

9<sup>th</sup> March 2020

## Coronavirus and Young Carers

Whilst the Coronavirus is impacting us all, it is likely also to have particular impacts on some children who have existing caring responsibilities within their families – that is young carers. There are however certain steps that can be taken in advance to mitigate any additional anxiety that this group of young people may be feeling.

Covid-19 is a cause for concern for all of us and understandably it will be so for many young carers. This group, who even under normal circumstances, often talk about being anxious or worried about the health and wellbeing of the person they are caring for, their own mental health and sometimes about whether the care that they provide is good enough.

At this time there is the potential for young carers to be experiencing heightened anxieties about the health of those they care for, especially if they are caring for somebody who is elderly or who has 'underlying health issues'. Additionally, with current restrictions on movement in some places, young carers may have increased anxiety about being able to adequately care for the person they look after.

Another issue that often affects young carers is isolation. Under normal circumstances they may not be able to socialise with their peers as a result of their caring role and family circumstances and further isolation due to restrictions to control the spread of Covid-19 may occur. These restrictions might impact not only their social interactions, but also peer and emotional support that some of these young people currently access.

It will be important therefore over the next weeks or months that professionals and services working with young carers are aware of the potential additional concerns that this group might have and are able to respond by keeping an extra eye out for them. Young carers may require more support than usual online, from helplines and from other support services such as counselling services. Some may also require more age-appropriate information.

Moreover, depending on many factors, including on how the Coronavirus spreads, there is the possibility that children across the country will find themselves having to undertake additional responsibilities, including temporary caring roles for family members as well as. Therefore, it is vital that all children and young people have access to support and age-appropriate information and advice.

Daniel Phelps, March 2020 (this will be updated as necessary)

## Recommendations

- Services and professionals working directly with young carers, as well as schools need to be aware of the potential heightened anxieties that young carers might be experiencing.
- Services, professionals and schools to check in on young carers and their families and to ask how they are getting on.
- Increased access to support, counselling services and helplines should be made available.
- Other peer and emotional support opportunities are provided, for example online and on the telephone.
- Professionals consider supporting young carers to develop a contingency plan (See [Carers UK COVID-19 advice for carers](#)).
- Age-appropriate information is made available regarding the Coronavirus (for example, see [The Mix : Coronavirus](#))
- Society as a whole to keep an eye out for children undertaking caring responsibilities.