



**Caring and
classes:
the education
gap for young
carers**

**CARERS
TRUST**

Acknowledgements

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- The 577 young carers and young adult carers, parents, education staff, young carer services and local authorities who shared their views and experiences for this report.
- Our young people's working group who worked alongside us to design the surveys, analyse the findings and launch this report.
- Our network of local carer organisations and members of the Young Carers Alliance.
- Education Policy Institute, Teacher Tapp and Votes for Schools for the expertise and additional insights they have contributed to this report.

About Carers Trust

Carers Trust works to transform the lives of unpaid carers. We partner with our UK-wide network of 130 local carer organisations to provide funding and support for unpaid carers. We also deliver innovative and evidence-based programmes, raise awareness of issues affecting carers and influence government policy. Our vision is that unpaid carers are heard and valued, and have access to support, advice and resources to enable them to live fulfilled lives.

Together with The Children's Society, Carers Trust runs the Young Carers in Schools programme. This initiative helps schools to better identify and support pupils who are young carers.

Carers Trust hosts the Young Carers Alliance, a network of over 200 organisations and 700 individuals committed to improving identification of, and support for, young carers and young adult carers. It also hosts the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance, an informal network of 51 young carers services across Scotland.

Carers Trust also provides the secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers and Scotland's Cross-Party Group on Carers.

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About young carers and young adult carers

A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who cares for a friend or family member who cannot cope without their support. This could be due to illness, disability, mental health problems or an addiction. Young adult carers are aged between 16 and 25. They may have different support needs to young carers.

Young carers and young adult carers support the person they care for in many different ways. This might include shopping, cooking, cleaning, managing medicines or money, providing personal care, helping people move around, looking after younger siblings or providing emotional support. Those who care for a parent or guardian may also have to do more to support themselves.¹

While the exact number of young carers in the UK is unknown, recent evidence suggests there could be two young carers in every class.²

1 This could include preparing their own meals, not having help with homework or not having anyone to attend open days and parents' evenings with them.

2 "Who are young carers in the UK? Understanding the prevalence and characteristics of adolescent young carers in the UK before and after COVID-19", Letelier, McMunn, McGowan, Neale and Lacey (2024)

Foreword

In today's education system, it feels like students who are also carers are left to cope with far too much. We are constantly juggling our education and personal lives with the challenges of caring for someone. It's really hard, but it often feels like schools, colleges and universities don't take into account all the extra things we do as carers. We feel forgotten and are often punished for things outside our control, usually because people either don't understand our situation, or just aren't interested.

We hope that by setting out the facts, this report will help people understand our needs as young carers and help us get the right support when we need it. As carers, all we want are the same opportunities as other students. We shouldn't be disadvantaged because we are carers.

One of the key findings in this report is that almost 1 in 4 young carers say there is 'no support at all' for young carers in their school, college, or university. Another finding is that almost a third of young carers are regularly late for school because of all the things they need to do at home as carers. But instead of getting the support we need to deal with these problems, all too often we are punished. All this does is make our lives as young carers even harder than they already were.

We hope this report means our perspectives, opinions, and experiences as young carers will be listened to and taken on board, so we feel properly represented. We hope the serious findings mean politicians start to take notice of young carers and understand how being a young carer can affect young people in every aspect of their lives. This is what we need if we are to get the support we need to help change our lives.

Eden and **Lewis**, members of the Young People's Working Group



Executive Summary



“Getting a good education is impossible. I’m a teenager and spend most of my time making sure my mum is well safe and happy. I’ve got no time to think about myself.”

Young carer

This report sets out the state of young carers’ educational attainment and opportunities in England in 2024. It proposes policy and practice solutions, as well as recommendations to improve recognition and identification of, and support for, young carers throughout their education.

Ten years ago, legislation designed to help young carers to thrive in education³ was introduced. But schools, local authorities, young carer services and, most importantly, young carers themselves have told us about the continued inequity that exists for hundreds of thousands of young carers.

Caring responsibilities affect the attendance and academic attainment of children and young people. They can also lead to issues such as bullying. Yet far too many young carers are not being given the help they need to balance learning and caring. A lack of capacity within schools and young carer services is resulting in a postcode lottery. Support available to young carers too often depends on how ‘young carer aware’ a headteacher, senior leadership team (SLT) or multi-academy trust is.

Through a combination of surveys, focus groups and individual interviews, we heard from almost 600 young carers, parents, school/college staff, young carer services and local authorities. In addition, the views of 24,993 pupils and 8,231 teachers across England have been captured via a series of polls. This report provides a platform for their voices and experiences and makes a clear case for the urgent need to deliver change across education.

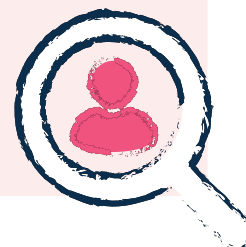
While gathering our evidence, we heard about many positive examples of schools and young carers services increasing awareness and support for young carers. However young carers, staff in schools and colleges and young carer services were emphatic that young carers do not have the same opportunities in education as young people without caring responsibilities.

³ The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced a requirement for local authorities to conduct young carers’ needs assessments which have regard to ‘*the extent to which the young carer is participating in or wishes to participate in education, training or recreation*’ (s91(8))



They consistently highlighted three main concerns:

- 1. Caring has a significant negative impact on education**
- 2. Awareness, identification and recording of young carers in educational settings is still too low.**
- 3. Support for young carers in education is worryingly inconsistent.**



These views are reflected in new Department for Education data; young carers were added to the schools' census in England last year. The data shows there are higher rates of absence and persistent absence among young carers than among their peers. And the fact that almost three quarters of schools reported having zero young carers underlines the need for improved identification and recording.

We also heard stark warnings from schools and colleges around their capacity to be able to make changes and give young carers the focus and support they need. We have responded to this by producing a new model for a Young Carers Pupil Premium, with independent supporting advice and quality assurance provided by the Education Policy Institute. This would work in tandem with existing Pupil Premium funding designed to improve educational outcomes for other disadvantaged pupils. The adoption of this new model by the UK Government would go a long way towards giving schools the finances and flexibility they need to support young carers.

7 Caring and classes: the education gap for young carers

Key findings



In 2022/23, young carers missed on average more than a month of their education (23 days of school), compared to 14 days for other pupils.



Almost half (46%) of young carers at secondary school in England were persistently absent in 2022/23. This means they missed at least 10% of school. That's one day of school every fortnight.



Almost half (48%) of young carers reported being bullied in the past year.



More than two in five (44%) young carers frequently struggle to study for tests or exams because of the demands of their caring situation.



Almost a third of young carers (30%) are regularly late for school because of the demands of their caring situation.



Almost one in four young carers (23%) say there is 'no support at all' for young carers in their school, college or university.



A Young Carers Pupil Premium to bolster school support could be implemented by the UK Government for £17million in 2024/25.



Fewer than half of teachers (46%) agreed that their school provides the support that young carers need.



Almost every young carer service and local authority (97%) that responded to our survey believes more targeted action and support from the Government is required to improve recording of young carers on the school census in England⁴.



Fewer than two fifths of young carer services and local authorities (38%) said they have the capacity to give education providers in their area the support they need to identify and support their young carers.



87% of schools and colleges that responded to our survey agreed that education providers should be required to report to Ofsted on how they support their young carers.

⁴ All references to school census data in this report relate to young carers in state-funded nursery, primary, secondary, alternative provision and special schools and non-maintained special schools in England only.

Our recommendations

The findings of this report are stark. They demonstrate how the life opportunities of hundreds of thousands of young people are being compromised by the excessive demands of a caring role. A role that, all too often, has been forced on them by a broken social care system. Only urgent action, taken now, will prevent the continued failing by society of huge numbers of our young people.

1. The UK Government should commit to introducing a Young Carers Pupil Premium.

- This targeted funding would ensure schools have the resources to improve pastoral, wellbeing and academic support for young carers in schools.
- It would also provide an incentive to improve identification of young carers.
- The funding would be ring-fenced and schools would be accountable for how they use the funding to support their young carers and evidence the impact.
- The Department for Education should commission a pilot of a Young Carers Pupil Premium within schools in different parts of England.

2. The Department for Education (DfE) should roll out a campaign as soon as possible to make teachers more aware of young carers and the challenges they face. In England, it should also highlight the urgent need to improve identification and recording of young carers in the school census.

- Targets should be set to ensure there are no schools recording zero young carers by the 2029 school census and that nationally at least 5% of pupils are recorded as young carers .
- In addition to awareness-raising, DfE should work with providers of management information systems, professional associations and carer organisations to make it easier for data to flow through to school census returns.
- Given that 'Not a young carer' is the default on the school census return, DfE should explore ways to ensure there is a requirement for active confirmation that a school has no young carers prior to submitting returns.

