



This document has been co-created by young carers and Gloucestershire Young Carers staff. The information included is designed to help you better identify and support young carers in your work, and answer any questions you may have regarding our service.

Young Carers: Key information for children's social care professionals

What is a young carer?

In Gloucestershire, a young carer is defined as a child aged 8-15yrs, and a young adult carer is defined as a young person aged 16 - 24, who provides physical care, supervision or emotional support, to a family member they reside with who may have:

- A long-term health condition
- Illness or frailty
- Physical disability
- Neurodevelopmental Disorder
- Poor mental health
- Substance misuse issue

It is recognised that children as young as 5 provide a caring role and this should be kept in mind when working with families as they may require support from Early Help or through primary school.

Becoming a young carer can happen to a child at any time, maybe even overnight due to an accident or sudden onset illness such as cancer or a stroke. For others it may be because of the gradual development of a health condition or age related illness.

Whatever the circumstances might be, this will have an impact on the everyday life and wellbeing for the child/young adult and the family as a whole and additional support may be needed.

Who are Gloucestershire Young Carers?

- Gloucestershire Young Carers is a charity working with children and young people who take on a caring role for a family member.
- We provide support for children and young people using a whole family approach.
- We work to raise awareness of and improve response to young carers with professionals across Gloucestershire ensuring young carers are supported wherever they come into services.
- We are engaged with over 900 young carers aged 8-15 years and over 300 young adult carers aged 16-24 years.

What services do we provide?

- **A young carers assessment (8 - 15)** - a holistic assessment completed in school or at home with the parent(s) and child/young person.
- **A young adult carers assessment (16 - 24)** - completed in a place the young person feels comfortable speaking with the young person only.
- **A transition assessment (Year 10 +)** - Helping young people look to their future, assisting them in transition to adulthood and enabling them to decide whether they want to be a carer into their adulthood.
- **Respite groups** - Social activity groups held regularly across all areas of the county
- **Activities in the school holidays** - variety of activities for all age groups.
- **Caring related 1-to-1 support** - specialist, caring related 1-to-1 support for young people to help understand their caring role.
- **Wellbeing support programme** - Time-limited, age-based support programme for young carers aged 11+.
- **Caring related support group** - Caring specific support groups for young carers helping them understand their caring role and help them meet other young people in similar situations. E.g. caring for a parent with mental ill health.
- **Young Adult Carer Service (YACS)** - specific support for 16 - 24 year olds using a holistic approach, supporting YACs balance their caring role and focusing on their future ambition. This includes 1-to-1 support and activities.
- **Participation opportunities** - two active forums who help steer the charity through sharing their voice. They use their experience to work with other organisations to help better identify and support young carers and promote multi-agency working across the county.
- **School Liaison work** - working with schools to provide assemblies, support, training and official accreditation. Each school in the county has a designated Young Carers Lead.
- **Training to professionals** - young carer focused training led by specialist staff and young carers themselves.



Facts and Statistics

> **1100** Young carers aged 8 - 24 known to GYC

30% Increase in referrals in 23/24



Research suggests there could be up to

7000

young carers in Gloucestershire.



Families

Unlikely to recognise their caring role.
Unaware of services.
Don't 'identify' as a young carer.
Remain silent due to stigma and fear.



Services



Barriers to identifying, assessing or responding to the needs of young carers. May fail to consult/inform young carer about cared for. Unlikely to be identified through provision of person with care needs.

Condition cared for:



40% Physical illness and disability



33% Mental ill-health



17% Learning disability and autism

Young Adult Carers - impact of caring



89% Health affected by caring



42% report moderate or severe depression and anxiety



88% report their social life is affected by caring



46% of young carers were persistently absent from secondary school (Avg 23 missed a year)



1/4 of young carers said there was no support at school at all

Eligibility criteria

When referring you will be asked to identify the practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities undertaken by the child or young person and the impact of those on at least one of the following:

- Their physical/mental health
- Their education
- Their emotional and behavioural development
- Their family and social/peer relationships.

Priority will be given to 'sole' carers i.e. the young person lives alone with their parent, and to 'main' carers (who may have other family members present but are the main carer).

How to make a referral

To make a referral you can find our online form via www.glosyoungcarers.org.uk

When completing please;

- Ensure details of any current safeguarding concerns are noted where it asks if family have any social care involvement
- Provide additional information such as CPP or CIN plan (we are frequently not getting this completed on the form or the information may be hidden elsewhere within the referral)
- Include useful information such as hard to contact/hard to engage families
- If you are unsure if the family meets the criteria please contact us to enquire.
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Please contact Karen Horsted-James, Social Care Manager, [here](#) to enquire.

Please remember we do have a '3 attempts to contact' policy.

