

1. Aims, values and principles

The role of the Young Carers' Team is to:

- Promote awareness of young carers, the challenges they face, and the resources that can assist them
- Identify young carers so that they can receive appropriate resources
- Assess young carers whose role is more complex, and offer direct support to those who are undertaking inappropriate caring tasks
- Work collaboratively with Children's Social Care and Education and Early Help colleagues, so that wider family needs are identified and supported as appropriate

The Young Carers' Team works in accordance with the Dorset Children Thrive Principles:

- Puts children and families first
- Gets it right first time
- Makes services easy to access
- Develops our skilled and confident workforce
- Provides good quality, efficient services
- Measures success

This protocol supports the [Guidance for Identifying Young Carers](#). Whereas that document is focused on the core pathway for the team's work, this document sets out the wider resources and procedures that support the pathway, as well as the processes to be followed by those working with those identified as young carers

2. Ensuring we hear the voice of the child

Hearing, and responding to, the voice of the child is key to our work. Therefore, team members will take steps to ensure that they consistently create opportunities for the child to identify and voice their wishes. Team members, and the Team Manager, will use reflective practice and supervision to challenge themselves and one another to ensure that the needs of the child are always at the heart of our practice.

When completing the Multi-Dimensional Assessment of Caring Activities (MACA) and the Positive and Negative Outcomes of Caring (PANOC) assessment, team members should always seek to speak with the child separately from their parents and other professionals, so that the child can speak openly. Where the child faces additional difficulties in making their

views and wishes known, the Young Carers' Family Worker will offer them access to independent advocacy.

3. Team structure and resources

The Young Carers' Team comprises Young Carers Family Workers. The work of the Young Carers Family Workers is primarily focused on assessing the needs of young carers and providing formal support to those in greatest need. This support might consist of:

- Visits to the family home
- One-to-one support in school or the community
- Access to a break from their caring responsibilities
- Advocating on behalf of the young person with other agencies and professionals including schools

In addition, Dorset Children's Services commissions Carer Support Dorset to provide a young carer registration service, signposting, and a range of support activities.

4. Meeting the statutory requirements

Section 3(1) of the Young Carers (Needs Assessments) Regulations 2015 requires that:

'A local authority must ensure that any individual carrying out a young carer's needs assessment on their behalf—

- (a) is appropriately trained;
- (b) has sufficient knowledge and skill to be able to carry out that assessment; and
- (c) is an appropriate person to carry out the assessment having regard to the young carer's circumstances, in particular the young carer's age, sex and understanding.'

We meet these requirements through the following procedures:

- New team members will be subject to robust recruitment and selection process, in line with the Safer Recruitment Guidelines.
- All Young Carer Family Workers are provided with a robust induction process to ensure understanding of the correct processes for supporting young carers and the wider context of Children's Services. This induction includes a mixture of virtual and in person training, team meetings,

shadowing, time with line managers and introductions to other relevant professionals and organisations.

- Beyond induction, team members are supported to access continuous professional development. This will include a comprehensive learning and development offer from Dorset Council, including specific training for Children's Services Staff. Where appropriate, team members can also access specific training opportunities relating to working with young carers.
- Alongside this, team members will have monthly reflective supervision meetings. The team are also supported by team meetings to raise practice matters and any issues and concerns.
- Assessments will be allocated to team members based on the circumstances of the child and their family and the ability and capacity of the team member to meet their needs.
- All Young Carers Family Workers have access to a range of professional development through the Learning and Development Team and the PDSCP training programmes. In addition, staff are supported to access specialist learning and development opportunities relating to young carers when there is the opportunity to do so.

5. Assessing the needs of young carers - tools (MACA and PANOC) and timelines

Once a Young Carers Family Worker is allocated an open assessment from the Early Help Hub, they will contact the young person and the parent within 5 working days of allocation. The assessment should be completed within 20 working days of the allocation.

During the visit, the Young Carers Family Worker will seek to establish whether the young carer is carrying out household tasks beyond what would reasonably be expected, or tasks which would be considered caring (see *Guidance for Identifying Young Carers*, 5.2 for more details). This will include completion of the MACA and PANOC assessments, as well as ensuring they speak to the child and parent separately to do so.

The young person and their family will usually be informed of the outcome of the assessment at the time it is completed. If this is not possible, the child or young person and their family will be told within 5 working days of the assessment taking place.

6. Working alongside social care colleagues

The team will work within the principles of Dorset Children Thrive at all times. This includes a commitment to, and responsibility to, ensure relevant information on the young carer and their family is shared with other professionals supporting the family.

It is likely that many young carers will be open to either Education and Early Help or Children's Social Care prior to their assessment as a young carer. Young Carers Family Workers will ensure they liaise with any professionals working with the family, attend any relevant meetings regarding the family, and contribute to any plans where appropriate.

