

Other tools and resources

-  www.ep-yc.org
-  www.youngcarers.ie
-  www.familycarers.ie

Young people can be referred to their GP for counselling and support.

Look Again, Think Again: A step-by-step model to develop a collaborative support programme for Young Carers in Irish Secondary Schools using School Care Team and Community Youth Work Groups

Daynes, R; Crosscare (2014)

A Study of Young Carers in the Irish Population

Fives, A. et al. (2009). Child and Family Research Centre, NUI Galway. Published by the Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs

Working with young people with caring responsibilities (young carers)

Chapter 12 of 'Access All Areas – a Diversity Toolkit for the Youth Work Sector' published by NYCI and Youthnet

Find out more about EPYC and young carers

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Young Carers in Ireland



Who are they?
Where are they?
How can we support them?



Who are Young Carers?



Young carers are people under the age of 18 who are providing care for a parent, sibling, friend or other close relation who has an illness including mental illness, a disability or a problem with substance misuse. Young carers provide support in their family by helping with taking on extra, usually adult responsibilities including dispensing medication, feeding, personal care, dressing, or making sure the bills have been paid. The level of care provided may vary depending on the family dynamic and the need of the person being cared for.

The 2014 HBSC School Survey (Ireland) reported 56,118, (or 11.3% of 10-17 year olds) to be providing care across Ireland

They also help the family in other ways, like looking after other brothers and sisters, shopping for food, doing extra washing, or preparing dinner.

A young carer is also a young person

How can you recognise a Young Carer?

Young carers look just like everyone else. You may or may not know if a young person in your group is a young carer. Their involvement in your group may be their only time away from their additional family responsibilities and feeling different. They may cherish the opportunity to feel “normal”.

Be aware that the young carer may not want you to “know” about their extra role. If they, or their guardian, haven't explicitly told you about their caring responsibilities, it may be better not to bring it up directly with the young person.

- There are some ways in which you may spot a young person in your group needs extra supports. These may include:
 - Being late, leaving early or frequently missing group meet ups.
 - Checking a mobile phone regularly for messages from home.
 - Being unable to commit to “extra” events.
 - Being tired, withdrawn, stressed, angry, isolated or frustrated.
 - Unusual pains and aches from the physical demands of their caring.

Why do young carers need extra supports?



Young carers often report positive aspects of their caring role. They often have strong family bonds, and know how to cope with difficult situations. They may learn skills their peers won't learn until later, like budgeting, communicating with professionals and medical language.

However, without support, young carers' educational achievement and social and emotional development can be significantly affected, with little time to do homework or socialise with friends. There can also be a significant impact on the young person's mental health and wellbeing. Young carers experience higher levels of stress and anxiety, and may have difficulty maintaining friendships. They may also suffer physically from their caring role.

The National Youth Strategy recognises that young people benefit from involvement in recreational and cultural opportunities, including youth work, arts and sports, and having safe spaces and places to develop.

Remember that caring isn't always a bad thing—more than 70% of young carers report good life satisfaction.

How can you support Young Carers?

It's really important for young carers to be able to have time away from their caring duties and to think of themselves, their wants and their needs. Ultimately, a break from caring helps them handle their caring role better. Here are some ways you might consider supporting young carers in your group:

- Use family caring as a topic for group discussion or as a planned session topic.
- Make it as easy as possible for young carers to be involved in your group – try not to have minimum attendance policies where possible and where you can, make allowances for lost time.
- Encourage creativity and mindfulness. It's useful for all of us!
- Create opportunities for young carers to talk to you. Let them lead.
- Be aware of supports available to young carers and help them through the access process. Young carers often know what they need, but not how to get it.
- Be a welcoming and safe space for young carers.
- Offer sessions on coping skills, resilience and managing stress.