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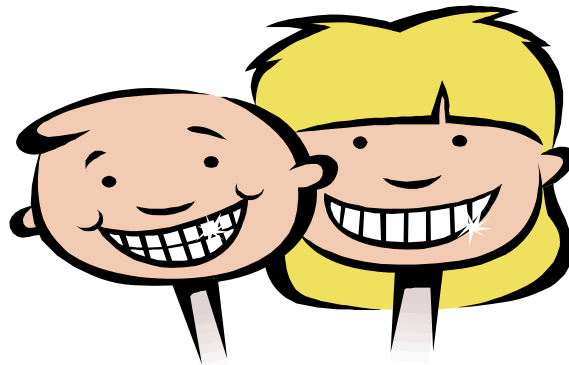


Help Point



“Working to Empower the Community”

Pamela Beswick - Project Director



Information Pack



Children's Fund

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Foreword

This information pack has been developed with the help of Lewisham Young Carers. It responds to the needs of Young Carers, identified by the government, for schools and other services to promote effective practice in supporting Young Carers. Whilst many of the session plans are based on school settings, the format allows them to be used within organisations and less formal settings.

This pack contains information, which aims to:

- Raise awareness of the issues of Young Carers and their responsibilities
- Increase understanding of the social and academic impact of caring
- Help identify Young Carers at school and suggest strategies to support their needs
- Provide a framework for discussion on mental health and disability issues

The information pack also includes three session plans which:

- Explain what a 'Young Carer' is and raise awareness of support available
- Provide a framework for discussion on mental health and disability issues
- Suggest activities, appropriate resources and opportunities for pupil assessment

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Introduction

Definition of a Young Carer

‘A Young Carer is a young person, under the age of 18, who has a caring responsibility for another family member who is either unwell (from either mental or physical illness) or disabled’

Department of Health (www.carers.gov.uk)

There are more than 51,000 Young Carers in the UK, these young people take on an extraordinary responsibility and often their school and social lives suffer as a result. It is absolutely vital that we support these young people particularly in safeguarding their social and educational development.

In February 1999 the government launched the National Carers Strategy. The strategy recommended that all schools raise awareness of Young Carers and implement basic strategies to support Young Carers in their school. This resource pack provides an excellent source of information and material for teachers and schools to do just that. This pack is based on a project which Carers Lewisham have been running in two local secondary schools; it provides practical advice based on considerable experience of working with Young Carers.

Schools are encouraged to make use of this pack and to work with pupils who have caring responsibilities to gain support through their school and local Young Carers Project.

Young Carers Statistics

The following statistics were taken from 'Young Carers in the UK – the 2004 report' Chris Dearden and Saul Backer.

- ❖ The average age of Young Carers in 2004 was 12; over half (57%) were in compulsory secondary education
- ❖ 56% are girls, 44% boys.
- ❖ 84% are white; African Caribbean Young Carers are the largest minority groups.
- ❖ 56% of Young Carers live in lone parent families.
- ❖ 22% of Young Carers miss school or experience educational difficulties (this figure has progressively decreased since recordings in 1995)
- ❖ Of people with care needs, 50% have physical health problems, 29% mental health problems, 17% learning difficulties and 3% sensory impairment
- ❖ Person with care need: mother 52%, father 14%, sibling 31%, grandparent 3%
- ❖ Caring tasks Young Carers are providing: domestic 68%, general 48%, emotional support 82%, intimate 18%, child care 11% and other 7%
- ❖ Hours caring per week:

5 hours or less	15%
6 – 10 hours	34%
11 – 15 hours	17%
16 – 20 hours	16%
21 – 30 hours	10%
31 – 40 hours	4%
41 – 50 hours	2%
Over 50 hours	2%

Young Carers Needs

Young Carers may experience mental ill health or physical ill health and a range of emotional and social problems, such as:

- Difficulties at school, with attendance, completing homework and in getting qualifications
- Lack of time for play, sport or leisure activities
- Tiredness, stress, irritability, depression, frequent bouts of illness and poor concentration
- Conflict between the needs of the person they care for and their own needs, leading to feelings of guilt and resentment
- Feeling there is nobody there for them, that professionals do not listen to them and are working only with the adult
- Lack of recognition, praise or respect for their contribution
- Feeling they are different from other young people and unable to be part of a group
- Feeling no one else understands his or her experience
- Having a 'parenting' role for a sibling and other responsibilities not usual for their age, for example Young Carers from minority ethnic groups may be expected to take responsibility for interpreting, regardless of whether they understand the issue
- Combining 'over maturity' and 'immaturity'
- Problems moving into adulthood, especially with finding work, their own home and establishing relationships.

Young Carers therefore need understanding, recognition, practical and emotional support and information. Individual needs will differ, but include:

- ❖ Someone to talk to, who will listen and try and understand their feelings
- ❖ Acknowledgement of their role
- ❖ Information about specific illnesses and disabilities
- ❖ Opportunities to have a social life and develop friendships outside the caring role
- ❖ Practical assistance
- ❖ Financial information and advice
- ❖ Information about services available from statutory authorities and voluntary organisations
- ❖ Someone to help when dealing with professionals
- ❖ Someone to interpret for the cared-for person
- ❖ A break from caring
- ❖ Contact with other young people in a similar situation.

