

Young Carers In Schools Programme

Richmond Carers Centre - Young Carers in Schools Programme Evaluation - October 2023

Improving identification and understanding of young carers' needs in school and education

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the London Health & Care Partnership for their funding support and partnership, without which this one year pilot project may not have been possible.

A special thanks to the 17 partnership schools who have engaged with the programme. Your recognition of the importance of improved identification and support for young carers in schools has been crucial to the programme's success.

Introduction

Young carers often experience reduced health and educational outcomes due to the demands of their caring role. Young carers take on much higher levels of responsibility in the home than their peers. For some, the impact of their caring role on their physical and mental health and wellbeing is considerable.

This impact can often be prevalent in the lives of young carers in school and education:

- An average of 48 days cut-short or missed due to caring role each school year (*Carers Trust & The Children's Society, 2016*)
- On average, young carers have "significantly lower" educational attainment at GCSE level - the equivalent to nine grades lower overall - than their peers (*The Children's Society, 2013*)
- Young carers (16-19) are twice as likely to be not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to their peers. (*Carer Trust, 2020*)

Richmond Carers Centre's Young Carers in Schools Programme has the primary aim of improving the identification, recognition and understanding of the needs of young carers, raise the profile of young carers in school, and ensure young carers needs are met. This will lead to the improvement of the health, education and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people who are caring for others.

This report evaluates the effectiveness of the Young Carers in Schools Programme explores feedback from educational professionals who engaged, including it's successes and challenges, identifying the programme's next steps and aims moving forward.

Young Carers in Schools Programme

Year 1 Outcomes - Highlights



17 partnership schools engaged

13 training sessions on improving identification and support of young carers delivered to 240 school professionals

98% of professionals who attended training reported an increased understanding of young carers

12 young carer awareness raising assemblies delivered to over 2800 school pupils

Performance Against Targets

The programme has excelled during its first school year of delivery, with all deliverable targets set out at the beginning of the programme being met and in most cases, exceeded.

Prior to beginning delivery of the programme, five key delivery targets were set. Performance against those targets can be viewed in the below table.

Target	Target Met	Delivery Details
Identify up to 10 partnership schools for Young Carers in Schools Programme	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17 partnership schools identified 12 primary schools, 4 secondary schools & 1 private school
Identify an additional 50 young carers (10% increase of registered young carers in London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames)	Exceeded	56 referrals received from LBRUT schools by end of 2022/23 school year (September 2022-July 2023)
Minimum of 12 assemblies per year	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 assemblies delivered 2830 school students engaged
Deliver professional training to 100 school professionals on the identification and recognition of young carers in schools	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 professional training sessions delivered at partnership schools 240 professionals attended professional training sessions 98% of survey respondents reported an increase in understanding of young carers
Minimum of 3 communications in school bulletin / year	Exceeded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 termly school bulletins distributed 3 additional ad-hoc bulletins distributed

End of Year Feedback

To help inform the end of year programme evaluation, Feedback was gathered from schools in a number of different ways including feedback surveys for professional training, verbal feedback from Young Carer Leads and end of year surveys. This feedback provided schools with the opportunity to share their experience engaging with the programme, giving us an insight into what has worked well, what barriers there are to engaging with the programme and what ongoing support needs schools have identified. The results of these are outlined below.

Increased Identification of Young Carers

One of the key aims of the programme is to ensure an increase in identification and recognition of young carers within London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames' schools. Partnership schools included a mix of primary and secondary schools in the borough, all of whom reported an increase in the amount of identified young carers at their schools since engaging with the programme.

On average, primary schools reported a 52% increase in identified young carers at their schools since becoming a partnership school of the programme. Secondary schools reported a positive increase of 40%.

One of the key factors identified by schools in helping them to identify more young carers was the professional training delivered as part of the programme. 98% of respondents to the training survey reported an increase in awareness of young carers after attending training and as a result, felt more informed about what signs to look out for and better prepared to appropriately identify young carers at their school.

“Since the training - we identified 3 new children as young carers. We knew of the children's tricky homelife - but hadn't considered the children to be young carers... but I think going forward that will help us to target appropriate support for the children - rather than just saying; "Oh they have a tricky home life.””