7. Identification of the Need for Additional Help

Where a young carer is being supported by a Young Carers Family Worker, and the need for additional help is identified, the Young Carers Family Worker will discuss this with a Team Manager or Service Manager. Where the Young Carers Family Worker can signpost to a relevant service or organisation, this will be done directly with the family.

However, where the need for family support has been identified, the Young Carers Family Worker will obtain consent from the family and then contact the Early Help Hub to discuss the family's needs with a duty family worker. If agreed, the duty family worker will process the Early Help Involvement Request and assign to the relevant locality team.

8. Managing Safeguarding Concerns

Where the Young Carers Family Worker has safeguarding concerns for the well-being of a young carer, or other children within the family, they should discuss this with a Team Manager or Service Manager to agree next steps.

In all managing safeguarding concerns, the Young Carers Family worker should discuss these concerns with the parent(s) to notify them that these concerns are being escalated except where to do so may place the child or young person at risk of significant harm.

All concerns will be well documented especially where the safeguarding concerns stem from the caring duties the child or young person is undertaking. In this situation, the Young Carers Family Worker should clearly

document which duties are impacting on their well-being and what this impact is, referring to the MACA and PANOC if appropriate.

If the family are open to Education and Early Help or the Children who are Disabled Team, these concerns should be discussed with the allocated Family Worker or Social Worker, or their Team Manager, to agree the next steps. Where the need to Step Up is identified, this will be done by the allocated Family Worker or CWAD Social Worker.

Where the family is open to Children's Social Care, the Young Carers Family Worker will liaise with the allocated Social Worker, or their Team Manager, to share the concerns they have, agree next steps, and document these conversations.

If the child, or their family, are not open to another professional then the Young Carers Family Worker will contact the Children's Advice and Duty Team to discuss these concerns and agree next steps.

9. Liaison with schools

There is considerable evidence to show that being a young carer can have an impact on educational outcomes. Amongst other things, being a young carer can affect a child or young person's school attendance, their sleep patterns, their ability to concentrate or to complete homework.

It is vital, therefore, that, wherever possible, Young Carers Family Workers link with the schools of the young carers they support. Consent to share information with the school should be obtained when the assessment is being carried out. If consent is withheld for any reasons, the Young Carers Family Worker should seek to understand any concerns the young person or their family may have and try to persuade them of the advantages of sharing this information with the school.

The Young Carers Family Workers should also ensure that schools report on any young carers as part of the school census.

10. Transition to Adulthood

Many young carers will continue to be young carers as they enter adulthood, and their caring responsibilities will impact on significant life choices such as post-16 education and training, going to university and living independently.

Work is ongoing on a comprehensive transition pathway for young carers aged 16 upwards but in the interim the Young Carers Family Workers should work to the following.

Before the end of year 10, the Young Carers Family Worker should have an initial discussion about becoming an adult, including any thoughts on post-16 education options. They should also contact the Carer Support Dorset Young Carer Coordinator to plan an introduction. They will develop a more detailed transition plan that considers the young carers education and career aspirations and plans for living independently. However, the Young Carers Family Worker will remain the lead professional until the young carer reaches the end of academic year 13.

As an adult, all eligible Carers are entitled to a Carers Assessment but are encouraged to access the preventative support and services from Carer Support Dorset.

If the Carer is likely to continue to have a medium or high impacting caring role into adulthood, a Carers Assessment may be required, the preventative support they already receive will form the basis of any support plan. The Young Carers Family Worker will contact the Adult Social Care Area Practice Manager to ensure a warm handover is arranged into the Directorate.

The Carers Assessment may lead to more input other referrals, such as:

- Occupational Therapy
- Care technology, equipment, or other home adaptations
- Referrals for benefits advice or signposting to additional help and support
- Short Breaks Service (replacement care for the adult they are caring for provided by CQC regulated providers to include personal care for up to 20 hours a quarter)

In addition, young adult carers can also access the following in their role as a carer:

- **Carer Support Dorset support** – including free training, support groups, befriending, access to counselling, and referrals for breaks, for example, in a caravan (Leonardo Trust) or CareFree breaks.
- **Rethink** – Dorset Carers Service (for those who are caring for someone with mental health illness) which includes access to a respite fund and counselling offer.
- **Dorset Carers Card** - provided by Forward Carers and known as 'Carer Friendly ID Card' as National scheme.

- **Counselling** - offer for up to 6 weeks and initial session from The Leonardo Trust (via referral from Carer Support Dorset, Rethink or Adult Social Care)
- **Wider services from Dorset Council** - such as assisted bin collection and mobile library service.
- **Carers Case Workers** - support Carers where there is complexity or safeguarding which may include where the carer is not coping with their caring role or their relationship with the cared for person is challenging.
- **Online self-help platform Bridgit** - is available to access 24/7 for the period of the 12 month pilot to May 2024. This also provides an opportunity to start a Carers Assessment which is submitted to Adult Social Care.
- **MYTIME Young Carers Employability Programme** - provides young carers with careers advice, mentoring and the opportunity to hear from inspirational speakers. Some brilliant partners are involved including The Colour Works Foundation. Young carers on the course will continue to receive the support of MYTIME Young Carers until they are 26 years old.