3. The UK Government should provide funding to **improve identification of, and support for**, young carers and young adult carers in education.
 - This would support development and delivery of training programmes, and implementation of whole-school approaches to supporting young carers' educational outcomes and wellbeing.
4. **Ofsted's new education inspection framework should set out how it will review the identification of young carers and the support provided to improve their attendance, attainment and wellbeing** as part of inspections.
 - Ofsted should also ensure that the voices and experiences of young carers are being represented within its Inclusion and Behaviour and attendance external reference groups.
 - Ofsted inspections of local authority children's services should specifically consider the support available for different groups of young carers. This should include those aged between five and eight, those who are electively home-schooled, and those with their own health and support needs.
5. The UK Government should **extend eligibility for Carer's Allowance to unpaid carers in post-16 education studying for more than 21 hours a week**. This will improve young carers' and young adult carers' access to financial support.
6. The Department for Education should **ensure that all guidance, resources and training for School Attendance Support Teams includes young carers as a priority group**.
 - Young carers should also be routinely considered as disadvantaged pupils by DfE.
7. The UK Government should renew its commitment to **develop a free e-learning module** to support education professionals to identify young and sibling young carers.
8. **All education providers should be required to appoint a young carer or student carer lead**
 - Young carer leads should have responsibility for improving awareness and ensuring appropriate support for young carers across the setting.
 - The DfE should ensure that training and guidance is consistently available to support young carer leads in this role.

9. All education providers should be required to implement a **young carers policy** which clearly sets out the support available to young carers within the setting.
- This requirement, together with the one for a young carers lead, should be added into the next substantive update of the DfE's *Keeping Children Safe in Education* guidance so schools and colleges are clear on expectations.
 - This policy should be produced in partnership with young carers.
 - Schools should consider how the young carers policy interlinks with other school policies, such as bans on mobile phones and lateness.
 - Settings should also provide clear information to newly identified young carers and their families about the support available to them.
10. **The Department for Education should add young carers to its daily attendance reporting.**
- This would make it easier to ensure real-time insights are available to inform interventions by schools, multi-academy trusts and local authorities.
 - This will also help ensure that schools and local authorities can comply with the *Working together to improve school attendance* ⁵ statutory duties.
11. **The Department for Education should include young carers on the Individualised Learner Record ⁶ for further education and training providers.**
- This would help to ensure consistent recording of young carers throughout different educational pathways and improve understanding of the educational experiences of young adult carers.
12. Academics should undertake **further research to understand the needs and experiences of young carers who are home-educated and young carers who have their own health and support needs.**
13. Local authorities should work with schools and their local young carers service to **improve identification and local data-sharing** in relation to young carers.
- There should be a specific focus on data-sharing at key transition points (e.g. early years to primary, primary to secondary; secondary to post-16 provision).
14. The Department for Education should **include the needs of young carers within the initial teacher training** curriculum for all teachers.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c_22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance__applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr>

This report was produced with the support of a group of young carers and young adult carers from across the country. The young people were keen to bring the insights in this report to life to show what they mean for young carers. The young carers working group has created three personas, which appear throughout the report, to show what the report findings look like for young carers in reality. All of the personas are based on young carers' own experiences.

Edward

Edward is six years old and has just started Year Two. He lives with his mum, dad and three-year-old sister and his favourite things (for now) are football, Lego and Sonic the Hedgehog.

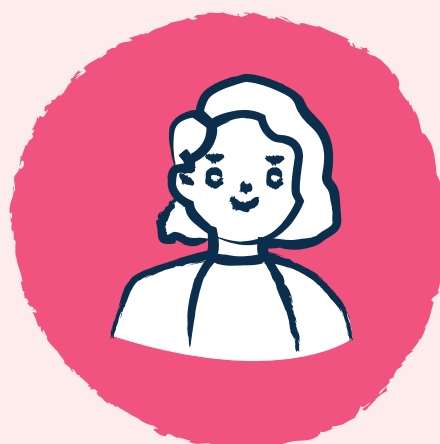
Edward helps support his mum who struggles with a panic disorder. This can lead to severe panic attacks that affect her mobility (or, in Edward's words, "Mummy's legs are poorly again"). If Edward's mum has a panic attack, then he often has to help her to get down onto the floor, seek help from an adult and make sure his younger sister is ok and not scared. If Edward's dad is away with work, then Edward will sort food for himself and his sister while his mum recovers. He will also help carry things for her when she is unsteady on her feet.



Alisha

Alisha is 15 and cares for her 12-year-old sister Maya who is autistic and has a range of physical health conditions. This means she is prone to seizures and has had lots of operations throughout her life. Alisha has just started Year 11 and hopes to study Graphic Design at college.

Alisha regularly has to help her sister if she is having a seizure and has had to call 999 many times because of the severity of Maya's seizures. Alisha has had to give first aid when her mum is at work and her sister has injured herself. Maya has issues with eating and so Alisha has to sit with her to make sure she is eating her food. Alisha goes to the same school as her sister and so supports her on the way to and from school.



Sabeena

Sabeena is 17 and is in year 12 studying Computer Science, English Literature and Law. Sabeena helps to care for her granddad who has mobility issues, Type 2 diabetes and ongoing problems with his heart. Both of Sabeena's parents work full-time at their local hospital. So Sabeena goes round to her granddad's house every day after college to help with cooking and cleaning. She does his shopping and will collect his medication. If her grandad needs any medical appointments, then Sabeena organises them for him. If there are any emergencies with her grandad then Sabeena is usually the one to go around and sort it because it is difficult for her parents to leave work at the hospital immediately.



Higher rates of absence and lower rates of attainment and progression to higher education – the stark state of young carers' education

Alisha



Alisha has really struggled to find time to focus on her GCSEs this year. She is finding the unpredictability of her home situation hard to deal with. She often gets home from school intending to revise but then has to drop everything because something has happened with Maya. Alisha feels guilty studying instead of helping her sister but also feels guilty caring and not spending the time studying. When she does take herself away to study, Maya can be really loud when she's upset or angry and doesn't understand that Alisha needs the time to study.

Young carers missing school

Many young carers miss out on education because of their caring responsibilities. This can be because something has gone wrong at home, or the person they care for needs their help. Young carers may also choose to miss school because they are being bullied.

- 38% of young carers surveyed reported they 'regularly' or 'sometimes' missed school because of their caring situation. Almost a third of young carers (31%) said they were frequently late for school because of their caring responsibilities.

Department for Education data also showed young carers were more likely to be late than other pupils (1.5 late sessions per pupil vs 0.5).⁷



⁷ 'Pupil absence in schools in England'; Department for Education; May 2024

National attendance statistics for young carers were published for the first time in 2024. They showed that the attendance rate for the 38,983 young carers recorded in the 2023 school census was 87.7%. This means young carers missed on average around 23 days of school, compared to 14 days for other pupils ⁸. The persistent absence rate for young carers was almost double that for pupils not recorded as young carers (39% vs 21.1%).⁹ The rate of unauthorised absences for young carers was also double the rate for pupils not declared as a young carer (4.8% vs 2.4%).

There is significant variation in rates of absence across different school types. Of the 23,261 young carers at secondary school recorded in the 2023 school census, 46% were recorded as persistently absent. This compared with 28% of young carers recorded as persistently absent in the equivalent record for primary schools. Young carers at secondary school also missed on average 29 days of school last year, compared to an average of 17 days for other pupils.

Young carers absence rates in 2022/23 by school type¹⁰

Young carers absence rates by school type		Young Carer	Not recorded as young carer
Total	Overall absence rate	12.30%	7.30%
	Percentage of persistent absentees	39.0%	21.1%
	Unauthorised absence rate	4.80%	2.40%
State-funded primary	Overall absence rate	8.40%	5.90%
	Percentage of persistent absentees	28.30%	16.20%
	Unauthorised absence rate	2.70%	1.60%
State-funded secondary	Overall absence rate	15.00%	9.00%
	Percentage of persistent absentees	46.20%	26.40%
	Unauthorised absence rate	6.50%	3.40%
Special	Overall absence rate	19.10%	13.00%
	Percentage of persistent absentees	55.20%	38.30%
	Unauthorised absence rate	6.00%	3.10%

⁸ Absence figures for pupils not recorded as young carers are based on the 2022-23 attendance data because this is the most recent period for which young carer data is available.

⁹ Persistent absence is defined by the Department for Education as missing 10% or more of possible school sessions.

¹⁰ 'Pupil absence in schools in England', Department for Education, May 2024. Sample sizes were:
 All school types = 37,587 young carers; 7,358,445 not declared as young carers
 State-funded primary = 15,326 young carers; 3,942,229 not declared as young carers
 State-funded secondary = 22,031 young carers; 3,283,912 not declared as young carers
 Special schools = 230 young carers; 132,304 not declared as young carers

Severely absent¹¹

One local authority provided us with data from its city-wide register of around 450 young carers at secondary schools. Of the 450 pupils on the register, young carers were almost twice as likely to be severely absent as the city-wide average for all pupils (9.3% vs 5.2%).