Support from Professionals

The needs of the whole family should be taken into account by both the statutory and voluntary sectors. Individual Young Carers' needs should be provided between education, health and social services professionals, and Young Carers should not be expected to carry inappropriate levels of caring responsibility.

Professionals providing a service for adults should always ask about the tasks being carried out by children within the family.

There are legal obligations. In particular, under the Children Act 1989 and the Carers Act 1995, Young Carers can receive support from local and health authorities. Young Carers should be aware of their legal rights and feel safe to ask questions and request help whenever they need it.

Support in Schools

School attendance monitoring will help quickly identify pupils who are experiencing difficulties at home. These simple measures can be introduced to support pupils with caring roles:

- ✓ Allow them access to a telephone if they are concerned about the person they are caring for. This may help the pupil to concentrate while they are at school, and feel supported by the school. Pupils on this scheme could be given a special pass
- ✓ Being flexible about homework, course work and time keeping if a Young Carer is experiencing a crisis at home
- ✓ Providing a quiet place to do homework during the day
- ✓ Helping Young Carers catch up on missed work
- ✓ Challenging bullying or isolation of Young Carers
- ✓ Set up a Young Carers club in school
- ✓ Encourage the pupil to seek support through their Young Carers Project

- ✓ Raise awareness of young people having to care for others at home
- ✓ Supporting parents with mobility problems or other needs in visiting the school

Teachers

School staff can be one of the prime sources of support for Young Carers and should be aware of the signs of caring. Young Carers should feel comfortable about asking for support from a range of school staff, including their form teacher, pastoral care teacher, school nurse and Education Welfare Officer.

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

This session is designed to encourage participants to consider the responsibilities of a Young Carer and how these may be different or similar to a young person without a caring role.

<p>Expected Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>An understanding of the concept of a Young Carer</p> <p>Awareness of the range of responsibilities of Young Carers</p> <p>An understanding of the impact of caring on a young person</p> <p>Knowledge of the reasons why caring sometimes becomes the responsibility of younger family members</p> <p>Ability to suggest constructive ways in which Young Carers can be supported in school</p>
<p>Suggested Session Format and Activities</p>	<p>Reflect on students' current responsibilities</p> <p>Focus on the definition of a Young Carer</p> <p>Task: case studies of Young Carers</p> <p>The impact of caring</p> <p>Sources of support for Young Carers</p> <p>Evaluation sheet</p>
<p>Extension Activities</p>	<p>Identify key members of pastoral staff</p> <p>Discuss reasons why and the ways in which the school might help to support Young Carers</p> <p>Identify external sources of support</p>
<p>Assessment</p>	<p>Through feedback to case studies and evaluation forms, students should be able to:</p> <p>Identify the impact of caring level of responsibility carried by a Young Carer</p> <p>Suggest ways in which the school can support Young Carers</p> <p>Identify themselves as a Young Carer, if they wish to do so</p>

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Activity Sheet 1 – Responsibilities

What responsibilities do young people of our age have:

At home?	At School?	Elsewhere?

Do all young people have the same responsibilities?

What responsibilities might a Young Carer have?

What is a Young Carer?

Can you produce a definition of a Young Carer?

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Activity Sheet 1 – Responsibilities – Support Sheet

Begin the session by examining the responsibilities of the participants, providing them with the opportunity to discuss this in small groups. Consider responsibilities which may occur at home, school or within other situations/environments. The group can then feedback and discuss the question 'do all young people have the same responsibilities'?

The session then moves on to examine the possible responsibilities of a Young Carer. These may include the responsibilities highlighted earlier, but also more specific items relating to a Young Carer. Again examine the responsibilities within different situations/environments.

Finally ask the group to come up with a definition of a Young Carer. They may want to do this in small groups and then feedback. Use information sheet 1 for the standard definition.

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Activity Sheet 2 – Case Studies

Read your case study carefully and then complete the table below.

What responsibilities does the Young Carer have?			
How do you think the Young Carer might feel about their caring role?			
What problems or issues might the Young Carer experience due to their caring role:			
At School?	With their friends?	With finding leisure time ?	In the future?

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Case Study A

Kirsty -12

Kirsty lives with her mum and her younger brother David aged 7. Her Mum and dad separated two years ago, during which time Kirsty's mum has started to suffer from severe arthritis and asthma.

On bad days, Kirsty's mum is so ill she finds it difficult to walk short distances from one room in the house to another, and climbing the stairs can be impossible.

Kirsty has often had to call out an ambulance for her mum, especially at times when she has fallen or has had a severe asthma attack.

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Case Study B

David -10

David lives with both his mum and dad, but has no brothers or sisters. His dad has a drink problem and his mum suffers with depression and is rarely able to get out of bed.

