



# MYTIME

## YOUNG CARERS

### **OVERLOOKED AND OVERBURDENED: ADDRESSING THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG CARERS**

The report is for the attention of Department for Education, teaching professionals and those who work with young carers.

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## WHO ARE YOUNG CARERS?

A young carer is legally defined in section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 as 'a person under the age of 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person'. Therefore, young carers are children who provide care for someone or multiple people with unmet care needs, relating to ill health and / or disability. Young carers may be caring for one or multiple people in their family including those that may not live in the same household.

## YOUNG CARER CASE STUDY: ELOISE, AGED 19

Eloise's mum has bipolar, and depression and Eloise has been caring for her since she was just 6 years old. For as long as she can remember, Eloise has wanted to become a teacher. More than anything in the world, she wants to make a difference to young carers and help with their education experience and attainment, in a way that she was not. However, Eloise began to fall behind at school. While there, she worried about being away from home, so her attendance became worse and worse. Her ability to concentrate was affected by the constant pressure she felt balancing the demands of school and the support her mum needed. Eloise's caring responsibilities took up so much of her time outside of school that she had no hobbies, no friends and no social life, which took a huge toll on her own mental and physical health. Her confidence plummeted and her hopes for the future fell away. She was always tired and stressed and she felt totally alone. Her teachers knew that Eloise had 'a lot' going on at home, but didn't understand it, so didn't know how to help her. Eloise's grades began to plummet alongside her self-esteem. Her hope of becoming a teacher has now faded - she's not at college anymore and her future looks bleak.

**Eloise's story is one we have heard many times. Without effective support at school, young carers can often find themselves feeling isolated, misunderstood and without hope for the future. How do we stop Eloise becoming 'the cared for' of the future?**

## MYTIME YOUNG CARERS

**MYTIME** Young Carers is a national charity based in Dorset. Through our holistic programmes of support, **MYTIME** is dedicated to reducing the negative impacts of caring responsibilities and improving long-term outcomes for young carers. The **MYTIME** Level Up Programme focuses upon improving the educational outcomes for all young carers. Through this programme, MYTIME provides schools with training, tools, resources, strategies and the help that they need to create supportive and inclusive environments for children who are young carers, improving their educational outcomes. This is helping to address the issues young carers face in education - by providing the support they need and creating the conditions in which they can thrive and achieve their full potential.

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Ten secondary schools participated in this study and provided data for 10,591 young people in total, of which 426 were young carers (4%). Many of the young carers in this study are not registered with the local authority and have not undergone a young carers assessment. Instead, they have been identified by the staff at their school who have received training through the **MYTIME** Level Up Programme. The data provided:

- ▷ Rates of persistent absence from school
- ▷ English and Maths GCSE scores of those in Years 10 and 11.
- ▷ Suspension rates (fixed period exclusions)
- ▷ Free School Meals and Pupil Premium information
- ▷ Special Educational Needs and disability (SEND) information
- ▷ Gender information

The data was provided in two sets: pupils known to be young carers and pupils known not to be young carers. This demonstrates the difference in experiences of secondary school aged young carers compared to that of their peers without caring responsibilities.

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## REPORT SUMMARY

The findings of this report, which are summarised below, indicate that between **450,603** and **909,207 (5-10%)** of all pupils at school in England are not receiving adequate or effective support by the education system. This is because they have a caring responsibility at home, which might otherwise fall to the state to provide, and education providers lack the tools and the frameworks to identify these young carers and their needs.

Training a key member of staff in each school to identify and work with young carers to help balance their educational needs and caring responsibilities would enable a cost effective and impactful solution. It would work effectively against the best-case figure of **5%** of pupils being young carers, whilst creating structures which are able to support the higher estimate of **10%**. This report determines the cost of this training to be approximately £1200 per school, per year – a total of **£29MILLION** per year for the **24,000** state-maintained schools in England.

This report includes three case studies from schools that have been given the knowledge, understanding and tools that they need to identify and support young carers. This is an indication of what could be achieved nationally, should appropriate funding be released to ensure that young carers can thrive in their education.

**YOUNG CARERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL (AGED 11-16) ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO BE PERSISTENTLY ABSENT FROM SCHOOL AS THEIR PEERS WITHOUT A CARING RESPONSIBILITY.**

This study found that **46%** of young carers are persistently absent from secondary school in comparison to only **23%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. In Year 7, the persistent absence rate of young carers was **33%** and this increases to **53%** in Year 11. The **MYTIME** Young Carers (2024) Unseen Sacrifices<sup>1</sup> report highlighted that **27%** of primary school age young carers in Dorset were persistently absent from school. This demonstrates that as young carers progress through their education, they are more likely to be persistently absent from school.

**YOUNG CARERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ARE LESS LIKELY TO PASS GCSE ENGLISH AND MATHS, AND SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LIKELY TO ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST SCORES (5+ AND 7+).**

This study found that Year 11 young carers are achieving significantly lower English and Maths GCSE grades than their peers without a caring responsibility. Only **64%** of young carers in this study achieved a 4+ in English and Maths, compared to **71%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. The gap between young carers and their peers without a caring responsibility widens significantly at 5+ and 7+ (formally grades C-A\*) in English and Maths.

<sup>1</sup> **MYTIME** Young Carers (2024) *Unseen Sacrifices: Understanding the Educational Disadvantages Faced by Young Carers*



**YOUNG CARERS AGED 11-16 ARE OVER TWICE AS LIKELY TO BE SUSPENDED FROM SCHOOL THAN THEIR PEERS WITHOUT A CARING RESPONSIBILITY.**

Until now, data on the rate of suspension (Fixed Term Exclusions) for young carers has never been collected and compared to the rates of suspension for their peers without a caring responsibility. This study shows that **40%** of young carers of secondary school age have received a suspension from school, compared to only **17%** of their peers without a caring responsibility.



*"The findings of this study raise serious concerns about the educational experiences and outcomes for young people who have a caring responsibility and the clear and urgent actions which must be taken to address those concerns. The data collected for this report on secondary school age young carers and the previous Unseen Sacrifices report, published by MYTIME on primary age young carers, demonstrates the acute need for young carers to be identified as distinct 'group' by Ofsted in the new education inspection framework.*

*This top-down approach would ensure that schools were asked to report on the identification of young carers and the support being provided, to ensure their wellbeing, attendance and attainment is improved. Schools need to be provided with the right training and tools to both identify young carers and to support them adequately and appropriately.*

*Without urgent action, we risk failing generations of children who provide care for their families and perpetuating or amplifying the inequalities they already face – effectively punishing children for caring."*

**KRISTA CARTLIDGE** (CEO MYTIME Young Carers, former School Leader)

## KEY STATISTICS

Ten secondary schools participated in this study and provided data for **10,591** young people in total, of which **426** were young carers (**4%**).

### ATTENDANCE FIGURES FOR THE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY:

- ▶ **46%** of young carers are persistently absent from school in comparison to only 23% of their peers without a caring responsibility.
- ▶ In Year 7, **33%** of young carers are persistently absent from school in comparison to only 12% of their peers without a caring responsibility.
- ▶ In Year 11, **53%** of young carers are persistently absent from school in comparison to only 33% of their peers without a caring responsibility.

### ATTAINMENT FIGURES FOR THE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY:

- ▶ Only **64%** of young carers achieve a 4+ in English and Maths at GCSE compared to 71% of their peers without a caring responsibility.
- ▶ Only **38%** of young carers achieve a 5+ in English and Maths at GCSE compared to 48% of their peers without a caring responsibility.
- ▶ Only **4%** of young carers achieve a 7+ in English and Maths at GCSE compared to 15% of their peers without a caring responsibility.

