

Are you a young carer?

Definition

We have identified that there are many people living as a young carer that are not even aware that they qualify as a young carer. We have highlighted the tasks that are considered when qualifying as a carer and have organised a monthly drop in for people to drop in for advice and support accessing services

● A young carers role

A young carer is defined as someone who is under the age of 18 who cares for a friend or family member with a mental health problem or an addiction, who would not be able to cope without their support. We have included below:



- Practical tasks such as cooking, shopping or doing the housework
- Physically caring for someone who may be bed bound
- Personal care such as helping to get dressed
- Emotional support such as talking to someone and providing mental health support
- Managing budgets and finances
- Looking after brothers and sisters
- Helping someone to communicate or helping administer medicines

Support Saturday

We have organised for the first Saturday of every month in your towns local community centre to be a drop in session to support all young carers. It is a drop in session for 2 hours for anyone to come and talk to an NHS professional if they may require and are able to access. It may also be a chance for them to talk to others in the same situation for support, knowledge, advice or a friend. Contact your local council for more information on the venue in your town.

Pitch

As a child in care myself, I wanted to look into care services and young carers that are in need of any support in my local area. Upon reading Health Watch Medway spotlight series (May 2019 I have come to understand that there are gaps in services for people who recognise they are young carers. There are services for people who come under this category but some people are still unaware or don't understand that they qualify as an official carer. This makes it difficult for us to identify them as well as for them to be able to access the required services (Health watch Medway, 2019).

I feel it's important to make it clear to everyone the roles and responsibilities a young carer may have, and give people an understanding of what a young carer is. This may encourage and help us identify those in need of current support as well as locate people who do not know they can access these services. The website carers trust highlighted what a young carer is considered to be and this is anyone under the age of 18 who cares for a friend or family member due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, who would not be able to cope without the support of that person.

The tasks can include:

- Practical tasks such as cooking, shopping or doing the housework
- Physically caring for someone who may be bed bound or unable to leave the house
- Personal care which can include: helping someone get dressed or washing themselves
- Emotional support for things such as Talking to them and keeping them company
- Providing mental health support
- Managing budgets and finances
- Looking after any brothers, sisters or family members
- Helping someone to communicate if they are unable to
- Supporting someone with medicines or administering them, or collecting a prescription for someone

The Medway joint carers strategy (2019-2025) highlighted a recent polling that was undertaken by Carers UK that there are now as many as 8.8 million adult carers in the UK.. There is also no central registration to determine how many are in Medway which means there could be many young carers and service users not accessing beneficial support that could improve the quality of life for them all. The census 2011 states that at the end of 2017/18, Medway council were aware of 1595 carers, and not able to identify who or how many young carers there are. I feel that this campaign would help identify these carers so they can be supported.

Being a young carer can have a huge effect in the life of the carer as well as the person receiving the care. Medway health watch also quoted that young carers can feel isolated due to not being

available to maintain their own relationships with their peers. This is because they are already providing care using their own time which can result in lack of well-being for themselves. They also suggested that they can be in financial hardship and feel uncomfortable admitting to even being in a young carers role at all. Some do not even know that they are a carer until they meet a health and social care professional who can help them understand their role. Some measures have been put into place to support them such as:

- NHS staff being more aware of noticing a young carer, reporting it or helping to give them advice when able to. I feel this needs to be checked and a report updated when more young carers are identified
- Providing respite in times of need
- Financial support allowing them to live their own lives
- Mental health support to ensure the wellbeing of the individual
- CARERS first also ensure that they receive a young carers assessment and work closely with them to make sure proper support is in place
- If the young carer is in school they can help with activities to help reduce any long term ill effects on the individual
- A carers health check is also available through their GP and a free annual flu vaccination

All of these services could be really beneficial in improving the quality of life of the young carers and the service user

Campaign

I am proposing to start a campaign for people who are young carers themselves, service users and anyone who may know someone that they feel is a young carer to come chat, ask for advice and be given support to access the services that can benefit them or the service user. I feel that the campaign could help report all services such as mental health, day care services and home care services to those that need it. If we also provided a public advert such as a poster asking for professionals and service users to come together once a month to provide advice and ways to help people access these services and help solve the issues that surround these young carers.

Professionals such as Barnardos, Shelter or talking therapies would all help greatly in trying to ensure we as social care providers are giving the people in our local area the best service they require. By offering these services once a month every Saturday we can try and ensure a social worker is available to spend 2 hours at a venue close to each of the central towns or the bus routes in each town (i.e. Chatham, Gillingham, Strood, Rochester), or a community centre to provide a walk in service with leaflets of all the services available to young carers. They could also give advice on more personal situations if that person needed and is willing to talk, or just for some advice.

References

https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/young-carers/support-advice-families-young-carers?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22910630350&gclid=Cj0KCQiAyP3KBhD9ARIsAAJLnnYfWTzsDR9In8glDnDqM70IFLC1XZhi5fwol2sRForSloyG9tUbLGYaArqSEALw_wcB Barnardos information on young carers (2025)

<https://carers.org/about-caring/about-young-carers> What is a young carer

<https://www.kmsab.org.uk/p/information-for-carers/support-for-young-carers> Information on support for young carers

Medway joint carers strategy- <https://www.medway.gov.uk>- consensus in 2011 (2019-2025)
