



Executive Summary

Our Young Carers provide a wide range of activities to support a parent including basic household tasks such as shopping, cleaning, cooking, looking after other children in the family and providing physical and emotional support to the parent such as washing, dressing, giving medication, lifting and transferring and taking on responsibilities for managing family life. These Young Carers with their complex family situations and caring role have the challenge of undertaking their caring role in addition to their own personal development.

The philosophy of the programme is to take a holistic view of the family needs and to agree with the family members the most appropriate way of supporting them and to individualise the Young Carer's programme. The programme seeks to provide opportunities to address the physical emotional and development needs of Young Carers through the delivery of activities designed to achieve the following outcomes: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; achieve economic well-being. (Every Child Matters)

Background

“You just can't picture a child picking an adult up, getting them on the stair lift, taking them up and bathing them. You can't



picture it. And if you can't picture it, it doesn't happen." (May 1993)



St John Ambulance commissioned research into Young Carers asking the following questions:

- Who are Young Carers?
- How many Young Carers are there?
- What are the experiences of Young Carers?
- What issues affect Young Carers?
- What support do statutory and voluntary agencies provide to Young Carers?
- How are Young Carers projects funded?
- What are the gaps in the provision of support for Young Carers?

The outcome of this study identified that Young Carers provide a wide range of activities to support a parent including basic household tasks such as shopping, cleaning, cooking, looking after other children in the family and providing physical and emotional support to the parent such as washing, dressing, giving medication, lifting and transferring and taking on responsibilities for managing family life. The impact of caring compromises their own personal development and ability to integrate within their peer group, there are frequent absences from school which impact on their learning and relationship with teaching staff.



These Young Carers with their complex family situation and caring role have the challenge of undertaking their caring role in addition to their own personal development.

The key areas for support were identified as:

- Someone to talk to (in confidence) who understands the carer's needs, both as a child or a young person and as a carer.
- Information about medical problems and what help is available, (domestic help, medical advice, information on welfare rights and benefits etc) written for young people.
- Access to practical help to reduce the amount of caring that the young person is require to do.
- Information to make informed choices about their situation with support and alternatives.
- Opportunities for personal development
- Access to respite, providing essential time-out from their caring role.

This study noted the gaps in the provision of support for Young Carers and given the nature of our organisation it was decided to consider the possibility of making a contribution through partnership arrangements to assist the establishment of pilot projects. In order to address the key issues identified the nature of this support was likely to be befriending/buddying schemes; telephone counselling support; respite care; drop-in sessions; supported social activities.



SJA Young Carers Programme – Philosophy

The programme philosophy is to ensure that we can provide a significant contribution with our partners, offering appropriate support to target those children who are undertaking caring roles to ensure that they are not disadvantaged or isolated as part of a socially excluded population, and to create the opportunities to help them develop and reach their full potential. The vision is to contribute through early intervention to promote protective factors and reduce the presence of risk or dangers to the development of healthy Young Carers, their families and making sure they are integrated into their communities.

Objectives

The programme's key objectives are to provide appropriate and sustainable activities to

- Develop Young Carers' self esteem and confidence through the provision of a range of activities
- Provide access to essential respite
- Provide access to counselling
- Raise awareness of Young Carers' rights
- Raise the awareness of Young Carers issues amongst professionals
- Secure the future of the programme

Outcomes

The programme recognises that Young Carers are children and they require to have their physical, emotional and development needs



supported to ensure that they are enabled to reach their full potential and share the same opportunities as others of the same age and culture.

Guidance from Every Child Matters: Change for Children (HM Government 2004) has assisted the programme developers to specify the SJA Young Carers Programme outcomes as being:

- **Be Healthy** – The programme aims to provide activities that will ensure the Young Carers' physical, mental and emotional health needs are supported to sustain them through to adulthood. The programme supports healthy living and provides information and education to ensure that Young Carers can make informed choices about their lifestyle.
- **Stay Safe** – The programme aims to maintain the health and well being of individuals by providing them with self confidence to report instances such as bullying or discrimination and provide them with the knowledge and skills to enable them to safely carry out their caring role.
- **Enjoy and Achieve** – The programme aims to provide Young Carers with access to the same or similar opportunities as their peers, to work in partnership to ensure that Young Carers educational needs are being met enabling them to develop to their full potential.
- **Make A Positive Contribution** – The programme aims to help Young Carers develop self-confidence enabling them to successfully deal with life changes and challenges through activities to assist them to develop positive relationships and citizenship.
- **Achieve Economic Well-being** – The programme aims to encourage Young Carers to consider all possible options regarding education



and training opportunities to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to make appropriate decisions about their future.

Young Carers Definition

“Young Carers are children and young people under the age of 18 years, who provide care to another family member, who has an illness; a disability; mental health issues; a sensory disability; or problematic use of drugs or alcohol. The level of care they provide would usually be undertaken by an adult and as a result of this has a significant impact on their childhood.”

(North West Quality Protects Reference Group 2002)

The census in 2001 highlighted that in the UK there are 174,995 Young Carers.

