

## Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

### Introduction

The Carers Trust definition of a carer is “anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.” Caring can be a positive and rewarding experience, however young (aged 5 to 17 years) and young adult (18 to 24 years) carers are less likely to do well at school, get a job or experience a varied social life when growing up.<sup>1</sup>

### Summary

The Children and Families Act (2014), the Care Act (2014) and Working Together (2015) introduce new responsibilities to local government to identify, assess and support young carers and reduce inappropriate and/or excessive caring by children. A key principle is the prevention of the escalation of need however, it is recognised by the Governments Carers Strategy that many young carers and young adult carers are not being identified and being offered the help they need.

Caring can have positive impacts emotionally and psychologically and can be rewarding, however evidence shows that caring can have a negative impact on health, social activity, education attainment and employment opportunities for young carers.

Recommended approaches focus on support to families to address the underlying need which results in the young person’s caring responsibilities and preventing excessive and inappropriate caring rather than focusing on respite and relief. Also young adult carers benefit from programs to support education, training, employment and broader transition to adulthood issues.

### Headlines

Numbers of young and young adult carers are difficult to ascertain. The 2011 Census reported 5712 carers between the ages of 0 and 24, providing unpaid care in Norfolk, 1752 aged 15 or under. Norwich district has the highest numbers followed by King’s Lynn & West Norfolk and Breckland<sup>2</sup>. The census is however regarded as providing an underestimate of the number of children and young people with unpaid caring responsibilities. This is due to a lack of recognition among carers, and those cared for, of their caring roles and a reluctance to disclose this status for fear of consequences. A study by the University of Nottingham for the BBC suggests the actual number to be more than 12,000, though this may be an overestimate. Indications are there are more female than male with the highest percentage in the 10 to 14 year old age group.<sup>3</sup>

A survey of 3434 children and young people in primary and secondary schools in Norfolk commissioned by Norfolk County Council Public Health Department, was conducted in 2015. Of those who responded, 6% of secondary pupils indicated that they are a ‘young carer’, while 8% said they are ‘not sure’ if they are and 2% did not want to say. These proportions are higher than the census reports (2%) though not as high as the BBC report (8.33%). When asked who they were caring for most were one or both parents and the reported hours caring was less than the proportion reported in the census.<sup>4</sup> A survey completed by the Benjamin Foundation asked for the reason care was required, 31% was Mental Health, Other 28%, Chronic illness as 24% and Physical disability 17%. Reasons also include substance misuse, behavioural problems and sensory impairment.

The numbers of young carers within Norfolk recorded in the Census grew from 1,290 in 2001 to 1,752 in the 2011 Census for Norfolk. Although considered an underestimate of the numbers of carers does indicate a growing population.

“Hidden from view” a report by The Childrens Society<sup>5</sup> using the Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England (LSYPE)<sup>6</sup> estimates that one in 12 young carers is caring for more than 15 hours per week, about one in 20 misses school because of caring responsibilities, and that young carers are 1.5 times more likely to be black, Asian or minority ethnic communities and twice as likely to not speak English as their first language. Young carers are 1.5 time more likely to have a special educational need or a disability. The average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer.

<sup>1</sup> <https://carers.org/about-us/about-young-carers>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

<sup>3</sup> BBC (2010) *Young carers are ‘four times’ the official UK number*. Online at [www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/11758368](http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/11758368)

<sup>4</sup> SHEU (2015) *Norfolk health-related behaviour survey of children and young people 2016, full report*. Norfolk Public Health

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/hidden\\_from\\_view\\_final.pdf](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/hidden_from_view_final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.education.gov.uk/ilsype/workspaces/public/wiki/LSYPE>


No strong evidence exists to show young carers are more likely to come into contact with support agencies, despite government recognition that this needs to happen. Young carers have the equivalent to nine grades lower educational attainment at GCSE level than their peers and are more likely to be not in education, employment or training between 16 and 19. Young carers are also more likely to be caring for a mother than a father and more likely to be caring for a single parent.