David's mum and dad argue nearly all the time. David always gets upset when he sees them like this, but knows that his dad has a problem, and that his mum is unwell.

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Case Study C

Melanie -14

Melanie is helping to care for her 17-year-old sister who has cancer. When the cancer was first diagnosed it was her mum that used to care for Mandy, but now her mum is back at work, Melanie does most of the caring until her mum gets back home.

Mandy is very weak -she finds it difficult to speak and struggles to walk.

Melanie gives her sister her medicine and feeds her when she gets home.

She also carries Mandy upstairs to the bathroom to get washed, or to her bedroom.

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Case Study D

John - 13

John lives with his mum and older brother, Steven, who has learning disability he is unable to concentrate on one thing, finds it hard to listen to other people or make them understand him and is always touching things he shouldn't.

When John gets home from school, his mum does the shopping, but John has to care for Stephen and this can be exhausting. John is always having to keep an eye on what his brother is doing once or twice John has managed to stop Stephen from hurting himself

Session 1: Young Carers and Their Responsibilities

Activity Sheet 2 – Case Studies – Support Sheet

In small groups the participants should examine a case study and complete the table on activity sheet 2. Each group should then feedback on their case study and discuss the different situations and how this may affect the responsibilities as well as the problems of the Young Carers.

Use information sheet 2 to support this activity.

Session 2: Mental Health & Disability

What do you know about mental health and disability?

This session is designed to encourage participants to consider their views of mental ill health and disability, by inviting them to compare and reflect on their perception, and social attitudes towards people with disabilities and mental ill health. These views will then be used to examine the wide-ranging impact on young people who have responsibility to care for someone with a disability or mental ill health.

Expected Learning Outcomes	<p>An understanding of the difference between mental and physical health</p> <p>Knowledge of the factors that contribute to mental ill health and disability increase understanding of the concept of “normality”</p> <p>Awareness of social taboos and perceptions of mental health and disability</p> <p>An understanding of how a young person may be affected by caring for someone with a disability or mental illness</p>
Suggested Lesson Format and Activities	<p>Raise awareness of mental ill health and disability</p> <p>Explore students’ perceptions of mental ill health and disability</p> <p>Define mental ill health and disability</p> <p>Tasks: What do we know about mental ill health? What do we know about disability?</p> <p>Problems for Young Carers</p>
Extension Activities	<p>Focus on ways of promoting positive images of disability and mental health in the school community</p> <p>Look at aspects of bullying, exam stress, peer pressure and how this can impact on mental health</p> <p>Identify external sources of support for Young Carers</p>
Assessment	<p>Through feedback to “true/false” statements and input into class discussions</p>

Session 2: Mental Health & Disability

Activity Sheet 1 – Awareness Raising

In small groups or pairs, discuss the following questions:

1. How do we tell when someone has a disability?

Write a definition of disability

What sort of support might a person with a disability need?

2. How do we tell when someone is suffering from a mental illness?

Write a definition of mental illness.

What support might a person with a mental illness need?

How easy would it be for a Young Carer to provide the support required for someone with a disability or mental illness?

Session 2: Mental Health & Disability

Activity Sheet 1 – Awareness Raising – Support Sheet

In small groups or pairs, ask the participants to consider the questions on activity sheet 1. You may want to address both disability and mental illness together or feed back after each topic area.

Disability

Feedback: Can we always tell? Is it easy to recognise?

Discuss the common factors highlighted in the groups definitions and compare this to the standard definition found on information sheet 3.

Discuss and feedback on the types of support highlighted by the groups

Mental Health

Discuss in the same way as disability.

Use information sheet 4 to support this activity.

The possible support required by an individual with a disability or mental illness should have been discussed. At the end of this activity, briefly examine if a young person i.e. Young Carer would be able to provide the support required.

Session 2: Mental Health & Disability

Activity Sheet 2 – Disability Quiz

What do we know about disability?

Tick the relevant box for each of the statements below. If, once you have finished, you have any ticks in the 'don't know' category, discuss them with the neighbouring group and try to place them in the true or false categories.

	True	False	Don't know
1. Most people with a disability are born with it			
2. If a person is disabled it means they are ill			
3. Someone with a disability can't be cured			
4. Most people with a disability are elderly			
5. A young person with a disability has to go to a special school			
6. You can always tell if someone has a disability			
7. People with disabilities are not allowed to work			
8. People who are blind can read books			
9. There are many different sorts of disabilities – not just physical ones			
10. People with disabilities want other people to do everything for them			

Session 2: Mental Health & Disability

Activity Sheet 2 – Disability Quiz – Support Sheet

1. Most people with a disability are born with it

FALSE: only 17% of people with disabilities were born with it. Most people who are disabled become so because of accidents or disease at some stage in their lives.

2. If a person is disabled it means they are ill

FALSE: it just means they are unable to carry out certain tasks, or find difficulty doing so.

3. Someone with a disability can't be cured

FALSE: it depends on the reason for the disability. Many disabilities can be improved with treatment or drugs or with technological support.

