

Young Carers Action Day

March 15th is National Young Carers Action Day and what better time to shine a light on the amazing young carers we have in our schools, and the incredible support services available to them. The impact of having caring responsibilities at a young age can be huge, and although there is some great work going on in schools to minimise this impact, it's still important to recognise how vulnerable young carers can be, and what we can do to champion them.

In the UK today, there are approximately 800,000 young carers. Of them, 39% said that nobody in their school was aware that they were a young carer. 1 in 3 young carers have mental health issues and crucially, 27% of young carers aged between 11-15 do not attend school regularly (Children's Society).

I'm sure it comes as no surprise that during the COVID-19 pandemic, over 80% of young carers reported feeling more isolated than normal and some have struggled to return to school since then.

The NHS defines a young carer as *"anyone under the age of 18 that helps look after a family member with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or a drug and alcohol problem."* Often young carers will do extra jobs in the home, provide physical support for a parent/carer or sibling as well as emotional support.

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Gaddum Young Carers to have a chat about the amazing work that they do, how to refer to them and the impact of being a young carer. You can listen to our conversation in our [Media Gallery](#).

Gaddum spoke to me about some of the things young carers may struggle with, such as self-esteem, building peer relationships and revising at home. Something, admittedly, I hadn't thought of. Teenagers are under enormous pressure as it is but when you add caring responsibilities, we can only imagine how difficult it must be to juggle everything. Gaddum provide a safe space for those age between 5-16 in Manchester with caring responsibilities, providing a listening ear, activities, and a safe space alongside peers.

One Education had the pleasure of having Gaddum deliver a workshop at our Safeguarding Conference 2023, where they made links with one of the primary schools that I work closely with. The school, situated in Gorton, has a cohort of around 14 young carers who have begun accessing a weekly support session, taking part in pamper sessions, wellbeing talks and activities like going to the park. The school staff and Gaddum staff members take it in turns to deliver a workshop to the group and this has been well received by pupils.

On a recent trip to the park, a child thanked the member of staff and said it was the first time they had been to the park and could play without having to look after siblings. The children have opened up to each other about tasks that they fulfil at home, and have discussed how reassuring it is that they aren't alone as a young carer.

Often the life of a young carer is their norm, and with more and more children becoming young carers in primary school, being able to identify the young carers in your school is vital. Often young carers are only identified after reaching crisis, therefore early identification is crucial. Your school should have in place a Young Carer Champion, who will be able to identify families where children have young carer responsibilities, and can signpost to relevant support organisations.

So take the opportunity this Young Carers Action Day to think about how your school can improve their offer to young carers, and the huge impact that this will have on those individuals.

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