### FIXED PERIOD EXCLUSIONS (SUSPENSIONS) FOR THE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY:

- ▶ **40%** of young carers experience suspensions (Fixed Term Exclusions) compared to 17% of their peers without a caring responsibility.
- ▶ Young carers are more than twice as likely to receive an external suspension of between 1-5 days from school than their peers without a caring responsibility.

## KEY STATISTICS CONT.

### FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM) AND PUPIL PREMIUM (PP) FIGURES IN THE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY:

- ▶ **60%** of young carers receive **Free School Meals** in comparison to only 20% of their peers without a caring responsibility.
- ▶ **61%** of young carers are allocated **Pupil Premium funding** in comparison to only 22% of their peers without a caring responsibility.

### SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) IN THE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY:

- ▶ **33%** of young carers are on the **SEND register** in comparison to only 21% of their peers without a caring responsibility.

### DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOLS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THIS STUDY:

- ▶ **58%** of the young carers in this study were identified as **female**, **42%** were identified as **male**.

#### YOUNG CARER AND NON-YOUNG CARER COMPARISON

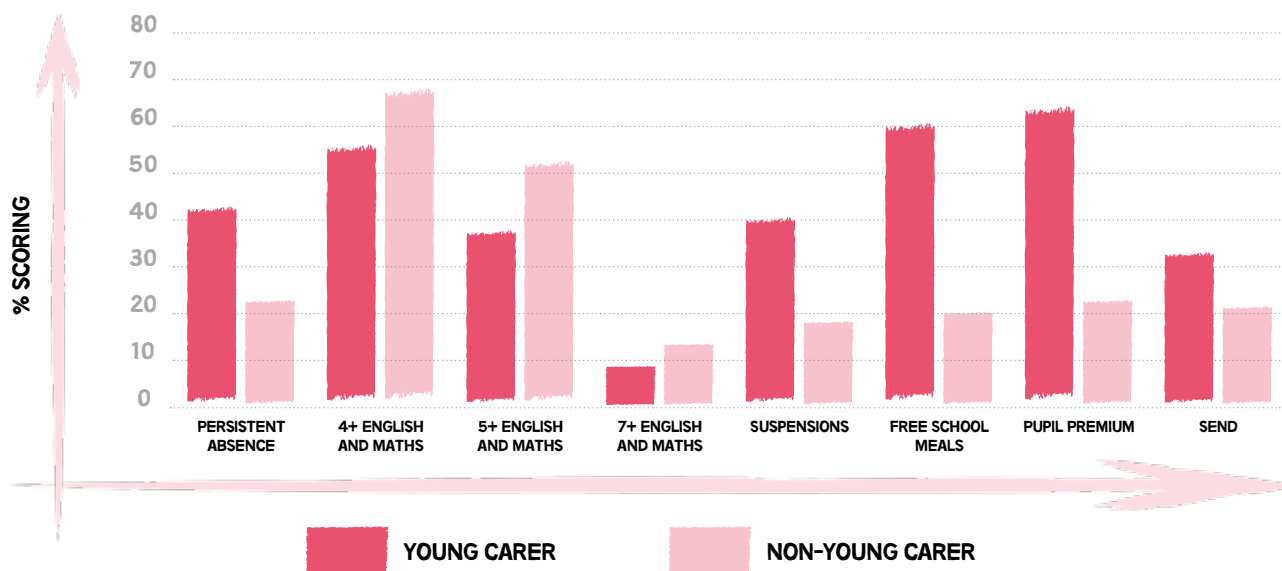


Figure 1. MYTIME data provided by 10 secondary schools in Dorset 2024 – totalling 10,591 pupils of which 426 (4%) are identified as young carers.

## REPORT FINDINGS

### ATTENDANCE FIGURES

This study shows that **46%** of young carers are persistently absent from secondary school in comparison to only **23%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. This is mirrored in the national data on young carers attendance, as was published in the Carers Trust, (2024) Caring and Classes report <sup>2</sup>. This showed that almost half of young carers attending secondary school in England were persistently absent in 2022/2023 and missed an average of 23 days a year, accounting for over a month of their education per year.

Further analysis of the data collected for this report shows that as young carers progress from KS3 to KS4 (Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4) their persistent absence rate increases. In Year 7, persistent absence rate for young carers was **33%** but this increases to **53%** in Year 11. Whilst this study found that this is also the case for pupils without a caring responsibility, the increase in persistent absence is significantly greater for young carers. Many of the young carers **MYTIME** work with explain that this is due to a number of reasons: the increasing pressure they experience as they approach their GCSE exams, their increased isolation from their peers, not wanting to burden their family with their concerns due to fear of making the person more unwell, the person they care for requiring more care, and/or young carers experiencing their own physical and mental health issues because of their caring role.



*"I am already under enough pressure at home trying to balance how much caring I need to do. When my teachers start to put more pressure on me, talking about all the hours of revision I need to be doing and how important my exams are it all just gets too much. I feel overwhelmed and like I can't cope. I can't talk to my dad about any of it, I don't want him to worry as it makes him worse."*

YOUNG CARER - AGE 15 (Y11)

### YOUNG CARER AND NON-YOUNG CARER COMPARISON

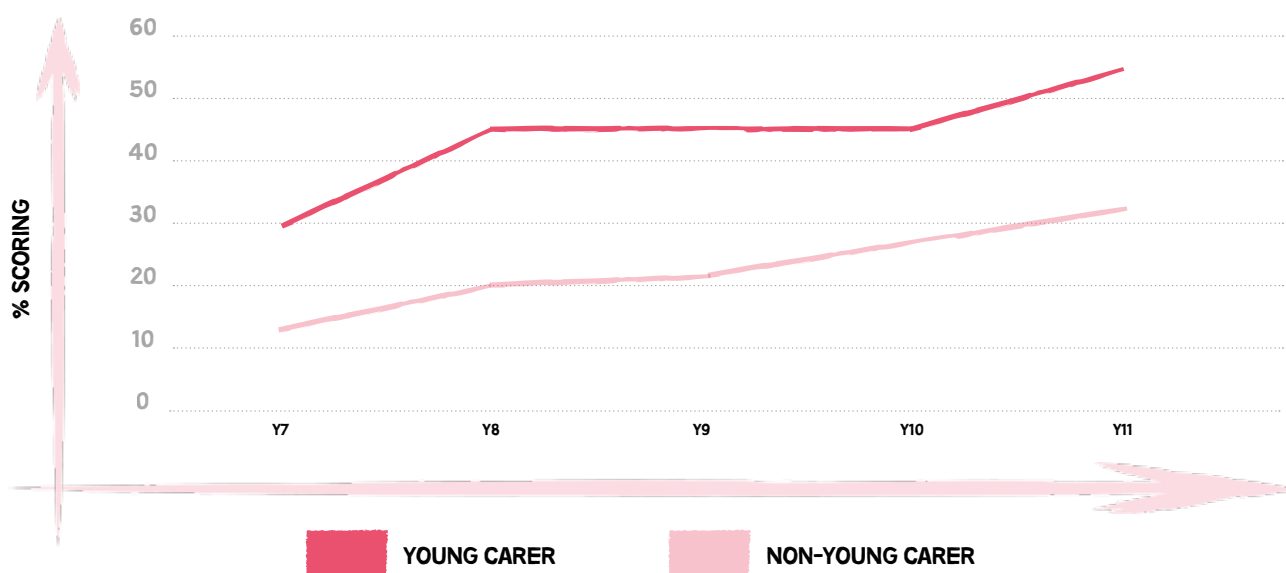


Figure 2: MYTIME data provided by 10 secondary schools in Dorset 2024 – totalling 10,591 pupils of which 426 are identified as young carers.

