

Include Programme

Supporting young carers

Information for
peer mentors



The
Children's
Society

A better childhood. For every child.

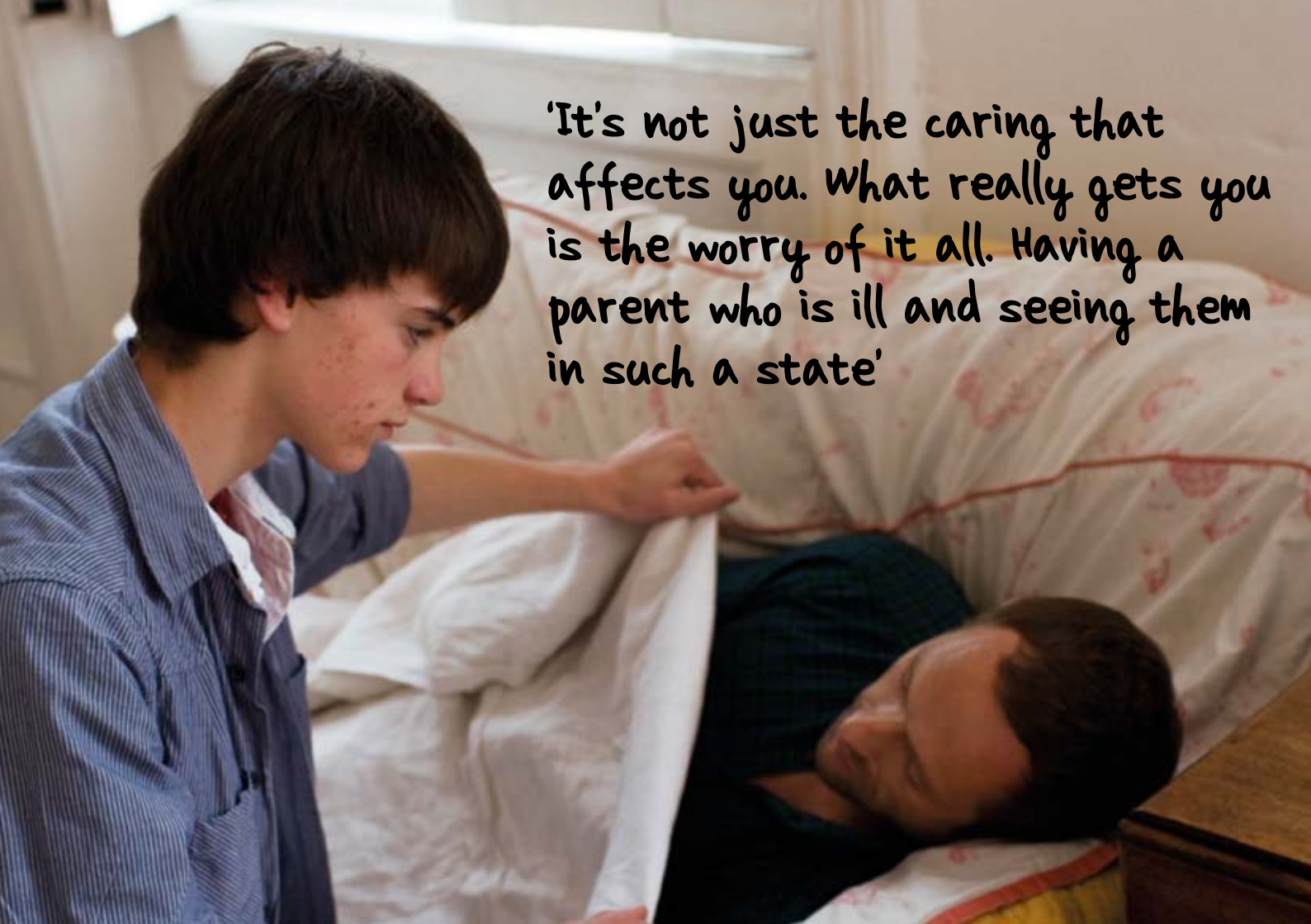
www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Who are young carers?

Young carers are children or young people under 18 who help to look after someone at home, usually a parent, sibling or grandparent who has an illness or disability. They carry out, often on a regular basis, significant or substantial caring tasks that an adult would usually do.

There are likely to be several young carers in your school and you may be one yourself.

If a young carer has too much to do or too much responsibility it can have an impact on their well-being or educational achievements.

A young man with dark hair, wearing a blue and white striped button-down shirt, is leaning over a hospital bed. He is looking down at an elderly man lying in the bed. The elderly man is wearing a dark blue hospital gown and is looking towards the young man. The bed has white linens with a red floral pattern. The background shows a window with blinds and a white wall.

