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Surrey Young Carers in Schools Research

April 2020

James Whitley

Ecorys

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Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This report presents the findings from a survey exercise undertaken in 2019 by the independent research organisation Ecorys for Surrey Young Carers to understand the numbers of young carers identified in Surrey schools.

Surrey Young Carers

Surrey Young Carers is part of the voluntary organisation Action for Carers Surrey¹. Since 1996, Surrey Young Carers has supported and advocated for young carers and their families to minimise the impact of caring on their lives. They also offer young carers the chance to take part in regular activities, giving time out from their caring role. They promote the needs of young carers to influential organisations within Surrey and nationally and provide training to health, social care and education professionals. Young carers are encouraged to contribute to all aspects of the service, including the Young Carers' Forum.

As part of Action for Carers Surrey, Surrey Young Carers works in partnership with Surrey County Council, Clinical Commissioning Groups and other local health services, and Surrey and Borders Partnership Trust, as members of the Interagency Strategy Group for young carers in Surrey. Action for Carers Surrey is affiliated to Carers UK and is a Network Partner of the Carers Trust.

Ecorys

Ecorys² is a worldwide, research-based consultancy. Since 1929, Ecorys has helped clients in the public, private and civil society understand and meet their challenges. We help our clients to make and implement informed decisions leading to a positive impact on society through the work that we do. Our services focus on areas including policy and research, programme management and communications, and digital, design and information technology.

Ecorys specialises in economic analysis and evaluation of social projects, including those involving young carers and families. Our clients have included Carers Trust, The Children's Society, Sheffield Young Carers and the Department for Education.

In addition, Ecorys UK is supporting Carers UK as its Charity of The Year 2020 as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy³.

¹ surrey-youngcarers.org.uk / actionforcarers.org.uk

² ecorys.com

³ ecorys.com/united-kingdom/latest-news/ecorys-uk-announces-carers-uk-their-charity-year-2020

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Who are young carers and young adult carers?

A young carer is someone under 18 who helps look after someone in their family, or a friend, who is ill, disabled or misuses drugs or alcohol⁴. This caring role goes beyond every day or occasional help that may occur in all families, and is specific to care that is relied upon in maintaining the health, safety or wellbeing of the person being cared for.

A young adult carer is someone with a caring role who is aged between 18 and 25 years old⁵.

1.1.2 How many young carers are there nationally?

The 2011 Census identified 166,363 young carers aged 5-17 in England⁶. We estimate that to be around 2% of the population (see section 2.1.1 of this report). Though an increase over the figure in the 2001 census, a survey for the BBC in association with the University of Nottingham, first undertaken in 2010⁷ and updated in 2019⁸, suggested **there could be more than four times more young carers than had previously officially been recognised**.

In the 2010 BBC study, which focused on secondary school pupils, **one-in-12** (8%) of the 4,023 young carers had caring responsibilities such as dressing, washing or bathing family members. The 2019 BBC study suggested an even higher incidence of caring amongst young people than indicated in the previous study, with **more than one-in-five** (22%) of the 925 secondary pupils surveyed having caring responsibilities. Nearly a third (32%) did a high level of caring – which would equate to 7% of all young people aged 5-17⁹. The study also found that, most commonly, a young carer cared for their mother or a sibling, who had a physical disability, followed by a mental health issue. The study found that girls were more likely to be a young carer than boys (61% of young carers surveyed were girls; 39% were boys).

Though the BBC surveys were far smaller samples than the Census, anecdotal evidence has suggested that many of those who work with young carers – for example, in schools – believe the BBC figures to be the closer of the two to the truth of the matter, suggesting there is a so-called ‘hidden’ cohort of young carers that go without support¹⁰ (see also section 1.1.4 of this report).

Further anecdotal evidence from working with young carers suggests that more young carers have been identified than are supposed to exist according to either the Census. It would appear that those completing the Census quite simply do not make the connection between a question about looking after someone and children or young people in their own household – perhaps because not all additional needs, such as substance misuse, are covered in the Census question¹¹ – or would feel stigmatised in

⁴ [carers.org/about-caring/about-young-carers](https://www.carers.org/about-caring/about-young-carers)

⁵ [carers.org/about-caring/about-young-adult-carers](https://www.carers.org/about-caring/about-young-adult-carers)

⁶ Hounsell, 2013. *Hidden from view: The experiences of young carers in England*. The Children's Society.