Young carers report a number of other reasons for being absent from school, including:

- ▷ Feeling too worried to leave the person they care for.
- ▷ Needing to attend medical appointments with the person they care for.
- ▷ Not completing homework on time and worrying about the consequences.
- ▷ Experiencing bullying from other pupils because of their caring role.
- ▷ Being too tired or stressed to attend school because of their caring role.
- ▷ Feeling unsupported by teachers, other pupils and school systems.

Additionally, the introduction of the 30-minute rule to attendance policies<sup>3</sup> means that if a child is over 30 minutes late to school or class they are recorded as absent. Young carers can often be late to school because of their caring responsibilities. Many have shared that now schools mark them absent if they are more than 30 minutes late, they will choose not to attend school to avoid being punished.



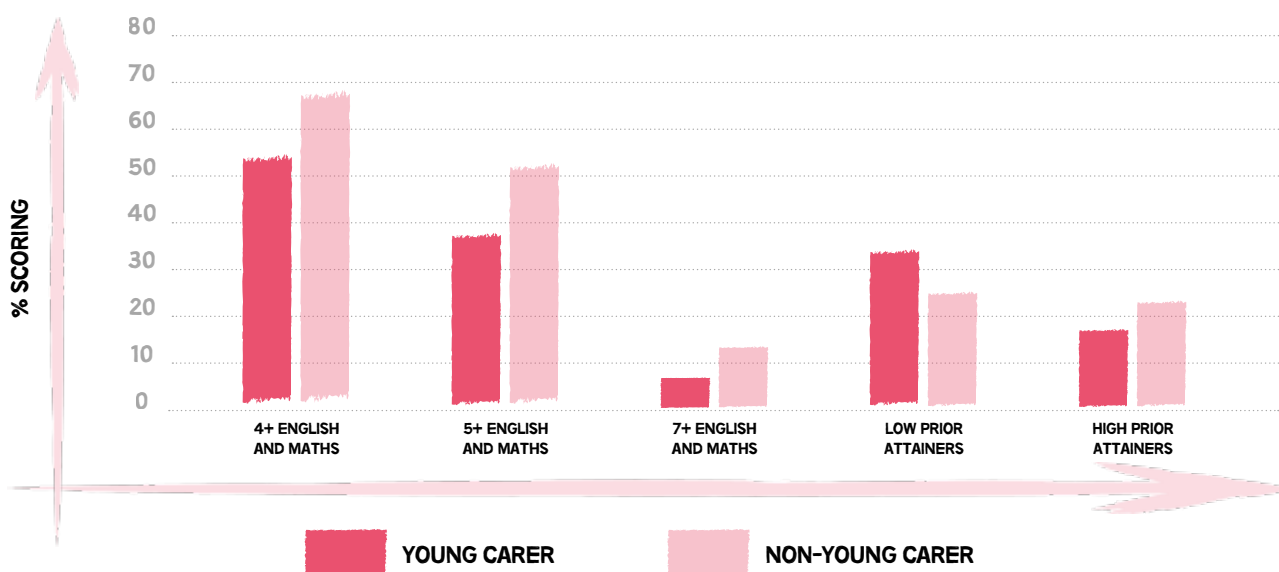
*“Why would I bother going in if I know that I am going to be late? I know I am going to get a detention and be marked down as absent, so I might as well stay at home.”*

YOUNG CARER - AGE 16 (Y11)

## ATTAINMENT FIGURES

In Year 11, young carers achieve significantly lower English and Maths GCSE scores than their peers without a caring responsibility. Only **55%** of young carers in this study achieved a 4+ in English and Maths, compared to **68%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. The gap between young carers and their peers without a caring responsibility widens at 5+ and 7+ in English and Maths. Only **37%** of young carers achieve a 5+ in English and Maths at GCSE compared to **51%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. At 7+, the gap widens even further with only **4%** of young carers achieving the highest scores in English and Maths, compared to **15%** of their peers without a caring responsibility.

### YOUNG CARER AND NON-YOUNG CARER ATTAINMENT



**Figure 3: MYTIME** data provided by 10 secondary schools on KS4 students and KS3 students in Dorset 2024, totalling 10,591 pupils of which 426 are identified as young carers.

## LOW PRIOR ATTAINERS

The data collected for this study shows that young carers are **35%** more likely to start secondary school as a low prior attainer, which means that they are less likely to leave primary school having met age-related expectations in reading, writing and maths. This is also evidenced in the **MYTIME** Young Carers (2024) Unseen Sacrifices report which explored attainment for young carers at primary school. This report showed that only **51%** of young carers reach age-related expectations in reading, in comparison to **70%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. Only **39%** of young carers reach age-related expectations in writing, in comparison to **63%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. Only **49%** of young carers reach age-related expectations in maths, in comparison to **73%** of their peers without a caring responsibility.

Students who start secondary school as low prior attainers are more likely to be placed into lower sets and require intervention to try to 'close the gap' in terms of reading, writing, and maths – without which their performance in most other subjects will suffer. This can have a significant impact on their progress at secondary school. It can have a negative impact on their confidence academically and it means they are less likely to cover more challenging material, therefore making them less likely to achieve higher grades.



*"I have always found school hard, other people seem to understand things, I just don't. I don't like school; I am in all the lowest sets. I mess about so people laugh at me for being funny instead of being stupid."*

YOUNG CARER - AGE 13 (Y9)

## HIGH PRIOR ATTAINERS

The data collected for this study shows that young carers are **26%** less likely to start secondary school as a high prior attainer. High prior attainers have an average point score of 110+ in their KS2 exams and as a result are likely to be placed in the top sets when starting secondary school. Students that are high prior attainers are competent in reading, writing and maths and can access more challenging material. High prior attainers are often more confident in their academic ability.



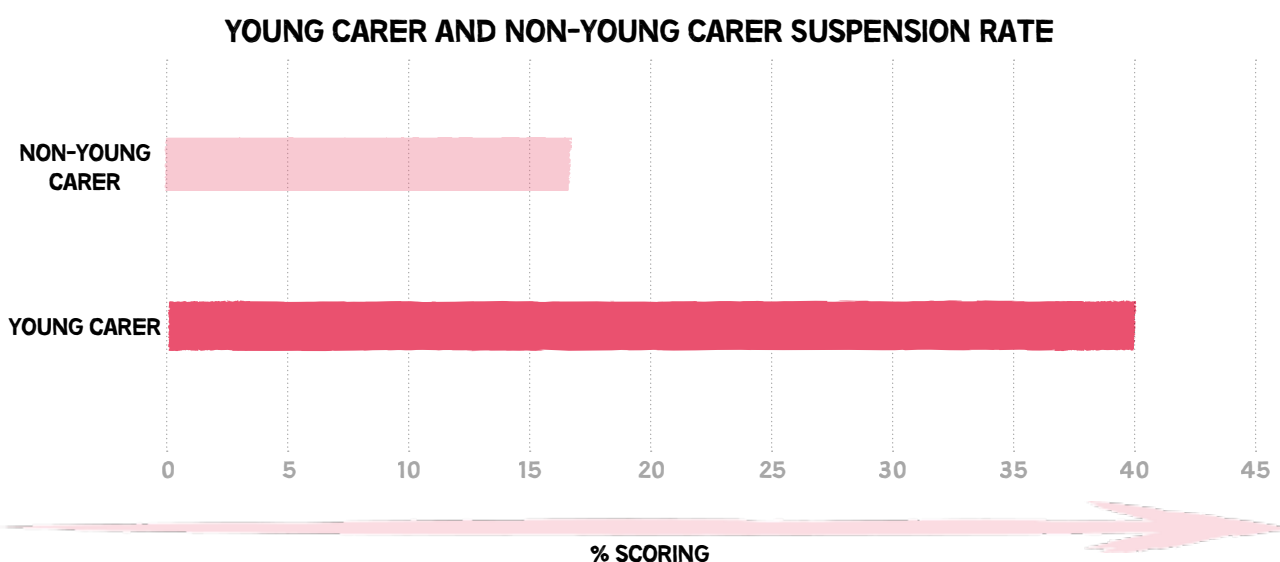
*"I love reading and find school easy. It's hard to balance the demands of homework with caring for my mum. When I can go into school I enjoy my lessons, but I don't have the time to do as well as I could."*

YOUNG CARER - AGE 14 (Y9)



## SUSPENSIONS (FIXED TERM EXCLUSIONS)

For the first time, data on the rate of suspension for young carers has been collected and compared to the rates of suspension for their peers without a caring responsibility. This shows that **40%** of young carers of secondary school age had received a suspension from school compared to only **17%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. Young carers are therefore **more than twice as likely** to receive an external suspension from school, which could be compounding young carer rates of persistent absence



**Figure 4:** MYTIME data provided by 10 secondary schools on KS4 students and KS3 students in Dorset 2024, totalling 10,591 pupils of which 426 are identified as young carers.