'It's not just the caring that affects you. What really gets you is the worry of it all. Having a parent who is ill and seeing them in such a state'

What tasks might young carers carry out?

The tasks a young carer does may include:

- Helping with jobs around the house
- Giving emotional support
- Helping with personal care such as washing, dressing and toilet requirements
- Helping to care for younger siblings including taking them to school
- Translating, if English is not the family's first language
- Helping with communication such as using sign language or talking for someone who has trouble speaking

What impact does this have on a young carer's school life?

It is possible that a young person's caring responsibilities will mean that they may:

- Arrive late to school
- Have difficulty completing homework on time
- Need to take days off
- Be constantly tired
- Be unable to concentrate in class
- Underachieve academically

- Have behavioural difficulties
- Be withdrawn or distressed
- Experience bullying/isolation
- No time for after school clubs
- Become ill themselves as there is no-one around to take on the caring and give them a break
- Find their parents are unable to attend parents' evenings

'I've gone from 12 to 30 and it's hard.
I want to live a normal life. I want
to be understood'



How can peer mentors help young carers?


Peer mentors can help young carers in many ways but it is important to remember that young carers may be reluctant to draw attention to their family's situation; they may not see themselves as a young carer and the degree of caring may vary.

- Find out what support already exists for young carers in your school. There should be a lead member of staff for young carers.
- Liaise with your school lead for young carers and tutors, teachers and other support staff about ways that may help young carers e.g. telephoning home, homework help, time out card, group for young carers. (You can use “young carers top ten tips for schools” as a guide. More information for teachers and school staff including resources and information booklets to download, can be found on www.youngcarer.com)

- Promote young carers' issues and support and discussions about disability in the school – assemblies, posters, meetings, PHSE
- Develop a notice board for young carers and ask what information they would like on there. (A starter kit for a young carers information notice board can be downloaded or ordered from www.youngcarer.com)
- Help to set up a club, organise an awareness day, run a lunchtime homework club, make a chill-out zone.
- Find out where the nearest young carers' project is and display their leaflets. Look at www.youngcarer.com service finder
- Do your research before you give advice

- Look out for possible signs that someone is a young carer (see “What impact does this have on a young carer’s school life?”).
- Be there for young carers to talk to if they want to.
“Listen to what we have to say” (young carer)
- If a young carer is late or in trouble – support them to talk to their teachers or with the young carers’ agreement you could talk to their teachers if they feel embarrassed.

If in doubt ask for advice and support from your peer mentor teacher.



'We should
always have
someone our
age to talk to
and play with.
They show you
around, don't
make fun of
you and ask
you to join in'

Useful websites

www.youngcarer.com The National Young Carers Initiative Include Programme. Young carers project search and information and downloadable resources for teachers and school staff

www.youngcarers.net The Princess Royal Trust for Carers. Information and online forum for young carers.

www.sibs.org.uk Information for children growing up with a brother or sister with special needs

www.kidscape.org.uk Advice about bullying

www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk Age appropriate information on disease and illness

www.childline.co.uk or **0800 111** Free helpline for children

www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/index.htm General information for young people aged 13–19

www.talktofrank.com or **0800 776600** Drug information and advice

www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/resources/school-resources/supporting-young-carers Healthy schools young carers e-learning module for teachers and school staff

Young carers give top ten tips for schools

1. Recognise that our responsibility as carers can affect our education and schoolwork.
2. Find out about us, what we need and how we are not like other students.
3. Take time to find out about individual problems at home. Sometimes we're too embarrassed to tell you ourselves.
4. Don't automatically punish us if we're late. Sometimes we can't help being late because we're helping out at home.
5. Provide more support such as lunchtime drop-ins or homework clubs.
6. Be flexible – give us more time and help to do homework or coursework.
7. Include information about young carers and disability issues in PHSE lessons.
8. Let us phone parents if we need to find out if they are OK.
9. Make sure there is a clear and up to date community notice board, which has support information for us and where else we can get help in the community.
10. Ensure teachers are offered training on young carers and disability issues both at university and on inset days.

Source: Young Carers Festival 2006

Who we are

The Include Programme makes childhood better for young carers in the UK. We campaign for change and promote best practice and work in partnership with social workers, teachers and health care professionals to deliver solutions that consider the needs of the whole family. We want to prevent young carers undertaking inappropriate care which affects their own physical and emotional well-being and give them back their childhood. We give children the hope and confidence they need to face the future with optimism. We never turn away.

Leaflet developed by young people and Hampshire Include Programme

This information is available in other formats



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www.childrensociety.org.uk/youngcarer