⁷ [bbc.co.uk/news/education-11757907](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11757907)

⁸ [bbc.co.uk/newsround/35420196](https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/35420196)

⁹ [nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2018/september/children-england-care-sick-family.aspx](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2018/september/children-england-care-sick-family.aspx)

¹⁰ Hounsell, 2013.

¹¹ Children's Commissioner for England. *Young Carers – The support provided to young carers in England*. Available here: childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-support-provided-to-young-carers-in-england

doing so. For example, Surrey County Council estimate that there are over 14,000 young carers¹² in Surrey: significantly more than the number they calculated would have been based on Census figures: around 2,600 young carers¹³. This is fewer than the number of young carers supported by Surrey Young Carers in 2019/20: 3,020 young carers¹⁴.

1.1.3 Why is it important to identify and support young carers?

Caring for a family member can bring with it a number of benefits, such as closer relationships with parents, compassion and empathy¹⁵. However, it is also widely recognised that inappropriate levels of caring have the potential to have a profound and negative effect on young carers' wellbeing, education and social outcomes and physical and mental health¹⁶. In particular, high levels of unpaid care has the greatest adverse effect on the health of young people¹⁷.

Particularly relevant currently, given the social distancing measures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, is the **social isolation¹⁸ and difficulties making friendships¹⁹ that young carers can face**. This is especially true if their relative requires care due to substance misuse or mental ill health, because of the stigma around these conditions.

1.1.4 What are local authorities doing to support young carers?

Government legislation in the **Care Act 2014** and the **Children and Families Act 2014** (which amended Section 17 of the Children Act 1989) place a legal duty on local authorities to identify young carers and carry out young carers' needs assessments that consider the needs of the whole family²⁰. In addition, the Government's **Carers Action Plan 2018-2020** highlighted that identification of young carers is vital, so that support can be provided so young carers are able to access opportunities and have the same life chances as other young people without caring responsibilities²¹.

¹² Surrey County Council. *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – Young Carers and Young Adult Carers*. Available from: surreyi.gov.uk/jsna/young-carers-and-young-adult-carers

¹³ Source: Surrey County Council Business Intelligence Team

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Joseph, S., Sempik, J., Leu, A., Becker, S.; 2020. *Young Carers Research, Practice and Policy: An Overview and Critical Perspective on Possible Future Directions*. *Adolescent Research Review* 5, 77–89 (2020). Available here: doi.org/10.1007/s40894-019-00119-9

¹⁶ carers.org/about-caring/about-young-carers

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics, 2013. *Full story: The gender gap in unpaid care provision: is there an impact on health and economic position?* Available from:

ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/articles/fullstorythegendergapinunpaidcareprovisionisthereanimpactonhealthandeconomicposition/2013-05-16

¹⁸ blackpoolcarers.org/latest-research-from-nottingham-university-and-bbc-shows-that-1-in-5-children-aged-11-to-16-have-a-caring-role-blackpool-young-carers-family-featured-on-bbc

¹⁹ Department of Health and Social Care, 2019. *Carers Action Plan 2018 – 2020 – Supporting carers today* *One-year on progress review*. GOV.UK. Available from: gov.uk/government/publications/carers-action-plan-2018-to-2020-1-year-progress-review

²⁰ Whitley, J.; 2017. *The Economic Case for Supporting Young Carers for Surrey Young Carers*. Surrey County Council. Available here: jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/filearea.cgi?LMGT1=CARER-RES&a=get&f=/Young_carers/Economic_Case_for_Supporting_Young_Carers_in_Surrey_report_.pdf

²¹ Department of Health and Social Care, 2018. *Carers Action Plan 2018 – 2020 – Supporting carers today*. GOV.UK. Available from: gov.uk/government/publications/carers-action-plan-2018-to-2020

