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NORFOLK
COUNTY COUNCIL
Social Services

A review of services for
Young Carers in Norfolk 2002

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**Young Carers
in Norfolk
2002**

INTRO

Young Carers are everyone's responsibility. If you work with adults with a disability or long term illness, do you know if they have children? Have you thought what these children may be doing to support their parent?

If you work with children with disabilities, do you know what role their brothers and sisters take in their care? Have you thought how this affects their own lives? If you work with children in need, have you thought to include Young Carers?

Since we began to develop services for Young Carers in Norfolk seven years ago, the number of Young Carers that

we know about has steadily grown. Increasingly, Young Carers are identifying themselves. More and more, they are telling us about their experiences, about their hopes and fears, about their needs.

This publication is about Young Carers. Much of it is by Young Carers themselves - their words, their pictures, their stories. Listen to them. And then think how you can help. Young Carers are everyone's responsibility.

Stuart Marpole

Chairperson, Young Carers in Norfolk Project Advisory Group

WHO ARE WE?

Young Carers are children and young people - up to 18 - whose lives are affected by caring. It could be caring for mum, dad, a brother, sister or a friend. They probably live in the same house as the young carer but not always.

They may have a physical disability, mental health problem, long term illness, learning disability, suffer from substance or alcohol misuse, HIV or Aids.

Young carers can be hard to identify. Sometimes professional workers focus on the person who is ill or disabled and overlook the young carer.

Sometimes young carers avoid drawing attention to themselves - worried that they or the person they care for will be removed from the family home.

Where a family member is mentally ill or dependent on drugs or alcohol, Young Carers may feel particularly stigmatised.

The following groups are not categorised as Young Carers: caring for someone with a short term illness, caring for brothers or sisters whilst parents are temporarily absent, e.g. at work caring for their partner or own child.

Who is doing it?

The work of all the Young Carers projects is co-ordinated by a multi-agency Project Advisory Group - chairperson Stuart Marpole - convened by Norfolk Social Services. All agencies - the County Council (Social Services, Education, Youth & Community Service); Primary Care Trusts, Primary Care Groups and the Health Authority; voluntary organisations - have a contribution to make.

This can be through direct work with Young Carers and their families, funding Young Carers projects or providing transport, venues for group activities or office space for projects.

Problems we face

- ★ Problems at school, with completing homework and getting qualifications.
- ★ Isolation from other children of the same age and from other family members.
- ★ Lack of time for play, sport or leisure activities.
- ★ Conflict between the needs of the person being cared for and the Young Carer's needs, leading to feelings of guilt and resentment.

What does it feel like to be a Young Carer?

- ★ There is nobody there for me, professionals do not listen and are only working with adult family members.
- ★ Lack of recognition, praise or respect for my contribution.
- ★ Feeling different from other children and unable to be part of a group.
- ★ Feeling that no-one else understands my experience
- ★ Problems moving into adulthood, especially with finding work, own home and establishing relationships.

What do we need?

The needs of Young Carers are actually very modest and straightforward. When asked, the main needs they identify are:

- ★ recognition of their role, to be heard, believed and respected support with caring tasks (especially important so that they can attend school and do their homework)
- ★ information about the support available
- ★ educational support
- ★ emotional support - someone they can talk to about their feelings
- ★ opportunities just to be children, to play, mix with their own age group and have some fun
- ★ a break from caring services for the whole family so they can all do activities together

What is being done for Young Carers in Norfolk?

A wide range of work including raising the awareness of professional workers, helping Young Carers in schools to identify themselves, and helping to establish and maintain support systems.

Lots of work is undertaken with Young Carers and organisations:

- ★ Training within the statutory and voluntary sectors
- ★ Awareness raising across statutory (including schools in lessons and assemblies) and voluntary agencies
- ★ One to one support to individual Young Carers and their families
- ★ Setting up and running Young Carers groups
- ★ Arranging and accompanying Young Carers on outings, weekend breaks and holidays.
- ★ Fundraising
- ★ Developing and co-ordinating inter-agency partnerships



Sing for your supper!

About 30 young carers from the Diss and Norwich young carer groups got together for a Karaoke disco and a great time was had by all!

Ros Staff, the manager of South Norfolk Crossroads, her husband Gary and daughter Sarah provided the equipment and hosted the session. Sarah sang fantastically and coaxed the young people to have a go.

Initial shyness was gradually overcome after makeshift curtains darkened the room and food and soft drinks were served. We had a Chinese/fish and chips supper from two local suppliers who must have thought it was their lucky day! Several sneaky young carers rifled through the song list to find 'unsuitable' songs for unsuspecting workers to embarrass themselves with.

The young people seemed to enjoy it. We're thinking of having another larger session available to more young carers in Norfolk later this year - so get practising!

Carole Sutherland Young Carers Development Worker, Crossroads

As we arrived at Sprowston Youth Centre, you could hear the happy chatter of old and new friends. As everyone said hello, the music was playing and everyone had already started singing and enjoying themselves, including the workers Gina and Carole.

Groups of five or more, or people doing solo's sang their hearts out and their smiles couldn't get any bigger. Since I've been with young carers I've found talking about some of my problems easier.