Monitoring of young carer attendance

As of September 2024, it is mandatory for schools in England to share their daily attendance data with the Department for Education. The *Working together to improve school attendance statutory guidance* also states that local authorities and schools will be expected to “*make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of their regular data monitoring and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible*”.¹²

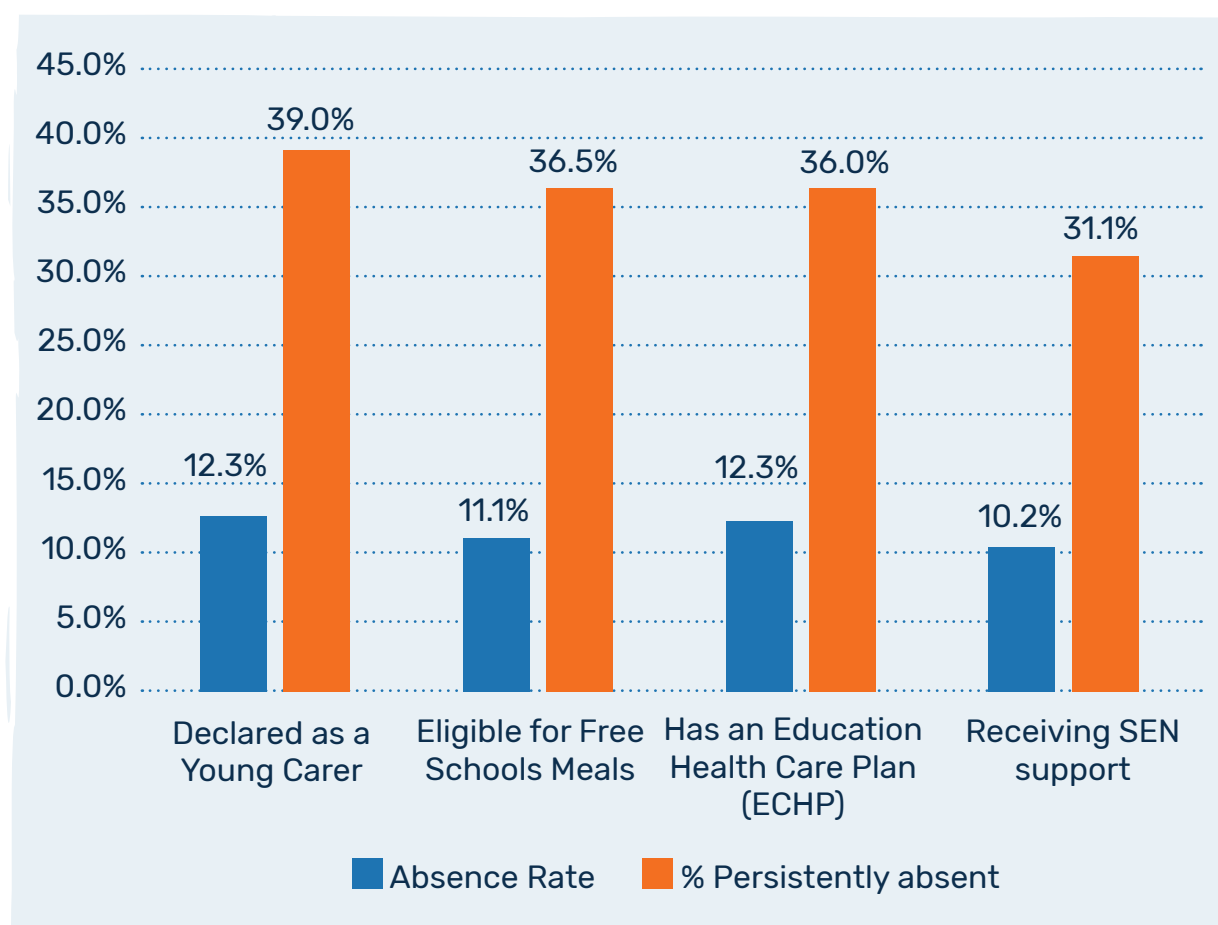
Young carers are not currently included as a specified group within the daily attendance recording. This is despite their rates of absence in 2022/23 being higher than those of included specified groups of pupils (e.g. those receiving special educational needs support) who are often considered disadvantaged.



¹¹ Severely absent is defined as missing 50% or more of sessions.

¹² Para 134 'Working Together to improve school attendance', Department for Education, February 2024

Figure 2: Absence rates by pupil characteristics in 2022/23¹³



Local authorities told us that including young carers as a group within the daily attendance reporting would make it much easier for them to monitor and respond to absence levels for young carers. It would also help to ensure they are complying with their new statutory obligations.

¹³ 'Pupil absence in schools in England – Academic Year 2022/23', Department for Education, March 2024

Impact of high absence rates among young carers on education and life opportunities

The high persistent absence rates for young carers is alarming because of clear evidence showing the link between absence and educational attainment. Department for Education data¹⁴ shows that only two in five (40.2%) pupils who were persistently absent achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 2. This compares with two thirds (65%) of all pupils achieving the expected standard.

A MYTIME Young Carers report¹⁵ published earlier this year analysed Key Stage 2 data for 130 young carers across seven schools in Dorset. It found that young carers performed well below age-related expectations across a number of attainment metrics.

Key Stage 2 attainment measure	Young carers in study	Non-young carers in study
Reach age-related expectations in reading	51%	70%
Reach age-related expectations in writing	39%	63%
Reach age-related expectations in maths	49%	73%

GCSE attainment data is not currently published for young carers. But DfE data shows that only 35.6% of persistently absent pupils achieved grades 9-4 in English and maths (compared to 67.6% of all pupils).

New applicant data from UCAS¹⁶ has also shown an attainment gap at A Level between young adult carers and their peers without a caring role:

- Young adult carers are 37% less likely than applicants without a caring role to achieve A*AA or above at A Level.
- Young adult carers are 25% less likely than applicants without a caring role to achieve AAB or above.



14 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/the-link-between-absence-and-attainment-at-ks2-and-ks4>

15 'Unseen Sacrifices: understanding the educational disadvantages faced by young carers', MYTIME Young Carers, 2024.

16 'Next Steps: What is the experience of young adult carers in education?', UCAS, August 2024

In terms of longer-term educational outcomes, a research collaboration between University College London (UCL) and Carers Trust found that young adult carers are 38% less likely than other young adults to obtain a university degree. Those caring for more than 35 hours per week were 86% less likely than their peers without a caring role to obtain a university degree.¹⁷

Given lower attainment among young adult carers at A Level, it is unsurprising that research shows young adult carers are under-represented in higher education. Recent research from a collaboration between UCL, City St George's, University of London and Carers Trust suggests that around 10% of all young adults have caring responsibilities.¹⁸ But UCAS data for 2023/24 shows just 3.9% of applicants for higher education aged between 18 and 25 were young adult carers.

Caring and learning

Many young carers reported how they struggle to balance their caring responsibilities with their education. This included not being able to complete homework, or to have sufficient time and space to revise.

Almost half of young carers (45%) we surveyed said that in the past year their caring situation meant they frequently struggled to be able to study for a test or exam. And 29% said they regularly do not manage to complete homework on time.



“I feel that when I get home, I can’t revise for my mocks or anything due to looking after my brother as my parents are at work.”