There are an increasing number of areas where young carers services and local authorities have been successful in engaging schools in identifying and supporting young carers. For example, in the county of Surrey, Action for Carers Surrey's Surrey Young Carers service has used young carers resource packs and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) materials for around 20 years. In 2017, they commissioned an interactive play 'People Like Us' for use in schools that was performed in 15 of Surrey's 56 secondary schools²² and seen by over 3,000 pupils. The play explored the day-to-day challenges young carers face and the impact this can have on their wellbeing and educational attainment. A filmed version of the play has been produced, accompanied by online resource materials²³. Following the play, almost **one-in-six** (15%) of the 3,433 pupils in attendance considered themselves a young carer. Three-quarters of them considered that they knew about young carers following the play compared with just over a quarter (27%) before it.

Surrey Young Carers launched the Angel Award on 31 January 2019 – Young Carers Awareness Day – to encourage and recognise young carer-friendly good practice in schools²⁴. The award follows a similar national Young Carers in Schools Award jointly run by The Children's Society and Carers Trust. In conversations between partner organisations involved in these programmes, it has been noted that **where intensive work to support young carers is undertaken with schools, more young carers are identified than indicated by the 2011 Census**. It also appears anecdotally that the more comprehensively the work is carried out across the whole school, the more young carers that are identified. However, it is important to note that the relationship may also work the other way, and a counter-argument is that schools that have (or identify) more young carers are more engaged with intensive work to support young carers.

1.2 This Study

1.2.1 Aims

In 2019, Surrey Young Carers and Ecorys undertook a survey exercise with the aim to record **how many young carers have been identified by schools**, and **compare these findings to the numbers of young carers indicated by the 2011 Census**.

Surrey Young Carers approached 15 secondary schools in Surrey to participate in the survey. These were schools that had hosted the 'People Like Us' play about young carers. 11 of them responded.

The idea was to note how many young carers have been identified and express this as a proportion of pupils on roll, and then compare this to numbers of young carers the Census suggests there would be.

This exercise was undertaken not to provide a complete picture of how many young carers there are in the schools. As discussed in section 1.1.2 of this report, many young carers remain 'hidden' and therefore difficult to count. What it aimed to do was to show at least a minimum number of young carers identified.

A secondary aim of the study was to consider **the relationship between schools' intensive work with young carers** (as suggested by hosting the 'People Like Us' play about young carers) **and the number of young carers identified**. In addition, the survey exercise gathered suggestions on **what the schools**

²² surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/teachers-and-education-staff/school-management/statistics/numbers-of-maintained-and-academy-schools-in-surrey (September 2017 figures used)

²³ actionforcarers.org.uk/for-professionals/schools-colleges/people-like-us

²⁴ actionforcarers.org.uk/for-professionals/schools-colleges/the-angel-award

considered to be methods they have employed to promote effective identification and support for young carers.

Findings from the study are presented in section 2 of this report, with concluding remarks and areas for further research suggested in section 3.

1.2.2 Method

Surrey Young Carers administered the survey of schools. This included liaising with a staff contact in each school, including:

- ▶ [Circulating a questionnaire](#) by email to a contact person within each school
- ▶ [Sending reminders](#) for completion
- ▶ [Dealing with any queries](#)
- ▶ [Sending the survey results](#) to Ecorys.

Ecorys' role was to:

- ▶ [Draft the survey questionnaire and short supporting guidance](#) note to schools, allowing for comment from Surrey Young Carers and any schools
- ▶ Work with Surrey Young Carers to [monitor survey returns and reminders](#)
- ▶ [Collate the survey results for analysis](#)
- ▶ [Compare the survey results with 2011 Census data](#) and findings from other research
- ▶ [Write a short report](#) collating the findings.

The questionnaire that was administered is provided in Annex 1.



2.0

Findings

2.0 Findings

This section of the report presents the findings from the survey of schools in Surrey.

2.1 How many young carers are there in schools?

2.1.1 Results

The results from the 11 secondary schools that returned questionnaires are presented in Table 1.1 below. School names have been anonymised. Schools have been ordered in descending order of total number of pupils on the school roll.

