

## Step 6

# Tool 4: How to run a young carers forum

### Purpose

This how to guide aims to support Young Carers' School Operational Leads to set up and run a young carers' forum. It includes information about:

- What is a young carers' forum
- When to run a young carers' forum
- Adult involvement
- Running the first session
- Running subsequent sessions
- Suggested topics/activities for young carers' forums

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## What is a young carers' forum?

A young carers' forum in your school brings together all or a representative sample of the young carers identified in your school on a regular basis to influence and develop the school's provision for pupils with caring responsibilities.

Setting up and running regular meetings of a young carers forum creates the opportunity for schools to gather young carers' input as you develop the school's provision. You could, for example, maximise the impact of a pupil noticeboard for young carers by gaining young carers' input on how to make the noticeboard engaging. You could even get your forum to design and produce materials for you!

## When to run a young carers' forum

The forum should be held regularly enough to deal with any issues that come up but not so regularly that there is nothing to discuss during sessions – once every half-term might be a good place to start and adjust accordingly depending on how needed the meetings are.

The meetings should also be held at a time and place that is convenient to young carers. Lunchtime meetings are preferable to after-school as many young carers have to get home quickly to resume their caring roles. For many young carers the breaks during school may be the only free time they get during their day so it is important that these sessions are enjoyable for them to attend and that they feel they are getting something out of it.

## Adult involvement

The forum should be run by members of staff who are recognised to young carers and are involved with carer issues within the school.

## Running the first session

The first session should be about the young carers getting to know each other better and to make them feel more comfortable talking about important issues around each other. Some young carers within the group may know each other through either school friendships or through the local young carers service, while others might be newly identified and not know anyone else in school who is a young carer so it is important that icebreaker activities are used to get people talking to others outside of their friendship groups and to encourage all to participate.

This session should also be used to set out rules for the group. This should be done by the young carers contributing what they see as important and a contract/agreement should be made when this is completed. The contract/agreement should include confidentiality, respect, commitment etc. There should also be an agreement made by the member of staff about how they will undertake their role in the meetings.

The young carers should also set out targets and goals that they would like to achieve as a group by the end of the term/school year. At the end of the term/school year these can be looked at to see if they were achieved and what can be done next term/school year to make them achievable or continued then.

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## Running subsequent sessions

In the following sessions the young carers should be able to decide what is discussed during the meetings, unless there is a particular issue that needs to be discussed. If young carers within the group are comfortable with the idea, other staff members and other pupils could be invited to some sessions to raise awareness of young carer issues.

## Suggested topics/activities for young carers' forums

It is recognised that schools will be at different stages in the journey to implementing support for young carers. To enable the school to identify what to focus on, these topics/activities are split into three categories:

- The basics
- Beyond the basics
- Best practice

## The basics

	In place?
Helping secure the commitment of school leaders by presenting at a governors' meeting.	
Inputting into the school's review of how it meets young carers' needs (see <b>Step 2: Reviewing your school's provision for young carers</b> ).	
Informing the development of the school's whole school commitment for young carers (see <b>Step 5: Acknowledging young carers in principal school documents</b> ).	
Writing a pupil friendly version of the school's whole school commitment for young carers.	
Helping raise awareness for staff by providing key messages or top tips for staff that could be included on a young carers' noticeboard and/or the school intranet.	
Helping raise pupil and families' awareness of young carers by providing key messages to include on a pupil noticeboard or online.	
Creating staff and pupil noticeboard material.	

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## Beyond the basics

	In place?
Creating a pupil friendly version of the school's policy for young carers (see <b>Step 5: Acknowledging young carers in principal school documents</b> ).	
Helping raise staff awareness by providing key messages about who young carers are, potential impacts of caring on pupils and top tips for school staff that could be used in staff training sessions.	
Creating staff training materials e.g. PowerPoints, videos, or handouts.	
Speaking at staff training sessions.	
Helping raise pupil awareness by informing the content of school assemblies or lessons relating to young carers.	
Creating lesson or assembly resources.	
Helping deliver assemblies.	
Helping raise awareness of young carers by writing content for school newsletters. This could include descriptions of a "day in the life" of a young carer, a letter to staff and/or pupils about what it is like to be a young carer and what types of support they would like from the school community and/or pictures of what young carers do or how they feel.	

## Best practice

	In place?
Helping the school to support young carers who are moving to the school by inputting their views into the types of support they would like/would have liked transitioning from primary to secondary school.	
Creating materials raising awareness about the school's provision for young carers, which could be sent to pupils at feeder schools and/or speaking to young carers transitioning to the school.	
Helping share good practice by speaking at a training session for feeder/linked schools.	

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