Suspensions are a disciplinary measure taken by schools in response to a student's severe or persistently poor behaviour that is considered to be detrimental to other pupils and / or staff. There are two types of exclusions: fixed-term (also referred to as a suspension or temporary exclusion) and permanent, which are determined according to the school's disciplinary policy<sup>4</sup>.



*"I get no flexibility with homework, so I am in trouble all the time. I am told that I am lazy and they constantly moan about my appearance, pencil case, and other things that don't matter. I have been suspended because I have a bad temper and sometimes when I am being punished for things that aren't my fault, I just lose it."*

YOUNG CARER - AGE 12 (Y8)

In April (2024) Catch 22<sup>5</sup> published a review of the national rates of exclusion, which highlighted that certain groups of students are far more likely to be suspended from school. These include:

- ▷ Young people from the Gypsy and Traveller Community
- ▷ Black Caribbean young people
- ▷ Boys
- ▷ Those in receipt of Free School Meals
- ▷ Those struggling with poor mental health

<sup>2</sup> Carers Trust (2024) *Caring and classes: the education gap for young carers*

<sup>3</sup> Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024)

<sup>4</sup> Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance

<sup>5</sup> The prevalence of school exclusions in the UK, their root causes, and the importance of preventative offerings over reactive interventions | Catch22

Young carers have not previously been included as a cohort when analysing national rates of suspension. However, young carers are overrepresented in other vulnerable groups such as those receiving Free School Meals and those struggling with poor mental health.

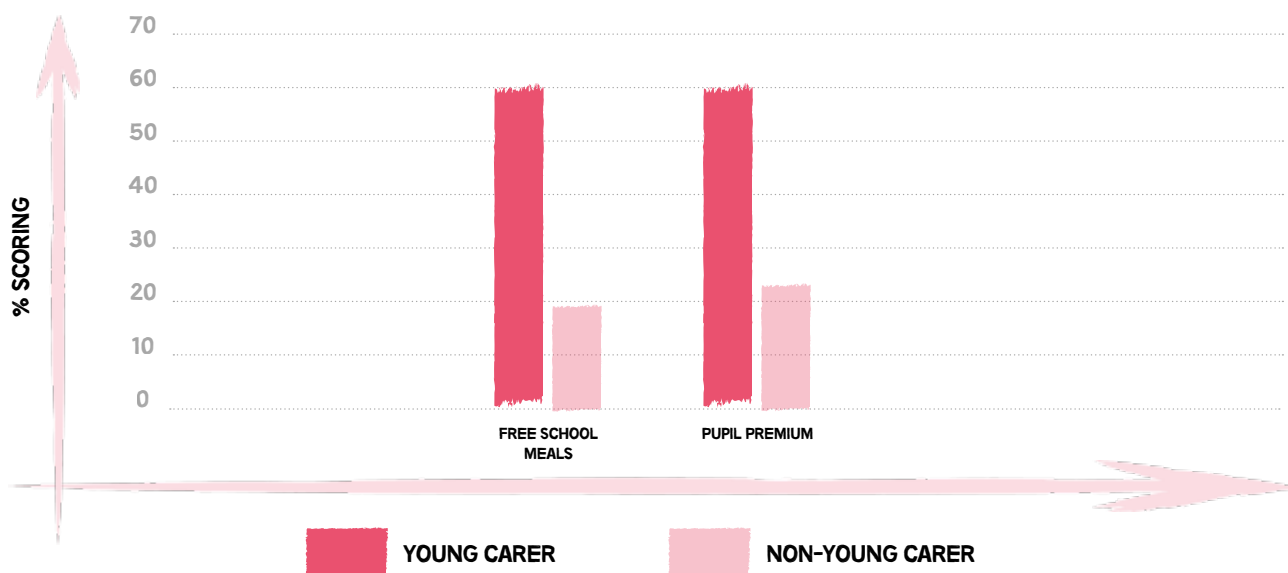
Research conducted by Impetus<sup>6</sup> on early adult outcomes for suspended pupils, shows that young people who are suspended from school are:

- ▷ **50%** less likely to achieve Level 3 qualifications by age 19
- ▷ **60%** less likely to have completed higher education by age 24
- ▷ **50%** less likely to be in sustained education, employment or training at age 24
- ▷ **170%** more likely to receive health-related benefits by age 24
- ▷ **150%** more likely to receive out-of-work benefits by age 24

## FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND PUPIL PREMIUM

In this study, **60%** of young carers receive Free School Meals (FSM) in comparison to only **20%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. **61%** are allocated Pupil Premium funding in comparison to **22%** of their peers without a caring responsibility.

### YOUNG CARER AND NON-YOUNG CARERS FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND PUPIL PREMIUM



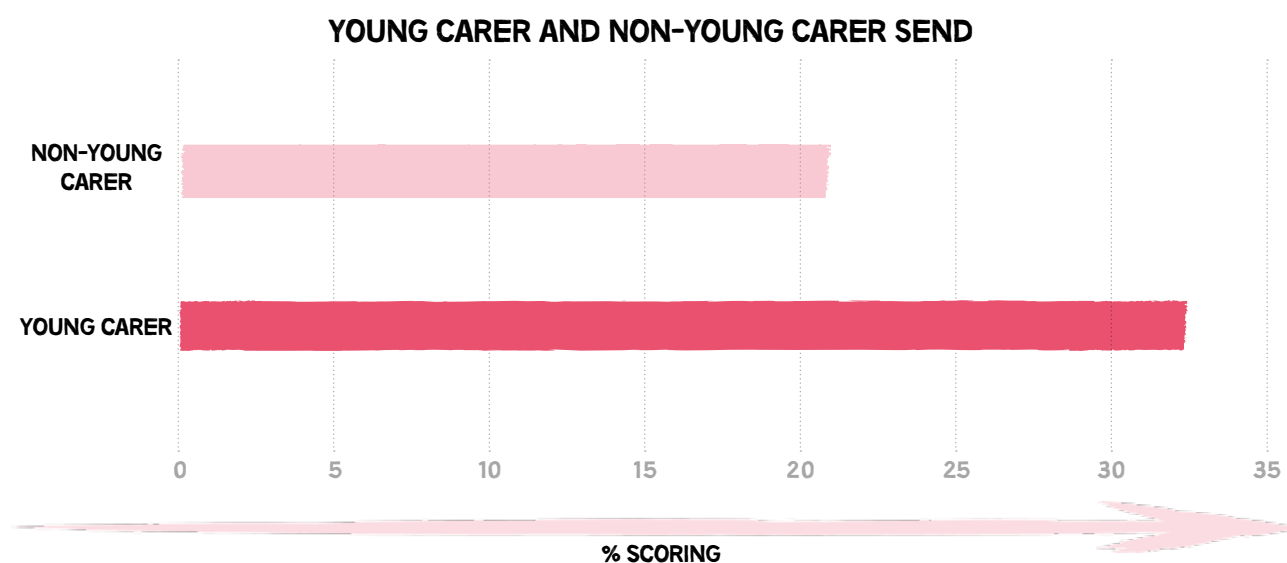
**Figure 5:** MYTIME data provided by 10 secondary schools on KS4 students and KS3 students in Dorset 2024, totalling 10,591 pupils of which 426 are identified as young carers.