Table 2.1 School data

School name	Pupils on roll	Boys-YCs identified	Girls-YCs identified	Total-YCs identified	% of YCs in school
School A	1,752	11	24	35	2%
School B	1,500	8	11	19	1%
School C	1,320	7	4	11	1%
School D	1,300	11	9	20	2%
School E	1,000	10	31	41	4%
School F	900	15	16	31	3%
School G	743	27	24	51	7%
School H	725	24	17	41	6%
School I	550	23	38	61	11%
School J	350	6	3	9	3%
School K	320	25	31	56	18%
TOTAL	10,460	167	208	375	4%
AVERAGE	951	15	19	34	4%

Source: Ecorys questionnaires completed by 11 schools

Table 1.1 shows that, on average, **4% of the schools' pupils were young carers**. Overall, 55% of the young carers were girls (the 2010 BBC study found 61% of young carers were girls – see section 1.1.2 of this report), and girls outnumbered boys as young carers in six out of the 11 schools. The finding that there was proportionally slightly more girls than boys as young carers tends to follow other research²⁵, although one exception to this is the Children's Society study 'Hidden From View' that used the Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England (LSYPE) and found that young carers were equally likely to be a boy or girl²⁶.

Also of note is the sample size. A study involving only 11 schools was able to generate a sample size (based on the number of pupils on school rolls) of 10,460. This dwarfs the sample sizes in the two BBC studies (Table 1.2). It would be relatively easy to extend the sample size further with further schools completing a simple questionnaire or data return across Surrey, or indeed in other local authorities or nationally.

Table 2.2 Study sample sizes

Study	Sample Size	% of Young Carers in Sample
This study	10,460	4%
2011 Census	7,451,165*	2%
2010 BBC study	4,023	8%
'People Like Us' play survey	3,433	15%
2019 BBC study	925	22%

Sources: *Ecorys questionnaires completed by 11 schools* / 2011 Census / bbc.co.uk/news/education-11757907 / Surrey Young Carers / bbc.co.uk/newsround/35420196. * = Total population aged 5-17 in 2011 multiplied by 93% response rate for 5-19-year-olds²⁷.

Table 1.3 compares the number of young carers actually identified by the school (middle column; see also Table 1.1) with the number of young carers that would be expected to be found based on the rate identified in the 2011 Census (penultimate column). **The rate used based on the 2011 Census was 2.23%**. This has been calculated by dividing the total number of young carers in 2011 – 166,363 – by the total population of 5-17-year-olds in England in 2011 – 8,012,005²⁸ – multiplied by 93%, which is the response rate for 5-19-year-olds (age breakdowns were only available in five-year tranches)²⁹. This equates to an effective sample size of 7,451,165. This figure includes young carers of primary school age, because a breakdown of the 166,363 young carers in England was not available by each year age or school year.

²⁵ See, for example, Office for National Statistics, 2013 (in relation to the 2011 Census).

²⁶ Hounsell, 2013.

²⁷ Office for National Statistics. *Mid-1971 to Mid-2015 Population Estimates for Regions in England and Wales, Quinary age groups and Single year of age and sex; estimates resident population*. Population estimates for Government Office Regions by single year of age and sex - Mid-1991 to Mid-2015.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160115211827/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/2011-census-user-guide/quality-and-methods/quality/quality-measures/response-and-imputation-rates/index.html

This may mean that the Census rate as presented may be slightly lower than the actual rate, and so may under-estimate the proportion of young carers in the Census, because the proportion of young carers is thought to increase with age. However, because the proportion of young carers identified in the 11 schools is 4%, it can safely be said that the rate found in the schools is higher than in the Census.

