

# SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS



**A GUIDE FOR GPS  
AND PRIMARY CARE  
TEAMS**

**Carers Trust Wales is part of Carers Trust, an ambitious national charity committed to improving support and services for unpaid carers by:**

- **Recognising and celebrating the essential contributions carers make**
- **Raising awareness of the barriers faced by carers of all ages**
- **Working with decision-makers to ensure that appropriate support is available to empower carers to live happy and fulfilling lives**

We work with Network Partners – local services that deliver direct support to carers – making the most of our collective experience, expertise and innovations.

This booklet has been funded by Welsh Government as part of the national Young Carers ID card project.

## **Contact us**



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## INTRODUCTION

This booklet is for GP surgeries and primary care teams to support growing understanding of the challenges children and young people who have caring responsibilities face and how they can best be supported in a primary care environment. It will also introduce the national Young Carers ID card model and what this may mean for your practice.

## WHO ARE YOUNG CARERS?

Young carers are children and young people under 18 years old who provide unpaid care to a family member or friend who has a physical or mental health condition, disability or addiction.

**Young carers undertake a range of activities which might include:**

- **Cooking, cleaning and other domestic tasks**
- **Emotional support**
- **Manual handling and physical support of others (sometimes including personal care)**
- **Storing and giving medicines**
- **Managing family finances**

There are thousands of young people across Wales who provide care for family members or friends. According to the 2011 census there are 21,611 young adult carers (aged 16-24) and 7,544 young carers (aged under 16) in Wales. More recently, the School Health Research Network survey found that almost 1 in 6 pupils in Wales' secondary schools have caring responsibilities.

## YOUNG CARERS' RIGHTS

All carers have the right to information, advice and assistance under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 which defines a carer as:

**“A person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or disabled child”.**

Carers do not have to live with the person they care for or care for a minimum number of hours to be considered a carer.

If a local authority believes that a young carer might have a need for support they have a duty to offer a Carers' Needs Assessment and to meet any eligible needs for support identified through it.

## THE NATIONAL YOUNG CARER ID CARD MODEL

Young carers have voiced many reasons for wanting an ID card, including:

- **To raise awareness of their responsibilities and to give formal recognition to their role**
- **To discreetly let people know about their caring responsibilities without having to share personal details repeatedly**
- **To give confidence to ask for help or understanding from professionals**

All local authorities across Wales have committed to making an ID card available for young carers by the end of financial year 2021/22. Many local authorities will look to launch the card or transition their existing scheme to the national model sooner than this. Some local authorities are early adopters of the scheme meaning they will make the card available in late 2020.

The ID cards may look different depending on which area the young carer lives in. However, all cards will have the national ID card logo which was designed by two young carers:

**It will also include:**

- **A photo of the young carer**
- **Their full name**
- **Their date of birth**
- **Details about the issuing local authority**



You can find up to date information about which local authorities have an ID card in place and how to contact them by visiting [carers.org/YCID](https://www.carers.org/YCID)

It is important to remember that not all young carers will have an ID card. They are voluntary, not compulsory. Therefore, whilst they can be a useful tool for pharmacists and pharmacy staff, policies and procedures should not demand that young carers wishing to collect prescriptions must have an ID card.

## TOP TIPS FOR RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS



When registering patients with your practice make sure that all patients, regardless of age, are asked whether they look after someone. It can be helpful to provide a description of what it means to be an unpaid carer as many people can wrongly assume that questions about carers relate to paid care workers



Make sure to consistently record within patient records when a young person identifies that they are a young carer. Young carers will be eligible for the flu vaccine as with all carers of older or disabled people who are particularly at risk of complications



Display information about caring, the support services available in your local area and how your practice can help carers of all ages within your surgery and online



Appoint a 'Carers Champion' or 'Carers Lead' within your practice to take responsibility for making sure your policies and everyday practices recognise the challenges carers face and help to support them



Consider the feasibility of developing a pathway for young carers and those they care for to book routine appointments outside of school/college hours. This is particularly important for young people who might have to attend a lot of medical appointments with the person they care for





Be aware that a young person might sit in on a consultation because of their caring role. As long as the patient consents to them being there, do not presume that the young person should be asked to leave when discussing sensitive or personal information. In some cases the young carer might be the only person providing support to your patient so it may be important that they are aware of any decisions that are made. If you have any safeguarding concerns you should refer to your standard safeguarding procedures or the National Safeguarding Team (NHS Wales): A guide for safeguarding adults and children at risk in general practice



Recognise that many young carers will be experts in the condition of the person they care for. It is important to respect their expertise and to work in partnership with them and your patient



Make sure you routinely ask young people if they have caring responsibilities, particularly if they are reluctant to accept referrals or treatments. Research shows that young carers are more likely than their peers to have mental and physical health problems or to have an additional learning need. They can also be reluctant to seek help for their own health and well-being because of prioritising the needs of the person they care for



Ensure your practice has up-to-date information about the support available to young carers via the local authority and young carers' service. This may include respite or replacement care to help them attend medical appointments



Get in touch with your local health board and local carers services to see if there is a scheme in your area to support GP practices to be more carer aware. Many local services will provide training, resources or outreach support to work with either your staff or directly with patients