<sup>6</sup> Impetus | Young people suspended during secondary school are twice as...

Ofsted do not identify young carers as a distinct group of disadvantaged students, and they do not attract additional funding because of their young carer status. In 2024, **72%** of schools did not identify a single young carer on the school census. Schools are not mandated to undertake training on identifying and supporting young carers and many remain unaware that there are young carers in their school who need specific support directly in response to the impacts of their caring role. Therefore, most schools are unlikely to understand the relationship between poverty, caring and attainment. This means they are unlikely to use any Pupil Premium funding they receive to directly address the issues young carers experience at school which would help to improve attendance, increase attainment, and reduce the number of suspensions they receive.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

In this study, **33%** of young carers are on the SEND register in comparison to only **21%** of their peers without a caring responsibility. These figures mirror those published in the **MYTIME** Young Carers (2024) Unseen Sacrifices report on primary school age young carers, which revealed that **32%** of young carers are on the SEND register in comparison to only **18%** of their peers without a caring responsibility.



**Figure 6:** MYTIME data provided by 10 secondary schools on KS4 students and KS3 students in Dorset 2024, totalling 10,591 pupils of which 426 are identified as young carers.

A pupil is categorised as having special educational needs if they are finding it harder than other pupils to make progress. These children are registered either as needing additional school support or as having an Education, Health and Care Plan. Research suggests that there are varying interpretations and practices across professionals, schools and local authorities in both SEND identification and provision. However, there should be consistent assessment and response in SEND identification and support as to whether the child's SEND needs are a direct outcome of having a caring responsibility. Further research into the relationship between having a caring responsibility and being identified as SEND needs to be conducted, so that appropriate support and interventions can be put in place.



*"I am the SENCO at my school, and until I received training on young carers from MYTIME, I had no idea that so many of the young people I work with also have a caring responsibility. Being aware of this is so important as it gives me insight into the wider family picture and means I can tailor the interventions our department put in place far more effectively."*

SENCO, AT A BOURNEMOUTH SECONDARY SCHOOL.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

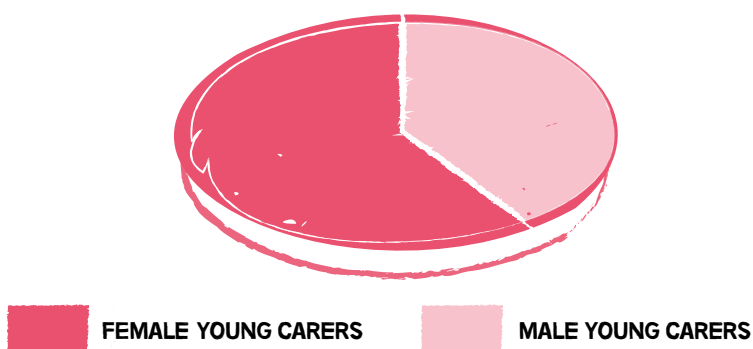
**58%** of the young carers in this study were identified as female and **42%** were identified as male. Whilst this study does not explore the reasons behind this prevalence of female young carers, feedback from the schools highlighted that boys were less likely to identify themselves as having a caring role.



*"Boys at our school have been less willing to identify themselves as young carers. We have found that they are less comfortable talking about their caring role and reaching out for support. This is despite us having a Young Carer Champion, young carer group activities and a real focus on raising the profile of young carers amongst staff and students. There is work to be done on ensuring boys feel that they can share their experiences and access the support that is available to them. We have recently encouraged male young carers at our school to participate in a brilliant, innovative new programme, 'Being a Boy,' which has helped boys explore their identities as male young carers and we intend to continue this work moving forward."*

LEON LIMA- PRINCIPAL AT WINTON ACADEMY

### YOUNG CARERS GENDER



**Figure 7:** MYTIME data provided by 10 secondary schools on 426 young carers in KS3 and KS4.

There is a need to conduct further research into this area and explore how gender influences young people's involvement in caring, self-identification as a carer, and whether gender plays a role in the wellbeing, attendance, suspension rate and attainment of young carers.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the findings of this report reveal a troubling picture for young carers in secondary schools, highlighting significant barriers to their education and overall well-being. The stark contrast in attendance figures between young carers and their peers (43% versus 23%) indicates that having a caring responsibility severely impacts their ability to engage consistently in school. The increase in persistent absence as young carers progress through their education underscores the compounded pressures they face, particularly during critical exam periods. Many young carers report feeling overwhelmed and torn between their educational commitments and their caregiving roles, which can lead to chronic stress and anxiety.

The academic outcomes for young carers are equally concerning. The data shows that they are significantly less likely to achieve expected GCSE scores in English and Maths, with only 55% reaching grade 4 or above compared to 68% of their peers. This gap widens further for higher grades, indicating systemic disadvantages that may stem from both their caregiving responsibilities and the educational environment they inhabit. Young carers often enter secondary school as low prior attainers, which not only affects their academic placement but also their self-esteem and motivation.

Furthermore, the high rates of suspension among young carers (40% compared to 17% of their peers without a caring responsibility) raises questions about the support structures in place within schools. Exclusion serves as a punitive measure that can exacerbate the challenges young carers already face, leading to further disengagement from education.

Socio-economic factors also play a critical role. A significant proportion of young carers qualify for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium funding, yet they remain under recognised in terms of their specific needs within the educational framework. The lack of targeted support and understanding from schools regarding the unique challenges faced by young carers hampers their educational progress.

Additionally, the demographic analysis highlights a gender disparity, with more girls identified as young carers. This may point to underlying societal norms regarding caregiving roles, particularly among boys, who may feel less comfortable disclosing their responsibilities.

Considering these findings, there is an urgent need for educational policies to incorporate comprehensive support systems for young carers. Schools must be equipped with training to identify and assist these students effectively, addressing both their academic needs and emotional well-being. More inclusive practices are essential to ensure that young carers can thrive in their educational environments, ultimately leading to improved outcomes and future opportunities. Further research is also needed to explore the intersection of gender and caregiving roles, ensuring that all young carers receive the support they need to thrive and succeed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this report are striking. They reveal how the life opportunities of young carers are being undermined by the overwhelming demands of providing care to a family member. Immediate action is essential to prevent our education system from continuing to fail these young people.