Table 2.3 Expected numbers of young carers (2011 Census)

School name	Pupils on roll	YCs identified (Actual)	YCs expected (Census)	Difference
School A	1,752	35	39	-4
School B	1,500	19	33	-14
School C	1,320	11	29	-18
School D	1,300	20	29	-9
School E	1,000	41	22	+19
School F	900	31	20	+11
School G	743	51	17	+34
School H	725	41	16	+25
School I	550	61	12	+49
School J	350	9	8	+1
School K	320	56	7	+49
TOTAL:	10,460	375	234	+141
AVERAGE:	951	34	21	+15

Source: Ecorys questionnaires completed by 11 schools

Table 1.3 demonstrates that **the 11 schools combined have 141 more young carers than would be expected based on the Census figures**. This equates to around 15 young carers per school on average. Seven of the 11 schools exceed Census estimates, some by substantial margins proportionally. Interestingly, the larger schools generally identify proportionally fewer young carers, with the four largest schools identifying fewer young carers than would have been expected based on the Census.

Table 1.4 contrasts the number of young carers actually identified by the school with the number of young carers that would be expected to be found based on the rate identified in the 2010 BBC study. The rate used was **8%**³⁰.

Table 2.4 Expected numbers of young carers (2010 BBC study)

School name	Pupils on roll	YCs identified (Actual)	YCs expected (2010 BBC study)	Difference
School A	1,752	35	147	-112
School B	1,500	19	125	-106
School C	1,320	11	110	-99
School D	1,300	20	109	-89
School E	1,000	41	84	-43
School F	900	31	75	-44
School G	743	51	62	-11
School H	725	41	61	-20
School I	550	61	46	15
School J	350	9	29	-20
School K	320	56	27	29
TOTAL:	10,460	375	875	-500
AVERAGE:	951	34	80	-46

Source: Ecorys questionnaires completed by 11 schools

Table 1.4 presents that, in this case, **all but two schools are below the figures expected in the 2010 BBC study: many by substantial margins**. Overall, the schools have 500 fewer young carers than would have been expected, and on average the difference is **46 fewer young carers in each school than expected**.

Table 1.5 outlines the number of young carers actually identified by the school with the number of young carers that would be expected to be found based on the rate identified in the 2019 BBC study. The rate calculated in the study was **22%**.

³⁰ 337 out of 4,029 secondary school pupils surveyed in the 2010 BBC study were classified as young carers.

Table 2.5 Expected numbers of young carers (2019 BBC study)

School name	Pupils on roll	YCs identified (Actual)	YCs expected (2019 BBC study)	Difference
School A	1,752	35	385	-350
School B	1,500	19	330	-311
School C	1,320	11	290	-279
School D	1,300	20	286	-266
School E	1,000	41	220	-179
School F	900	31	198	-167
School G	743	51	163	-112
School H	725	41	160	-119
School I	550	61	121	-60
School J	350	9	77	-68
School K	320	56	70	-14
TOTAL:	10,460	375	2,301	-1,926
AVERAGE:	951	34	209	-175

Source: Ecorys questionnaires completed by 11 schools

This time, **all schools are below the 2019 BBC study's expected figures and the margins have increased compared with the 2010 study** (Table 1.4). Overall, the schools have almost 2,000 fewer young carers than would have been expected, and on average **the difference is 175 fewer young carers in each school than expected: five times the average number of young carers in each school (34)**.

2.1.2 Discussion

The findings from this limited analysis suggest that:

- ▶ This study, along with other findings and anecdotal evidence, **estimated the number of young carers to be greater than found in the 2011 Census**.
- ▶ The two **BBC studies contain vastly differing estimates**, ranging from 8% in the 2010 study to 22% in the 2019 study. One reason for this could be the **differing sample sizes**: 4,029 in the 2010 study and 925 in the 2019 study.

