows that young adult carers and their families often live in or on the edges of poverty (Becker, F, and Becker, S, 2008). If a young person participates in learning for more than 21 hours per week, they are not entitled to claim Carer's Allowance. This benefit, of just over £62 per week, is vital to many young adult carers and their families. Young adult carers would benefit from the support of colleges and carer services with accessing the financial support they need to help them stay in learning. This may include grants or funds, such as the 16–19 Bursary.

### Supporting young adult carers to access bursaries and grants at Barnardo's CareFree Project

One of the ways CareFree eases young adult carers' transition between school and college is by supporting them to complete the considerable amount of paperwork involved in accessing bursaries and grants. This can be a stressful and lengthy process for young adult carers and can act as a significant barrier to their progression in education. In order to overcome this challenge, project workers at CareFree ensure that all the necessary paperwork is dealt with before September so that the young adult carer can start their course without the added stress of form filling and worries about accessing financial support. As part of this process, Project Workers work proactively with colleges to ensure they are clear about the financial needs of young adult carers and that appropriate support is put in place prior to them starting on a course, including access to travel bursaries and other college funds for equipment and books.

CareFree also helps young adult carers to access external grants for expensive college equipment such as laptops. Having their own laptop increases a student carer's ability to be flexible and work from home in the event that the person they care for is unwell and they are unable to attend college. Access to financial support to buy equipment can be the deciding factor for many students who are considering whether to take up a college course. For example, CareFree recently helped to secure a £700 grant for a young adult carer who wanted to do a sports course. Without this grant, the family would not have been able to afford the accommodation and specialist equipment required for her to go to college.

Helping young adult carers to access the financial support they are entitled to is an important part of CareFree's advocacy work. They recently consulted with the young adult carers that they support to find out what was stopping them from progressing in education and into adult life. One of the main barriers that young adult carers identified was finances as most of the parents that CareFree works with are unable to work and so family budgets can be tight.

The support that CareFree provides in enabling young adult carers to access bursaries and grants is therefore crucial in enabling young adult carers to engage in education. It has helped to reduce the level of stress for both parents and young adult carers, taking away the fear of form filling and helping some families to overcome their reluctance to ask for help.

## Financial support at York College

At York College, young adult carers are tracked for bursary purposes. The application form for bursaries asks if the student has caring responsibilities, if they are registered with their local carers centre and if they would like information about the centre. For students who are carers there is a more flexible cap on the income threshold to qualify for a bursary, which means that very few applications from carers are turned down. The college pays 100% of the student's essential course costs and up to £1,000 in travel costs. Where possible, all travel costs will be met. In addition, the college has meal vouchers for carers and is flexible with additional costs such as print credit or money to attend open days.

The college is also more flexible in its eligibility requirements for other types of support. For example, the college may issue a young adult carer who lives two miles away with a bus pass despite students not normally being eligible for this if they live within a three mile radius. This means that rather than having to leave college early to walk home or pick up siblings from school, carers can attend as much of their lesson as possible.

The financial support offered by the college has grown over time. Initially, the support was developed in response to welfare staff noticing that some students were coming in to college without basic equipment or adequate clothing, such as a bag or a winter coat, while other students were regularly missing college.

Collecting information about caring responsibilities via the bursary form began around the same time as York Carers Centre introduced the Carer's Card in the college. The two initiatives have made a big difference to the way York College identifies and supports young adult carers. Previously, the college relied on students coming forward to request financial help. Now, it is recognised in college policies that students with caring responsibilities will receive more financial support and do not have to be interviewed to qualify for a higher level of award.

The college's flexible approach to support is driven by an understanding of the financial constraints that caring often places on young adult carers. Balancing caring responsibilities with their college commitments often leaves little time for carers to work and earn extra money for their family. In addition, young adult carers in full-time education do not qualify for Carer's Allowance, yet there are considerable costs associated with looking after someone who has caring needs. This combination of factors means that carers often struggle with their finances, so the financial support offered by York College can help this group of students to continue with their studies and achieve at college.

In its ongoing professional relationship with student carers, the Welfare and Funding team has repeatedly witnessed students who, initially too embarrassed to tell people about their home situation, are now confident to come and talk to the team about their needs, as they know that they will be listened to and will get appropriate support.