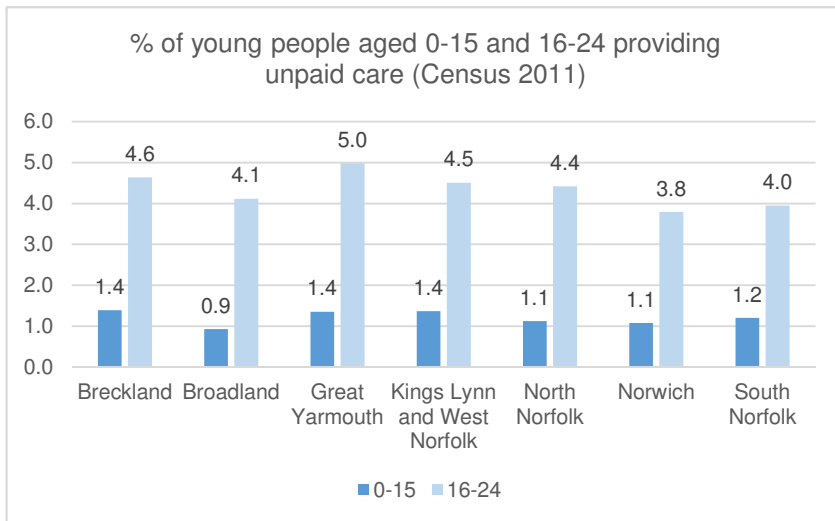
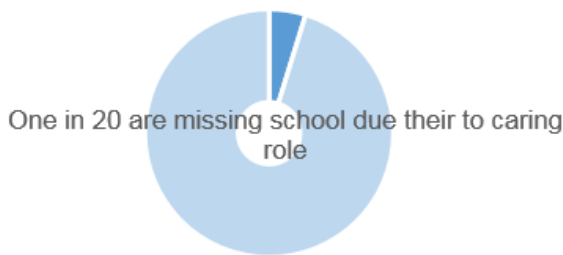
**1.5** times more likely to be black, Asian or minority ethnic groups

**1.5** times more likely to be NEET

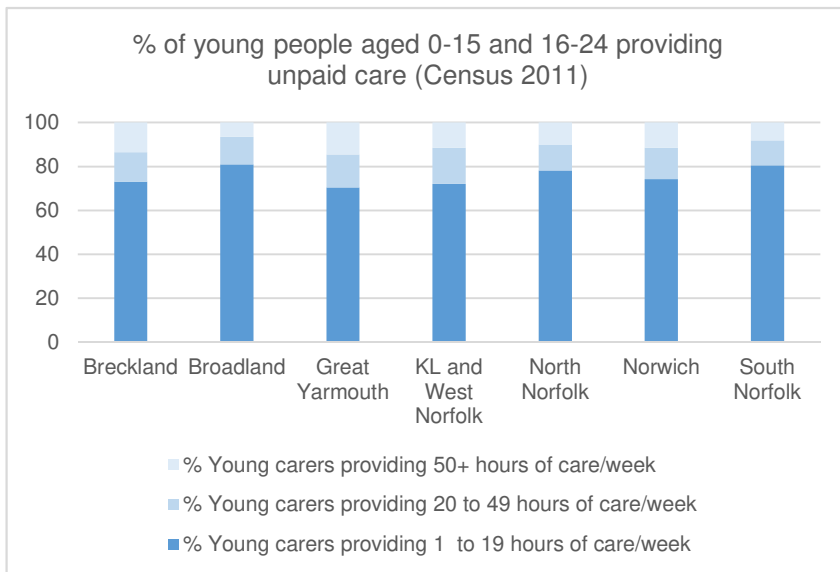
Average family income **£5000** lower

**9** grades lower education attainment at GCSE

More likely to be a girl  More likely to be caring for a mother and single parent