- ▶ The sample size used in this paper is 10,460 secondary school pupils. It would be **relatively easy to extend the sample size further** with further schools completing a simple questionnaire or data return across Surrey, or indeed in other local authorities or nationally.
- ▶ Nevertheless, however large a sample size is does not mean it is **representative of its population**. Particularly in the context of young carers, the numbers of young carers can be under-estimated due to the stigma associated with identifying as a young carer. This was thought to affect the Census, and may affect school self-reported figures to some extent as well.
- ▶ This study relied on self-reported data from schools on the number of young carers they had identified in 2019, up to two years after they hosted the 'People Like Us' play about young carers. Even though the schools involved hosted the play, which demonstrates a commitment to identifying and supporting young carers, the figures are likely to still under-report the actual number of young carers. Ideally, young carers should be surveyed directly – but that was not possible given the relatively limited scope and resource available for this study. Instead, the estimates presented in Table 1.3 are likely to be a **minimum amount that the Census may underestimate the number of young carers** nationally.
- ▶ Similarly, the survey cohort for the study (schools that hosted the 'People Like Us' play about young carers) is **not necessarily representative of schools across the country** and, as previously mentioned, schools that have more young carers may be more likely to be engaged with intensive work to support young carers. Young carer numbers within schools may differ based on a range of factors, including the wider profile of the local population, such as levels of deprivation and health needs. In a similar vein, the principle of the study is that the schools in the study may be more likely to identify young carers than schools nationally. These caveats will need to be borne in mind when extrapolating the findings from this relatively small study to wider populations.

2.2 Are more young carers identified following involvement in young carer initiatives?

A secondary aim for this study was to ascertain **whether or not the numbers of young carers identified increased following intensive work with young carers**. This could be done most simply by comparing the numbers of young carers identified before hosting the 'People Like Us' play about young carers to those identified during or after involvement. However, this data was not routinely collected and, regardless, tends to be 'spiky': that is, that young carers are identified in peaks and troughs throughout the school year. For example, schools report that most young carers are identified at the start of the school year, reflecting new entrants to school and also – to a lesser extent – picking up any new young carers from the previous six weeks of school holidays (at no other point is there such a long fallow period for recording young carers in school).

It is important to note that the relationship between intensive work with young carers and the number of young carers identified may also work the other way, and a counter-argument is that schools that have (or identify) more young carers are more engaged with intensive work to support young carers.

The 11 schools answered a survey question as to whether or not the number of young carers identified increased, decreased or stayed the same after undertaking work to support young carers in the school (which may include the 'People Like Us' play and related work, or other initiatives). **Ten of the 11 schools said that the number of young carers identified increased**: five of these said that their numbers increased significantly (the other five said numbers increased slightly). Only one of the 11 schools said that numbers

of young carers identified remained the same. For young carers' numbers to have been stimulated independently of initiatives to support young carers – for example, for them already to be working with a large number of young carers before getting involved, generally – it would have been expected that more schools' numbers of young carers would have remained the same.

This finding is supported by independent research which found that a similar intervention to the Angel Award – the national Young Carers in Schools Award run jointly by the Children's Society and Carers Trust:

"...helped schools identify over twice as many young carers as they otherwise would have. On average schools said that they had identified 59% of their young carers as a result of their participation in the programme"³¹.

This **suggests that involvement in initiatives such as the Angel Award and the Young Carers in Schools Award may have stimulated schools to identify young carers**, as the number of young carers has increased following involvement with initiatives to support young carers. Interestingly, three of the 11 schools that returned our survey questionnaire have since achieved the Angel Award – all three of these schools reported a 'significant' (rather than 'slight') rise in identification of young carers in our survey.

In addition, the Children's Society and Carers Trust found that:

- ▶ Schools in receipt of the Bronze Young Carers in Schools Award had identified an average of 15 young carers per school
- ▶ Schools in receipt of the Silver Young Carers in Schools Award had identified an average of 20 young carers per school
- ▶ Schools in receipt of the Gold Young Carers in Schools Award had identified an average of 44 young carers per school.

These findings further **suggest that schools involved in increasing levels of activity to support young carers, subsequently identify more young carers**. If the relationship worked the other way around – that schools that identify more young carers then get involved in schemes to further identify and support young carers – then the average number of young carers identified in schools with Bronze, Silver and Gold awards would be roughly the same.

In addition, the Young Carers in Schools Award programme research found that the programme improved staff understanding and ability to identify and support young carers. Following involvement in the programme:

- ▶ 94% of schools reported that staff were more likely to know what to do if they identify a pupil who may be a young carer
- ▶ 94% of staff had a better understanding of the types of support young carers may need
- ▶ 92% of staff had improved understanding of the potential signs a pupil is a young carer
- ▶ 88% of staff were more confident to identify and respond to the needs of young carers.