Positive Response to Training & Assemblies

Raising awareness of young carers amongst both professionals and students at schools is an integral part of the programme. The programme has largely achieved this through the delivery of staff training on identification and recognition of young carers, in addition to awareness raising assemblies for all year groups.

As part of the end of year survey, partnership schools were asked to provide a rating out of 5 (5 being 'Excellent', 1 being 'Not Good') to both the awareness raising assemblies and staff training. As shown in the below overview, feedback on these have been overwhelmingly positive.



Training

The training sessions have been positively received by schools. Sessions are approximately 45 minutes long and are delivered during the school day, at a time most appropriate for professionals. The training is pitched so it is accessible to all members of staff regardless of job role.

There has been good engagement with the training sessions from partnership schools. We have found that it works well delivering the session at the start of the programme as an introduction into the topic of young carers, and highlights the need for better support and improved identification.

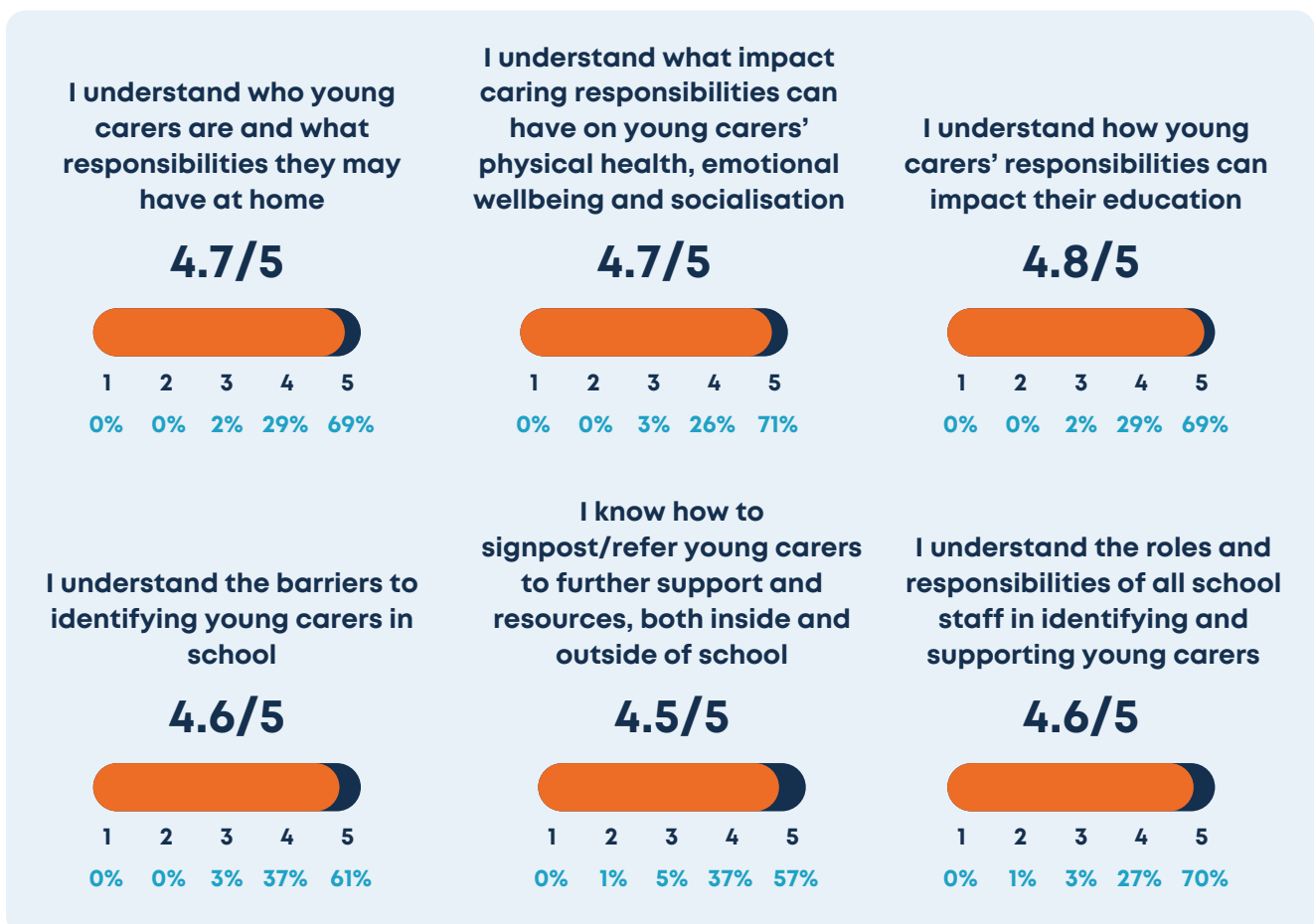
Some examples of the feedback received about training sessions include:

“Brilliant training! Very informative and clear. It has given me a lot more understanding of what a young carer is and how they could be affected. Also how to spot signs and help them”

“Nice efficient presentation - lots of info, but also led very assertively and effectively”

“Thank you so much the training was amazing. The trainer spoke with such confidence and transparency about the young carers programme, what to look out for and next steps so thank you so much!”

In addition to qualitative feedback, attendees were asked to rate their knowledge out of 5 (5 = Very Confident, 1 = No Confidence) in different young carer related issues following their attendance at the training. These results also show an increased level of understanding of the role of a young carer, and how it may affect their school life.



The feedback from schools has helped us to develop and enhance staff training to be responsive to the needs of each partnership school, while retaining the key messages and aims of staff training around young carer awareness and support.

Assemblies

Similar to staff training, engagement with assemblies has also been very positive. In the secondary school setting, assemblies have been delivered to individual year groups and in primary schools they are either delivered to Key Stages or as a whole school assembly.

The length of the assembly works well with a run time of approximately 15 minutes. The primary school assembly has been received well with good engagement from students both during an activity that is delivered and through answering and asking questions. There has been self-identification from students as young carers following the delivery of a number of primary school assemblies.

“Thank you so much for coming into our school and talking to our children in the school assembly. I had 3 children come and speak with me at break time - who said to me - I think I am a young carer! There were no surprises - but it did start some conversations!”

While our experience delivering assemblies in schools has largely been positive, we also acknowledge that there are often logistical challenges. These challenges have included ensuring access to the correct equipment, setting up of technology on site, working around school timing and adjusting to the different approaches that schools often have to assemblies. We recognise that this can have an impact on the effectiveness of the assembly by having to reduce the length or cut content.

It is important that we recognise these issues and ensure that we continue to review our approach to delivering assemblies, and remain responsive to the needs and requirements of each different partnership school. As we head into year 2, we aim to review and improve our communication and preparation with schools to deliver effective and informative assemblies to students.

The positive feedback from partnership schools has clearly highlighted one of the primary benefits of the Young Carers in Schools Programme. Improved recognition and identification of young carers in schools, along with increased awareness of where to access support, is an important first step to reducing the potential impact of their caring role on their school life.

Barriers to Identifying Young Carers

We asked Young Carer Leads in partnership schools to identify if there are any barriers to identifying young carers in their schools, and what key steps they considered to be the main challenges with this.

All partnership schools who responded to the survey identified parental engagement or understanding as the main barrier to identifying young carers. This is consistent with feedback we received verbally from staff throughout the school year, particularly during introductory meetings with school professionals. Schools have reported that whilst they have been able to identify students who are young carers, their parents sometimes do not, and they have not had many responses to their identification letters. This has led to a lack of identification in some schools and subsequent referrals to the Young Carers Service.

For example, one school explained to us that:

“We have had some responses from our letter this week. A couple of the identified children and some that we hadn't. Unfortunately, the majority that we identified as staff have not replied”

We have encouraged staff to have subsequent one to one conversations with the families they have identified as potential young carers but despite this, some parents have still been reluctant to identify their child as a young carer. Parents can become upset if a school tries to discuss it with them, which has caused schools to feel nervous to have the conversations with parents. To help with this, we have produced a prompt sheet to help facilitate conversations as this seems to be an area where schools experience some resistance and would benefit from some guidance.