**“It's just about making life a little bit easier, showing students that somebody understands and making them see that there's somewhere that they can go if they need some help.”**

**Welfare and Funding Adviser**

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# Support for specific groups of young adult carers

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Although all young adult carers are likely to need additional support to participate in learning, NIACE's consultations with young adult carers and support workers have shown that three particular groups of carers face specific challenges in relation to education. These include:

- Young adult carers from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds (Butt, J, 2006).
- Young male carers (Carers Trust, 2014).
- Young adult carers with a learning difficulty (Becker, F and Becker, S, 2008).

The Top tips for colleges supporting students with caring responsibilities on page 45 are relevant for work with these particular groups of young adult carers. However, this section provides additional suggestions that will help colleges to consider the specific needs of these groups and provide tailored support to enable them to engage, aspire and achieve their full potential.

## Young adult carers from BAME backgrounds

Young adult carers from BAME backgrounds may face challenges in accessing external support due to a lack of understanding about their ethnicity or culture. These include:

### Translating and caring

For young adult carers from BAME backgrounds, the pressures of caring are often compounded by English being an additional language in the home. The lack of translation services available in public services means that these carers often have a dual role of caring and translating. Many young adult carers from BAME backgrounds have to accompany their parents to doctor or hospital appointments, or be present when social services visit the home, to translate some potentially complicated and upsetting things. This can impact on their attendance at college.

**“I used to feel a lot of responsibility because I had to do everything for my mum. I had to phone up the hospital, read out letters to her, and just everything in general. The language was more of a problem.”**

**Young adult carer**

## **Distrust of external support services**

Having English as an additional language can also mean it is difficult for families from BAME backgrounds to understand and therefore trust services. Support workers can mistakenly be seen as intruders who scrutinise the home situation and misinterpret cultural behaviours as safeguarding issues. As a result, BAME families often rely heavily on family members to provide the care and support needed and find it difficult to access external support.

**“You do kind of feel like you’re under investigation.”**

**Young adult carer**

## **Lack of understanding about procedures to access external support**

Some young adult carers from BAME backgrounds report that there is less understanding of the caring role and awareness of the support available for carers in BAME communities than society as a whole. Furthermore, BAME families may find it difficult to understand the criteria which need to be met in order to receive support. This again means that they are less likely to access external support, placing more pressure on young carers in these families.

**“I thought it was my duty as a son to look after my mum anyway, so I thought it was a natural thing to do. I didn’t class myself as a carer, I was just someone that was there for my mum.”**

**Young adult carer**

## **Support for young adult carers from BAME backgrounds**

### **Support to self-identify as a carer**

Colleges need to support young adult carers from BAME backgrounds to recognise that they have caring responsibilities and that support is available to help them. This may involve speaking with the person who is being cared for in order to raise awareness of the demands and pressures on the young adult carer and their support needs.

### **Providing translation services**

Where appropriate, colleges should provide translation services for families to remove this additional pressure from young adult carers from BAME backgrounds. This includes any meetings or situations where staff need to communicate directly with a young adult carer’s family member.

### **Being sensitive to religious and cultural commitments when planning support activities**

Colleges need to be aware of the cultural and religious commitments of young adult carers from BAME backgrounds, such as times of worship, and plan support activities in a way which ensures that they do not inadvertently exclude this group.

## Young male carers

Young men with caring responsibilities have told us that they face a range of specific challenges when accessing support to participate in learning. These include:

### Gender stereotypes around caring

The stereotypes around carers can mean that young male carers find it difficult to persuade support services that they have caring responsibilities. As a result, they may not be offered the same level and types of support as young female carers.

**“I’ve seen people that have been told, even by the Job Centre and stuff, that because they’re male they can’t really be a carer or they care too much.”**

Young adult carer

### Being reluctant to ask for help

NIACE’s research, which will be published in late 2015, suggests that young male carers may be reluctant to declare their caring responsibilities and ask for support, either because they feel uncomfortable talking about these private matters and their emotions, or because they are worried about being teased by their peers. Similarly, some young men with caring responsibilities feel that asking for help would make them look as if they were struggling to support their family and they did not want to admit this.

**“They feel they can’t ask for help, they have to take it all on, on their own, and they’re very reluctant to share the information with anyone, possibly for the reason of getting teased or just looking like they can’t cope.”**

Young adult carer

### Lack of male support workers

The low numbers of male support workers can make it difficult for young men with caring responsibilities to talk about the difficulties they face as carers or even everyday things like shaving and football (HSCIC, 2014). This can again restrict the likelihood of young male carers asking for support when they need it.

## Support for young male carers

### Training or briefings for staff

Support staff in colleges should work proactively to tackle gender stereotypes around caring to ensure that young male carers are identified and referred in the same way as young women with caring responsibilities. This could be achieved through continuing professional development activities that enable staff to be aware of gender stereotypes and be proactive in supporting young male carers to receive effective support.

