

To: Governing bodies of all schools and management committees of all units  
Autumn term 2008

*Stepney Primary School*



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## MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG CARERS

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Effective Attendance Practice in Schools: An overview of attendance guidance states that schools should have “support systems in place for vulnerable groups which provide, among other things, signposting and access to external support for parents and pupils” and “training for staff on specific needs of pupils eg young carers”. The impact of taking on an inappropriate caring role can include underachievement or absenteeism at school, mental or physical ill health.

### 2. SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 Young carers are children and young people (up to the age of 18) whose life is affected by looking after someone with a disability or a long term illness. The person they care for may be a parent, a sibling, another family member or a friend, who does not necessarily live in the same house as them. “Disability” refers to actual or perceived physical, sensory, emotional or learning impairment, long-term illness, HIV, drug or alcohol dependence, mental health problems, frailty or old age.
- 2.2 Young carers may have difficulties getting to school on time, no time/energy to do homework, difficulty in concentrating and may appear tired/distracted/preoccupied. They may also have emotional difficulties because they have had to grow up too quickly, often having to assume an adult role which distorts family dynamics and creates confusion/uncertainty for them as they struggle to find their place in the world. Socially, young carers miss out on forming relationships and peer friendships. They are unable to bring friends home and, because they are too worried or tired, are unable to relax and enjoy themselves.
- 2.3 Links between services to help young carers should be a priority. All agencies have a responsibility to identify children and young people who are acting as carers. Every effort should be made to provide support and help to lessen any adverse impact of caring.
- 2.4 The following appendices are attached to this report for further information:
- Appendix 1 – Legislation and guidance;
  - Appendix 2 – Sample school policy; and
  - Appendix 3 – Details of National Children’s Homes Young Carers Project
  - Appendix 4 - Barnardo’s Sibling Support Service

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 that the governing body ensures that a key member of staff is identified with responsibility for young carers.
- 3.2 that a school policy on young carers is developed and adopted.
- 3.3 that all staff be made aware of the needs of young carers.
- 3.4 that the school publicises information on the National Children's Homes Young Carers Project and Barnardo's Sibling Support Service.

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### **The Children Act 1989**

The Framework for Assessment of Children In Need and their Families, which gives guidance on S.17 of the Act, has a section on young carers which states that effective support will require “Good quality joint work between adult and children’s social services as well as co-operation from schools and health workers”..... (Paras 3.6.1-3.63)

**DFES Circular 10/99 Social Inclusion: Pupil Support** - now replaced by **Advice and Guidance to schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: groups of pupils at particular risk** tells schools in England:

- “Young carers should not be expected to carry inappropriate levels of caring which have an adverse impact on their development and life chances. However, there are children and young people who undertake caring roles. Young carers of a sick or disabled relative at home may be late or absent from school because of their responsibilities. A study in one authority suggested there may be up to 30 young carers in a secondary school”;
- “In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made”; and
- “Schools should consider designating a member of staff to have responsibility for young carers. They can also contribute to schemes that support them by working with the local authority and voluntary agencies”.

### **The National Carers Strategy (1999)**

Chapter 8 of this Government strategy states that “schools need to be sensitive to the individual problems faced by young carers” and that the “The government will draw schools’ attention to effective practice in meeting the needs of pupils who are young carers, for example through link arrangements with young carers services. Schools might find it helpful to have one member of staff to act as a link between young carers, the education welfare service, social services and young carers’ services.”

### **The Children Act 2004**

This Act provides legal underpinning for **Every Child Matters: Change for Children** – the programme aimed at transforming children’s services.

Parents, carers and families are the most important influence on children and young people’s outcomes. The **Change for Children** programme aims to ensure that support for parents becomes routine, particularly at key points in a child or young person’s life. This includes information, advice and support provided through universal services, as well as targeted and more specialist support for parents who need them.