**MYTIME** Young Carers joins other young carer focused organisations, such as Carers Trust, to call for urgent action from Government Departments, school and education providers and local authorities to take note of the concerns raised by this study and agree to the following:

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND STATUTORY AGENCIES:

- 1.** The UK Government should commit ongoing funding for schools, similar to £1200 already available to schools via the Senior Mental Health Lead Training grant. This targeted funding can be used to train a Young Carer Champion in every school. This would cost the UK Government £29million per year and would:
  - A.** Ensure that every school had the ability to develop and implement a Young Carer Strategy, improving the identification of young carers and developing the targeted support young carers receive.
  - B.** The Young Carer Champion could then deliver training to all school staff on how to identify and support young carers. This would enable schools to provide holistic, solution-focused approaches to improving young carers' wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and attainment.
  - C.** Set up and deliver young carer support groups to improve young carers' wellbeing, attendance and attainment.
- 2.** Ofsted's new education inspection framework should set out how it will improve the identification of young carers, by making them a distinct 'group' on the inspection criteria. It should review the support schools provide to young carers to improve their wellbeing, attendance and attainment. This would:
  - A.** Ensure that schools track and monitor young carers' attendance, attainment, suspension, behaviour, homework and wellbeing in the same way other vulnerable groups of students are monitored.
  - B.** Enable schools to develop specific interventions aimed at supporting young carers to attend school regularly, taking into consideration the complexity of balancing a caring responsibility alongside education.
  - C.** Develop programmes of academic support which enable young carers to achieve the same outcomes as their peers without a caring responsibility.
  - D.** Ensure that the data surrounding young carers' attendance, attainment, suspension rate and wellbeing could be collected. This would allow a data-driven approach towards support and intervention which could be standardised, creating immediate impact and making the case for long-term change.



- 3.** The Department for Education (DfE) should add young carers to its daily attendance reporting. This would:
  - A.** Ensure real-time insights are available to inform interventions by schools, multi-academy trusts and local authorities.
  - B.** This will also help ensure that schools and local authorities can comply with the statutory duties outlined in the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' document.
- 4.** The Department for Education (DfE) should make it compulsory for schools to identify young carers on the school census. This would:
  - A.** Ensure that all young carers known to the school are identified on the school census. This would allow the data on young carers' attendance, attainment and suspension rates to be tracked and monitored.
  - B.** Encourage all MIS providers to develop a young carer flag which identifies young carers and tracks their data in the same way other vulnerable groups are currently tracked, such as SEND, FSM, and PP. This would give schools the tools they need to monitor and support young carers effectively.
- 5.** **MYTIME** supports the introduction of a Young Carer Pupil Premium and assessing its effectiveness through a pilot in different parts of England. This would:
  - A.** Ensure that young carers have access to the specific support, resources and experiences they need to positively impact their wellbeing, attendance, attainment and behaviour.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR A YOUNG CARER PUPIL PREMIUM:

Other organisations working with young carers have called for a Young Carer Pupil Premium to be introduced. **MYTIME** Young Carers fully supports this but there are a number of issues which would need to be understood and addressed for this to be successful:

- ▷ A Young Carer Pupil Premium would incentivise schools to identify young carers. Whilst this would be extremely positive and address the significant under-identification issues on the school census return, it has the potential to overwhelm already underfunded and oversubscribed local authorities with young carer assessment referrals.
- ▷ Whilst young carers have the right to an assessment under the Care Act 2014 and Children's Act 2014, there are huge disparities nationally on how these rights are met. Across the country there is a lack of consistency in terms of the age of young carers, the assessment process, thresholds and the support that is made available to young carers post assessment.
- ▷ Families can be reluctant to admit that a young person in the household has a caring responsibility and fearful of local authority intervention. This can be particularly prevalent in households where the young person's caring responsibility is linked to mental ill health and/or substance misuse and more so if the recipient of care is the child's parent.

- ▷ In the 2024 school census 53,975 young carers were identified, however academics estimate there are between 454,603 and 909,207<sup>7</sup> young carers in England. Many young carers are known to their school but are not formally 'registered' as a young carer with their local authority. This would make the allocation of a Young Carer Pupil Premium fund complex, with eligibility difficult to ascertain.
- ▷ As 60% of the young carers identified in this study already attract Pupil Premium funding, it is important to establish whether a Young Carer Pupil Premium would be in addition to the current payment the school receives for these students or whether support should be covered by the current payment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION PROVIDERS:

1. Improve systems and processes to identify young carers at enrolment and throughout their education. This should be carried out when:
  - A. Children start school, transition to secondary school, transition to further education (including college and/or 6th form) and when pupils change school if they move to a new area during the academic year.
  - B. Schools should communicate with students and parents/guardians annually, providing opportunities for students with caring responsibilities to be identified.
2. Track and discuss young carer data on attendance, attainment, suspension rates and wellbeing at leadership level as it is done with any other disadvantaged group. This would:
  - A. Lead to an early identification of issues surrounding attendance, attainment, suspensions and wellbeing. The school would then have the opportunity to develop young carer specific interventions which address persistent absence, academic underachievement, behavioural issues and mental ill health.
  - B. Allow schools to allocate funding to young carers that also qualify for Pupil Premium and SEND funding. This could be used to improve young carers academic outcomes, increase participation in extracurricular activities such as trips and residentials, provide IT equipment and to deliver specific wellbeing interventions aimed at supporting young carers struggling with mental ill health.
3. Appoint a Young Carer Champion, who has received specialised training on how to identify and support young carers. This would:
  - A. Ensure that every school has a specific member of staff with responsibility for implementing young carer identification and support processes. The Young Carer Champion should ensure that all school staff access high quality training which would enable better identification of young carers and the implementation of effective support strategies.
  - B. Implementing a school-wide young carer policy which addresses the challenges young carers experience around homework, bullying, social isolation, mental ill health, academic underperformance, suspensions and persistent absence. This policy should focus on how each educational setting can make reasonable adjustments which consider the young carers' roles in providing care at home.
  - C. Ensure that schools are making referrals of young carers to local young carers services and to local authorities, requesting 'Young Carers Needs Assessments' to be carried out.

<sup>7</sup> <https://cosmostudy.uk/latest/cosmo-data-provides-new-insights-into-the-lives-of-young-carers>

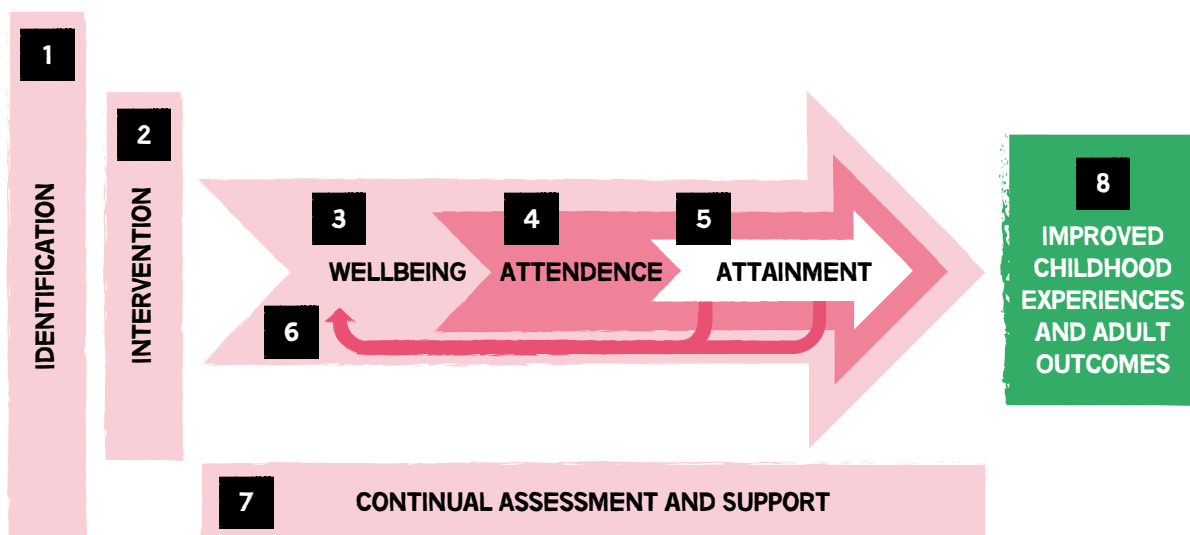
# MYTIME YOUNG CARERS: A SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH TO ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG CARERS IN EDUCATION SETTINGS

The **MYTIME** Young Carers Level Up Programme was designed and developed to assist schools with the identification of young carers and strategies for supporting them. The funding for this programme is being provided by grants from trusts, foundations, and individuals who believe that young carers deserve better support at school.

