



Supporting Young Carers in North Ayrshire



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Purpose of Guidance

This guidance has been developed in line with the [Carers \(Scotland\) Act 2016](#) (the Act). It is intended to provide staff with an overall understanding of duties and the approach to be adopted in identifying, working with, and supporting young carers across North Ayrshire.

The overall intention of the Act is to ensure that young carers can be children and young people first and foremost and are protected from undertaking caring responsibilities or tasks that are inappropriate with regard to their age, maturity and impact on quality of life.

Who is a Young Carer?

North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership (NAHSCP) and North Ayrshire Education Services recognise the significant contribution of young carers who support family and friends who need their help due to illness, disability, mental health, addiction issues or simply as the person they care for grows older.

Many young people do not recognise they are carers and see caring as just doing what anyone else would do in their situation. Some young carers do not live with the person they care for, some young carers care for multiple people and are often balancing education, work, and family responsibilities at home.

The Act defines a young carer as;

‘a carer who is under 18 years old or has attained the age of 18 years while a pupil at school, and has, since attaining that age remained a pupil at that or another school.’

Where a young person with a caring role has reached the age of 16 years and left secondary education to pursue employment or higher education, they will still be considered a young carer until the age of 18 years.

Identifying a Young Carer

All NAHSCP staff have a role to play in identifying and guiding young carers to the right level of advice and support as early as possible in their caring journey.

NAHSCP recommissioned the carer service early in 2023 and the incumbent supplier Unity continues to be the young and adult carer services partner to help people identify their caring role to gain access to information, advice, and support. Unity and NAHSCP have commenced plans to expand the reach of carer service by operating an outreach service instead of being centre based. Staff will be more present and visible in communities with support staff increasing more than threefold, to better identify young carers on their own doorstep and support them closed to school and home.

NAHSCP work with Education Services and Unity’s new North Ayrshire Gateway service to identify young carers from age 5 years, as well as their families, to ensure they are informed and aware of carers rights and support. Head Teachers and Pastoral staff are engaging in proactive conversations in schools helping to create a

secure environment where young people feel comfortable to self-identify and make known that they are young carers, if they chose to.

The Carers Gateway deliver carer awareness assemblies to all pupils across primary and secondary schools. Young carer staff facilitate young carer groups and provide one to one support to Head Teachers and Pastoral staff which helps identifying young carers, promote good carer conversations, assists in the offer, preparation, recording and reporting of Young Carers Statements (YCS) and supports the provision of appropriate support identified from the YCS.

The YCS is also a way to prevent young carers being identified by negative aspects of their attendance, behaviour, or attainment such as:

- Being late or missing days in school
- Being tired, anxious, stressed, depressed or withdrawn
- Problems socially or being isolated from peers/ presenting as overly mature
- Difficulty concentrating on work, not handing it in on time or producing a lower standard than normal
- Difficulty joining clubs or unable to attend school trips
- Showing physical problems
- Showing signs of neglect, poor diet

The above may be indicators of a range of concerns, not necessarily associated with a child having a caring role. However, within the quality conversations staff already have with young people, we should add “Are you helping to look after someone?”

Young carers themselves have a key role to play in raising awareness about the rewarding and demanding situations young carers face. Opportunities should be provided in schools for young carers to self-identify and present/ discuss young carers matters with their peers through appropriate activities. This may include school assemblies, workshops, talks or lunch time drop-in sessions.

NAHSCP implemented a Carer Appreciation Card in June 2016 with the focus of identifying young and adult carers across North Ayrshire. The card has a dual purpose of building a carer community in North Ayrshire and around 40 businesses have signed up to offer discounts and concessions for carers. Around 1,043 North Ayrshire Carers are registered and using their card, unfortunately this is mostly adult carers, and we encourage young carers to sign up for this support.

School staff can discuss any concerns with the Head Teacher or Pastoral staff with responsibility for the young person, if the young person gives consent. Any concerns about a young person, who may be considered as an unidentified young carer, should be directed to the young person’s Named Person.

Information gained because of this process will be held securely by the Named Person. While schools will respect the right to privacy, good practice will establish if the family is in contact with a support service that can help reduce their reliance on support from the young person. Schools will only share information about the young carer and their family if agreement has been given.

In the event of any young carer, who is considered to be at risk of significant or critical harm, the statutory Child Protection Procedure should be followed.