The Government, in partnership with local areas, is working to make sure parents and families have access to the support that they need, when they need it, so that all children can benefit from confident, positive and resilient parenting, from birth right through to the teenage years. The steps being taken will help to ensure that:

- good quality universal support, in the form of information, advice and signposting to other services, is available to all parents both mothers and fathers. It is important that access to support can be found in places where, and ways in which, parents and carers feel comfortable such as: early years settings, schools, primary healthcare services; and through childcare information services, telephone help lines and web based information;
- more specialised targeted support is available at the local level to meet the needs of families and communities facing additional difficulties. Types of support offered could include structured parenting education groups, couple support, home visiting and employment for training advice;
- all schools actively seeking to engage parents in children and young people's education. Helping parents to understand what they can do at home to work with the school; and
- children's centres and extended schools develop a coherent set of services both to support parents and to involve them properly at all stages of a child's learning and development.

### **Support through multi-agency services**

Through the Change for Children programme there will be an increase in the range of multi-agency services available to children and families, from integrated working with children's centres and extended schools through to multi-agency teams and panels supporting clusters of schools. These will be important vehicles for delivering better information and support for parents and carers. If these services are designed with the needs of parents and carers in mind, they are more likely to be accessed and used.

**Every Child Matters: Change for Children** places a duty on specific, hitherto separate agencies to cooperate for the benefit of children. Section 10 of the Act provides the underpinning framework for children's trusts. Well-being is the term used in the act to define the five Every Child Matters outcomes:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

“Pupil performance and well-being go hand in hand. Pupils can't learn if they don't feel safe or if health problems are allowed to create barriers. And doing well, in education is the most effective route for young people out of poverty and disaffection” – **Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Schools DFES/1089/2004**

## Example of a Young Carers' Policy for Schools:

### School ethos

At \_\_\_\_\_ we believe that all children and young people have the right to an education, regardless of what is happening at home. When a young person looks after someone in their family who has a serious illness, disability or a substance misuse problem, he or she may need a little extra support to help him or her get the most out of school. This Young Carers' Policy says how we will help any pupil who helps to look after someone at home.

### Definition of a young carer

Young carers are children and young people (up to the age of 18) whose life is affected by looking after someone with a disability or a long term illness. The person they care for may be a parent, a sibling, another family member or a friend, who does not necessarily live in the same house as them.

They carry out significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility which is inappropriate to their age. Caring tasks can involve physical or emotional care, or taking responsibility for someone's safety or well being. The impact of taking on an inappropriate caring role can include underachievement or absenteeism at school, mental or physical ill health.

"Disability" refers to actual or perceived physical, sensory, emotional or learning impairment, long-term illness, HIV, drug or alcohol dependence, mental health problems, frailty or old age.

### Our School:

- has a member of staff with special responsibility for young carers and lets all new pupils know who they are and what they can do to help;
- runs sessions in PSHCE lessons on the challenges faced by young carers;
- can put young carers in touch with NCH Young Carers Project. We can also put families in touch with other support services;
- is accessible to parents who have mobility and communication problems;
- respects your right to privacy and will only share information about you and your family with people who need to know in order to help you;
- will consider alternatives if a young carer is unable to attend out of school activities e.g. detention, sports, concerts due to their caring role;
- allows young carers to telephone home during breaks and lunchtimes; and
- can give parents advice about how to get their children into school when transport is a problem

## Identifying a young carer

Some of the warning signs that might indicate that a pupil has unrecognised responsibilities are:

- regular lateness or unauthorised absence, possibly increasing;
- tiredness in school and a lack of concentration; anxious or worried;
- erratic response to homework with incomplete, late or non-compliance to set tasks;
- under-achievement for potential capability;
- behavioural problems, especially inappropriate responses possibly resulting from anger or frustration;
- few or no peer friendships but possibly a good relationship with adults and presenting as very mature for their age;
- victim of bullying, perhaps linked to a family member's disability or state of health, eg substance misuse problem or due to a young carer not being perceived by peers as dressing in the latest fashion;
- lack of interest in extra curricular activities, especially after school; and
- apparent parental disinterest due to non-attendance at meetings.