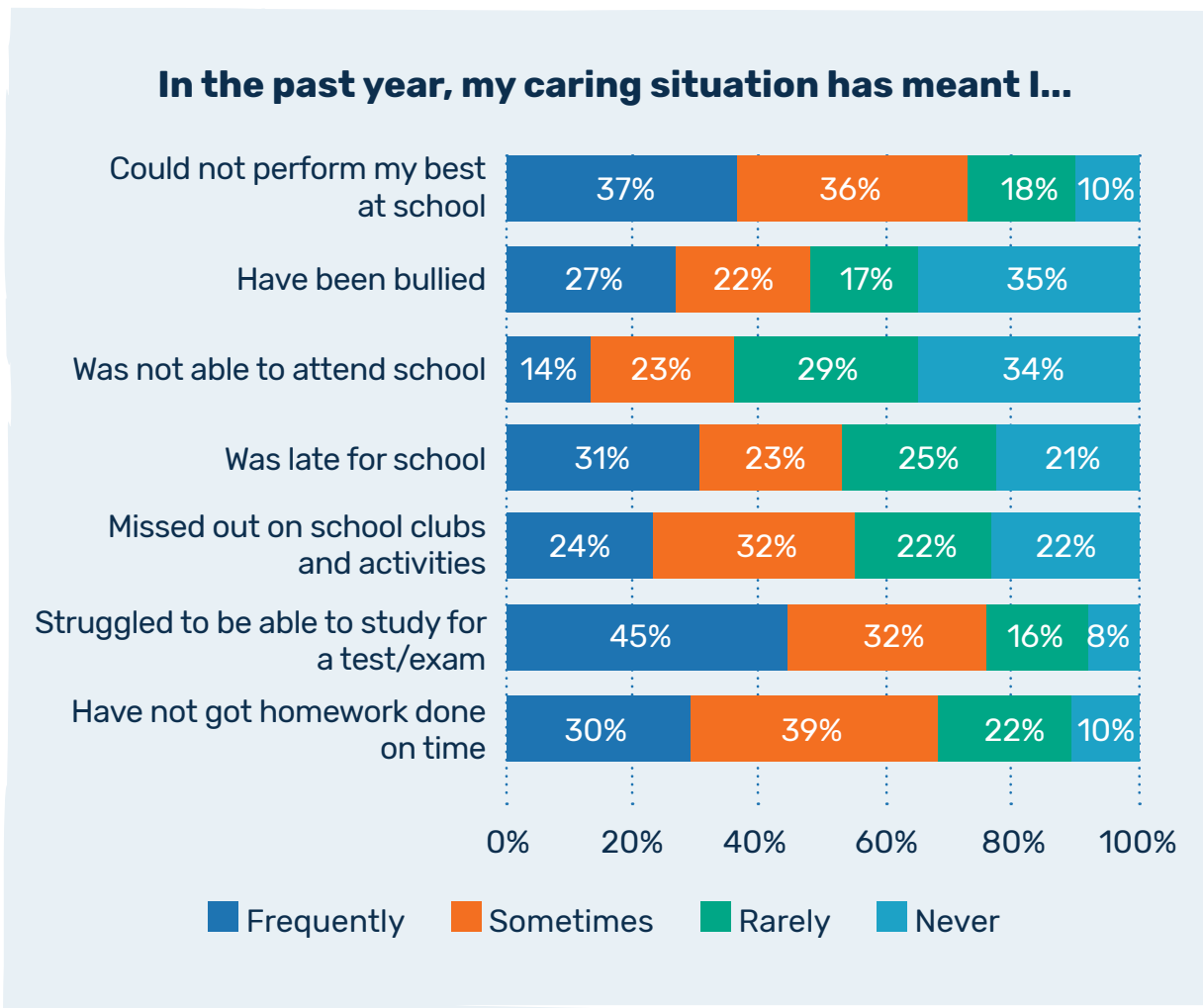
Young carer

Given this, it is not surprising that more than a third of young carers (37%) surveyed feel their caring situation means they haven’t been able to achieve their full academic potential at school.

¹⁷ Baowen Xue, Rebecca E. Lacey, Giorgio Di Gessa, Anne McMunn; Does providing informal care in young adulthood impact educational attainment and employment in the UK?, *Advances in Life Course Research*, Volume 56, 2023.

¹⁸ “Who are young carers in the UK? Understanding the prevalence and characteristics of adolescent young carers in the UK before and after COVID-19”, Letelier, McMunn, McGowan, Neale and Lacey (2024)

Figure 1: Young carers and young adult carers' responses to the question 'In the past year, my caring situation has meant I...'¹⁹



Young carers were keen to highlight to us that evidence of lower academic performance among young adult carers does not mean they lack ability; nor that they lack the aspirations of their peers. This is why identifying young carers at the earliest possible stage is so important. It ensures they have adequate support in place to provide them with the same educational opportunities as other young people:

“Being a carer does not mean you are less capable of doing things. It makes us stronger and more aware. A lot of carers I have met have shown me that they have a lot of compassion and good virtues. They deserve education.”
Young carer

¹⁹ These figures have been rounded to two decimal places. Due to rounding, figures may vary.

Awareness, identification and understanding of young carers

“Some [teachers] realise I have more responsibilities and worries than my mates, but most don’t seem to care, even if they know. One even told me to stop using it as an excuse because I hadn’t finished my homework. I was fuming.”

Young carer



Since 2018, statutory guidance has made it clear that all staff working in schools and colleges should be alert to the potential support needs of young carers in their setting.²⁰

Many staff in schools and colleges were positive about growing awareness-raising activity about young carers. But only 58% of respondents to our survey agreed that all staff in their setting have a good understanding of young carers and how to identify them. Our polling²¹ of 8,231 teachers also found that 28% of teachers said they did not know or were not sure if any of their pupils were young carers.

When it came to young carers themselves only 26% of respondents to our survey agreed that their teachers had a good understanding of the challenges young carers face.

Even students without a caring role think young carers need more support in the classroom.

VotesforSchools asked 24,993 students whether more awareness would help improve support for young carers²²:

- 82% of pupils between the ages of 7 and 11 want to learn more about what young carers do.
- 87% of pupils at secondary school or over 16 provision believe more awareness would help improve support for young carers.



²⁰ Keeping children safe in education 2024, Department for Education (2024)

²¹ In July 2024 we commissioned polling of 8,231 teachers through Teacher Tapp to ask whether teachers knew if any of their pupils are young carers.

²² Would more awareness help improve support for young carers? (votesforschools.com)

Barriers to identification of young carers

Many local young carer services said they offer awareness-raising activities for staff and pupils. But only 38% of them said they have the capacity to give education providers in their area the help they need to identify and support their young carers.

“ We offer assemblies, training and support to schools, but we are a small team and there are over 500 schools in the area we cover so it would take 2+ years to even offer everyone an assembly.”

Young carers service manager

Young carer services told us that resourcing pressures meant the support they offer schools to raise awareness of young carers was under threat. Their staff often have to prioritise completing assessments and providing direct support to young carers over awareness-raising work in schools.

“ When our funding ends the school’s project will end and we will no longer be able to deliver awareness-raising events and wellbeing activities in schools.”

Young carers service manager

The *Disability Action Plan*²³ published by the last government included a commitment to develop a free e-learning module to support education professionals to identify young and sibling young carers. The new Government should renew this commitment to ensure that all education professionals have equal access to training.

School staff and young carer services also commented on how the level of awareness within settings significantly depended on the engagement and support from the headteacher, senior leadership team (SLT) or multi-academy trust.

“ It’s frustrating – I pushed for more people in the school to be trained – it’s taken me a long time to get SLT to agree to get other people onto training. My role as young carers champion isn’t recognised by the school even though I do it all in my own time because I was a young carer.”

Young carers champion

²³ Disability Unit and Equality Unit (2024) Disability Action Plan

“ We struggle to even get some schools to talk to us. We send emails and get no response. We do receive referrals from schools but they just hand over for us to ‘solve’ attendance or any issues rather than seeing the situation as one where multi agencies need to support. An open regular dialogue would make a huge difference.”

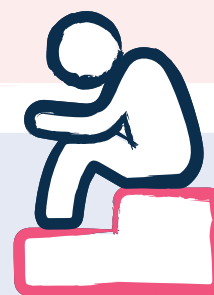
Young carer service

One of the recurring barriers to identification of young carers raised by schools and young carer services was that of stigma. This issue is particularly prominent for families where there are cultural expectations about children caring for elderly family members. And in cases where young carers are supporting someone because of substance misuse. Many schools commented on how there is still a fear among some parents of social services involvement.

“ There is a lot of fear around telling school about being a carer, for young people and their families. Education around substance misuse is limited in schools and is often perceived by children as being critical (e.g. drugs are bad). This makes it very difficult for children and families to ask for support around substance misuse and creates an additional fear of bullying for children who have family members with addiction.”

Young carers service

It is really concerning that **almost half (48%)** of young carers who we surveyed reported they have been bullied in the past year. More than one in four young carers said they experience bullying on a regular basis.



“ It’s really hard hearing other students use ableist slurs all the time and teachers not really doing anything about it or in a couple of instances joining in! If I try to stick up for my sister, they then start saying things about me.”

Young carer

Young carers are more likely than children without caring responsibilities to live in households with lower income.²⁴ But young carers in affluent areas or those attending private schools also need to be identified and supported.

“ Parental resistance to support is coming up – One school in a really affluent area is having the most issues – they identified 22 young carers, but only two [families] gave consent [to support].”

Young carers service.

Staff working in colleges and young carer services also commented how the different approaches to support and pastoral set-ups in post-16 education can present further challenges to the identification of young carers.

“ I think they are often an overlooked group - harder to identify - as in our college setting we support young carers who self-declare or who we identify due to welfare/ safeguarding concerns I am looking at ways to ensure young carer status is transferred to FE colleges through the transition process.”

College designated safeguarding lead

All schools and colleges should ensure that they include questions around young carers on enrolment forms. The wording on these forms is really important because very few parents or children will respond if it simply asks if the child is a young carer. As part of the Young Carers in Schools programme²⁵, a template letter for parents is available.

Schools should also ensure they proactively consider the needs of young carers as part of transitions. A number of Young Carers Alliance²⁶ members have produced specific transitions resources or run transitions programmes to support young carers when they move up to secondary school. It is important that young carers are considered at other transition points, such as from early years providers to primary schools.

Schools and young carer services told us that, to help address the issue of stigma, they would find it helpful to have resources to support conversations with parents and help them see the positives in identifying their child as a young carer.