Duty to Offer & Prepare Young Carers Statements (YCS)

Section 12 of the Act requires the responsible authority to offer and prepare a YCS on identification of a young carer. The YCS is a framework for young carers, who request or are offered, and accept the chance to complete their YCS. It helps to identify and recognise individuals needs and the things that are important to each young carer. The YCS is a record, which they will receive a copy of, to own and share with any other person that the young carer wishes to.

The responsible authority differs according to the circumstances of the young carer:

- Where the young carer is a pre-school (0-4), it is NHS Ayrshire & Arran or indeed the Health Board in which the child stays.
- Where the young carer is not pre-school (5 to 18 or 18 and still in secondary education) it is North Ayrshire Council's responsibility or the authority in which the child resides.

North Ayrshire Council, as the responsible authority, have identified and delegated authority to the Teachers and Pastoral staff in schools to support young carers to complete their YCS up to the levels of moderate risk/impact to the young carer. Where needs or outcomes are deemed to be substantial or critical the Names Person will liaise with local Social Work Service Access Teams to identify the appropriate Social Work staff to continue to support.

Exceptions to the above include:

- Where the young carer is a pupil at a grant aided or independent school, the responsible authority is the Manager or Proprietor of the school.
- Where a pre-school child resides in a different Health Board area than they would otherwise stay, due to a decision made by NAHSCP, the responsible authority is the Health Board where they would otherwise reside.

The offer of a YCS was enhanced with the introduction of a Carers Support Worker role within the NAHSCP Carer Team to support any carers who were not known to services or were aged 16 to 18 years and not in school. In terms of access to funding this was formerly only available through the assessment and associated budget for the cared-for person, but the Carer Support Worker has access to an Education Fund specifically for young carers and their families. North Ayrshire Carers Gateway service will also in their plans for expansion and improving reach for carers, be offering the opportunity to complete a light touch YCS opening the option for young carers to access the right support, in the right way at the right time.

For young carers self-identifying who are not known to Social Work Services or in education, and are requesting their YCS, local Service Access Teams are the point of referral who will direct the young carer to the Carer Support Worker.

North Ayrshire's Approach to Young Carer Support

The [National Carers Strategy](#) (Section 5) and North Ayrshire Carer Strategy '[Building Caring Communities' 2023 to 25](#) dedicates specific strategic outcomes for young carers so that:

- Young carers are supported and protected from inappropriate caring and negative impacts on their education, social lives, and future opportunities.
- Young adult carers are supported when moving from education to training and work while balancing an ongoing caring role.

Most young carers meet the definition of a 'child in need' under the [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#). Young carers are also highlighted as children who may need different or more support to what is normally provided, referred to as 'additional support needs' under the [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#).

[Getting it right for every child](#) (GIRFEC) is Scotland's approach to strengthening the wellbeing of every child and young person, including young carers who hold a caring role. A young carer is entitled to the same support, protection and opportunities offered to other children. The principles and values at the core of the GIRFEC approach apply for young carers just as they do any child. In North Ayrshire staff work within the parameters of this and have outcome-focused conversations involving and engaging young people to put their views first enabling clearer understanding of young carer needs and improved support planning based on what matters to each young carer.

Staff can also consider the holistic whole family approach by considering the young person's network of support and wider family. Community, along with the impact the cared-for person's needs is having on everyone around them.

To support a smooth transition for young carers between primary and secondary school, the Head Teacher will pass on all relevant information held including details of the young carers' circumstances, YCS additional support needs and successful support. Interventions.

Completing the Young Carers Statement (YCS)

Section 15 of the Act outline the information that must be contained in a YCS. NAHSCP consulted with registered young carers across North Ayrshire to consider the content and approach locally.

Young carers advised they would benefit from being able to invite a trusted adult or advocate to help them understand their YCS and help get their views, thoughts, and feelings across.

Circumstances can arise where there are strains or relationships that have the potential for conflict of opinion. This can be between the young carer and the person they care for/ family, or indeed the Named Person/ Teacher who identified or is responsible for preparing the YCS with the young carer. It is recommended that staff seek the best person to assist the young carer. Advice on advocacy can

be found here [Scottish Government Guidance on Carer Advocacy](#) to help young carers.

If concerns are such that tensions are having a detrimental impact on the young carer's wellbeing, raising a child or adult protection concern in line with our local Child Protection or Adult Support Protection guidelines may be necessary.

In terms of timescales for preparing and completing a YCS, legislation does not state a timeframe, but it is best to inform young carers and their families of indicative timescales. It is fully expected that some will take longer than others due to complexity, urgency or risk and the focus should be on achieving the right information and support for the young carer. If there are delays always advise the young carer and family where necessary of the reason.

