

KEY INSIGHTS FROM MYTIME'S 2022 EDUCATION SUMMIT

WHO ARE YOUNG CARERS?

Young carers are responsible for the care of at least one member of their family, though they may be as young as five years old themselves. These children work incredibly hard to care for loved ones, yet they represent a largely overlooked community, and often face enormous educational and emotional disadvantage as a result.

WHAT IS THE LEVEL UP PROGRAMME?

The Level Up Programme aims to address the issues young carers face in education. MYTIME provides training and resources to school staff to equip them with the knowledge, tools, and strategies to effectively support young carers, both academically and emotionally.

THE EDUCATION SUMMIT

MYTIME Young Carers hosted their first Education Summit at Bournemouth University in June 2022 as part of their Level Up Programme. The aim of the event was to provide an in-depth day of training to understand the challenges young carers face in schools and how to support them. During the day the attendees had the opportunity to hear from a range of speakers, including world-leading expert on young carers, Professor Saul Becker as well as young carers themselves.

METHODOLOGY

MYTIME gathered a wealth of data during the Summit, incorporating insights from discussions, feedback from delegates, and input from young carers. Drawing on this extensive data, MYTIME has identified four key thematic insights that schools must follow when developing support mechanisms for young carers.

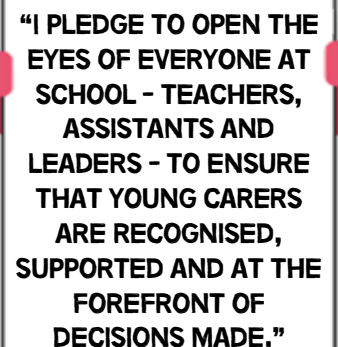
KEY FINDINGS

INSIGHT 1: YOUNG CARERS DO NOT FEEL UNDERSTOOD

Despite the research and campaigning that has taken place over the past 30 years, the majority of young carers remain hidden, and many educational professionals are still unaware of the impact that a caring role has on a child and their education. (1)

Young carers report feeling lonely and misunderstood, particularly in schools where they go unrecognised. They have expressed that this significantly affects their mental health and engagement with school. Professionals who attended the event emphasised the ongoing lack of awareness regarding young carers and how to adequately support them in schools.

It is crucial for schools to establish environments where young carers feel safe and comfortable confiding in at least one, if not more, understanding and empathetic staff members who are well-informed about the available support options.



"I PLEDGE TO OPEN THE EYES OF EVERYONE AT SCHOOL - TEACHERS, ASSISTANTS AND LEADERS - TO ENSURE THAT YOUNG CARERS ARE RECOGNISED, SUPPORTED AND AT THE FOREFRONT OF DECISIONS MADE."

INSIGHT 2: ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Tailored support is crucial for young carers in schools. It is essential for staff to recognise and acknowledge the uniqueness of each young carer, as a 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate.

Young carers expressed feeling neglected and experiencing uniform treatment, despite their individual needs. Delegates at the event were reminded of the importance of treating each child as an individual, rather than as a collective entity.

Staff training plays a critical role in understanding the significant impact of caring roles on students. Implementing reasonable adjustments, such as extending homework deadlines and scheduling breaktime detentions instead of after-school detentions, can assist young carers in managing their responsibilities while maintaining expectations.

INSIGHT 3: YOUNG CARERS WANT A NON-JUDGEMENTAL APPROACH

Stigma surrounding caring responsibilities can present a significant barrier for children with such responsibilities, hindering their ability to disclose their situation and seek support. (2)

Young carers have expressed concerns about the perceptions of others towards them and their families, which often deters them from seeking help. Consequently, they experience increased stress and anxiety due to the burden of concealment. Delegates at the event concurred that more efforts should be made to foster an inclusive culture for children and families.

At the Summit, it was emphasised that schools have a crucial role in educating the school community and eradicating the stigma associated with caring responsibilities. Schools must actively support young carers and their families, establishing a safe space where they feel comfortable disclosing their situation. This can be accomplished through comprehensive staff training and the promotion of an inclusive and supportive school culture that highlights the achievements of young carers in school, family newsletters, and on the website.

INSIGHT 4: YOUNG CARERS WANT SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

The summit underlined the critical imperative for schools to prioritise the identification and support of young carers. Young carers themselves disclosed that being recognised in school as having caring responsibilities at home had a positive impact on their engagement, as it made them feel supported. In response to Professor Saul Becker's keynote speech, delegates agreed that early identification plays a vital role in implementing interventions to support young carers.

Utilising a young carer identification tool such as the MACA and PANOC can effectively facilitate early identification in schools. Additionally, establishing a young carers group can serve as a valuable means of support, creating a nurturing network and fostering friendships among peers who share similar experiences.



CASE STUDY

Jayden, a Year 10 student, has a father with epilepsy. Unfortunately, he began experiencing problems at school last year, frequently arguing with his teachers. Jayden himself acknowledged the connection between his home life and behaviour at school, saying, "I see a correlation between what's going on at home and my behaviour at school." During this period, Jayden's father was hospitalised, but upon his return home, Jayden's behaviour returned to normal. When asked if the school was aware of the situation, Jayden explained that his mother was preoccupied with his father's care, and he himself was hesitant to reach out for help.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that schools provide training for their staff on how to identify and support young carers.
- It would be beneficial for schools to consider raising awareness of caring responsibilities amongst their pupils and families through various means such as assemblies, PSHE lessons, and newsletters.
- Schools could consider having systems in place to identify young carers early. As well as tracking young carers' progress and implementing interventions where necessary.
- It is suggested that schools appoint a Young Carer Champion in every school, who is provided with enough time and training to support young carers and host a group for them.
- MYTIME remains committed to providing a platform for young carers, empowering them to express their needs and voice their concerns.

REFERENCES

(1) Barnardos, *Still Hidden, Still Ignored: Who Carers for Young Carers?*, 2017
 (2) The Children's Society, *Supporting Young Carers from Hidden and Seldom Heard Groups: A Literature Review*, 2020