The above may be indicators of a range of problems, some not associated with caring. However, in dealing with any pupil exhibiting these signs, staff should consider asking the pupil if they are helping to look after someone at home. Staff should also enquire from colleagues with pastoral responsibilities for the pupil. Education welfare officers and education social workers, together with pastoral support staff investigating pupils causing concern, should also countenance the possibility of caring roles, especially when working directly with family members. Concerns about pupils who may be young carers will be raised with the school's co-ordinator for young carers. The school's co-ordinator for young carers will also receive all new information on young carers.

### **Our admission process will seek to establish if:**

- the pupil has parents / relatives with disabilities or long-term physical or mental health problems;
- the pupil has a responsibility for looking after that person over and beyond normal inter-personal relationships within a family setting;
- the family is in contact with a support service that could help reduce their reliance on the pupil.

Some families will choose not to disclose this information. Any information gained as a result of this process will be held on the pupil's personal file, kept securely and made available to the young carer's co-ordinator. We will respect the right to privacy and will only share information about young carers and their families with people who need to know in order to be able to help. Before sharing information with anyone else, we will seek consent from the young carer or, if they are not able to understand, a parent.

### **Children Act 1989**

Most young carers will meet the definition of a 'child in need' under the Children Act 1989 and may be entitled to an assessment from Children's Services. In the event of any young carers being considered to be at risk of significant harm the school's child protection procedures will be followed.

## **School support for identified young carers**

- A member of staff will lead on our young carers' support work. They will be the point of contact for young carers and their families and will liaise with young carers' services. Their name and contact details can be found in the school prospectus or by telephone from reception.
- Whenever possible, staff will talk to young carers in private and not in front of their friends unless the young carer asks for a friend to be present. Young carers will be given a card to identify themselves so they may have access to a telephone to telephone home if they are worried about a relative, without having to explain their need.
- Where possible we will negotiate deadlines for homework, course work etc in advance of these being set (we cannot change deadlines for some things, such as course work which is part of an externally moderated module).
- When an identified young carer is given a detention, we will consider allowing this to take place at break and lunchtimes rather than after school.
- We will liaise with support services to ensure that we can signpost families to additional help.
- If a parent is unable to travel to parent sessions due to family circumstances, we will try to make alternative arrangements. The young carer or parent may request this.
- We will provide advice about how children can get into school where transport is a problem.

We welcome any young person, parent or family member who wishes to discuss their family circumstances so that we can help their child in achieving their potential.

**Policy date:**

**Review and renewal due:**



### **National Children's Homes Hull and East Riding Young Carers Project**

#### **Who we are**

The Young Carers Project offers support to children and young people, across Hull and East Riding, who have a parent who is severely disabled – this includes parents who may have alcohol or drug addiction or mental health problems. The project is managed by NCH and funded jointly by Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

#### **Who we work with**

We work with children and young people up to 18 years of age. To be eligible for a service their parent, primary carer or close adult relative must be severely ill or disabled and the young person must undertake significant caring tasks to the adult or it be impacting detrimentally on their health, social or educational needs.

#### **Aims of the service**

- To provide individual and group support to children and young people, in partnership with parents, where their caring role has created peer isolation and/or is damaging life chances in terms of education and social attainment.
- To respond to young carers who carry substantial caring responsibilities to prevent inappropriate care being undertaken and enable them to participate in social, educational and leisure opportunities.
- To liaise in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of young carers and raise awareness of the issues confronting young carers and their families.
- To provide information and advice to young carers and their families as required.