³¹ Mesie, J.; 2018. *A Better Relationship with Learning – an evaluation of the Young Carers in Schools Programme*. London: Coram. Available from: coram.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource_files/Carers%20Trust%20evaluation%20report.pdf / coram.org.uk/sites/default/files/resource_files/A%20Better%20Relationship%20with%20Learning.pdf (summary)

At this point it should be said that, because the Angel Award and the Young Carers in Schools Award programme are optional, there may be other schools nationally that implement good practice but are not in receipt of an award.

2.3 What does our survey suggest has been effective identification and support for young carers?

Our survey also uncovered some themes regarding effective identification and support for young carers:

- ▶ **Progress does not appear to depend on whether or not there was pre-existing identification or support for young carers.** For example, one school *“had no real provision or support for young carers in the past”*, whereas for another: *“Young carer support here began before my time years ago”*. This suggests that schools can increase numbers of young carers identified and supported relatively quickly, even in cases where there is no history of identifying and supporting young carers. This may be because a package of support – such as the Angel Award or Young Carers in Schools Award – has been provided.
- ▶ **There were a number of different methods that helped identify young carers in schools.** These included:
 - ▷ Adding a young carer identification form to the school's admission pack
 - ▷ Ongoing identification using, for example, parent and staff newsletters
 - ▷ Making Heads of Year, along with their teams of tutors, responsible for identification of young carers
 - ▷ Raising awareness of young carers with pupils, to help to eliminate any stigma that may be attached to young carers and to promote understanding from other pupils who are not young carers
 - ▷ Raising awareness of young carers with school staff to ensure that support is given when needed.
- ▶ **Practical support has been beneficial, to enable young carers to complete school work and homework alongside their caring responsibilities.** Schools recognised that emotional issues could affect learning and behaviour, and there may be times when young carers may not be adequately supported with their homework. Support can be academic or pastoral, or a mix of both, including:
 - ▷ A school lead acting as an advocate for young carers in school
 - ▷ Support around young carers' aspirations, so they can see a bright future and that they can achieve well in school
 - ▷ Ensuring teachers are aware of some of the difficulties in completing home learning
 - ▷ Offering emotional support and a space to come should young carers need it.
- ▶ **Peer-to-peer support alongside other young carers has helped young carers not to feel alone.** As one school put it: *“They can often feel that they are the only one with a difficult home life and, when they realise that they are not alone and that there is support available, life can become a little easier”*. This group-based support has included initiatives such as:

- ▷ Half-termly meet-ups with food, including pizza lunches and 'doughnut drop-ins'
- ▷ One-off extra-curricular activities to raise aspirations and provide respite
- ▷ After-school clubs.
- ▶ **One-to-one support for young carers (with an adult/professional) can help young carers, especially at times of crisis.** Support for young carers is most effective when group-based and one-to-one methods are combined³².
- ▶ Despite the best intentions, **support for young carers can have poor take-up.** There may be a number of reasons for this, from those associated with the stigma of the label 'young carer' (so young carers do not want to be seen to be supported in school – though they may prefer to be supported outside of school) to young carers simply not needing or wanting support. Regarding out-of-school support, the Young Carers in Schools Award study³³ found that what would make a particular difference to young carers' lives would be having help at home and in the community. Regardless, schools felt it to be beneficial that young carers know that support is available, so they can access it should they ever feel that they need to.

At a school-level, the Young Carers in Schools Award study advocated that young carers should automatically be eligible for the Pupil Premium, and also that identification and support for young carers should be a requirement that is assessed during Ofsted inspections. It is currently possible for young carers to receive the Pupil Premium, but only if they are classed as disadvantaged³⁴, not from being a young carer directly. It is also possible for schools' support for young carers to feature in Ofsted reports, but there is no requirement.

Another suggested driver for good practice in the Young Carers in Schools Award study was the inclusion of young carers in schools' annual Section 175 Safeguarding Audit, so that schools would have to identify young carers numbers and provisions for them alongside the safeguarding issues that the audit already covers.