²⁴ Xue, B., Lacey, R.E., Di Gessa, G. and McMunn, A., 2023. Does providing informal care in young adulthood impact educational attainment and employment in the UK? *Advances in Life Course Research*, 56, p. 100549

²⁵ www.youngcarersinschools.com

²⁶ www.youngcarersalliance.org

Recording of young carers

We found that even when schools are identifying young carers, there are significant issues with how that information is then recorded.

Young carers were added to the January school census for state schools in England from 2023. Our analysis of the 2024 data shows significant work is needed to improve the recording of young carers in school census returns.

The 2024 England school census in numbers²⁷

-  **53,975** young carers were recorded, an increase of 14,993 (38%) from 2023.
-  **0.6%** of pupils were recorded as young carers (up from 0.5% in 2023).
-  **72%** of all schools recorded zero young carers in their 2024 school census return.
-  **16** local authority areas (11%) reported a decrease in the number of young carers recorded by schools in their area compared to 2023.

There is early evidence to suggest that schools proactively seeking to improve their identification and support for young carers are recording higher numbers of young carers.

The Young Carers in Schools (YCIS) programme is run jointly by Carers Trust and The Children's Society. It works with schools across England to share good practice, provide relevant tools and training and celebrate the great outcomes that many schools achieve for young carers.

In the 63 schools that applied for the refreshed Young Carers in Schools Award in 2024²⁸:

- 4.7%** was the average proportion of pupils identified as young carers (compared to 0.6% for all schools in the 2024 school census).
- 5** schools identified more than 10% of pupils as young carers
- 22** further schools identified between 5% and 9.9% of pupils as young carers.
- 108** was the highest number of pupils with caring responsibilities recorded in a school (out of 1489 pupils) with the second highest being 103 (out of 898 pupils).

²⁷ 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics – Academic Year 2023/24', Department for Education, 2024

²⁸ www.youngcarersinschools.com. The refreshed award was launched in January 2024.

Challenges to recording

“ One of the schools we work closely with – they have identified over 50 young carers and have referred lots to us for support –still came back with none on their school census.”

Young carers service manager

Young carer services told us many schools are identifying young carers and referring them for support. But these same schools are still not recording, or are significantly under-reporting, their young carers for the school census.

While some management information systems have the capability to automatically pull young carer data through to school census returns, this is not consistent. Many schools have to manually record all of their young carers or do not realise that the data is not flowing through to their census return.

93% of schools and young carer services we heard from said more targeted action and support from the Government is required to improve recording of young carers on the school census.



They said having specific guidance on how to ensure young carers are being accurately recorded on school systems and the school census would help to improve recording.

With young carers in England now included on the school census for state and independent schools and also on UCAS applications, young carers should now be added to the Individualised Learner Record ²⁹. This would enable improved recording of young carers within further education and support much-needed research into the educational experiences and outcomes of young carers in post-16 education.

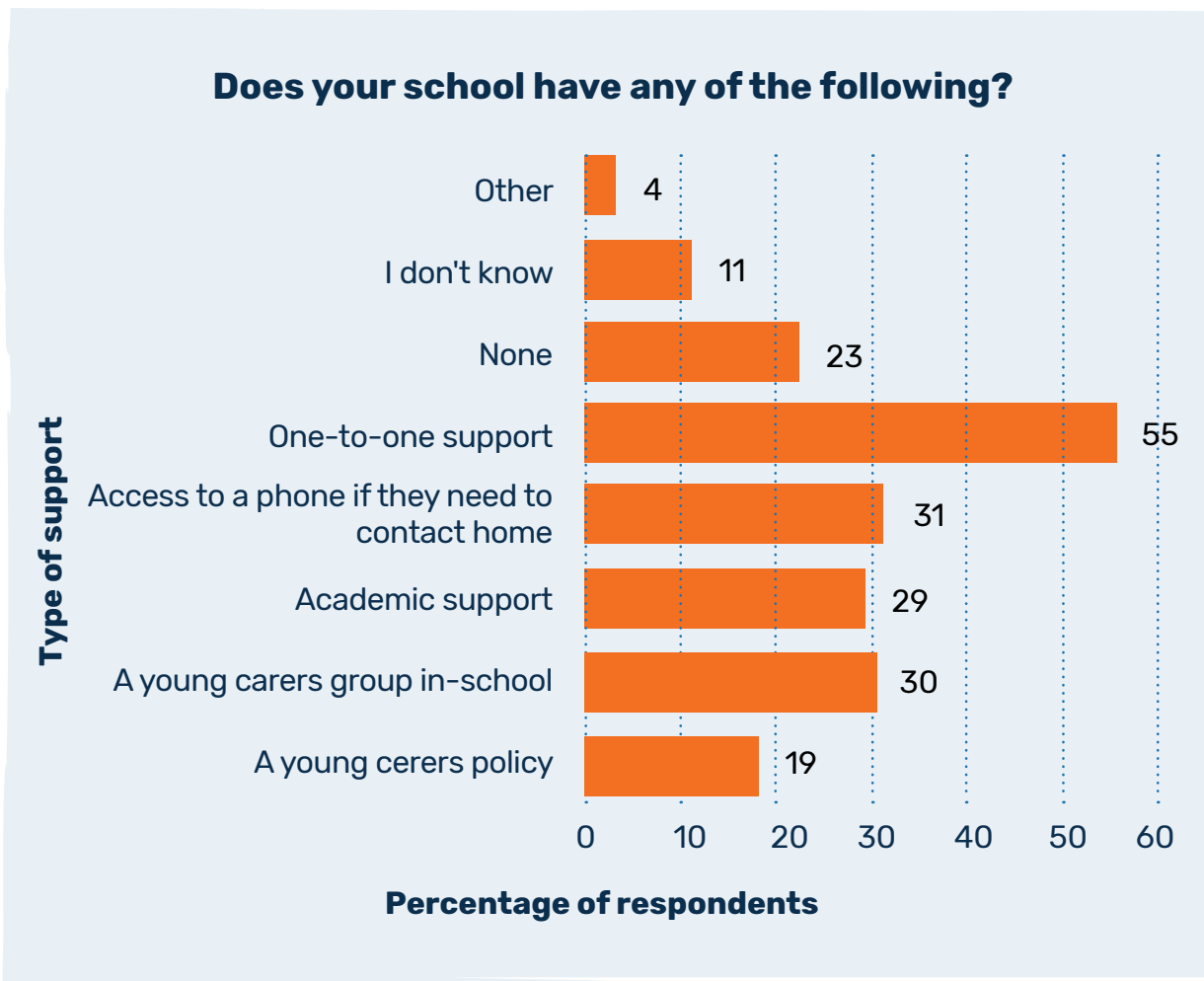
29 The Individualised Learner Record (ILR) is used by further education and skills training providers to submit data about learners who are undertaking further and vocational education in England.

Support for young carers

Once young carers are identified and recorded, it is vital that they are informed about and can access available support.

It's positive that the majority of young carers and professionals told us there are now different forms of support available to young carers. This ranges from academic support to young carers groups. Access to one-to-one support to talk through any concerns was the most common form of support available. More than half of all young carers are able to access such support.

However almost a quarter of young carers (23%) in our survey and consultation activities said there was no support for young carers in their school. A further 11% said they did not know what support their school had.



We heard from a number of schools that are taking positive steps to provide support for their young carers. For example:

- One school has a young carers lead for each year group to ensure that there is someone young carers can turn to for support.
- Some schools were providing food and hygiene hampers because of the financial pressures facing young carers. Others were organising trips to enable young carers to access opportunities which other pupils experience.
- Another school created its own young carer's passport which provides staff with more information about a pupil's caring responsibilities and support needs. This passport is then reviewed half-termly and passes to the next teacher each year.



Edward



Since Edward was identified as a young carer, his school has been able to give him a range of practical support. To reduce the likelihood of Edward's mum having a panic attack when collecting him from his classroom, teachers bring Edward out to meet his mum at her car.

They have also arranged for Edward to attend breakfast club so his mum can drop him off at a quieter time. This really helps her anxiety. It also ensures that Edward has breakfast, even if his mum is not feeling well. The young carers champion attends breakfast club, so Edward always has someone to talk to if he has any worries about home. School also provided Edward with a place on its summer sports camps. This means he can take part in activities with other children his age, just in case his mum can't take him out during the school holidays. The young carers champion has also given Edward different wellbeing strategies to help him to manage his worries about his mum.

Young carers champions

“For me, having a young carers champion was the best thing. It meant if we had a difficult night with my sister, I didn’t have to tell all my teachers the next day, I could just tell the champion and he would tell them for me. It made such a difference.”

Young adult carer

Carers Trust has been campaigning for every education setting to be required to have a young carers lead/champion. A young carers champion is a member of staff who coordinates support for young carers within a school or college. This can range from informing staff if a young carer has had a difficult weekend, to arranging extensions and homework support, to running in-school young carer groups. In some schools the young carers champion is part of the senior leadership team or the safeguarding team. In others, the champion may be a teacher, teaching assistant or part of the pastoral team with a clear link to school management for escalating any issues.