Timescales have been set under Section 13 where carers are caring for someone who is terminally ill. A cared-for person is terminally ill, if at that time, the person suffers from a progressive disease or condition and death in consequence of that disease or condition can reasonably be expected within 6 months. This provision is for young carers and adult carers and the following link provides more details on the process for prioritising carers for someone with a [terminal illness](#).

Young Carers Statement Content

Section 1 – What will happen to my statement?

This is the agreement between the Named Person/ Lead Professional and the young carer establishing the role and expectations of each person. It details what the young carer should expect to happen during and following their conversation, including who they wish to share their YCS with.

Section 2 – Information about me

Collects basic personal information about the young carer which will already be known to the Named Person.

Section 3 – My role as a Young Carer

Establishes who the young person cares for, the nature and extent of care they give and the impact on the young person's daily life.

Section 4 – Caring

Begins to look more in depth at the SHANARRI indicators to detail what physical and/ or emotional support the young carer provides, when and how they feel about this.

Throughout the conversation consider whether the young carer is able and willing to care, considering the age and maturity of the young person along with the nature of the caring role, appropriateness of tasks and possible risks to their wellbeing. This may be closely linked to the formal support provided, if any, to the person they care for detailed in their own assessment of need. Looking at this may help confirm if the young carer is willing and able or if there is unmet need for the person they care for. Section 30 of the Act amends Section 12A of the

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and Section 23 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 requiring the local authority to consider 1.) the care provided by the young carer in decisions about the cared-for person and 2.) the views of the young carer in so far as it is reasonable and practicable to do so.

Where a Child's Plan or Wellbeing Assessment is in place for a young person who is also carrying out a caring role, agree with all relevant persons how the YCS sits alongside the Child's Plan to ensure a coherent and continuous approach to planning support whilst ensuring specific needs are identified and recorded relating to their caring role.

Section 5 – Time for me

This considers what the young carer does. Enjoys when they have time away from caring. Under Section 3 of the Act, a break from caring can be any form of support that enables a carer to have time away from their normal caring responsibilities with each individual's needs to be looked at on their own merit.

Young carers in North Ayrshire told the NAHSCP Carers Team that they considered a break from caring to be:

- Going out with friends or sleepovers (without the cared-for person)
- Going to sports or after school clubs (without the cared-for person)
- Going to the cinema (with or without the cared-for person)
- Reading a book or listening to music (break at home)
- Playing video games or watching TV/ YouTube (break at home)
- Spending time with other family members (one to one)
- Taking a short break with family (with cared-for person)

Refer to the North Ayrshire Short Break Services Statement or contact North Ayrshire Carers Gateway on 01294 311333 or HSCP Carer Support Worker – gena Campbell for advice on accessing young carer and family breaks.

Some of the examples above relates to what is already happening in the young person's life meaning a wider choice of short breaks can be provided closer to or at home.

The eligibility criteria for young and adult carers were reviewed in June 2022 and through agreement at Integrated Joint Board the eligibility thresholds have been extended to include those carers with low and moderate carer needs. This extends the parameters of support to include early and effective support in line with the Strategic Commissioning Plan ambitions meaning lower levels of support will be provided for young carers with a view to support at an earlier stage and preventing the breakdown of caring relationships and maintaining young carers emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing. This will include a resource implication from widening the eligibility criteria and will be kept under review to ensure demand for carer services can be accommodated within agreed budget allocation.

The Lead Professional has a duty to offer and promote a variety of support under Section 25 of the Act which sets out the four options of the [Self-directed Support \(Scotland\) Act 2013](#).

A break may include the provision of replacement care for the cared-for person where friends or family cannot help, even if the cared-for is not in regular receipt of social care support. The HSCP has a duty under Section 24 to provide or arrange replacement care that the young carer would normally provide, in the manner that the cared-for person wishes under the options of self-directed support legislation, to allow the young carer to have a break from caring.

It is often noted that a break from caring or respite benefits both the young carer and the person they care for. The legislation makes the difference clear in that:

1. Support provided to a young carer under the Act to facilitate a break from caring is noted in their YCS.
2. Support provided to the cared-for person to meet their assessed needs is noted in either a Child's Plan or Support Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SSAQ) as opportunities for socialisation. Where the cared-for is an adult, services may be chargeable.

Also, care for the cared-for person is not replacement care if the purpose is to relieve the young carer, on a permanent basis, from inappropriate caring tasks.