The Karaoke was great and other trips or do's that get arranged are enjoyable and everyone seems happy that young carers are about. We are all very grateful to the workers and would like to thank them very much.

One young carer's account of the Karaoke evening

Young Carers at the Diss Group

I think the group is an awesome idea. It gives us all an opportunity to meet all our mates and discuss problems. We're all in the same boat and understand each others problems. We all enjoy the club and want to thank Carole, Gina, Rachel and Ros.

I think that Diss young carers group is really cool. There are so many different activities to do and it's always different every time. I enjoy going 'coz it gives me a chance to meet my friends and make new ones at the same time. We can always have a laugh and chat about the events that have happened over the week. You will always get cheered up if you are sad or in a bad mood. Everyone is so helpful and understanding.

People get easier to talk to, everyone knows how you feel. The staff are always there to support you.

A Poem

by a Diss Young Carer

Look over there, said one girl
Yeah said another, just look at her
She's weird and funny
She's not there in the head!
That's what people say
Day after day
They don't understand
What I go through, at all
But there's somewhere I go
Where people know what I'm like
I can talk and smile
I'm happy for a while
I have new friends and old
I discuss what I can
Get to say good stuff
And live for a while
And when I get home
And sort everything out
I still stay happy
I smile and shout
I go back to school
No matter what they say
I went somewhere special
yesterday
Young carers, hooray!

so what do **you** think?

'I don't want help to be obvious'... 'I don't want people to feel sorry for us' - just two comments from young carers at a consultation day held in Norwich earlier this year.

Eleven young carers aged between 10 and 15 from rural parts of the county took part, putting across their views on a range of issues to two representatives from the Children and Young People's Unit.

The session started with lunch before the young carers sat in a circle for a warm up game to help break the ice, as most had never met before.

They were then asked questions about the government and specifically how much they thought the government spent on children and young people's services. They were surprised by the answer - £40 billion. The work of the unit was explained and how a significant minority of the 12 million young people in the UK were experiencing difficulties in their life.

The CYPU is working towards prevention rather than crisis management and to illustrate this the true story of Matthew was read out - a boy who has experienced a range of problems arising from family breakdown, change of school etc. The group were asked to think of ways his problems could have been prevented and two discussion groups used this as a starting point.

There were also pleas for more transport so those living in the countryside were not excluded from activities young people in towns and cities enjoyed. Young carers also talked about the lack of parks and organised outdoor recreational activities in the countryside.

Some of the young carers said they had home carers who helped and whilst this was appreciated the allocation was not enough.

All the young carers taking part in the consultation belonged to young carer groups which were considered very important. But it was felt there was insufficient funding for outings.

In another exercise ideas were written on the back of Monopoly money and two groups came together with their proposals under the headings:

Protection
Inclusion
Responsibility
Enjoyment and Achievement
Health and Well Being
Participation and Citizenship

It was difficult to put most proposals under just one heading and many fitted several. These sheets were taken away and hopefully will appear on the CYPU website www.cypu.gov.uk. The results will be fed into the final strategy for Children and Young people being published in 2002.

More comments from the workshop:

"Teachers should be trained about young carers' needs"

"There should be counsellors, who are not teachers, at school"

"All school pupils should know about the situation of young carers"

"If I am ill I have to do as much as I can for myself"



I don't want help to be obvious

I don't want people to feel sorry for us

The government should give money for young carers

There should be more small groups to discuss problems

There should be more school trips which we can afford - not just to museums

There should be more publicity about young carers



Welcome to the Willows

Who are we?

A Young Carers Group in King's Lynn for up to 10 seven to 11 year olds. We come from local villages - some of us travel up to 20 miles and are collected by the Willows minibus or community transport.

Where do we meet?

Every Thursday at The Willows, Marsh Lane, King's Lynn, 4.30-6pm.

What do we do?

First we eat a hot meal then do activities like art and crafts. We end the session with a group game. During the school holidays we go on outings - the cinema, bowling, Park Farm.

What are we doing in this photo?
Designing the front page of a newspaper of course!



YOUNG CARERS VIEWS



I like going to my young carers ground because it makes me feel special. At our group I think the best thing is going on outings. That is the best thing and I like sand modelling and painting as well.

Michaela (aged 10) (aged 10)

I go to the Willows Young Carers' Group. My favourite activity is painting and anything messy.

Jade (aged 7) (aged 7)



My favourite thing at young carers are the activities gluing, painting and colouring. The best activity was making a dreamcatcher.

Shannon (aged 7) (aged 7)

The best thing we do at young carers is go on outings. These are really fun like Thetford Forest and Snettisham Park Farm. My favourite activity is bowling.

Amy (aged 9) (aged 9)



I like the club because it is nice to have a break from my brother. I like to take part in the activities. I like to go on the trips. It is nice to mix and talk with other children that have disabled brothers or sisters. I find the group helpful to have someone to talk to about my worries or fears.

Liam (aged 9) (aged 9)



I go to group because my dad uses an electric wheelchair because he can't walk. My mum has arthritis and bowel disease. Also my brother has special needs. When I go it gives me a break from caring. At the group we do lots of things like art and crafts, games and we also watched a video on young carers. Everyone is kind to each other and I can talk to someone if I want.

Sarah Jane (Poppy) (aged 10)