## Targeted marketing campaigns

Colleges can empower young adult carers by communicating the importance of young male carers asking for help when they need it, with reassurances that they are not 'weak' for doing so.

**“I know it’s easier said than done, but to just reinforce the fact that they’re not stupid for asking for help. In fact, it’s quite the opposite: if help is needed it’s important that the help goes to that person, for the wellbeing of the person they’re caring for and themselves.”**

Young adult carer

## Offering support activities/sessions targeted at young male carers

Colleges should offer informal activities/sessions that are appropriate for young men, enabling them to comfortably share their issues and experiences. For example, peer support groups aimed specifically at young male carers can provide a safe and non-judgemental space in which they can share their experiences of caring.

## Encouraging young male carer champions

Young male carers could be encouraged to take on advocacy roles to raise awareness in colleges of the needs of young men with caring responsibilities. Male young adult carer champions could then coordinate specific support for others.

## Young adult carers with a learning difficulty

There is very little research about the experiences of young adult carers with a learning difficulty. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are likely to be substantial numbers of young adults with a learning difficulty who provide care – this may be for an elderly parent, sibling or other relative. In many cases, people with learning difficulties may be involved in mutual care relationships.

Consultations undertaken by NIACE with both carers with learning difficulties and professionals who support them suggests that the level of disadvantage, isolation and social exclusion experienced by an individual when these two sets of circumstances are combined is significantly increased, often resulting in severe marginalisation from mainstream society (NIACE, 2011).

**“I get really tired and sometimes I feel really down. I do like being a carer, but I want to be able to do things for me too.”**

Young adult carer

# Support for a young adult carer with a learning difficulty

## Support to self-identify as a carer

People with a learning difficulty may need additional support to identify themselves as a carer. Building a home visit into their college induction, initial assessment or learning programme may help to identify a caring role. Alternatively, a student with a learning difficulty may talk to their tutor about their home life who may then identify that they are in a caring role. Their tutor can ask the student some questions to help them self-identify as a carer, such as:

- Do you look after a partner, family member or friend who is ill, disabled or elderly?
- Do they need your help every day, or most days?
- Do you get paid a wage for this?

**“People with learning difficulties do not always realise that they are becoming a carer. I think it’s important that I know I’m a carer, so that I can get the help I need.”**

**Young adult carer**

## Provision of a one-to-one learning buddy or support worker

Starting at college can be a daunting experience but for young adult carers with a learning difficulty it can be particularly challenging. Providing a named individual to work with a young adult carer on a one-to-one basis can really help them to overcome any anxieties or difficulties they experience. A learning buddy will be able to provide informal support and encouragement throughout the day, and help a young adult carer to access formal support when needed. A support worker will be able to tailor college support services to meet the young adult carer’s specific needs.



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# Top tips for colleges supporting students with caring responsibilities

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## → Encourage and facilitate self-identification

Negative experiences at school, bullying and discrimination may mean that many young adult carers are reluctant to declare their caring responsibilities. It is important that colleges implement both formal and informal mechanisms to enable and encourage a young adult carer to declare their situation. This can include questions on enrolment forms, at the interview and induction process, and at meetings with tutors. It's also important that young adult carers are visible – make reference to young adult carers in the college prospectus and on the college website – this will help students to feel that their needs are important to the college, and that they are likely to receive the support they need. Posters and leaflets that raise awareness of young adult carers' needs, and that signpost young adult carers to staff who can provide support, will also encourage declaration. As with all information, these resources will need to be written and produced in a way which is accessible to all learners.

## → Listen to the young adult carer

Be empathetic, approachable and understanding – provide opportunities to enable a young adult carer to talk about their caring role and the impact that it has on them and their learning. Don't pressurise them to talk. The young adult carer is the expert on their own situation and the difficulties they experience – with your guidance, they are best placed to know what support they need.

## → Consider the student's privacy when sharing information about their caring role and family situation

Some young adult carers may be open and vocal about their caring role but many will not. This may be because they consider it to be private, or because they feel uncomfortable sharing information about their family situation. Many young adult carers report being bullied or discriminated against because of their caring responsibilities. It's therefore not surprising that they may not want their personal situation to be public knowledge.

However, with their permission, it is important that some people are informed about a young adult carer's role, particularly the impact that it has on their learning. Think about who needs to know – probably staff who have direct contact with a young adult carer and can contribute to providing help and support – for example Student Services, course tutors and personal tutors.