Why Children Care

The main reason why children undertake inappropriate caring roles is a lack of adequate support services for their ill/disabled relative. If adequate and appropriate support services are not provided, most of the care and support required falls to family members. If a lone parent requires support, then there is no other available to adopt the role of carer and caring falls, by default, to other family members, including children. However even where there is another adult in the household this does not preclude children from adopting this role. In a family where a mother is ill/disabled, a father may continue to work full time



to provide the family with an income, thus relying heavily on children to provide care and support.

In the absence of adequate social care support, there is a complex interplay between several factors that determine how and why some children become carers. As indicated above, family structure is a significant determinant. Where there is more than one child available to care, or children of both sexes, then choices, preferences and family norms will be important.

What Children Do

Young Carers undertake a range of tasks from basic, domestic chores, through general caring tasks, such as assisting with mobility, giving medication etc; intimate personal care, such as bathing and assisting with toileting; emotional support; and providing child care for younger siblings. Some also provide additional assistance such as translating, doing administration tasks, managing the household budget, paying bills etc.

How Caring May Affect Young People

Research shows that being a young carer can effect personal, social and physical development. Educational and social opportunities are often missed which can have a major impact in adult life. Young Carers can find it hard to form relationships and often say they feel different



from their peer group. Signs and symptoms of Young Carers can include

- Truancy
- Inattention and fatigue in school
- Disruptive behaviour
- Subject to bullying
- Isolation
- False maturity
- Lack of confidence and esteem

This is not a comprehensive list and some of the signs and symptoms could be the result of a range of issues. Young Carers often try to hide their identity, as they fear that their family situation might come under closer scrutiny that may impact the family unit.

Young Carers Fears and Worries

Young Carers often live in a constant state of worry about the person they care for:

What will happen to the person they care for?

“Will he take his tablets? Will she make it to the toilet?”

What’s it going to be like in two years time? Is she going to die?”

What will happen to them?

“Will I be able to go to college and get a job? What am I going to tell school this time? Is this going to happen to me too?”



Young Carers live in constant fear of the family being torn apart by the “authorities” if they find out about them. This means that Young Carers are often isolated and alone. They don't have friends round their homes and they don't ask for help in case someone finds out

Young Carers Needs

The philosophy of the programme is to take a holistic view of the family needs and to agree with the family members the most appropriate way of supporting them and to individualise the Young Carer's programme.

The programme objectives are to incorporate the following:

- To provide information and advice to enable the family to make informed decisions. Children who are affected by caring in the family are often isolated and don't know how to access information or help

- To offer respite activities and support their social needs

Children like adults need a break and value time off from responsibility.

- To give recognition to Young Carers for the role that they play
Young Carers should be respected for the decisions they have made regarding their caring role and a holistic approach should be adopted towards Young Carers.



To offer a holistic approach through initial assessment

Young Carers around parents often feel compromised and guilty by the family circumstances that they are in. For many children the contact with the programme will be the first formal acknowledgement by the family and workers that they were part of the often-complex situation at home. Many children were partners in the provision of care but not in the planning of it

- To offer a supportive listening ear.

To have a designated person to listen to them in confidence about their experiences, who is independent from those representing their parents or siblings and who can be an advocate for them

Referral Pathway

Young Carers can access the programme through self-referral or referral agents such as Social Services, Barnados and other key professionals involved with the family. When a referral is received the programme arranges to visit the family at home to carry out an initial assessment to determine whether the programme is appropriate to meet the Young Carer's and family's needs. If the referral criteria are satisfied the Young Carer will be invited to join the programme and access the core activities. However, if the criteria are not satisfied the Young Carer and family will be signposted to more appropriate support services.



Programme Overview

The programme has been developed to meet the needs of Young Carers, it is flexible and responsive at an individual level whilst emerging from core activities. The programme is divided into three areas of activity to address the different needs of individual Young Carers:

- *Leisure*

Offers Young Carers respite and the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities, to meet other Young Carers and develop teamwork, leadership and communication skills. Leisure time is vital for children who have little chance to play or be young in their lives.

- *Educational*

Offers alternative educational development to Young Carers as many find it hard to reach their full potential at school. It provides group-learning opportunities in a fun, needs-led way. This area also provides learning resources and a quiet study area, which carers may not experience at home, to offer them the opportunity to catch up on schoolwork.

- *Developmental*

Aims to enhance personal development and social skills through residential activities, allowing quality time out from caring. These activities help Young Carers to develop self-esteem, confidence and



assertiveness with day, weekend and weeklong breaks away from their caring responsibilities.

We also make use of online facilities for young carers as further support to give details of local services as well as information and links to other sites, acting as a signposting service, which includes a database on medical matters in a format appropriate to children.

Professional Awareness.

In addition to providing a direct service for young carers the project aims to promote issues faced by Young Carers in a positive way. Through awareness raising among professionals such as teachers, health professionals and social services and others that may come into contact with Young Carers, aims to improve the services and support available to them.

Monitoring and Evaluation

On entering the programme the Young Carer and staff carry out an initial assessment to identify the individual needs and develop agreed targets. The targets must be flexible to take account of individual circumstances and any changes that may occur during the programme. Throughout the duration of the programme there is continuous informal assessment with individual development and progress being monitored. Bi-annual reviews are undertaken based on; the needs