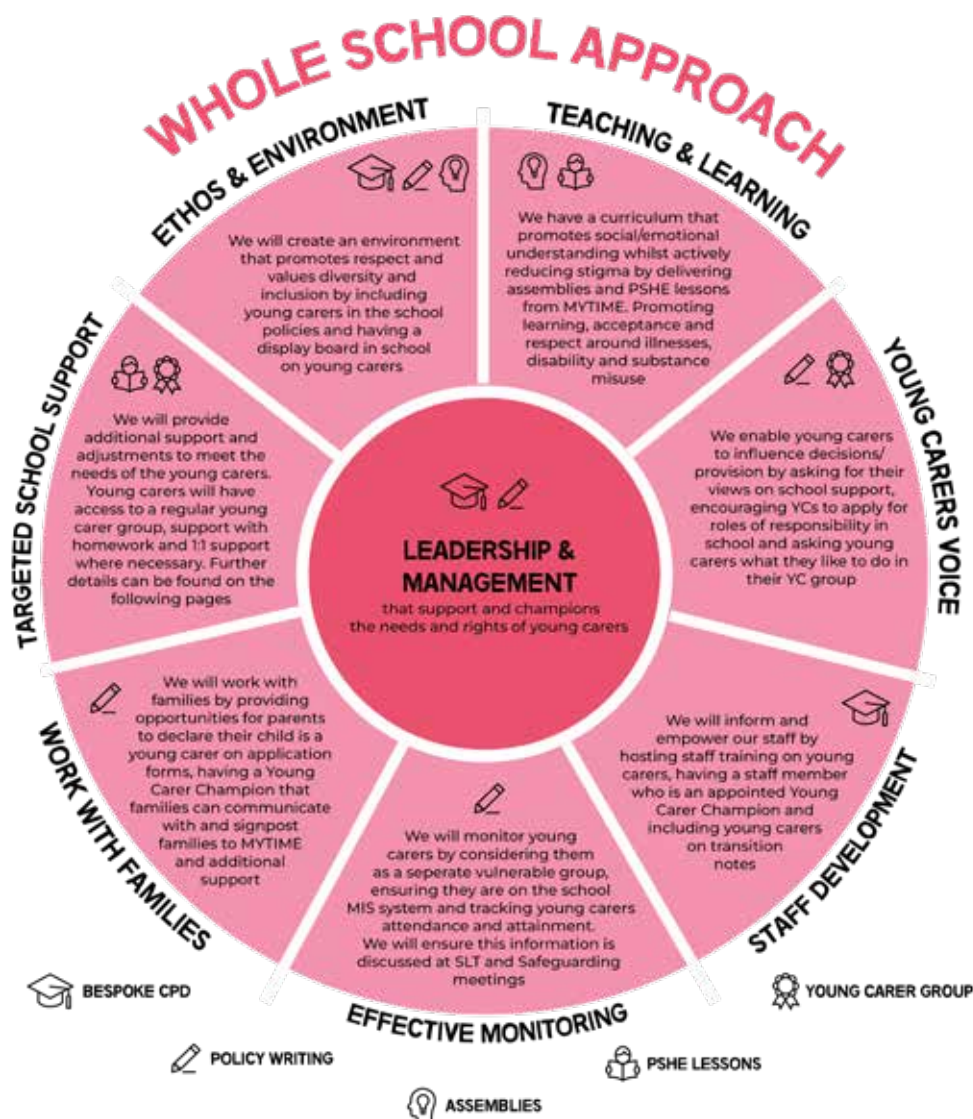
**MYTIME** is currently working with over 220 schools nationally and has developed a whole-school approach to improving the wellbeing, attendance and attainment of young carers. This highly effective programme provides evidence to prove that if the recommendations suggested above were followed, outcomes for young carers could be significantly improved.

The **MYTIME** Level Up Programme supports schools through an 8-stage process, beginning with the identification of young carers. It is only once young carers are identified that interventions can be put in place to support their wellbeing, attendance and attainment. These can then be assessed continuously, leading to improved childhood experiences and adult outcomes.

## MYTIME INTERVENTIONS MODEL



**MYTIME** promotes a whole-school approach to identifying and supporting young carers. Senior leaders are expected to create the conditions where designated Young Carer Champion and school staff can ensure young carers thrive and that their families feel supported. **MYTIME** Level Up Co-Ordinators (all former teachers) provide individualised support to schools over multiple years, by training Young Carer Champions and delivering school staff CPD sessions, policy development, assemblies, PSHE lessons and young carer groups.



## IMPACTS OF THE MYTIME LEVEL UP PROGRAMME

The impact of the **MYTIME** Level Up Programme can be seen in the 2023 and 2024 school census. In Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) where **MYTIME** is now working with 92% of state-funded primary and secondary schools, the school census data showed that BCP primary and secondary schools identify the highest percentage of young carers in England.

Local authority	School type	2024 BCP data	2024 National data	2023 BCP data	2023 National data	Change
<b>Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole</b>	Primary	1.9%	0.5%	1.4%	0.3%	+0.5
	Secondary	3.2%	0.9%	2.5%	0.6%	+0.7
	Alternative Provision	5.5%	0.3%	4.0%	0.2%	+1.5

## SOLUTION FOCUSSED APPROACHES IN PRACTICE:

The following case studies demonstrate what is possible when schools are given the tools, training and help they need to identify and support young carers.

### CASE STUDY 1: WELLBEING – THE BLANDFORD SCHOOL

## THE BLANDFORD SCHOOL



**MYTIME** began working with The Blandford School in 2022-2023.

It is an academy secondary school in rural Dorset, and there are 1108 students on roll aged between 11-18.

After receiving training from **MYTIME**, The Blandford School identified over 60 new young carers that they had been previously unaware of. Since undergoing this training, the school has focused on improving the wellbeing of the young carers that go there and have seen some exceptional improvements in this area.



*“Working with MYTIME has encouraged all staff (teaching and support) to always be aware and conscious of the needs of the young people we work with. It has opened our eyes to the complexities of family life for young carers and the respect we must all have for their wellbeing. As a result, our culture is more inclusive, more needs-led and (crucially) far more celebratory of their achievements.”*

SALLY WILSON-HEADTEACHER

The Blandford School has appointed a Young Carer Champion, who leads on delivering the school's Young Carer Policy. The Blandford School now runs a successful and extremely well attended young carer group, they have delivered PSHE lessons and assemblies to all students and they regularly take young carers on trips with **MYTIME**.



*“MYTIME have sparked a culture shift across school in raising awareness for staff and students alike on the lives of our young carers. We have worked hard to build a culture where our young carers can have trust in us to support them when they need it, to feel heard and to have a safe space to socialise and connect. This in turn has had a positive effect on students' wellbeing.”*

HOLLY LORBERG - YOUNG CARER CHAMPION



Holly has championed young carer voices at the school and conducted a recent survey with them which showed that all young carers at The Blandford School feel well, or extremely well, supported.



*"The support at school has improved my wellbeing - I didn't like coming into to school where I felt misunderstood. Since the support has been in place I have built good relationships with staff and knew who I could talk to when I needed support. Individual teachers are more understanding of my situation, because of the training they have had. I feel less anxious as I know I can speak to them and there are reasonable judgements."*

YOUNG CARER - AGE 15 (Y10)



**THE BLANDFORD  
SCHOOL**



## CASE STUDY 2: ATTENDANCE - ST EDWARD'S SCHOOL



**St Edward's  
School**

Unity - Achievement - Faith



**MYTIME** began working with St Edward's School in 2022-2023. St Edward's is a comprehensive state secondary school in Poole and there are over 1000 students on roll, aged between 11-18.