An additional barrier that was identified by one partnership school is that it can be difficult to arrange a whole staff training event due to the busy nature of schools, and lack of opportunities for all staff to attend one session. This is something that was identified by our staff early on in the programme. To help with this, we have tried to remain as flexible as possible and deliver training in smaller staff groups to help make the organisation of training easier for schools. We will continue to review the approach to delivering training to see if there are any further adjustments we can make to ensure the training is as accessible to as many schools and education staff as possible.

Identifying Next Steps for the Programme

During the review of the programme, we secured investment from local funders that will ensure the sustainability of the programme and support for young carers in schools. The funding will extend the programme for a further two years. This is a positive sign that local funders recognise the importance of continuing the programme with schools, and of improving identification of young carers while increasing their access to support both in and out of education.

Taking into consideration the feedback provided by partnership schools, as well as internal reviews completed by our staff, we have identified the following next steps to work towards. These steps will help the development of the programme, increasing its accessibility and support.

Baseline Review for Partnership Schools

A baseline review tool has been developed to help the programme better evaluate the impact being made in schools. We will formalise the use of this tool with all new partnership schools, who will be required to complete their baseline review at the beginning of their engagement with the programme. This will provide a clear way for progress to be measured by our organisation and partnership schools.

Development of a Young Carers in Schools Resource Pack

Create a resource pack that can be shared widely with schools in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames. This has been consistently requested by schools, and our aim will be to make sure that all resources are in one place and easily accessible. The resource pack will include literature to help better inform schools of how best to support young carers, while also providing templates and useful documents for schools to use.

A Focus on Parental Education

In response to schools identifying 'Parental Engagement' as the most common barrier to young carers' identification, we will explore opportunities to better support schools to reduce stigma among parents, and with raising awareness of young carer related issues. We will aim to identify further opportunities to engage with parents such as parent coffee mornings and promoting young carers in school communications.

Professional Coffee Mornings

Year 2 will include the planning and delivery of a professional coffee morning with our partnership schools. This will enable schools to share good practice more easily and seek peer support. Our staff will facilitate these events, and it will be hosted by one of our partnership schools. A review will be completed with schools on how this could be developed further.

Richmond Carers Centre - Excellence Award for Schools

Many of our partnership schools have found it challenging to engage with the national Young Carers in Schools Award due to the level of commitment and evidence gathering required. In response to this, we aim to develop an Excellence Award for Schools to recognise the good work that schools are doing to support young carers locally as a result of their engagement with the programme as a partnership school.

The above five step model will help us to further improve the Young Carers in Schools Programme as we move into year two. Importantly, it will help the programme to remain accessible to both existing partnership schools who will be able to build on the progress to date, while also supporting newly identified partnership schools who are in their infancy with the programme.

In Summary

We are extremely proud of the work that has been delivered as part of the programme in schools. There has been a clear benefit to partnership schools engaged in the programme, evidenced firstly by the much improved identification of young carers in schools. In addition to this, the positive feedback provided by partnership schools and Young Carer Leads about their experience engaging with the programme is an example of how our flexible approach has made the programme easily accessible to schools. We are also proud of the clear increase in awareness and understanding of young carers in schools by the 200+ staff who participated in our staff training.

We recognise there is still significant room for growth with the YCiS programme. There is a lot of work to be done to continue reducing barriers to accessing support for young carers in schools, and part of our work moving forward will be to better understand the wider impact the programme can have, not just for schools and their staff, but more importantly for the young carers in their school communities.

We have recently secured longer-term funding that will help to further develop support for young carers in schools, supporting the programme to become an increasingly integral and core part of our service offer. Not only are we excited about the long-term future of the programme, and the positive outcomes we can potentially achieve for young carers in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames, but we would also like to explore how we can share what we have learnt on a wider-scale.

Using our connections such as the Carers Trust Network Partnership and the London Health and Care Partnership, we would like to ensure that what we have learnt can be shared with schools and similar young carers' services as widely as possible. We strongly feel that improving identification and awareness of young carers in schools should be a nationally recognised issue, and that services like ours, along with programmes like the Young Carers in Schools Programme, are integral to achieving this aim.

With that in mind, we will strive to ensure that our Young Carers in Schools Programme can be an example of best practice to others, and we hope that by doing this, we can continue to improve access to support for young carers both on a local and national level.



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