4. Most people with a disability are elderly

FALSE: people with a disability are found in all age groups e.g. 3% of all children under the age of 16 have a disability

5. A young person with a disability has to go to a special school

FALSE: many young people with disabilities go to mainstream schools. Just because a person is disabled doesn't mean they are not as clever as those who are able bodied.

6. You can always tell if someone has a disability

FALSE: some disabilities are not obvious. For instance, it's not possible to see if someone is deaf; and someone who has difficulty in walking may appear perfectly fit when sitting down.

7. People with disabilities are not allowed to work

FALSE: there are laws, which say that employers must hire people with disabilities. Many people who are disabled are just as able to work as anyone else.

8. People who are blind can read books

TRUE: they can read using Braille

9. There are many different sorts of disabilities -not just physical ones

TRUE: some people have a learning disability which means that they learn more slowly than others.

10. People with disabilities want other people to do everything for them

FALSE: people with disabilities want to be as independent as possible. The best way to help someone who is disabled is to let them do as much as possible for themselves.

Session 2: Mental Health & Disability

Activity Sheet 3 – Mental Health Quiz

What do we know about mental ill health?

Tick the relevant box for each of the statements below. If, once you have finished, you have any ticks in the 'don't know' category, discuss them with the neighbouring group and try to place them in the true or false categories.

	True	False	Don't know
1. Only adults suffer mental illness			
2. More men commit suicide than women			
3. 6 million people in the UK suffer from mental illness			
4. Alcohol and drug abuse are the main cause of mental ill health			
5. Epilepsy is a mental illness			
6. Bullying can sometimes cause mental health problems			
7. Depression is a mental illness			
8. People with mental illness sometimes say or do things they don't really mean			
9. Exercise can help stop people felling depressed			
10. One in four people will suffer from a mental health problem at some point in their life			

Session 2: Mental Health & Disability

Activity Sheet 3 – Mental Health Quiz – Support Sheet

1. Only adults suffer from mental illness

FALSE: surveys vary: figures between 5% and 10% of children and adolescents suffering from some form of mental ill problem. One study gives a figure of 4% of children requiring specialist services.

2. More men commit suicide than women

TRUE: one reason is thought to be because women are encouraged to share their feelings more than men, so men 'hold' their negative feelings.

3. 6 million people in the UK suffer from mental illness

TRUE: so mental illness is far from uncommon.

4. Alcohol and drug abuse are the main causes of mental ill health

FALSE: pressure, stress, suppression of feelings and a difficult family Backgrounds are the main causes of mental ill health, although alcohol and drug abuse can often have a negative effect on a person's mental health.

5. Epilepsy is a mental illness

FALSE: it is a physical health problem caused by electrical activity of cells in the brain. It is because of the way the body responds when a person has an epileptic fit/seizure that some people make the mistake of thinking that epilepsy has something to do with mental health.

6. Bullying can sometimes cause mental health problems

TRUE: a person can become depressed because they are always being bullied, and may find themselves struggling to cope with everyday life.

7. Depression is a mental illness

TRUE: over 4 million people suffer with depression in the UK. Everyone at some point in their life may feel depressed, but it is when such feelings leave a person struggling to cope with their everyday life that depressed feelings can lead to depression.

8. People with a mental illness sometimes say and do things they don't really mean

TRUE: sometimes the illness can affect how a person thinks, speaks and behaves to others.

9. Exercise can help to stop people feeling depressed

TRUE: during exercise the body produces endorphins, which make a person, feel relaxed and helps them feel less stressed.

10. One in four people will suffer from a mental health problem at some point in their life.

TRUE: so most people will probably know someone who is suffering from mental ill health

Session 3: Support

This session is designed to encourage participants to consider what support networks are available to them and Young Carer's and how they might be able to form part of a support network.

Expected Learning Outcomes	<p>An awareness of what support networks may be available to young people</p> <p>An understanding of what characteristics make someone a supportive individual</p> <p>Ability to identify possible support networks for Young Carers</p>
Suggested Session Format and Activities	<p>Identify individual support networks</p> <p>Discuss what support is available for Young Carers and how these may differ from a young person not in a caring role</p> <p>Discuss what characteristics make someone a supportive person</p> <p>Case Studies – map out the support network of various Young Carers, identifying the different types of support available</p>
Extension Activities	<p>Identify what support networks are available in the local area</p> <p>How can individuals offer support to Young Carers</p>
Assessment	<p>Through feedback on case studies and the ability to identify local support networks</p>

