

Young Carers and the School Census

Thursday 14 December 2023

Dear Headteacher,

Ahead of the January 2024 school census return, we are writing to ask for your help to ensure that young carers in your school are identified, supported, and recorded in your school census return.

The latest research suggests that there are likely to be over one million young carers across the United Kingdom – at least two young carers in every class and some as young as five years old; but many of them are unidentified and are therefore missing out on vital support. Young carers consistently tell us that one of the things that would most positively impact their lives is better awareness, recognition and support for young carers in schools.

This need for early identification of young carers in schools, so their support needs can be met, comes from a range of issues young carers face in schools. Carers Trust's latest Young Carer and Young Adult Carer Survey found:

- 40% of young carers and young adult carers don't get the help they need to balance caring with their studies
- As a result, one in three young carers and young adult carers struggle to balance caring responsibilities with education
- And more than one in four young carers don't have someone in their school, college or university (a Young Carers Lead) to whom they can turn when they are struggling with their caring role.

“There is no empathy or understanding towards young carers. I still get detention if I cannot finish my homework on time because my brother has had a seizure. If I'm late because I'm helping him, again, I get late marks even when my mum phones and explains. They are really harsh when things go wrong.” Secondary-aged Young Carer

Being a young carer can also have a significant impact on attendance, with new data showing young carers having significantly lower levels of attendance and significantly higher rates of persistent absence.

In January 2023, young carers were added to the January school census return for the first time – something which we have long called for. Yet, the national data showed that 79% of schools recorded zero young carers in their census return – we know this simply cannot be the case and so we are asking for your help to improve this for the coming return.

The Children's Commissioner for England, whose job is to promote and protect children's rights, is absolutely clear that more needs to be done to support young carers to reach their ambitions. Identification is an important part of that. Going forward, she will be using the information from the School Census data to shape her work on young carers and education.

Carers Trust, MYTIME Young Carers and The Children's Society are working together to improve recognition, identification and support for young carers in schools on a national level.

Here are some suggestions as to how you and your colleagues can help ensure your young carers are identified and supported within your school:

- Arrange young carer awareness-raising sessions for staff and pupils.
- Review your school census return before it is submitted to check that any young carers known to the school have been properly coded.

(Note - The young carer indicator identifies, for those children on roll on spring census day, whether they have been identified as a young carer and if so, by whom. Please use code 'P' if a young carer has been identified by a parent or guardian, or code 'S' if the young carer has been identified by the school or by pupil self-declaration. To note, you do not need to get parental or pupil consent to the provision of information for the purposes of the census but should respect the wishes and feelings of both young people and their parents. You can find more information on completing the census here: [Complete the school census - Data items 2023 to 2024 - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\).](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census-data-items-2023-to-2024))

- Ensure your school/college has a Young Carers Champion – a member of staff leading the support for young carers. Having a young carers champion will build awareness of, and support for, young carers within the school.
- Have a Young Carers Policy/Agreement in place – so that all young carers and young adult carers know what help is available to them.
- Link with your local young carers service to ensure you know what support is available for your young carers and to ask them to share details of young carers known to them (where they have consent to share with school). Many local young carer services can also help with awareness-raising sessions for staff and pupils. If you do not know who your local young carers service is, you can find out via [The Children's Society's website](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk).
- We would also really welcome hearing from you if your school is willing to work with us to review the attendance and attainment for your young carers compared to other pupils.

For further information about supporting young carers in schools, visit the [Young Carers in Schools website](https://www.youngcarersin.org.uk) which provides resources, training and webinars, and an Award to recognise good practice. You can also find out about the national Young Carers Challenge for schools which more than 250 schools have signed up for since its launch in September.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact youngcarers@carers.org.

Thank you in advance for your support as we seek to ensure that every young carer can thrive in education.

Yours sincerely,

Three handwritten signatures in blue ink are displayed horizontally. The first signature is 'K E McHugh', the second is 'K S', and the third is 'M Russell'.

Kirsty McHugh, CEO, Carers Trust
Krista Sharp, CEO, MYTIME Young Carers
Mark Russell, CEO, The Children's Society