Young carers told us how having a young carers lead in school means they do not have to repeat their story to multiple teachers if things are difficult at home.

Feedback from schools and colleges suggest that many already have a young carers champion in place. 87% of schools/colleges that responded to our survey said they had a young carers champion/lead.

However, 63% of young carers surveyed said they either didn’t have or didn’t know about a young carers champion. Schools and colleges need to ensure that all pupils and staff know who their young carers lead is, as well as what support is available and how to access it.

Access to a phone

“ Sometimes I have to go to the toilets to be able to use my phone to check if mum is ok. If she’s not having a good day, my focus won’t be on school, it will be on her.”

Young carer

Fewer than one in three young carers (31%) we surveyed said they had access to a phone to contact home because of their caring role or be contacted because of a home emergency.

The Department for Education’s guidance on mobile phones in schools makes clear schools should be allowing flexibility for pupils such as young carers. It says:

*“Schools should recognise that a need for mobile phone access for some pupils may depend on their individual circumstances, including at home... Schools should allow flexibility in their policy for these pupils and consider including arrangements in other relevant policies (such as a young carers policy).”*³⁰

However, only 58% of schools and colleges in our survey said that young carers had access to a phone if needed. It is important that all young carers have access to a phone if they need to check on the person they care for, or to be contacted in relation to their caring role. Schools should ensure that sensitive phone calls can be made in a quiet, private space, rather than in the school office or toilet cubicles.



30 ‘Mobile phones in schools: Guidance for schools on prohibiting the use of mobile phones throughout the school day.’ Department for Education, February 2024

Support in college and university

“ I feel unsupported at university and struggle financially to support my studies.....caring needs can be overwhelming with no flexibility with coursework.”

Young adult carer

Through our survey, we heard from 25 young adult carers about their experiences of support available in post-16 education. Their views, combined with the findings from UCAS' new student carers report³¹, highlight the pressing need for more awareness and support for carers in further and higher education.

Multiple young adult carers reported that universities often confused carers with care leavers and that there was no support available for student carers.

The young adult carers felt strongly that this is contributing to inequality in terms of educational opportunities available to them. Remarkably, only one young adult carer in our survey agreed that young carers have the same opportunity to do well in education as their peers. This compares to 37% of secondary-aged young carers.

This feeling of inequity is shared by professionals. Only 8% of the professionals we heard from that work in schools, young carer services and councils believe young carers have the same opportunity to succeed in education as other young people.

Data from UCAS also suggests that caring responsibilities have a significant impact on the educational choices young carers make. Young adult carers applying in the 2023 admissions cycle were 39% more likely than applicants without caring responsibilities to choose to live at home. 41% of young adult carers chose to study within a 30 minutes' drive of home, making them 25% more likely to do so than non-carers.

Young adult carers were also twice as likely as applicants who are not carers to apply with an Access to Higher Education Diploma³². This means they are more likely to be going to be university as a mature student. So it is important to ensure they can access information and advice as easily as applicants following more traditional routes to higher education.

31 Next Steps: What is the experience of young adult carers in education?', UCAS, 2024. Their report is based on the 2023 cycle application data for 18,915 young adult carers across the UK and a survey of 1,155 of those applicants.

32 Next Steps: What is the experience of young adult carers in education?', UCAS, 2024. The Access to Higher Education diploma is a qualification equivalent to three A Levels which prepares people aged 19 and over without traditional qualifications for study at university.

In our survey, young adult carers also highlighted that it can be difficult to find out what support is available in colleges and universities. This is because they are much bigger than schools and there are fewer regular opportunities to seek support, such as daily registration or tutor time. A specific issue, raised by young adult carers studying at university, is that staff frequently conflated carers with care leavers when telling them about support available for them. They found there was actually no support for carers.

“The support isn’t publicised so I don’t know what there is to help me at the college. I heard there was a support group but I don’t know when or where it is or if it even runs anymore.”

Young adult carer

Financial support and employment

“It’s hard having to juggle care and education and employment when your focus is on caring 24/7. I get help sometimes but it’s never enough. I’m in debt up to my ears.”

Young adult carer

Finances are a key concern for young adult carers in post-16 education. The UCAS student carer report found that 70% of young adult carer applicants who completed UCAS’ survey³³ identified finances as a concern, compared with 52% of all applicants. Sutton Trust’s COSMO study also found that a third of young carers in that study said they were unlikely to go to university because they couldn’t afford it (compared with 22% of those without caring responsibilities).³⁴ Research consistently shows that young carers are more likely than their peers to live in economically deprived areas.³⁵

33 Sample size of 1,155 young adult carers from across the UK that made an application in the 2023 admissions cycle

34 COVID Social Mobility and Opportunities (COSMO) study, Sutton Trust (2023)

35 ONS, 2021 Census

England is now the only country in the UK where there is no consistent form of financial support available to young adult carers, other than loans. Young adult carers are not one of the groups automatically eligible for the Government's 16 to 19 Bursary Fund³⁶. They are also not eligible for the Special Support Grant; the replacement for maintenance grants which still exist in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.³⁷ In addition, young adult carers studying more than 21 hours a week in England and Wales are not eligible for Carer's Allowance, even when they meet all of the other eligibility criteria. Data from the 2021 Census shows that there are over 12,000 young people aged between 16 and 19 in England who are in full-time education and caring for 35 hours a week or more.³⁸

By contrast, young adult carers from low-income households in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales may be able to receive Education Maintenance Allowance. In addition, young carers aged between 16 and 18 in Scotland who are caring for at least 16 hours a week may be entitled to the Young Carer Grant³⁹ – a yearly payment of £383.75. The Scottish Government is also removing the 21-hour exclusion rule for many young adult carers who are studying full-time courses as part of the transition from Carer's Allowance to the new Carer Support Payment.⁴⁰

Data from UCAS found 63% of young adult carers surveyed said they took being able to balance studies with part-time work into account when researching their options. Given the higher proportion of young adult carers living at, or close to, home, there will be a significant number of young adult carers trying to balance their studies with caring and working.

Half of the young adult carers who responded to our questionnaire said they are currently working alongside their caring responsibilities and their studies. Out of those working, all of them were studying full-time courses.

Sabeena



Sabeena does not qualify for any financial support at college. So she has to work alongside her A Levels to be able to save up for university. She also needs help with day-to-day living costs, particularly when she has to do repeat trips to her grandad's house. She has not been able to find an employer who can give her enough hours while providing the flexibility she needs around her caring and studies. So Sabeena currently has three different part-time jobs. One of Sabeena's worries is about being able to get the grades she will need for university while she is having to work so much and look after her grandad.

³⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund>

³⁷ The only group of carers who would qualify are those who are waiting to go back to a course which they took agreed time out of because of a caring responsibility which has now ended.

³⁸ ONS, 2021 Census

³⁹ <https://www.mygov.scot/young-carer-grant>

⁴⁰ <https://www.mygov.scot/carers-support-payment>. Student carers who will be eligible for the carer support payment are part-time students, full-time students aged 20 or over, and full-time students aged under 20 who are studying advanced or higher education courses.

What support do young carers want?

At the 2024 England Young Carers Festival we asked young carers what support they would like to see in schools. Their responses can be grouped into five overarching themes.



1. Someone to talk to



2. A young carers group/time out



3. Awareness of young carers and what they do



4. Counselling or mental health support



5. Academic support

These findings are consistent with our 2023 Young Carer and Young Adult Carer survey. Mental health support, support with education and support to have a break from caring were three of the four top priorities identified by over 1,000 young carers and young adult carers.⁴¹

Research by The Sutton Trust shows the significant impact caring can have on young people's mental health. It found that young carers are significantly more likely to report severe psychological distress (56%) than their peers without a caring role (43%). For those caring for at least two years, the figure was even higher, at 60%. Young carers were also more likely to self-harm and make attempts on their own lives.⁴²

Young carers in our survey told us that having good support in school or college would benefit them in a range of ways:

- 78% said it will help their mental health.
- 67% said they will feel like they have someone they can talk to.
- 60% believe it would help them to keep up with their studies.



⁴¹ "Being a young carer is not a choice; it's just what we do", Carers Trust (2023)

⁴² "COVID Social Mobility & Opportunities Study: Wave 1 initial Findings – Briefing No. 4 – Mental Health and Wellbeing" (Sutton Trust) (2022)

Barriers to support

“It’s a postcode lottery. Some schools are brilliant at supporting young carers while others don’t provide enough support, and others claim they do well supporting young carers but only want the award to display.”

Young carers service manager

Professionals and young carers were clear about the need for greater and more consistent levels of support for young carers within education.

- Our polling shows that fewer than half of teachers (46%) believe their school provides the support that young carers need.⁴³
- Just 14% of young carer services and local authorities surveyed feel that education settings in their area are able to provide the required level of support to young carers.
- Only 20% of young carers in our survey feel there is enough support for young carers in their school, college or university.