Section 6 – School/ Home

Foster a conversation about the positive or negative impact/ risk to the young carer in terms of their attendance and attainment at school. The 2004 Act makes clear that young carers may experience barriers to learning and additional support needs should be identified, provided for and reviewed. [Further guidance on Attendance in Scottish Schools, 'Included, Engaged, involved: Part1'](#) makes clear that education authorities should recognise the impact that caring responsibilities may have on attendance and follow up on these absences' patterns. Some these needs may be met by small changes within schools such as:

- Alternative arrangements for the completion of homework
- A quiet space to study or home learning
- Where appropriate, allow the young carer to telephone home during break or lunch
- Provide advice on travel where attendance is an issue

Use SEEMIS code DCS (Exceptional Domestic Circumstances (Authorised) should be used) for attendance when short term critical family support is required from the young person, until longer term support can be provided.

Alternative times do after/ out with school activities (e.g., sports, music, even school excursions) if a young carer is unable to attend due to caring.

Display and actively promote young carer information, including but not limited to North Ayrshire Carers Gateway or Young Scot etc.

Specific information may be necessary when a carer transitions from young carer to adult carer. This may involve a change in support between services or relate to moving from primary to secondary/ secondary to further education, leaving school and beginning employment or no longer requiring support. The YCS will continue to have effect until the carer is provided with an Adult Carer Support Plan. For young people leave school at 16 years old, they are still considered a young carer under the Act until they reach the age of 18 years and should contact Service Access to access the offer of a YCS and support.

Section 7 – My Life

Expand the conversation to look at the emotional impact on the young person and gauge how happy, healthy, safe, and confident they feel. At the point of review, it is expected that a measure of change or maintenance can be gathered to track and evidence the quality of support for our young carers.

Section 8 – My Voice

Carer Involvement is a key principle of the Act, and we must appropriately involve young carers in the planning and evaluation of carer services and support for the person they care for. Young carers have expressed that involvement and being listened to helps them feel confident, valued and in control and then able to make informed choices about their caring role and potential need for support.

The established [Equal Partners in Care \(EpiC\) framework](#) states ‘Carers have a unique role in the life of the person they care for. When we are planning and delivering care for that person, it’s important that we involve their carer. They have valuable knowledge to contribute, and any decision will have an impact on their caring role’.

Section 9 – My Support

Begin to identify the level of need and individual outcomes for the young carer, essentially what matters to them and what help or support, if any, would make life easier to balance daily living and caring.

These support needs could include a wide range of aspects including their physical needs, emotional, relationship or social needs, health and wellbeing or economic and physical environment needs. All relevant need must be recorded in the YCS and if a young carer has no need in a particular area, it is good practice to note this also. Section 15 of the Act is prescriptive, and details all matters that must be considered and recorded when preparing a YCS. It is best that a proportionate approach is taken as not all issues will be raised by the young carer through conversations.

The Act requires North Ayrshire Council to develop local eligibility criteria for carers. This is a framework to help determine the level of support to provide to young carers based on their identified needs. North Ayrshire young carers have been involved in setting these criteria.

Due to the geography of Ayrshire, there may be young carers living in one local authority and caring for someone in another. Some young carers may attend school

in East or South but normal residency is in North. The responsible local authority, where the person they care for resides, has the duty and power to support the young carer.

There is no national threshold and North Ayrshire Council have chosen to support young carers at all levels of impact/ risk to the young carer to trigger the duty to provide support, initiating the duty to offer the four options of self-directed support as the mechanism to deliver the agreed support.

Decisions about eligibility threshold and levels of support for young carers depends on the information gathered throughout conversations with the young person from the previous sections. In all cases, the young carer must be informed of the eligibility decision and the reason for determining this.

For the young carer to receive support in their caring role, the person they care for does not need to be receiving formal services or support from a Social Work Team.

How are we going to do this?

The young carers' individual outcomes should link to and support the achievement of their potential in relation to the wellbeing indicators of the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach – Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included. What, how, who and when will be specific to the young carer and their circumstances. Each outcome can have short- or longer-term focus. It is best practice that we note all outcomes, the way support will help, who is responsible for overseeing this and when this will be completed.

Young carers' needs are those needs for support that may not be met through support to the cared-for person, where this is in place or from signposting and small changes from universal and community-based support.

