

MYTime's School Support Programme

At MYTime, we believe that no child's destiny should be defined by their beginning, yet young carers currently achieve 9 grades lower overall at GCSE than their peers. Our School Support Programme – due to launch this September - is designed to ensure that young carers have access to the additional support they may need in school, and, ultimately, to level the academic playing field between young carers and their peers.

Young carers may face a number of obstacles to academic progress as a result of their caring duties. Responsibilities at home may render it difficult for young carers to complete homework, get to school on time or attend regularly. If the child in question feels stressed, anxious or tired because of their caring role, then they may struggle to concentrate in class. It's important that school staff know about a young carer's circumstances, so that they can take the necessary measures to help them overcome these challenges, yet 39% of young carers state that their school is unaware of their caring responsibility. Central to the purpose of our School Support Programme is our aim to raise awareness of young carers within their school communities.

But that's not all. As long as only 19% of school staff here in the UK have ever received training on how to support young carers, we realise that simply highlighting young carers to their schools won't be enough. Led by our highly experienced School Support Co-ordinator, we will provide specialised teacher training to ensure that school staff are equipped to recognise and support their young carers. We'll also produce individualised young carer policies for schools, and help to monitor the attendance and grades of young carers, recommending appropriate measures that school staff could take to boost these where necessary. We are committed to improving the educational outcomes of young carers, and we won't rest until we've achieved that goal.

The practical challenges that a young carer may experience in school are significant, but it would be naïve to underestimate the emotional or social issues that some encounter there too. The role of a young carer is often misunderstood and sometimes unfairly stigmatised, and as result, 2 in 3 young carers experience bullying in school. It is as important to us to improve the educational experience of a young carer as it is to improve their educational outcomes. That's why we'll be delivering student assemblies to encourage a culture of respect and understanding for young carers, and also working with schools to establish young carer support groups. We'll even be offering Memory-Making days out and weekend R&R Retreats through schools, creating opportunities for young carers to get to know one another and build vital support networks within their school communities.

The School Support Programme launches this September to 10 schools across the county of Dorset, and is predicted to benefit at least 200 young carers this year, but our ambitions are big, and we're keen to roll the programme out across the UK as soon as we're able. We need your support to make that dream a reality, so visit our Crowdfunding page to find out more and, if you can, to donate. We'd be so grateful for your support.

<https://www.avivacommunityfund.co.uk/young-carers-school-support-programme>