Professionals, parents and young carers also told us there is inconsistency in the level of support provided to young carers, even when schools are within the same area or multi-academy trust.

“We are in a boys-only school in a partnership, but there is no support at all in the girl’s school. So sometimes we have a sister in the same family within the same partnership who cannot get the support that her brother does.”

Pastoral lead

One of the challenges regularly highlighted by schools was that young carer leads/champions often take on the role voluntarily. This means they don’t have any allocated time for supporting their young carers. Young carer champions told us how, even when they have identified young carers, limited capacity means they can only support those young carers facing the biggest disadvantage.

⁴³ Teacher Tapp polling of 8,231 teachers, July 2024

A lack of dedicated funding means young carers are not a priority group when school budgets are stretched. Other work and other groups of pupils are often prioritised.

“ School funding is at an all-time low. There are barely funds for essentials. We are willing to offer more support. [But] it is not financially viable to do so.”

Young carer lead

Almost half of schools and colleges (45%) in our survey said that they are having to provide extra support to young carers and their families because the support is not available outside of school/college. Staff cited a range of reasons for this. They include waiting lists for young carers services or mental health support, and rising thresholds for statutory support.

Some staff working in primary schools reported in the focus groups they were not able to access support for their youngest young carers. This is because their local authority would only recognise a child as being a young carer from the age of eight. So assessments for support and young carer services below that age were not available.

“ We are a nursery infant school and referrals [made by us] to young carers [services] cannot be accepted. I feel this is unfair as all children who are young carers, despite their age, should have the opportunity to access the right support services.”

Designated safeguarding lead

There is no minimum age for a child to be defined as a young carer. We have heard from young carers who first started caring when they were just three or four years old. It is therefore important for Ofsted to consider how the youngest young carers are being supported during inspections of children's services.

Improving availability and access to support

We asked education providers, young carer services and local authorities through an online survey, online focus groups and individual online interviews about two specific proposals for improving access to support for young carers of all ages:

- 1. The introduction of a Young Carers Pupil Premium.**
- 2. Increasing the role that Ofsted plays in monitoring support for young carers in schools and colleges.**

93% of respondents agreed that dedicated additional funding for education settings to support young carers is needed to improve their educational opportunities.

While DfE guidance specifically states that schools could use existing pupil premium funding to support young carers⁴⁴, additional funding is vital given the financial pressures faced by schools. Research by Sutton Trust has shown that 47% of school leaders are using pupil premium funding to plug gaps elsewhere in the school's budget, up from 41% in 2023 and more than double the figure of 23% in 2019.⁴⁵

As well as providing extra support, young carer champions felt funding directly linked to young carers would increase the emphasis on young carers in schools.

“I think it would help us no end. From a financial point of view, absolutely it would help but it might also help put a bit more emphasis on identifying young carers within schools if additional funding was coming in. Schools are on their knees – I buy resources out of my own pocket because we don't have the funds to do that.”

Young carers champion

⁴⁴ 'Pupil Premium: overview', Department for Education, February 2024 update.

⁴⁵ 'School Funding and Pupil Premium 2024'

Through our polling, we asked teachers how they would prioritise spending on young carers if they could only spend it on one area. Their top three priorities were:

- 1. Respite/opportunities for young carers to meet together (46%)**
- 2. More mental health support (20%)**
- 3. Supporting attendance at school (10%).**



Developing a Young Carers Pupil Premium

One way of securing this dedicated funding for young carers in education would be to create a Young Carers Pupil Premium.

Carers Trust has modelled how a Young Carers Pupil Premium could be used, how it might work and an estimated cost. The model has been produced with independent supporting advice and assurance provided by Education Policy Institute.

What would a Young Carers Pupil Premium be?

The Young Carers Pupil Premium (YCPP) would be an annual payment to schools to help them provide designated support for young carers. This support would help young carers to balance learning with their caring responsibilities. It would be modelled on the existing Service Pupil Premium.⁴⁶ The YCPP would be £340 a year.⁴⁷

Schools would receive funding based on the number of young carers in their school.

The YCPP would enable schools to provide additional pastoral support. It would also provide academic support to mitigate specific challenges faced by young carers, such as not having a quiet space to study at home.

Examples of the support this could fund include:

- Monitoring of young carers' progress, compared to the wider school population.
- Paying the additional hours needed for a staff member(s) to become a young carers champion/lead.
- Employing additional staff to provide small-group academic or emotional support to young carers.

⁴⁶ The Service Pupil Premium (SPP) was introduced by the Department for Education in 2011 in recognition of the specific challenges that children living in service families face and as part of the Government's commitment to delivering the armed forces covenant.' Service Pupil Premium: what you need to know', Ministry of Defence (2023)

⁴⁷ For 2024/25 academic year.

- Running a young carers' group or putting on activities so young carers can come together.
- Securing additional support for young carers from external services, such as mental health organisations, specialist young carer services or holiday activity providers.
- Creating holiday activity packs for young carers.
- Transitions support for young carers.
- Providing information and support to parents of young carers.

Schools, local authorities and young carer services have highlighted some fundamental principles for any Young Carers Pupil Premium:

- The funding must be ring-fenced for the specific purpose of supporting young carers. Schools must be required to report specifically on how the funding is being used for their young carers.
- Schools should be expected to work with young carers, parents and wider stakeholders, such as young carer services and the local authority, when deciding how to make best use of the funding.
- There must be robust assessment at both school and national level of the effectiveness of the support provided through the funding. Evaluations of how the Young Carers Pupil Premium is being used would help to improve the evidence base around what works for young carers in education.

Who would be eligible for the Young Carers Pupil Premium?

Young carers from reception year up to year 11 who are recorded on their school's annual school census return would be eligible.

One of the key implementation challenges to overcome would be agreeing the definition of a young carer for the purpose of the Young Carers Pupil Premium. There would need to be clear accompanying guidance as to which young carers are eligible, so schools, young carer services and local authorities know and understand the scope. This may differ from that needed for young carer support inside or outside of school. This is particularly important given that the definition in the Children Act is broader than the one typically used by young carer services and local authorities.

In line with the approach adopted for the Service Pupil Premium, young carers would be eligible for the Young Carers Pupil Premium regardless of whether they are eligible for core pupil premium funding. This is to ensure the YCPP can be used to help the specific challenges faced by this group of children and young people.



How much would a Young Carers Pupil Premium cost?

The cost of a Young Carers Pupil Premium would depend on the number of eligible young carers and the value of the premium. We have modelled costs for the Young Carers Pupil Premium across the life of this parliament. **Details behind the modelling of costs are available in Appendix Two.**

The immediate cost to implement

It would cost £17.4m to introduce the Young Carers Pupil Premium across schools in England for the 2024/25 academic year. This would support the 51,094 young carers between reception and year 11 already identified in the schools census.

Costs based on the potential number of young carers

We believe that, on average, around 5% of the pupil population in schools are young carers. We want schools to take action to identify all their young carers by the end of this parliament. If successful, we estimate the annual cost of introducing a Young Carers Pupil Premium in England would be £138.1m by the end of this parliament. This equates to 379,450 young carers across the country.

Recent studies by the Sutton Trust⁴⁸ and City St George's, University of London and UCL both found between 10% and 12% of young people were young carers. However, these were both based on older young carers (aged 16 to 18). Prevalence

48 <https://cosmostudy.uk/latest/cosmo-data-provides-new-insights-into-the-lives-of-young-carers>

of young carers in primary schools, particularly Key Stage One, is likely to be quite a bit lower, but more data is needed to understand the full picture. In the 38 primary schools that applied for the Young Carers in Schools Award in 2024, the average prevalence was 5.1%. But it ranged from 1.1% up to 18.4%.

One potential option for any Young Carers Pupil Premium model would be to cap the funding schools receive to 5% of the pupil population, until more robust data around primary school prevalence is available. This would provide certainty around the potential costs of a Young Carers Pupil Premium.

Increasing the role that Ofsted plays in monitoring support for young carers in schools and colleges

Until 2019, Ofsted included young carers as a group of pupils which an ‘inspector will pay particular attention to the outcomes for’.⁴⁹ But, since then, young carers have not been mentioned in Ofsted’s education inspection framework.

Young carer services and local authorities were almost unanimous (99% agreed) that Ofsted should include young carers as a group of pupils which schools/ colleges are required to report on. Young carer services told us how including young carers on Ofsted’s earlier framework helped them to engage with schools and ensure they were working to identify and support their young carers.

We were pleased to hear from some young carer services that schools they work with have had young carers included within their Ofsted inspections. But this was prompted by the school or young carers champion specifically raising the issue of young carers with inspectors. Young carer services also told us how adding young carers to the Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) framework has already led to local authorities being asked about young carers for the first time as part of their inspections.