If we are unable to contact a family or they repeatedly cancel home visits, then we do have to consider closing the referral and moving on to the next. We do ultimately try to liaise with the referrer before we do this.

It is helpful if a young carer / family remains open to the referring service until we have completed our assessment and can feed back to the referrer. We aim to complete an assessment within 6-8 weeks of receiving the referral

An assessment may be completed in school, at college, family home or another location providing a safe space

Signs they may be a young carer

It is not always obvious that a child is a young carer. Often, the situation at home is “the norm” and therefore parents and children may under-estimate or not identify their caring role. They may not appear to be caring directly for the family member. Instead, they might take on extra chores, or provide support and practical help to other family members.

Examples of support could look like:

- Cooking for the family.
- Cleaning the house.
- Doing the laundry and other household chores.
- Getting someone dressed in the morning or ready for bed.
- Feeding family members.
- Administering medication
- Looking after siblings – for example, by taking them to school, helping with homework or playing with them.
- Managing family finances.
- Making phone calls to GPs and other professionals.
- Filling out forms and applications.
- Providing a listening ear.
- Helping to keep everyone safe.
- Emotional support.

Each caring role is different - a young carer would not do all these tasks, and a child doing some of these tasks will not always be a young carer. Many children will take on chores as an everyday part of family life, however, as professionals we need to make a reasonable judgement as to what is acceptable/age appropriate and if what we see is having an impact on their lives.

Top tips from young carers

The 3 B's

- **Be** curious! - Always ask “why”. Query things and dig deeper using your professional judgment
- **Be** honest, clear and realistic about your role and the support you can offer to young people and their families.
- See **Beyond** the young person being ‘just a carer’.

Challenging negative assumptions

- In the eyes of young people, social workers have been seen to stereotype family members and make assumptions based on their situation (e.g. substance misuse), immediately had negative labels/assumptions placed on them due to their circumstance.
- Please acknowledge the stigma around these situations and families.

Transitions

- There have been a number of instances where social workers have not had efficient handovers from other staff and therefore not been well informed. Even in one instance a social worker kept calling the family the wrong name.
- Young people and their families HATE having to repeat themselves and re-tell their stories. effective transitions reduced this.

Imbalance of power/holding knowledge

- Be in mind how much information you know and how little the young people and their families know.
- As social workers you know a lot about the families you work with but they do not know you which can be incredibly daunting to a young person.
- Be professional but don't be too formal. Be human.
- Get to know them before you expect them to trust you. Put yourself in their shoes. How would you feel?

Please listen to young people and take what they say seriously

- Often, Young people feel they have not been spoken to or consulted on what is going on with professional support. This can make them feel wary of what is going on.
- Involve young carers in their support plans. They hold valuable information and insight but do not depend on them.
- Take what they say seriously, they want the best for their family like you do.
- Don't talk down to them. They know more about their parent's situation than you. They live it every day

Ensure support packages are holistic - work with all relevant organisations

- Utilise the agencies available around the county
- Keep these agencies in the loop and ensure efficient communication between them all
- Children's services have to work with the whole family, why can't adult services?

Be efficient but mindful

- Be clear on timescales and be aware of the impact these can have on young people and their families.
- If you know that it has been a long time between referral and meeting with professional, acknowledge that and be clear why.
- Don't forget caring and their parents' issues aren't the only things in their lives.
- They're just ordinary people.
- We understand the system can be a problem but individuals can and do make a difference

Parental Drug and Alcohol Misuse:

- Ensure that young people's own views are taken seriously
- Recognise the impact of alcohol misuse on children & its links to domestic violence.
- Young carers groups and non-stigmatising services are especially appreciated.
- Living with a parent with an alcohol (or drug) problem is stressful and so puts children at risk of physical and/or psychological health problems. Try and help establish coping mechanisms & appropriate social support to try and reduce the level of stress experienced.
- Consider the impact of the responsibility on a young adult carer if including them in a recovery/detox plan.

71%

of young people said they needed someone to talk to, who understood the problem of alcoholism when they were children. (NACOA)