Census 2011 numbers of young people providing unpaid care by age group	0-15	16-24
Breckland	319	618
Broadland	193	459
Great Yarmouth	235	538
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	338	666
North Norfolk	165	386
Norwich	234	848
South Norfolk	268	445



Census 2011 numbers of young people providing unpaid care by number of hours	1-19 hours of care / week	20-49 hours of care / week	50+ hours of care / week
Breckland	670	123	124
Broadland	528	82	42
Great Yarmouth	545	116	112
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	714	163	113
North Norfolk	423	64	54
Norwich	753	145	117
South Norfolk	549	78	55

## Influences on Health and Wellbeing

The government's Carers strategy acknowledges that many young carers are still not being identified and offered the support they need.<sup>7</sup>

The Children and Families Act (2014)<sup>8</sup> and the Care Act (2014) states that a local authority in England must assess whether a young carer or young adult carer has needs for support and what those needs are gives carers the same right to assessment as the person they care for.

## Social, environmental, population context

The Children's Society report "There's nobody is there – no one who can actually help?" Policy briefing February 2016<sup>9</sup> analysed the 2001 and 2011 Census as well as semi-structured interviews with 45 young carers, six parents, and 13 workers from young carers' services. It suggested the reasons for lack of access or engagement with services as a combination of organisational barriers, families being hard to reach and hard to engage. Support needs identified included the housing conditions, having to share a bedroom with the person they cared for, stairs in the property when the cared for has mobility issues and financial stress. Those interviewed identified caring as something they would always do, were coping with, did not want to ask for help, found it difficult to proactively identify support or just saw it as part of everyday life. The young people identified their support needs to include stable relationships with support workers, understanding not pathologising and the provision of assessment and support for the person needing care. Barriers to meeting the support needs were identified as personal resistance, responses from professionals (not including the young carer in discussions or not respecting the young carers responsibilities) or organisational issues (changes to services / service delivery).

## Burden of ill health and gaps in services

Caring can have positive impacts emotionally and psychologically as well as being rewarding, however evidence shows it can also have a negative impact on health, social activity, educational attainment and employment opportunities for young carers. Excessive levels of caring can also impact emotionally and physically resulting in care givers doing less well at school, getting a job and their social life or experiences.<sup>10</sup> One in 20 misses school due to their caring responsibilities. Carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level (nine grades lower) and are more likely to be NEET (not in education and employment) between 16 and 19 years of age. The average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer. Young carers are also 1.5 times more likely to have a special educational need or a disability.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/a-national-strategy-for-carers>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/part/5/crossheading/young-carers-and-parent-carers/enacted>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/CFD094\\_YoungCarers\\_Report\\_Summary\\_V6\\_LOW%20RES%20SINGLE%20PA GES.pdf](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/CFD094_YoungCarers_Report_Summary_V6_LOW%20RES%20SINGLE%20PA GES.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Clay D, Connors C, Day N,N, Gkiza M with Aldridge J (2016) *The lives of young carers in England, qualitative report to DFE.*

Loughborough. Young carers research group

## Current services, local plans and strategies

Norfolk County Council's (NCC) strategy for the future, 'Reimagining Norfolk' includes priorities which influence young carers and young adult carers; excellence in education, real jobs and supporting vulnerable people. NCC Adult Services aim is to support people in Norfolk to live fulfilling lives as independently as possible by working with individuals and communities in partnership with the private and voluntary care sector and NHS. Norfolk County Council's 'Children First' vision is that children are at the heart of our families who live in our communities. 'Our ambition is for all children in Norfolk to achieve their full potential and have their needs met at the earliest possible opportunity so that no child in Norfolk is left behind.'

Norfolk's Early Help service is about working with children, young people and their families to offer the right support at an early stage before a small need becomes a bigger one.

Norfolk's Safeguarding Children's Board (NSCB) Threshold Document advocates 'Right Time, Right Service, Right Duration' as the framework within which to safeguard children using the Signs of Safety philosophy and collaborative approach with families and communities.

