

Armed Forces Young Carers Identities and Identification research and practice

Helen Leadbitter

Director Young Carers Initiative

www.youngcarersinitiative.co.uk

@helenleadbitter @YoungCarersYCI



Who are young carers?

- Under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person who is has a long term illness, is disabled, has a mental health condition, or addiction problem.
- Young Adult Carers 16 – 25
- Caring for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other family member.
- Young carers often take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult.
- Caring can affect a young person's physical health and emotional wellbeing, education, life chances and socialisation
- Significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level.
- More likely not to be in education, employment or training between 16 and 19.

Hidden Cohorts

Young carers may be less likely to be identified for a number of reasons:

Caring for someone with a stigmatised illness, eg HIV/AIDS

Cultural perceptions around caring roles and family expectations

Cultural stigma around illnesses, particularly mental health

Uncertain immigration status, eg being a refugee or asylum seeker

Fear of social services/professional involvement in the family

Caring role not seen as significant (by YP, cared for or professional)

Becoming known to social services through youth offending services/ criminal justice system

From an armed forces family – moving location frequently may mean young person/family fall between gaps of

The Legislation

Children and Families Act, 2014 and Care Act, 2014

- Better, more consolidated rights for young carers, young adult carers, and their families
- The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to adopt a whole system, whole council, whole-family approach, coordinating services and support around the person and their family and considering the impact of the care needs of an adult on their family, including children.
- Children and Families Act Part 5, Section (s.) 96 details the rights for young carers including that Local Authorities (LAs) must assess whether young carers in their area have support needs and, if so, what those needs are.
- Both pieces of legislation require a Whole Family Approach to ascertain if any of the young carer's needs for support could be prevented by providing services to the person cared for.

Young Carers in Armed Forces Families

- Despite these changes in legislation and entitlements and despite the growing evidence and recognition of young carers in armed forces families the scale of this issue remains unknown and the figures and statistics are piecemeal.
- May be caring for a serving parent who has returned from combat and is injured physically or emotionally
- A parent remaining at home who is affected by illness or disability
- or sibling affected by illness or disability
- Young adult carers may be among serving personnel
- Young carers may find continuity of support for themselves or the person they care for is disrupted as they regularly move between barracks and they may feel isolated or find it harder to cope without the support from extended family or local community networks
- Difficulties in recognising the impact and need.

Impacts upon young carers

- Caring can affect a young person's physical health and emotional wellbeing, education, life chances and socialisation
- Many young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level and more likely not to be in education, employment or training between 16 and 19
- Young carers may find continuity of support for themselves or the person they care for is disrupted as they regularly move on posting. They may feel isolated or find it harder to cope without support from extended family or local community networks
- Deployment of one parent will be an additional impact
- Service children can also be adaptable and resilient with a pride in their families' way of life

The Vision

Children and young people should be protected from inappropriate and excessive caring responsibilities to have the opportunity to enjoy their childhoods' thrive and reach their potential.

Effective support for young carers should aim to prevent them having to take on excessive care by offering the right kind of support to the people they care for.

Additionally, for the armed forces community, the armed forces covenant exists to remove disadvantage to ensure armed forces and their families get the same outcome as the civilian community

Young Carers and Educational Impacts

Evidence shows that being a young carer can impact on attendance, attainment, personal development and welfare:

- Over $\frac{1}{4}$ miss school or experience difficulty
- Significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level
- On average young carers miss or cut short 48 school days a year
- $\frac{1}{4}$ said they were bullied
- 42% say there not a particular person at school who recognised them as a carer
- Transient: Regular moves to new schools

Findings

- Acknowledgement of need: Amongst all agencies and across the armed forces tri-services there was underlying awareness and acknowledgment of need to identify and support young carers.
- Consultations and discussions with professionals revealed that many were already working with families who have children caring but had not fully recognised their role or how and where to access support for them.
- Discussions also highlighted the fact that some serving personnel aged 17 – 25 have been identified as young adult carers caring at a distance and during leave for parents or siblings at family home

Findings: Policies and Practice

- There are comprehensive single and tri service welfare policies and processes in place, but there was no evidence of structured policies or specific provision for identifying families where children may be caring or at risk of caring at levels which could impact on their own wellbeing.
- Although there are single service assessment processes in place for family members with additional needs, these did not include any processes for identifying young carers.
- Apart from a section in the SSAFA FANDF handbook, there is no specific information for families or young people.
- **At both strategic level and in welfare and education provision, young carers in armed forces families are a hidden group of children and young people.**

Building pathways to identification and support

Ensure

- Tri service welfare assessments consider the needs of the whole family, including carers and young carers and whenever possible ensure a whole family approach being adopted.
- Young carers in armed forces families can access mainstream young carers projects if needed.
- All SCISS schools be offered training opportunities and chance to engage with the YCIS award
- Health services are young carer aware and know of policies and resources.

Develop

- An awareness-raising programme and training for all welfare staff and community support staff via online training and webinars.
- information sharing protocols
- young carers resilience and wellbeing workshops

Building pathways to identification and support

- We know that the physical and mental health of young people can be negatively impacted by a caring role. Young carers' health and well-being should be addressed as part of a young carers' needs assessment.
- The health needs of armed forces personnel (including reservists and veterans) may significantly affect the mental and physical health of their family members, including their children.
- Include identification and support of carers and young carers on the agendas of armed forces health networks

Building pathways to identification and support

- Going forwards there is a need to have an agreement for effective tri-service data collection to enable development of suitable services to reach and support families. Useful actions could include:
- Include a question about carers and young carers in the Tri-Service Continuous Attitudes Surveys set up by MOD, including the annual FAMCAS (families), AFCAS (armed forces) and RESCAS (Reserves) surveys.
- Schools individually correlating data for service pupils and those who are young carers.
- Request to the DfE pupil census to correlate data for service pupils and those who are young carers.
- Service pupil information profiles recording data on family members with additional needs and children who are young carers (note: this will need careful wording).
- Asking questions to identify any carers and young carers during transition processes for veteran's families.

Thank you

Helen Leadbitter

Young Carers Initiative

www.youngcarersinitiative.co.uk

@YoungCarersYCI

@HelenLeadbitter