11. Visits

Once assessed, young carers being supported should be seen in person at least once every 12 weeks. This can be in the family home, in school or in the community. Attendance at an activity would also be included as contact.

Where a young carer does not want contact this frequently this should be recorded in the chronology and noted with the line manager as part of supervision.

12. Annual reviews

Annual reviews should be completed within 13 calendar months of either the initial Young Carers Assessment or the previous Annual Review using the Annual Review workflow on Mosaic. This includes should completion of a new MACA and PANOC assessment to understand the extent and impact of the caring role and whether this has changed in the previous year.

13. Visits or contact outside the family home

For many young carers it may be best to see them outside the family home either individually, or alongside other young carers. This is both to provide a break from caring and to support the young person to be able to speak freely.

Where this is done outside of school, such as taking a group of young people to do an activity or on a one-to-one basis, the Young Carers Family Worker should undertake a risk assessment which is proportionate to the activity. For low-risk activities such as a visit to a coffee shop, or a walk around the local park then a mental assessment can be done considering the young person's age and any previous safeguarding concerns.

Where there any higher level of risk then a written risk assessment is needed. This might include any physical activities, or where the young person may be on their own for a period of time, such as a bowling trip, or walk on the beach. The risk assessment should identify any risks, their likelihood, and the possible severity, as well as any measures to mitigate the risk.

All Young Carers Family Workers are required to have an up-to-date Driver Risk Assessment and business use which includes the transportation of children in their car insurance.

14. Closing cases

There are circumstances where a child or young person would be closed to the Young Carers Service.

When a young person reaches end of Year 13 - Many young carers have a long-term significant caring role and while this continues, they will be supported by a Young Carers Family Worker. Once they reach the end of Year 13 the young carer will be closed to the Young Carers Team. The Team Manager or Service Manager should ensure that, where the young person will continue to provide a caring role, the transition process described in section 9 has been followed.

When the Annual Review identifies that the carer role has reduced or that the young person is no longer providing a carer role – As part of the annual review, the Young Carers Family Workers will carry out an updated MACA and PANOC assessment. If this determines that the young person no longer carries out a significant caring role, then the Young Carers Family Worker will close the case. They should also determine whether the young person is carrying out any caring role and where none is identified they should inform Carer Support Dorset to remove the young person from the Carers Register.

When the cared for person dies – sadly for some young people the person they care for will die, ending their caring role. For these young people support should continue 3 to 6 months to enable the Young Carers Family Workers to continue to provide support and identify any additional support the young

person and their family may need. The Team Manager or Service Manager should ensure that a plan is in place for the family before the closure is completed. Carer Support Dorset will continue to offer support for up to 12 months.

15. Recording on Mosaic, including Young Carer activities

Contact with young carers will be recorded on Mosaic, including attendance at activities. These are recorded through Visit for Young Carer form, which enables the Young Carers Family Worker to record different types of contact include a home visit, a school visit, participation in an activity and electronic communication.

Contact with parents or other professionals involve, either in person or electronically, should be recorded as a case note.

16. Measuring success

Measuring success for young carers poses some interesting challenges as they are a very diverse group of children and young people. Many of them will be supported by the Young Carers Team for many years, they come from very varied family circumstances and a positive outcome for one young carer would not be relevant for another.

As a minimum we would strive to achieve the following for all young carers:

- Young carers are safe and that their caring role does not prevent them from thriving.
- Young carers can access help and support for the caring role and other related needs.
- Young carers can access education and learning in order fulfil their potential.
- Young carers experience good physical and emotional wellbeing including a break from their caring role.
- Young carers that will continue to have a caring role into adulthood have support as they become adults.

Beyond this, success will be defined by the young carer and their support worker. This might be by achieving small milestones or observation of improvement which Young Carers Family Worker record. This might include but is not limited to:

- Engagement in activities and courses
- Making new friendships
- Improved self-esteem (feeling more positive about themselves)
- Demonstrating more confidence in their own abilities
- Positive attitude about themselves/their caring role
- Aspirations for the future
- Improved appearance (including personal care)
- Turning up for activities and appointments on time
- Getting on well with other young carers and staff
- Working well with others (maybe difficult for young carers with additional needs)
- Smiling/laughing more
- Creating a CV
- Feedback from other professionals indicating improvement, e.g., with respect to conduct

The Annual Review carried out for each young carer represents an opportunity to reflect on progress and what the young carer may wish to improve on over the next year.