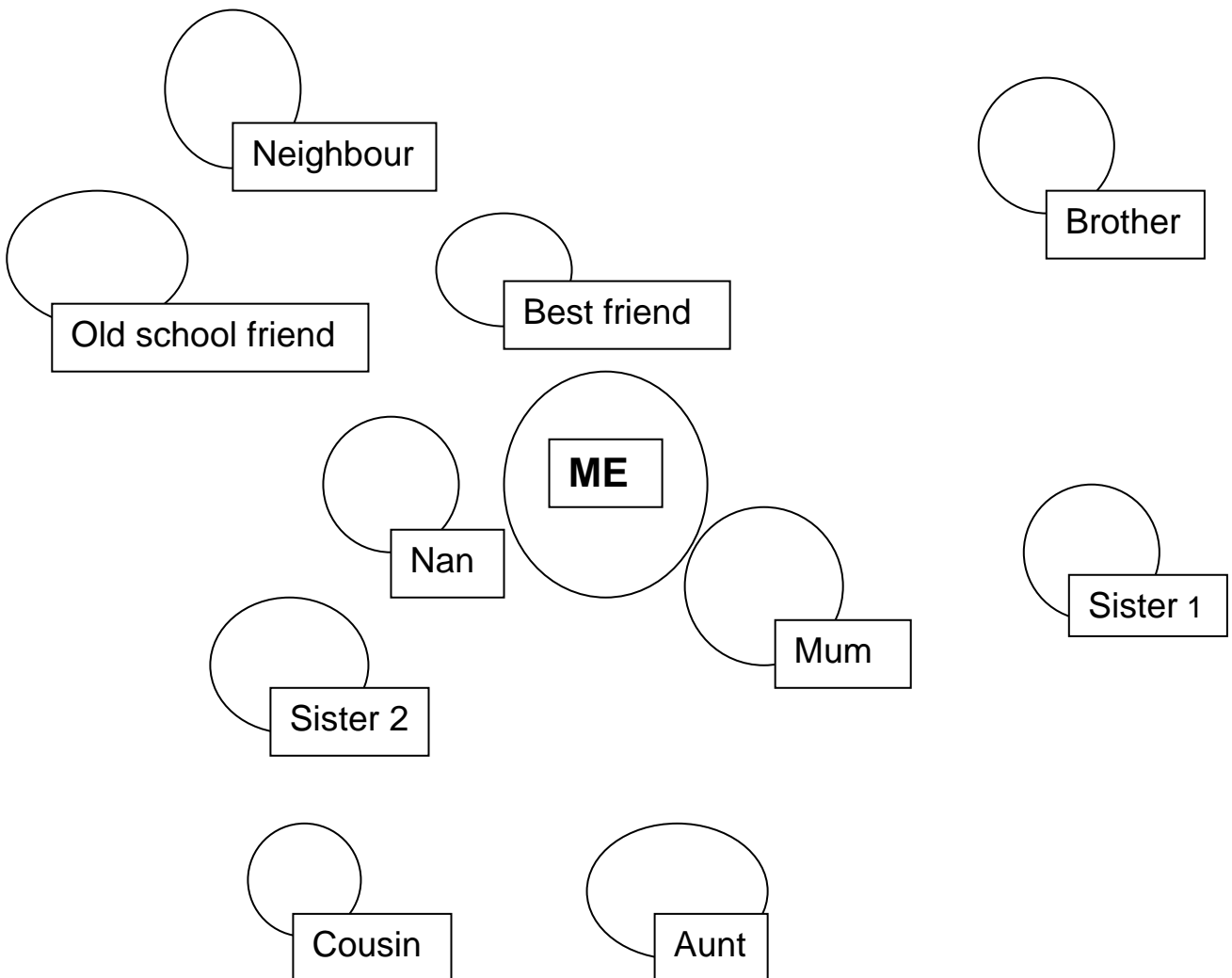
Session 3: Support

Activity Sheet 1 – Support Network – Example

MAPPING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK

The chart below shows how a person's support network can be illustrated.

1. Think of ten people you know
2. If the circle in the middle of the chart below represents you, place a series of ten circles either close to, or far away from yours, depending on how close you feel to the ten people you thought of.
3. Now illustrate your own support network.



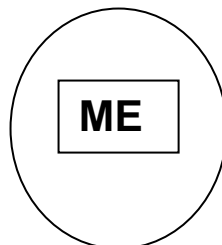
Session 3: Support

Activity Sheet 1 – Support Network

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3. Now illustrate your own support network.



Session 3: Support

Activity Sheet 1 – Support Network – Support Sheet

Initially there needs to be some discussion around the word 'support' and what it means to the group. This may also provide an opportunity for a discussion around possible areas of support.

Introduce and demonstrate the example network and use this as a base from which to work.

This task should be completed individually and it should be stressed that the activity is private and people will not be asked to share their responses unless they want to. Some participants may require additional support to highlight ten key people in the lives.

Session 3: Support

Activity Sheet 2 – Where I get support

Think about the reasons why you get on well with some people and not others.

In the 'positive' box below, write the reasons why you get on well with some people. For example you may get on well with someone because they are easy to talk to, or because they share the same interest or hobbies as you.

In the 'negative' box write the reasons why you find you don't get on well with other people. For example you may not trust them, or they may have different interests and hobbies from you.

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE

Imagine you are a Young Carer and wanted to speak to someone about a caring role

→ Using some words you have listed in the 'positive' box above write a description of the type of person you would be happy to speak to about your caring situation.