## → Work with individual young adult carers to identify additional learning needs and skills gaps

Many young adult carers may have gaps in knowledge as a result of disrupted attendance at school due to their caring responsibilities.

It is important that colleges work with individual young adult carers to identify any specific learning needs and gaps in skills or knowledge which may act as a barrier to their progress. Tailor support and catch-up sessions to enable them to engage and progress.

### → **Explore flexible attendance for young adult carers to fit with caring responsibilities**

All caring situations are different. Talk to the individual young adult carer and find out how minor flexible attendance could help them. For example, a parent with a mental health problem may need care every morning to get up, take medication and face the day ahead – if so, pressure on a young adult carer could be significantly reduced if there was some flexibility with their start time. Other young adult carers may have differing responsibilities on different days and would benefit from having an adapted timetable to fit with these responsibilities. However, before flexibility is offered, support the student and their family in seeking support that does not rely on the young person being late or missing college.

### → **Offer extra time to complete coursework and assignments**

With effective additional support arrangements, many young adult carers will be able to complete coursework and assignments within deadlines. They will also be able to succeed in exams. However, being a young adult carer can be unpredictable – unexpected problems can occur which take priority over everything else. For example, a parent may be taken into hospital unexpectedly, or urgent problems with money or housing may arise. It may therefore be hard for a young adult carer to focus on submitting an assignment on time. Most young adult carers will not always need extra time but it will reduce the pressure on them if they know it is an option if and when a crisis situation occurs. It's also important that they know how and who to approach at such a time.

### → **Allow the use of mobile phones**

**“If I was told that I couldn't have my phone on I would just leave college – my mum needs to be able to contact me quickly in an emergency.”**

**Young adult carer**

Many young adult carers often feel guilty about leaving the person they care for. They also feel worried about that person's wellbeing while they're at college. Allowing a young adult carer to leave their mobile phone on silent or vibration mode during lessons can help to alleviate some of these concerns and means they can be contacted quickly in an emergency.

### → **Support young adult carers' travel to and from college**

A long journey to college can cause additional difficulties for many young adult carers. Talk to the young adult carer to ensure they have identified the quickest route. You should also speak with student services to find out if your college can access funds to support the young adult carer's travel costs, if they don't already have access to a bursary.

## → Enable students to learn from home

There may be occasions when a young adult carer temporarily and unexpectedly cannot get into college, for example when a parent requires extra care, or when a sibling is unwell. Supporting the student with resources and materials to learn from home can enable them to continue studying. This might include ensuring they have access to an online learning platform, or sending notes, activities and materials to students.

However, again, support the student and their family in seeking support that does not rely on the young person needing to learn from home.

Find out if the young adult carer has access to a PC or laptop at home. If not, see if the college is able to offer support through its hardship funds or provide one on a temporary basis.

## → Develop peer support networks and groups

**“Carers feel forgotten. A group meeting with other young people in a similar position would help – people assume that all carers are old, boring and depressed. But that’s just not true.”**

**Young adult carer**

Young adult carers can feel alone and isolated. Contact with other young adult carers can help them to realise that there are other young people in a similar situation to themselves. Simply knowing that they are not alone can be a big confidence boost. Many young adult carers may talk frankly and honestly to peers and share concerns about the person they care for, the uncertainty of their role, what will happen if the person they care for dies and about their own future. These are all emotive and difficult issues that many young carers feel more comfortable talking to other young adult carers about than to someone who is not a young adult carer.

Consider therefore, setting up a support group for young adult carers. This could be based within the college and could be run in partnership with a local carers service or support organisation. Before doing so, talk to the young adult carers you work with to find out how they might like to be involved in a support group, what form it should take, how often it should meet and where it should take place.

A student-led group will empower young adult carers and enable them to develop skills, feel valued and ensure that the group is appropriate to their needs.

## → Provide support to deal with emotional and behavioural difficulties

**“I get angry quickly and find it hard to control my temper. When I was younger I was aggressive and got into trouble with the police. Because of this I can’t do the course that I want to do. It’s really messed things up.”**

**Young adult carer**

Recognise that frustration, anger, lack of confidence and low self-esteem are understandable and normal reactions to the complex pressures that young adult carers experience. For some, personalised support to manage their emotions and channel their behaviour in a positive way may be valuable. It is important for a young adult carer to understand their emotions and how to deal with them (see the Looking after your health, wellbeing and happiness section, in *The Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning for Young Adult Carers* (NIACE, 2014)).