³² Whitley, J., Wooldridge, R.; 2018. *Family Project Evaluation*. Sheffield Young Carers Project. Available here: sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk/research/sheffield-young-carers-family-project-evaluation

³³ Mesie, 2018.

³⁴ Eligible for Free School Meals, a looked-after child or previously looked-after child. See: gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium



3.0

Conclusion

3.0 Conclusion

This section of the report provides some concluding remarks and areas for further research.

Comparing the findings of this small research study with Census data and other research (including the two BBC studies and anecdotal evidence) has suggested that **there are more young carers than the Census has indicated**. The implications of this could, in turn, suggest that the **Government and Ofsted should encourage or require schools to have a greater focus on identifying and supporting young carers**.

This small study has also generated a relatively large sample size: larger than two BBC studies that are often quoted to estimate the 'true' number of young carers. The questionnaire used in this study (see Annex 1) could be used by schools, local authorities or national bodies or charities to easily **identify a more accurate estimate of the number of young carers nationally than the Census seems to provide**. This would seem an appropriate area for further research.

Along with the sample size, the representativeness of the sample should also be considered. Because of the limitations associated with schools' self-reported data, schools may still under-report the number of young carers. Therefore, self-reported school data, including that used in this study, should be considered to provide the minimum number of young carers that exist in a school.


The findings from the study also suggest that **involvement in initiatives such as the Angel Award and the Young Carers in Schools Award may have stimulated schools to identify young carers**. Rather than, say, schools identifying copious numbers of young carers before getting involved in young carer-based initiatives. This suggests **the role these initiatives can be play in identifying young carers can be potentially significant**, even though Government legislation (the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014) already place a legal duty on local authorities to identify young carers and carry out young carers' needs assessments that consider the needs of the whole family.

In addition, findings from research into the Young Carers in Schools Award suggests that schools involved in increasing levels of intense activity to support young carers subsequently identify more young carers. In other words, **the more schools involve themselves in initiatives to support young carers, the more young carers are identified**.

Finally, social isolation is particularly relevant currently, given the social distancing measures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Given that research has found that **young carers can face social isolation** – especially if their relative requires care due to substance misuse or mental ill health, because of the stigma around these conditions³⁵ – and have difficulties making friendships, this may be a timely area for further research. Related to this, young carers are already part of the Government's Loneliness Strategy and, as part of that, the Building Connections Fund Youth strand³⁶.

³⁵ blackpoolcarers.org/latest-research-from-nottingham-university-and-bbc-shows-that-1-in-5-children-aged-11-to-16-have-a-caring-role-blackpool-young-carers-family-featured-on-bbc

³⁶ gov.uk/government/news/115-million-fund-to-tackle-loneliness-across-england



Annex 1
Questionnaire

Annex 1: Questionnaire

We are asking schools to complete this questionnaire about the number of young carers in their school. This is part of a research study by Ecorys in association with Action for Carers Surrey and Surrey County Council.

Completion is optional, though responses will help to understand the number of young carers in Surrey and nationally.

The results will be compiled, analysed and written into a short report, which will be publicly available. Your school name will not be identified. You can withdraw consent at any time via the contact details below.

To return the questionnaire, or if you have any queries, please contact John Bangs, Carers Strategy and Development Manager, Surrey County Council, john.bangs@surreycc.gov.uk, 01483 519145.

<p>Name of school.....</p> <p>Location of school (Local Authority Area)</p> <p>Number of pupils on roll</p> <p>Age range of pupils (e.g. primary/secondary).....</p> <p>No. of young carers identified: Boys.....Girls.....</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Total*</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>*If unable to provide split by boys/girls</i></p> <p>Having undertaken work to identify young carers in your school, did the:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Number of young carers identified increase significantly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Number of young carers identified increase slightly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Number of young carers identified remain about the same</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Number of young carers identified decrease slightly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Number of young carers identified decrease significantly</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Don't know</p> <p>Why did your school begin/continue work to identify young carers in your school?</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