Key messages from GYC Staff

- We advise referrals are made to Gloucestershire Young Carers as part of ongoing work with the family **not** at the point of closure. By placing a referral as part of a support plan we can ensure smooth transitions and ensure initial engagement is positive.
- If a child has been identified as a young carer and requiring a referral then they should be considered as part of a Child in Need plan and included in the support plan put in place.
- We encourage obtaining the voice of the child on the referral. Do not just second guess how their caring role 'may' be impacting them or what it may be that is preventing them from accessing other services.
- Consider an Adult Social Care referral for the cared-for person as part of your assessment/ongoing work. This is to look at ways in which they may be able to provide support that will alleviate the caring role for the child.
- As part of any ongoing support plans, please ensure that Gloucestershire Young Carers are included and invited to any STRAT, CP or CIN meetings. We often hold valuable information through our engagement with the child/family and so our inclusion can be useful.
- We need to challenge the view that a young adult carer or older sibling is a protective factor to younger siblings or others within the family. The Young Adult Carer may concur with this view as they have been forced into this role for many years, without the chance to consider if this is a choice they wish to hold.
- Explore that young person's goals and needs equally with others within the family, even if they are adults - they may well have been the child that was overlooked and needed the support of social care in previous years.
- Be aware there is a 'Young Carers Lead' in every school in the county. When liaising with schools, be aware of this, find out who they are and make sure they are aware of the situation and any changes that occur.

How do I talk to parents about their child being a young carer?

Understanding the term 'young carer'

Some families and young people may have difficulty with the term 'young carer' because:

- The young person may not see themselves as a young carer - it is just what they are used to.
- Parents may find it hard to think of their children as carers. This can create feelings of guilt and shame.
- Cultural and generational perceptions of caring can vary widely.
- Societal stigma.
- Families can be fearful of consequences of referrals to other agencies

We understand that thinking of a child as a 'carer' can be difficult to get your head around, especially if the parent or guardian are the primary caregiver to the children and family. Quite often however, we see amazing parents burnout trying to hold everything together themselves, so accepting support from additional services is NOT a failing and can have a positive impact on a child and family.

Introducing the concept to parents/reframing of young carers

- When speaking to parents, the term 'carer' can cause defensiveness and sometimes anger therefore how you approach these discussions can be crucial.
- Try using the word 'support' instead of 'carer'. Unfortunately there is still some stigma around the word and can help reduce initial resistance to the conversation.
- Often parents feel guilt about the situation so try to reframe it. Discuss how you understand how difficult the situation must be for both parents and child and that it is no-ones fault.
- Try explaining that young carers often report that they feel closer to their families, more appreciated, grown up and feel they have a strong family unit. However with this strong family unit does sometimes come these added pressures and anxieties.

Examples:

"We can see the situation is difficult for both you and [young person]. We know everyone looks after each other in the house but we should make sure that [young person] is supported and gets any help they feel they need."

"We know [young person] supports you/sibling when they are home and we want to make sure that both you and the family gets any support you all think would help."

"The situation you find yourself in is no-ones fault and we want to give as much support to you and [young person] as possible. If we talk to [young person] hopefully we can see how they feel and any worries they may have."

"It may be good for [young person] to have someone outside of the house to talk to. Sometimes it is easier to talk to someone not part of the family or school. This will only be because they worry about you and don't want you to worry more. It is completely normal."

"Young people often value the opportunity to meet others who have had similar experiences to them. Maybe it would be good for [young person] to meet some other young people who are in similar situations."

Communication and Transparency

- Be honest and non-judgemental about what you are seeing and clearly explain how the child can be supported with this. That could be through conversations with school or with Gloucestershire Young Carers. Make sure the parents are aware of these conversations every step of the way.
- Clearly explain who Gloucestershire Young Carers are and what the support could include following an assessment. Explain that Gloucestershire Young Carers are a voluntary organisation and they do not have to engage if they do not want to. However, place emphasis on the positives from engaging with the service and how it could help their family and their child be happier and thrive in different areas of their life, such as socially and in school or college. the Gloucestershire Young Carers website has lots of information for you and the family to look at.
- Keep the conversation positive about the situation. Being a young carer is not necessarily a negative, there are many positive things that can come from having a caring role.
- If a referral is placed, keep the family up to date and try to promote communication between the family and Gloucestershire Young Carers.

Information-sharing and transitions

- Throughout your work with a family ensure there is not only clear communication with the family but with other professionals working with the family, such as school, health care and voluntary organisations.
- By doing this you ensure young carers and their families do not have to repeat themselves to professionals and making sure all services have the information at their disposal to best support the family.
- Ensure all key information is logged and available, where possible, to professionals working with the family. This will also help with transitions between professionals whether that be internally or with external organisations.
- Think about how you pass on information and what information you disclose. Information about the family such as dynamics, communication preferences, and barriers to engagement are key. All safeguarding concerns and support plans in place should also be shared with professionals.
- Encourage information sharing as this can bring additional support for families.

Further information

If you have any further questions about young carers or the services we provide please visit: www.glosyoungcarers.org.uk

You can also find additional information and resources about young carers on the Carers Trust: www.carers.org

You can also contact us on: [01452 733060](tel:01452733060) or info@glosyoungcarers.org.uk

Any feedback on this resource is appreciated. Please email: Scott@glosyoungcarers.org.uk