After partnering with **MYTIME**, St Edward's identified 20 new young carers that they had been previously unaware of. Since engaging with the Level Up Programme, the school has focused on improving the wellbeing of the young carers, which has led to 70% of the young carers at the school improving their attendance.



*"It is my belief that attendance has increased because the young carers enjoy being at school. This is due to the culture that has been created and the fact that there are now multiple members of staff that each young carer can approach for help and support. We have appointed an exceptional Young Carer Champion, who really listens to the needs of the young carers. We provide opportunities for them to feedback on both their positive and negative experiences and we always ensure we respond, so they feel seen and heard."*

**CHRIS BARNETT - HEADTEACHER**

Chris highlights how the school has used data to understand the effectiveness of the support now being offered to young carers and explains that all staff are now aware of who the young carers are by identifying them on the school MIS system (SIMS). Young carers have a user-defined code, which enables staff to create seating plans for each class and this reminds staff every day of who the young carers are. St Edward's treat young carers exactly as they would any other vulnerable group and there is a key member of the Senior Leadership Team who has been given responsibility for the outcomes of young carers. She works closely with the Young Carer Champion to ensure that young carers remain a priority.



**St Edward's have put a large variety of provision in place for young carers including:**

- ▷ Young carer activities which take place every half term
- ▷ 1:1 sessions with the ELSA trained Young Carer Champion, which are delivered through their EDEN Learning Centre
- ▷ Young carers are given a pass that they can show to staff on the gate. This means they are not challenged when their caring responsibilities prevent them from arriving to school on time, but instead, they are greeted warmly.
- ▷ Young carers are on the school website, ensuring that parents and the wider community know St Edward's supports young carers.
- ▷ Specific staff training has been put in place focusing on additional support for the morning 'transition period' between home and school. This gives young carers time and space to leave their caring responsibilities at the school gate and prepare for a day of learning with their peers.



*"My Young Carer Champion was able to give me a late card - I don't always need to use it but if I show it to the staff on the gate, I am able to avoid the need to explain why I am late as they understand I have a reason for using it."*

YOUNG CARER- AGE 13 (Y9)

As a result of these proactive efforts, Yaz, the Young Carer Champion, reports that they have had several parents email her directly to self-refer their children to receive support from the school in relation to their caring responsibility. St Edward's also gather data on the nature of the young carers' caring responsibilities to help tailor their support to the needs of each individual student and their family.



*"If we do have students that are struggling with their attendance, our initial focus is to get them into the school, not necessarily into all lessons. We have one student who was at risk of becoming a school refuser, but they now are regularly attending lessons due to our ethos and support. More importantly, this student now openly engages in conversation about their situation, allowing us to listen and understand. Before the support, there was no communication."*

YAZ- YOUNG CARER CHAMPION, ST EDWARD'S

When the young carers at St Edward's were asked about the support which had particularly benefitted them, one said:



*"My Young Carer Champion could see I was struggling, I was able to have a temporary reduction in homework, just focusing on homework in the core subjects until my situation was more manageable. They spoke to my teachers for me and this was supported. It definitely made it easier to come into school, rather than avoid the situation by staying at home."*

YOUNG CARER- AGE 14 (Y9)



**St Edward's  
School**

Unity - Achievement - Faith

## CASE STUDY 3: ATTAINMENT - GLENMOOR AND WINTON



**Glenmoor & Winton Academies**  
High Achievement – High Standards  
Part of United Learning



**MYTIME** began working with Glenmoor and Winton Academies in 2021-2022. Glenmoor and Winton Academies are a co-located secondary school in Bournemouth that are part of the United Learning Multi Academy Trust. Students are aged 11-16 and there are over 1800 students on roll.

After partnering with **MYTIME**, Glenmoor and Winton have identified over 70 new young carers that they were previously unaware of. Since engaging with the Level Up Programme, the school has focused on improving the wellbeing and attainment of young carers.

In 2024, despite young carers being three times more likely to enter the school as low prior attainers, 82% of young carers at Glenmoor achieved a 4+ in English and Maths, and 65% at Winton achieved a 5+ in English and Maths. They deliver a variety of academic interventions through their Learning Coach Programme that ensure young carers are offered the very best support in terms of catching up with their peers. Glenmoor and Winton recognise that if young carers struggle with maths, reading and writing, this has a huge impact not only on their ability to achieve good GCSE results which will allow them to go on to further education, but can also significantly impact their confidence, their attendance and their long-term future.



*"At Glenmoor and Winton, all young carers have individualised action plans which allow us to provide support in the areas they need it most. These action plans are used to make allowances for those struggling with homework, they provide key 1-1 emotional and academic support, allow us to make reasonable adjustments to start and finish times and provide opportunities for personal development through trips and clubs."*

LEON LIMA- PRINCIPAL GLENMOOR AND WINTON ACADEMIES



Glenmoor and Winton have also worked hard to create a 'culture of safety' for young carers at the school. They have focused on giving young carers a sense of belonging by creating an environment where they feel seen and supported. The Young Carer Champion delivers a young carer group every week, where young carers can go to take part in fun activities such as tending to the school garden and art sessions. This provides them with a safe space to spend time with other young carers and an opportunity for them to talk to the Young Carer Champion about things that are bothering them.



*"My school raises awareness of young carers and we have done a number of events, for example, trips and the MYTIME Employability Programme, which helped me understand what I want to do when I leave school. Some of the events we have done have involved the whole school and this has helped people understand that the school is working with MYTIME to support young carers."*

YOUNG CARER - AGE 16 (Y11)



**Glenmoor & Winton Academies**  
High Achievement – High Standards

Part of United Learning

## CONCLUSIONS

Young carers face numerous challenges, including balancing their caring responsibilities with education, financial barriers and difficulties in accessing appropriate support. The significant issue of persistent absence from school and higher suspension rates among young carers underscores the need for them to be recognised as a distinct group in educational policy. While some schools are making an outstanding effort to identify and support young carers, there remains considerable inconsistency, with many schools unable to offer the necessary support.

The inspiring case studies illustrate the transformative impact that proper training and support can have on young carers in schools. The critical work happening in these schools highlights that with the right tools and a supportive framework, schools can significantly improve the lives of young carers, helping them to overcome barriers and achieve their full potential. The positive changes in wellbeing, attendance and attainment serve as a beacon of hope, demonstrating what is possible when schools prioritise the needs of young carers.

Providing funding for schools to train a Young Carer Champion in every setting could result in the implementation of essential interventions to address the numerous issues that contribute to the underrepresentation of young carers in higher education and employment. While the Department for Education's recent addition of young carers to the school census is a positive step, further improvements in data collection and support accessibility are needed.

The UK Government has pledged to young people to improve their opportunities and outcomes, by creating a positive environment that helps them thrive. This can only be achieved if the needs of young carers are considered, and action is taken to ensure we don't fail these exceptional young people who do so much to care for others.



# MYTIME

## YOUNG CARERS

### OUR THANKS GO TO THE FOLLOWING SCHOOLS FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THIS REPORT:

AVONBOURNE BOYS SCHOOL

AVONBOURNE GIRLS SCHOOL

BOURNE ACADEMY

GILLINGHAM SCHOOL

GLENMOOR ACADEMY

MAGNA ACADEMY

POOLE HIGH

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S SCHOOL

ST EDWARD'S SCHOOL

WINTON ACADEMY

A HUGE THANK YOU TO THE YOUNG CARERS WHO MET WITH US TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES - YOU ADDED SO MUCH TO THIS REPORT AND WE ARE SO GRATEFUL FOR YOUR TIME AND INSIGHTS.



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