Session 3: Support

Activity Sheet 2 – Where I get support – Support Sheet

Again this task should be completed individually. Each participant should think about the information on their support network diagrams and the possible factors that affect how close an individual is to them within their support network. They should be able to think about what characteristics the 'ideal' person would have who they would be happy to talk to about a caring role.

This activity could then be followed by role-play, in which pairs of students try out a brief conversation in which the Young Carer they imagined for Task 2 tells their 'ideal' person about their caring situation.

Whole class feedback:

How did the 'ideal' person respond to what they were being told?

How easy was it for the 'carer' to tell someone about his or her situation?

Did/would anything help to make it easier?

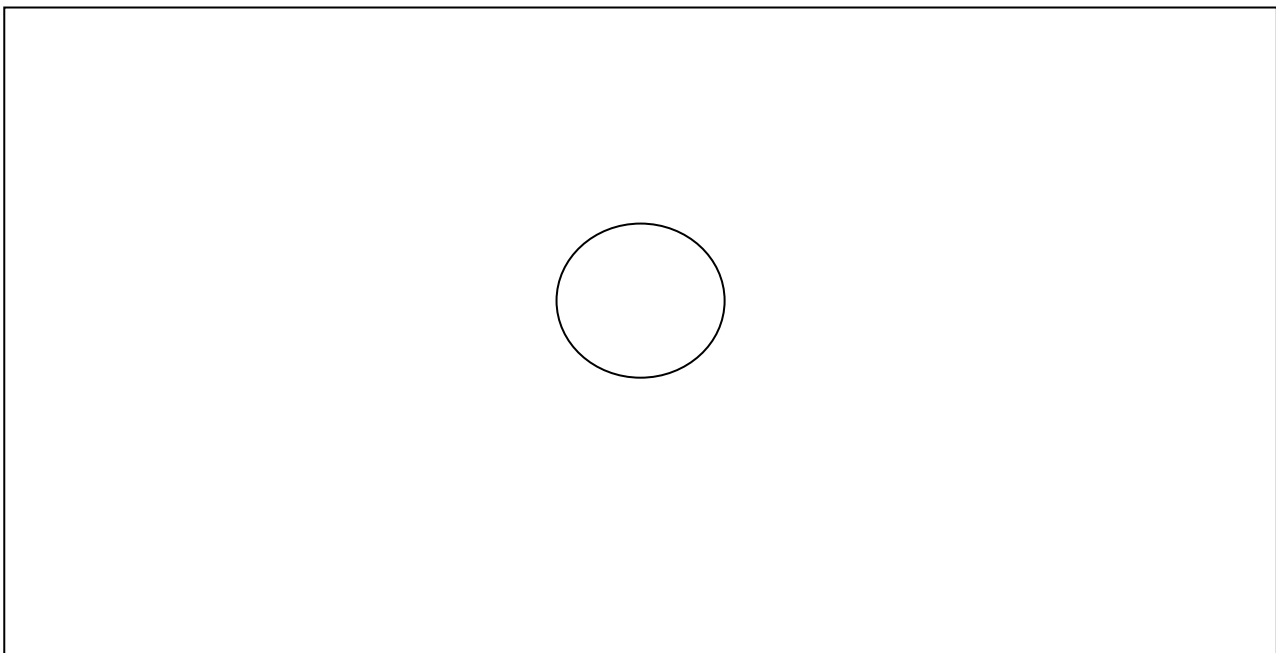
Session 3: Support

Activity Sheet 3 – Case Studies

Read your case study carefully and then complete the following tasks:

Make a list of all the people who helped the Young Carer in some way:

The circle in the middle of the box below represents the Young Carer. Illustrate their support network by placing the people on your list in the box, each in a separate circle. Place the circle close to the Young Carer if you think the person helped her a lot, or further away if you think the person only helped a little.



How useful was the help they received? Which was most useful?

Session 3: Support

Case Study A

Jasmine – 13

Jasmine is 13 years old. Her dad had a stroke just over a year ago, as a result, cannot move the right side of his body.

When her dad first had the stroke, Jasmine took a lot of time off school to care for him, and was at risk from falling behind with her class work. When Jasmine's tutor Mr Franks realised why she was not in school, he managed to get Jasmine a lot of help.

First of all Mr Franks spoke to the school's Education Welfare Officer, who visited Jasmine and her dad. He supported Jasmine in getting back to school and catching up with the work she had missed. The Education Welfare Officer also spoke to Kathy, the worker at the local Young Carers Project.

Kathy took Jasmine away on a four-day holiday, together with other Young Carers, so she could have a break from caring for her dad. Jasmine also met other Young Carers of all different ages, and this helped her to stop feeling so alone with her caring situation.

Session 3: Support

Case Study B

Stacey - 15

Stacey is 15 years old and lives with her mum who has a mental illness. When Stacey's mum was first ill, she didn't take any medicine the doctors gave her. Stacey became worried because her mum got more and more ill. She decided to speak to her school nurse about her mum, and the nurse spoke to her mum's social worker, Kev.

Sandra explained to Stacey the reason why her mum needed to take her tablets, when she needed to take them and the effects they may have. Sandra assessed how much Stacey cared for her mum by asking her what it was like looking after her mum, the things she does to help care for her and how her school work was being affected by her situation at home.