87% of the 38 schools and colleges who responded to our survey also agreed that schools should be required to report to Ofsted on how they support their young carers. Young carer leads told us that if senior leadership in schools knew Ofsted were likely to ask about young carers, then this would increase the profile of the young carer leads and their work within schools. More importantly, this would in turn improve the support offered to young carers at school. A third of children who responded to Ofsted’s own ‘Big Listen’ consultation want Ofsted to particularly ask how schools support the needs of distinct groups of pupils. Young carers were one of the distinct groups the children highlighted.⁵⁰

Following the conclusion of the ‘Big Listen’⁵¹, Ofsted should ensure its new education inspection framework is updated to include young carers. Specifically

49 ‘The common inspection framework: education, skills and early years’, Ofsted, 2015 (Now withdrawn)

50 ‘Hearing feedback, accepting criticism and building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen’, Ofsted, 2024

51 Ofsted Big Listen – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

as part of the proposed new inclusion inspection criterion, it should set out how it will review the identification of young carers and support for their attendance, attainment and wellbeing as part of inspections. Ofsted should also work with young carer services, local authorities and schools to agree what information Ofsted should specifically request, and to decide on the metrics that should be used to determine how well a school or college is supporting its young carers.

Ofsted's new 'Ofsted Academy' should include training for its education inspectors about young carers and the issues they experience within education.

In addition, Ofsted should ensure that inspections of a local authority's children's services consider how different groups of young carers are identified and supported. This should include access to assessments and support for younger young carers, young carers with their own health needs and young carers who are electively home-schooled.

Given the educational inequalities experienced by young carers, Ofsted should ensure that the voices and experiences of young carers are represented in its new inclusion and attendance/behaviour expert reference groups.



Conclusion

This report clearly highlights the significant impact caring responsibilities can have on a young carer's education and longer-term opportunities.

Young carers are experiencing a wide range of issues. These range from the challenges associated with balancing caring with learning, to financial barriers to difficulties accessing the right support. But it is the compelling evidence around young carers' absence from school which makes the strongest argument for young carers to be considered as a specific group of pupils in all educational policy.

Many education providers are doing their utmost to help their young carers. But there is still far too much inconsistency. Too many schools are not able to provide the level of support that is wanted or needed.

The Young Carers Pupil Premium would provide schools with much-needed resource to provide wellbeing, pastoral and academic support to the young carers identified in their school. Almost half of young carers at secondary school were persistently absent last year. This helps explain why young carers are under-represented in both higher education and employment. This is not inevitable and must not be allowed to continue if we want to remove the barriers to opportunities for all young carers.

England is the only country in the UK without any national model of financial support for young adult carers in post-16 education. With evidence showing under-representation in higher education, lower attainment at A Level and significantly worse mental health outcomes for young adult carers, this is an issue which the Government must act on urgently.

Adding young carers to the school census was a welcome move from the Department for Education. It is providing much-needed national insights into educational outcomes for young carers. But we now need the new Government to set out its plans to significantly improve recording in the school census. It should also do more to remove the postcode lottery of support for young carers.

One of the UK Government's five stated missions is to break down the barriers to opportunities for all young people and break the link between background and success. This report clearly shows that without urgent action at both national and local level, the Government will likely fail in achieving this mission. If this happens, we risk failing a whole generation of young people, depriving them of the fair future that they deserve.

Appendix 1

– Who we heard from

Evidence was provided by the following groups:

24,993

pupils

(VotesforSchools polling) and

8,231

teachers

(Teacher Tapp polling)

65

young carer services

(52 in England, 11 in Scotland, 1 in Northern Ireland and 1 in Wales)
(Online survey, online focus groups and individual interviews)

38

schools/colleges

(England) (Online survey, online focus groups and individual interviews)

423

young carers and young adult carers

(390 in England, 14 in Wales, 11 in Northern Ireland and 8 in Scotland)
((Online survey (282) and in-person consultation activities (141))

24

parents

(23 in England, 1 in Scotland)
(Online survey)

14

local authorities

(13 in England, 1 in Scotland)
(Online survey, online focus groups and individual interviews)

14

other stakeholders

(including academics and other charities) (England) (Online survey and online focus groups)

Appendix 2

– Modelling of a Young Carers Pupil Premium

We have set out costings below for modelling of a Young Carers Pupil Premium over the next five years. These different costings are based on differing numbers of young carers being recorded. A caveat to this modelling is that it has been produced based on the first two years of school census data, when more than 70% of schools recorded zero young carers. Improvements in identification and recording of young carers are therefore likely to push the overall cost of the policy upwards. This will require ongoing review.

Model 1 – the cost to implement a Young Carers Pupil Premium now

To introduce a Young Carers Premium for the 2024/25 academic year, the cost would be **£17.4m**. This is based on **51,094** young carers being identified across year groups reception to year 11 in state schools in England in the 2023/24 academic year⁵², multiplied by a Young Carers Premium rate of £340 (the rate of the Service Pupil Premium in 2024/25)⁵³.

52 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics#dataBlock-d0b6acc0-51de-4d0a-b75c-d5ac59f54d07-tables>

53 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium#:~:text=Pupils%20in%20state%2Dfunded%20schools%20in%20England%20attract%20the%20service,2023%20to%202024%20financial%20year>

Model 2 – the cost of a Young Carers Pupil Premium based on a 37% increase in the number of young carers being recorded each year

There was a 37% increase in the number of young carers recorded in the 2024 school census compared with 2023, in year groups reception to year 11. We have modelled what the cost would be over the rest of this parliament if the increases in the number of young carers being recorded persisted at the same rate. This scenario also assumes:

- The rate of the Young Carers Pupil Premium increases in line with HM Treasury's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators in future years beyond 2024/25.⁵⁴
- The size of the overall pupil population changes in line with the Department for Education's pupil projections.⁵⁵

Using this approach, the cost by 2028/29 would be **£89.6m**. This is based on **246,196** young carers being recorded and a Young Carers Pupil Premium worth £364. This would equate to 3.2% of pupils being recorded as young carers by the end of this parliament which is likely to still be an underestimate of the true number, based on a range of other sources set out below.

Academic Year	Number of young carers (in year groups reception to y11)	% of pupil population recorded as young carers	Young Carer Premium cost
2024/25	70,220	0.9%	£23,874,682
2025/26	96,307	1.2%	£33,185,678
2026/27	131,514	1.7%	£46,107,766
2027/28	179,069	2.4%	£63,955,879
2028/29	246,196	3.2%	£89,630,272

⁵⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gdp-deflators-at-market-prices-and-money-gdp-march-2024-quarterly-national-accounts>

⁵⁵ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-pupil-projections>

Model 3 - the cost of a Young Carers Pupil Premium based on up to 10% of pupils being recorded as young carers by the end of this parliament

There is significant variation in the likely number of young carers depending on the source and methodology:

- 53,975 (0.6%) of pupils were recorded in the 2024 school census (all ages – or 0.7% across reception to year 14)
- 96,755 children (1.2%) in England aged between 5 and 16 were identified in the 2021 England and Wales Census.
- Research by BBC News and the University of Nottingham suggested that there are 800,00 secondary-aged young carers in England.⁵⁶ This would equate to 22% of secondary-aged pupils being young carers.

For older young carers, recent data has shown prevalence rates of around 10%. A City St George's, University of London/UCL study of UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKLHS) data found that 9.8% of young people aged between 16 and 18 were young carers⁵⁷, while Sutton Trust's COSMO study found the prevalence to be 12%.⁵⁸

Given the variety of prevalence rates, we have modelled the potential costs based on up to 10% of pupils being recorded as young carers. As for model 2, our estimate is for the end of this parliament (2028/29) and assumes that the pupil population changes in line with DfE pupil projections over this period and the value of the premium rises in line with GDP deflators.

56 <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2018/september/children-england-care-sick-family.aspx#:~:text=New%20figures%20from%20BBC%20News,admitting%20to%20being%20young%20carers.>

57 Letelier, A., McMunn, A., McGowan, A., Neale, B., & Lacey, R. E. (n.d.). Understanding Young Caring in the UK Pre- and Post-COVID- 19: Prevalence, Correlates, and Insights from Three UK Longitudinal Surveys.

58 <https://cosmostudy.uk/latest/cosmo-data-provides-new-insights-into-the-lives-of-young-carers>

Potential costs of a Young Carers Pupil Premium

% of pupil population recorded as young carers	Number of young carers (in 2028/29) (in year groups reception to y11)	Cost of Young Carers Pupil Premium (£) (in 2028/29)
0.7%	50,116	£18,245,345
1%	75,890	£27,628,596
2%	151,780	£55,257,192
3%	227,670	£82,885,788
5%	379,450	£138,142,979
10%	758,900	£276,285,959

The Sutton Trust and UKLHS studies were both in relation to older young people aged between 16 and 18. It is therefore more likely that the prevalence rate for primary and secondary schools combined would be in the range of 5% to 10%. The exact figure will depend on how broadly a school defines a young carer.

A prevalence rate of 5% would equate to an annual cost of **£138.1m** by the end of this parliament, based on **379,450** young carers being recorded in year groups reception to year 11, who would receive a premium worth £364.



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