The identification, assessment and support of young carers and young adult carers is embedded in NCC services using a whole family practice approach. NCC delivers awareness raising and practice development workshops and training programmes for staff and multi-agency partners.

Norfolk has a diverse provision of services for young carers funded by grants, fund raising and other sources. NCC Children's Services commissions dedicated, specialist, individual support and group work services to young carers and their families across Norfolk. Adult Social Services and NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups commission support for adult carers including young adult carers. This diverse, mixed economy of provision gives a fragmented, often confusing, picture of services that would benefit from improved collaboration.

## Voice – the perspective from the public, service users, referrers and front line staff

Getting our voices heard<sup>11</sup> identified good practice within services such as health and education but these were regarded as patchy and the young carers wanted clarity about the future of their services.

Norfolk Children's Services and Families House Break consulted a small number of young carers and their families in February 2016. Again reassurance about services was included and parents indicated a need for more opportunities for the young carers to talk, access to short breaks, learning grants and support with transport as well as support for wellbeing and access to mental health support.

Service providers consulted also indicated the fragmented nature of services and a more collaborative approach was sort. Concern was expressed as to the long term provision of services. Currently Children's Services commission services are accessed by between 500 and 550 young carers each year. As there are limited provision of services it is important to ensure those most in need are able to access services and that evaluation is based on outcomes recorded. The report highlights how frontline professional could improve their systems and processes. Within health services recommendations included printed outcomes of discussions to provide reassurance of information understanding, double appointments to check in with both patient and carer, joint referral for both patient and carer especially for mental health care. Social workers should carry out 'whole family' assessments, assessments to include the living arrangements, financial health and other young people in the household, ensure they adopt child-centred lines of enquiry and training for adult social workers to ensure they are well supported in whole family work with children and young people. Education staff identifying and supporting carers ensuring the caring status is shared as children move from one school to another, information about young carers held with a central named member of staff, the concept of 'caring' included in lessons and discussions and schools to consider 'Young Carers in Schools' accreditation. Young carers were also keen to point out how important it is to include them when drafting communication materials and resources for other young carers and their families.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.carersagencypartnership.org.uk/en/info-and-services/publications/download/1429018963-getting-our-voices-heard>

## Considerations for Health and Wellbeing Board and commissioners

Recommendations made by the Children's Society included Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and Local Safeguarding Adult Boards (LSABs) should compare their audits of children and adults caseloads to help to identify young carers and ensure appropriate referrals. Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs) to provide the opportunity for leaders in the health and care sectors to work jointly to improve health and well-being. Representatives from young carer services to be included on boards to ensure effective information sharing and local service provision information kept up to date and accessible. Support needs to remain available, affordable and accessible suggesting that commissioners explore joint commissioning of services and a whole family approach. Longer contract time frames, developing a peer mentoring system for young carers and creating an 'innovation fund' to encourage new approaches and improve knowledge transfer. Support to families to address the underlying need which results in the young person's caring responsibilities is recommended also programs to support schooling and transition. Several studies support this recommendation rather than focusing on respite and relief.

Clay et al<sup>12</sup> recommend that would improve assessments and outcomes from assessments include clear communications, ensuring the assessment is carried out soon after the carer is identified, conducted in private space at the home not a formal setting and flexibility regarding the assessment process.

Concerns from parents about sharing private information with professionals, limited understanding of available services and concern by parents of the suitability of the services offered for the child as all considerations of possible barriers.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Clay D, Connors C, Day N,N, Gkiza M with Aldridge J (2016) *The lives of young carers in England, qualitative report to DFE*. Loughborough. Young carers research group

<sup>13</sup> The Children's Society (2013) '*Hidden from View: The Experiences of Young Carers in England*' Online at: [http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/report\\_hidden-from-view\\_young-carers\\_final.pdf](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/tcs/report_hidden-from-view_young-carers_final.pdf)