Sandra also gave Stacey details of her local Young Carers Project and spoke to her head teacher about her situation at home. The head, Miss Carter, was really supportive. She told Stacey to come and talk to her whenever she wanted someone to speak to, and has been really helpful - she has even said that Stacey can use the office phone to call her mum while she was at school, just in case she gets worried.

Session 3: Support

Case Study C

Steven - 10

Steven is 10 years old and lives with his mum and older brother Karl, who is 19. For the past 10 years Karl has suffered from an illness that has left him unable to walk, talk or feed himself.

Steven and his family get help in caring for Karl from the district nurse and occupational therapist, but Steven often helps to feed and dress Karl first thing in the morning. When he gets home from school, Steven sometimes takes Karl out in the wheelchair to see his friends or just talks to him about his day.

Steven sometimes gives himself a break each week by going to his local Youth Centre. He gets on well with one of the youth workers, Dave, and has spoken to him about his caring situation. Dave has offered Steven a lot of advice and support. He has recently given Steven details of his local Young Carers Project, and will be calling them up for support.

Steven is thinking about telling one of his teachers about his caring situation. He knows that if his teachers were aware he cares for his brother every night after school, they would be more understanding if he can't always finish all his homework.

Session 3: Support

Activity Sheet 3 – Case Studies – Support Sheet

“Where Young Carers get support”

This activity can be completed in a number of ways. The participants can be split up in to small groups, with each examining a case study and then providing feedback to the group. Or, the group can examine each case study in turn.

Make a list together of all the sources of support, which were available to the Young Carers in the case studies, and identify the different types.

Ask the participants/groups to then produce a ‘network diagram’ for the Young Carer, similar to the one they produced for themselves in activity 1. The groups have to identify the individuals who provided support the most and who only provided a small amount of support.

Discuss which sources of support were most helpful and why.

Which of these are available at school or within an organisation?

Definition of a Young Carer

'A Young Carer is a young person, under the age of 18, who has a caring responsibility for another family member who is either unwell (from either mental or physical illness) or disabled'

Department of Health (www.carers.gov.uk)

Frequent Effects of Children and Young People Providing Care

- ❖ Problems at school, with completing homework and getting qualifications.
- ❖ Isolation from other children of the same age and from other family members.
- ❖ Lack of time for play, sport or leisure activities.
- ❖ Conflict between the need of the person they are helping and their own needs, leading to a feeling of guilt and resentment.
- ❖ Feeling that there is nobody there for them, that professionals do not listen to them, and are only working with the adult.
- ❖ Lack of recognition, praise, or respect for their contribution.
- ❖ Feeling that they are different from other children and unable to be part of a group.
- ❖ Feeling that no one understands their experience.
- ❖ Problems moving into adulthood, especially with finding work, their own home and establishing relationships.
- ❖ Problems with bullying by other children, because of their caring situation.

Disability

Definition of Disability

'Disability is a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995)

When people think about physical and other disabilities it is often in the context of what a person is unable to do. Although help may be needed if a person is unable to perform certain physical tasks, not everyone with a disability requires care from a member of their family.

Not all disabilities are permanent, and most of those which are can be treated or ameliorated with treatment (e.g. drugs, physiotherapy) or technological aids (motorised equipment, computers etc) used to increase mobility and physical functions. A specially designed computer can help someone to speak, for example. And hearing aids are used by large numbers of people to overcome their hearing loss.

Most people who have a disability are keen to be as independent as possible, and to do whatever they can for themselves. When we meet a person with a disability it's useful to remember not to help them unless they ask us to. It's also a good idea not to make assumptions about what people with disabilities can or cannot do. Many people with disabilities are in full time employment, and others take part in sports: there's an Olympic contest every four years, for instance.

Mental ILL Health

Defining Mental ILL Health

'A mental health problem can refer to any problem that disrupts the way we think and feel, either temporarily, for example following a bereavement, or on a more severe and enduring basis'

Making it Happen: A Guide to delivering mental health promotion. Department of Health (2001).

Everyone has different levels of physical and mental health -most people know when they are physically unwell, but awareness of what constitutes good mental health can sometimes leave people struggling to recognise when they are suffering from a mental illness.

Mental illness covers a wide range of problems. All of us get depressed or anxious, especially after a distressing or traumatic event, like the death of a relative or a friend. But with mental illness, these feelings carry on for a long time and make it difficult to cope with everyday life. Because everyone is different, people have their own ways of reacting. So mental illness can cover anything from depression to hearing voices.

Anxiety and phobias

It's normal to feel anxious about taking exams or starting a new school.

Almost everyone is scared of something, whether it's looking down from a high building or going into crowded places. However, it's possible to suffer from anxiety or phobias so much that you no longer feel in control of your actions.

Information Sheet 4 continued

Depression

Most of us get depressed from time to time, but usually our feelings are related to a specific event and we find ways to get over it in time. But some people get so depressed that their whole life seems bleak and hopeless.

Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is caused by adverse chemical reactions in the brain, which affects the way a person thinks about himself or herself. They often feel as if they are being controlled or followed by someone else, and may be very afraid at times.

The most common causes of mental ill health are:

- Suppression of feelings.
- Stressful life events
- A difficult family background.
- Biochemistry and genes

People who suffer with a mental illness can sometimes get better, in the same way that someone can when suffering with a physical illness. However, as with a physical illness, if a person is unable to address or avoid the cause of the mental illness, they can often become more ill.

Positive mental health can be encouraged by a person learning to relax, learning to deal with difficult situations, setting goals, expressing their feelings, facing up to their problems or finding someone to talk to.

Effects of Caring for someone with a Mental Health Problem

It is because mental illness is often regarded as a 'taboo' subject that many carers, especially Young Carers, may find themselves being bullied if it is known that a relative of theirs has a mental illness. The person for whom they care may be suicidal or violent, or their moods may quickly change, and this can be particularly stressful and frightening. The impact of caring for someone with a 'mental illness can also give way to emotional exhaustion. '

Possible Issues Affecting Young Carers

What if I don't want to go to school?

Everyone has days when they don't want to go to school. Sometimes people know the reasons, sometimes they don't.

Possible reasons might be:

- Pressure to do things you don't want to do
- People being unpleasant
- Problems with friends
- Being bored
- Work is too hard
- Problems at home
- Not doing homework
- Problems with teachers

What can you do if you feel it's important to find someone to talk to?

It can help to be prepared:

What you would say? (Try writing it down first)

When would you say it (talk to someone when there not busy)

Take someone with you if you are nervous

Bullying

Bullying is an unhappy experience- certainly for the person being bullied but sometimes for the bully too. People can be bullied in different ways- through teasing, threats, physical attacks, spreading rumours...

Being bullied can make you feel horrible inside – as if there is something wrong with you. It is very important that you talk to someone you can trust. If no one knows, no one can help.

- Try not to be on your own – stay with other people.

- Write a diary of bullying and show it to a trusted adult
- Tell your friends or an adult
- Keep asking for help until things are sorted out
- If nothing works you may be able to change school.

Everyone worries about making friends even though they may look confident. Some people have lots of friends- others are happy with one or two. If you feel you don't have any it can be very lonely. It is also very common for friends to fall out.

Remember:

- It's easy to think no one likes you – if you don't talk to people they may think you don't like them.
- Sometimes you might feel different to other people.
- People can be on their own for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes through choice, sometimes not, it doesn't mean they aren't nice, or can't be a good friend.
- Stick up for your friends.

When you feel lonely it can feel like everyone has friends apart from you. It can make you feel bad about yourself, even though deep down you are nice.

Why not try some of these....

- Invite someone you think is nice to sit next to you.
- Smile, be friendly and show interest in others.
- Take things slowly friendships take time to build.
- Talk to someone you don't usually talk to
- Join a school club it is easier to make friends if they are doing same things as you.

Summary

We hope that you have found all or some of the enclosed information useful. Your comments and suggestions on the pack would be appreciated so we can continue to improve the support available to Young Carers.

If you would like more information on Signposts Young Carers project please contact:

Mandy McKnight
Signposts
58 Regent Road
Morecambe
LA3 1TE

01524 732807
079529800059

mandy@signposts.org.uk

or visit the Signposts website at www.signposts.org.uk

The project has services available across the Lancaster District.

Finally we would like to thank Carers Lewisham for their co-operation in setting up this pack.

YOUNG CARERS INFORMATION PACK FEEDBACK SHEET

1. How did you use this resource pack?

- A. Information only
- B. General awareness raising
- C. Awareness raising in school
- D. Other [please state]

2. How did you find the over all content of the pack?

- A. Very informative, well thought out and easy to understand
- B. Quite informative, although there could have been more information
- C. Complex, unclear and difficult to use
- D. Any other comments:

3. Has the pack given you:

- A. New information on young carers and ways to raise awareness and identify them?
- B. A general overview on young carers and ways to raise awareness and identify them?
- C. Little new information on identifying young carers and ways to raise awareness that you didn't already know?

4. Please state if there is anything that you would omit from the pack

5. Please state what you would include in the pack

School or Organisation:

Please return this form to Signposts Young Carers Project, 58 Regent Road, Morecambe, LA3 1TE



RU Under 18s

Do you help look after
someone at home?

Signposts Young Carers Project offers support to young people under 18 who may be helping to look after someone at home. This may be someone who is ill or/and disabled, has mental health, drug or alcohol problems.

The project offers:

- Time and space to talk
- Someone to listen
- Opportunities to meet with young people in the same situation
- Days out and holidays
- Advice and information
- Help to cope with the hassles at home and at school.

Where can I get more information?



Call or text Mandy McKnight on
07952980059
Or ring 01524 419021



Write to
Mandy McKnight
Signposts
58 Regent Road
Morecambe
LA3 1TE



Email: signpostsmarc@signposts.org.uk