Reviewing the Young Carers Statement (YCS)

The YCS should be reviewed in the following circumstances:

- When the cared-for person moves to a different local authority area
- When the person being cared-for becomes resident under Part 2 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968/Section 25 of the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 or / Part 2 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- Any other change in the young carer or the person(s) they care for circumstances which the Named Person or Lead Professional views as having a material impact on the care provided by the young carer.
- When the person being cared for is discharged from hospital
- When there is a deterioration in the young carers' health and wellbeing, development or attainment.
- If outcomes have differing timeframes

Reviews should be proportionate to the level of impact/ risk/ caring role. Complexity of care but should be carried out at least annually in line with all other assessment guidelines.

The review will keep information contained in the YCS up to date, ensure that support has been/ continues to be relevant or effective and would consider if the needs and outcomes of the young person has changed. This may result in a change to support. The young carer should be provided with a physical copy of their YCS in a reasonable timescale.

Important things to do if I can no longer care

This section requires information about arrangements to be put in place for the care of the cared-for person in an emergency. This may be due to the young carer being unwell or in hospital or there is adverse transport or weather issued that they cannot attend, for example. It is recommended that any arrangements or sharing of contacts is discussed thoroughly with the cared-for person to ensure all matters are agreed with everyone.

North Ayrshire Carers Appreciation Card can help in these circumstances as carrying the card at all times helps to identify the young person as a carer and starts the conversation or process of putting support in place in times of crisis.

Future planning is about longer-term plans for the person you care for when you are no longer able or willing to care. Future plans are more in-depth than emergency plans. This may be when the young carer plans to move away from home to pursue further education or employment or move into their own home. The carer, cared-for person and all other relevant family members or friends should be involved in this plan. The wishes and preferences of the carer and the cared-for person should be considered. Some things to consider include, but are not limited to, current care and future care, living arrangements, practical legal and financial provision including Power of Attorney, guardianship, wills and trusts (if relevant).

All young carers can request a YCS to be carried out, at any time, no matter how old or young they may be. For young carers up to the age of 12, parental consent will be requested. Young carers aged 13 years and upwards can make their own decision, but it is best practice to notify their parent/ guardian. Any young carer aged 16 or over can make the decision on their own without consent.

Where can I ask for help, advice or support?

[Unity North Ayrshire Carers Gateway](#) on 01294 311333 or northayrshire.carers@unity-enterprise.com

[North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership](#) or on carersteam@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

[Young Scot](#)

[Carers UK](#)

[North Ayrshire Carers Appreciation Card](#)

[NHS Direct](#) or on 111

Only in the event of an emergency contact Police, Fire or Ambulance on 999

Appendix 1 – Duties Relating to Young Carers

- 1.1 Section 12 – Places a duty on all responsible authorities to offer a Young carers Statement (YCS) to all identified young carers and prepare for those that take up on the offer, as well as for any young carer who requests one. This applies whether the young carers requires or already has a Child's Plan as per Section 33 of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 1.2 Section 24 – Duty to take into account any impact that having one or more protected characteristics has on the young carer under Equality Act 2010.
- 1.3 Section 15 – Where the young carers identified needs meet levels of local eligibility criteria for young carers, the YCS must detail the support the responsible local authority provides or intends to provide the support, and the cost.
- 1.4 Section 34 – We must ensure that all young carers receive quality, consistent and current information, advice and signposting to universal, preventative and community based resources.
- 1.5 Section 19 – NAHSCP and NAC Education have agreed the position of the 'responsible authority' for supporting young carers in the preparation of their YCS. Additional Support Needs duties under the Education (Scotland) Act 2004 were considered in this decision as caring has the potential to create barriers to attendance, attainment and social development.

Appendix 2 – Social Work Team Contacts

North Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership [Contact Us](#) page where enquiries can be submitted, or people can telephone/ visit their local office.

Appendix 3 – Meaning of Carer

In this Act 'carer' means an individual who provides or intends to provide care to another individual (the 'cared-for person')

This does not apply:

- 1 In the case of a cared-for person under 18 years old, to the extent that the care is or would be provided because of the persons' age, or
- 2 In any case to the extent that care is or would be provided, under or by virtue of a contract or as voluntary work.

The Scottish Ministers may by regulations

Provide the 'contract' in 2) b) does or, as the case may be, does not include agreements of a kind specified in the regulations.

Permit a relevant authority to disregard 2) where the authority considers the relationship between the carer and cared-for person is such that it would be appropriate to do so.

In this part relevant authority means a responsible local authority or responsible authority (See Section 41 (1) of the Act).

Meaning of Young Carer

In this Act 'young carer' means a carer who –

Has attained the age of 18 years while a pupil at a school and has since attaining that age remained a pupil at that or another school.