#### **What we offer**

Depending on the needs-assessed support, the project may offer:

- individual support – all appropriate referrals to the project will receive a minimum of 2 individual sessions with a project worker to undertake an assessment to ascertain how illness/disability is impacting on family life and explore the young person's feelings and experiences of the care they provide;
- group work – we run specialist groups for young carers giving them the opportunity to meet others in a similar situation to themselves, explore their feelings and develop coping mechanisms. We also occasionally run groups focusing on particular 'disabilities' e.g. mental health, MS;
- support activities – we will usually provide a 'fun' support activity in each school holiday. This is for the young carers who do not need group or individual work but benefit from spending time with children in a similar situation to themselves;
- newsletters – in partnership with young carers we produce a newsletter 3 times a year. We also do a newsletter for professionals 3 times a year; and
- information, advice and support – this includes ensuring parents are supported and enabled to access services that promote their rights and advocating on the families behalf. Also those young carers that do not have regular contact with the project have a named project worker they and their families can contact when needed.

## **Service outcomes**

Some of the things we hope to achieve for young carers and their families:-

- Young carers have increased knowledge and understanding of their parent's disability/needs;
- young carers are more able to identify and communicate their needs to parents, professionals and others;
- young carers are more able to positively manage negative feelings;
- young carers have increased confidence and self esteem;
- young carers are able to access a supportive network of other young carers;
- young carers have a range of coping strategies for dealing with difficult situations and negative feelings;
- young carers' participation in social/leisure opportunities will increase;
- young carers will have improved attendance/attainment at school; and
- professionals have heightened awareness of the potentially detrimental impact of the caring role on young carers and strategies developed to alleviate this.

## **Where we are**

The project office is in Driffield; however, the direct work we offer to young carers runs from various locations in Hull and East Riding.

Our contact details are:

Hull and East Riding Young Carers  
NCH  
46 Middle Street North  
Driffield  
YO25 6SS

Tel: 01377 272774

Fax: 01377 254010

Email: [nesdc@nch.org.uk](mailto:nesdc@nch.org.uk)

## **To make a referral**

We only accept referrals on a project referral form as this is the information we feel is relevant to decide if the project may be able to meet the needs of the young person.

The Sibling Support Service is a specialist service providing group support to brothers and sisters (siblings) of disabled children and young people who live in Hull or the East Riding of Yorkshire.

The service works together in partnership with young people to help them achieve positive changes by:

- helping them develop knowledge and understanding of their sibling's disability; and
- helping them to develop ways of coping better so they can feel better about themselves and their situation.

### **Why might some siblings need support?**

Siblings may:

- be bullied or teased;
- not understand their brother's or sister's disability or condition;
- worry about their brother's or sister's health;
- have difficulties with school work;
- not be able to do things as a family;
- struggle to cope with violence from a brother or sister whose behaviour is challenging;
- have disturbed sleep; and
- feel that parents don't want to give them attention.

Negative feelings can also lead to strong feelings such as anger, embarrassment, guilt, resentment and isolation.

### **What the groups offer:**

- advice;
- information;
- time to talk;
- opportunities to meet others in a similar situation;
- opportunities to have fun;
- opportunities to make new friends;
- coping strategies for the difficult bits;
- help to share and manage feelings; and
- time out.

### **Who can receive support?**

Children and young people between the ages of 6-18 who are experiencing difficulties that are connected to them being a sibling of a brother or sister who has a disability.

The service runs a number of groups for children and young people throughout the year. Groups are held in a number of venues across Hull and East Riding,

## **How to access the service**

Referrals to the service can be made by a social worker or key worker within the Hull or East Riding Social Care Teams. If you, or someone you know, needs extra support please contact the service,

## **What happens next?**

A sibling worker will visit the sibling and their family to talk more about what the groups involve and when they can join a group.

At the end of the group session, parents will be given feedback and ideas of how to build on the successes and achievements that their child has made in the group.

## **Contact Details:**

Sibling Support Service  
Village farm Business centre  
East Street  
Holme on the Wolds  
East Riding of Yorkshire  
HU17 7GA

Tel: 01430 810149

Email: [siblings@s.org.uk](mailto:siblings@s.org.uk)