Think about the different ways to support a young adult carer to deal with any emotional or behavioural difficulties they may be experiencing, such as anger management sessions, gym membership, group support, or one-to-one counselling sessions. Talk to the individual young adult carer about the difficulties they are experiencing, the impact on their lives, future consequences and what the college could do to help. Support may be available within the college, or you may need to access external services.

### → **Provide personalised and holistic support (or signpost to relevant services)**

Young adult carers often lead complex lives and regularly juggle a range of responsibilities and pressures – such as managing household finances, communicating with services, dealing with housing and benefits issues, sorting out medication and respite care, and managing health and emotional difficulties. However, as young adult carers all have unique situations and challenges, personalised and holistic support is fundamental in enabling a young adult carer to overcome both practical and emotional barriers to learning.

Learning providers can play a key role in identifying the wider support needs of a young adult carer. Specialist staff within a college may be able to provide direct personalised support to deal with some issues. However, if there are issues that they are not equipped to deal with, it is important that they have effective partnership and referral arrangements in place to enable young adult carers to access the support they need.

### → **Ensure that provision is whole family focused**

Caring responsibilities and relationships with family members (especially with the person a young adult carer is supporting) can create barriers to learning which may be practical (such as lack of time) and emotional (such as feelings of guilt and concern about leaving the person who they care for).

For many young adult carers and their families, it is helpful for the person who is being cared for to be engaged with the learning provider. For example, an initial meeting – perhaps part of the college enrolment process – at a young adult carer's home, along with the person they care for, enables the college to gain a better understanding of the young adult carer's family circumstances and support needs. It also enables the person being cared for to play an active role in understanding and supporting the young adult carer to participate.

Regular and open communication between a young adult carer, their family and the college can help to overcome barriers to learning.

## Calderdale Carers' tips for promoting support for young adult carers

Calderdale Carers uses a wide variety of approaches to promote the support available to young adult carers at Calderdale College. This list was developed from suggestions made at a focus group with young adult carers and college staff.

- Place general posters throughout the college and more detailed information on the noticeboard within Student Services, particularly to encourage students who might not have recognised themselves as a young adult carer to come forward.
- Provide leaflets in busy social areas such as the college reception and the Students' Union.
- Use the college website to highlight information to existing and potential students, such as a college commitment to supporting young adult carers and links to local carers services.
- Develop virtual learning opportunities for both staff and students, including up-to-date information about what support is available for young adult carers.
- Promote specific information and produce posters in digital form for use on college TV screens.
- Publish the college commitment to supporting young adult carers within the college prospectus.
- Provide information at college open events, enrolment events and the Freshers Fair. Invite local carers services to run information stalls and to speak to students and staff.

Calderdale Carers has found that getting into the college and meeting staff and students face-to-face has been the most successful approach.

**“It’s [about] having that physical presence in college. What works best is us having a presence within Student Services, and for them to know us, so that if they do pick up on [a young adult carer] that’s the best way of people accessing support.”**  
**Specialist Young Adult Carer Worker**



## A self-assessment checklist for supporting young adult carers in your college

Recommendation	Status (red/amber/green)	Comments
<b>1. Establishing a solid foundation of support for young adult carers within your college</b>		
Develop and promote a commitment for student carers		
Establish a policy for young adult carers or integrate the commitments to young adult carers into existing policies		
Appoint a college lead/champion for young adult carers with the role of overseeing the implementation of policy		
Provide awareness training on young adult carers for all relevant members of staff, to include personal tutors, student support, and recruitment/admissions staff (perhaps through your college's equality and diversity training)		
Work with your local authority to enable them to fulfil their legal duties to young adult carers under the Care Act 2014		
Incorporate the support your college provides for carers into your local authority's strategy for carers and young carers		
Monitor the number of students entering the college with caring responsibilities		
Ensure that when equality impact assessments/analysis are carried out that indirect discrimination to student carers is considered		

(continued)

Recommendation	Status (red/amber/green)	Comments
<b>2. Promoting support for young adult carers at your college</b>		
Develop information promoting support for young adult carers at your college		
Develop partnership work between your college and a local young carers or young adult carers service		
<b>3. Applications and admissions</b>		
Identify young adult carers during the applications and admissions process for example, through an induction questionnaire		
Offer flexibility with entry requirements for young adult carers		
Provide information and advice for applicants who are carers at open days and in your college prospectus and website		
<b>4. Student support</b>		
Offer flexibility to young adult carers with attendance and coursework		
Publicise and promote support for student carers in a variety of ways, including through the college intranet, website, internal mailings, prospectus and other literature (student handbook) and Student Services		
Provide details of the relevant staff for young adult carers to contact at your college and in your college prospectus		

(continued)

Recommendation	Status (red/amber/green)	Comments
<b>4. Student support (continued)</b>		
Provide training including online training, for relevant staff on carers' issues and the specific needs of students who are carers		
Ensure personal tutors are aware of young adult carers and what types of support and flexible approaches can be offered		
Provide information and advice on financial matters for young adult carers		
Provide ongoing opportunities for identifying student carers and encouraging self-identification		
Support the transition of young adult carers from school to college, and from college to higher education and the workplace		
Implement a student mentors/student representatives scheme for new students who are carers		
Develop partnership work between your college and a local young carers or young adult carers service to enhance support for student carers		
Prioritise young adult carers for receipt of the 16–19 Bursary and other learner support funds		
Support students to request an assessment of their needs as a carer from their local authority		
Signpost or refer students to a local carers service		

(continued)

Recommendation	Status (red/amber/green)	Comments
<b>4. Student support (continued)</b>		
Develop individual support plans and crisis plans with young adult carers		
Develop and facilitate peer support		
Link into (or establish) a young adult carers network forum		

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# Useful resources from Carers Trust and NIACE

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## Carers Trust resources

### Young adult carer services in your area

Carers Trust Network Partners support young adult carers in many parts of the UK. This includes offering:

- Practical and emotional support such as breaks and counselling.
- Clubs, activities and holidays.

To find a local Carers Trust service, call 0844 800 4361 or visit **Carers.org**.

If you can't find a carers service in your local area then you can search for a young carer service online or get in touch with Carers Trust by emailing **support@carers.org** and we can search for you.

### Babble

Visit **babble.carers.org** or email **youngcarers@carers.org**

Babble is Carers Trust's online community where young carers under 18 can find others in a similar position, chat, have fun, share experiences and access information and support online from an expert team.

### Matter

Visit **matter.carers.org** or email **matter@carers.org**

Matter is for carers aged 16–25. This online service enables young adult carers to post photos, update statuses, ask for help and share their thoughts and comments from wherever they are.

### Carers.org

Visit **Carers.org** or email **support@carers.org**

**Carers.org** is for adult carers, with users aged 18 to 80+, with a focus on sharing knowledge and finding solidarity, backed by access to expert and authoritative welfare information.

## Young Carers in Schools

[www.youngcarersinschools.com](http://www.youngcarersinschools.com)

Young Carers in Schools is a free England-wide initiative that makes it as easy as possible for schools to support young carers and awards good practice. Run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society Young Carers in Focus partners, Young Carers in Schools is working with schools across England to provide guidance and practical tools, webinars and regional meetings, and recognition through the Young Carers in Schools Award.

## NIACE resources

NIACE has produced a range of resources to support young adult carers and staff who have a role to play in supporting them. See [www.niace.org.uk/our-work/life-and-society/citizens-curriculum/young-adult-carers](http://www.niace.org.uk/our-work/life-and-society/citizens-curriculum/young-adult-carers).

## The Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning for Young Adult Carers

Aimed at young adult carers in England. It's full of useful information about looking after health and wellbeing, job hunting, housing, health services, learning, working and volunteering, and money management. The book also has activities to help readers think positively, identify skills and skills gaps, and action plan. A one stop resource signposts to a range of websites and helplines for more information. See <http://shop.niace.org.uk/ruble-yac-2014.html>.

## WE Care! Financial Capability Resources for Carers

A pack of resources which aims to enable staff to develop skills, confidence and practical ideas for supporting young adult carers to improve their financial capability and money management skills. See [www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/we-care-improving-work-and-education-young-adult-carers-financial](http://www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/we-care-improving-work-and-education-young-adult-carers-financial).

## Young Adult Carer posters

A set of free posters to raise awareness about the challenges faced by young adult carers who are caring and learning, for learning providers and support services. See [www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/young-adult-carer-posters](http://www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/young-adult-carer-posters).

## Voices of Young Adult Carers

A collection of young adult carers' (between the ages of 16 and 25) personal accounts of their caring role and the impact that caring has had upon their lives, particularly upon their participation in learning. All of the stories have been written by individual young adult carers, in their own words. See [www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/voices-young-adult-carers](http://www.niace.org.uk/our-resources/life-and-society/voices-young-adult-carers).

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Due to the sensitive nature of our work we have changed the name of the carers and those they care for, in this resource.

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