

**A Better Relationship with Learning:
an evaluation of the Young Carers in
Schools Programme**

August 2018

Dr Jeff Mesie, Impact & Evaluation Team

Acknowledgements

Coram is the UK children's charity that has been supporting children for almost 300 years. Coram's mission is to develop, deliver and promote best practice in the care of vulnerable children, young people and their families.

This study was made possible by the generous support of the Queens Trust to the Coram Centre for Impact. The Coram Centre for Impact provides consultancy in service improvement and research and evaluation for other public and voluntary organisations.

We are grateful to the many young carers and staff in schools and in local agencies who kindly completed the survey and participated in the interviews.

We are also particularly grateful to Gill Middleton of the Carers Trust and Emma Dovener of the Children's Society who supplied contact information, reviewed fieldwork tools and made many helpful suggestions in the course of the study.

Published by Coram

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Executive Summary

The Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) programme

The Young Carers in Schools Programme is an England-wide initiative that equips schools to support young carers and awards good practice (see youngcarersinschools.com). The Programme is run in collaboration by Carers Trust and The Children's Society. They are improving the identification and support of young carers in schools across the country, so that they get the help they need.

A young carer is someone under 18 who helps to look after someone in their family, or a friend, who is ill, disabled or misuses drugs or alcohol. Young adult carers are young people aged 16–25 who care, unpaid, for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction.

Background

Work on an evaluation plan began in October 2017 and a report drafted in May 2018. Schools were surveyed and staff and children in schools and staff in local carers services were interviewed. These were used to generate a rich picture of the experience of implementing services to improve the identification and support for young carers in schools, the challenges of this work and to illustrate the nature of the impacts that schools were achieving.

The questions to be addressed by this evaluation were:

- 1) How successfully have schools and young carers services been able to implement the different parts of the programme?
- 2) To what extent does implementation of the programme improve the ability of schools to identify and respond to the needs of young carers?
- 3) How well have young carers been able to improve their relationship with education and their academic progress?
- 4) Do young carers experience wider improvements in terms of personal wellbeing?
- 5) How does service provision connect to or inspire the wider network of services?
- 6) What are the policy messages that emerge from the findings?

The key points from the evaluation in response to these questions are given below.

Key Points

1. A strong pre-existing commitment to pastoral care was usually an antecedent to schools getting involved in the Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) programme. Schools that were involved promoted the scheme amongst their networks, especially feeder schools.

2. Local carers services were often resource-limited in the amount of outreach that they could do promote interest in new schools.
3. The value of the programme was that it gave schools a framework and set of actions it could pursue to identify the scale of the issue and to begin supporting young carers.
4. Schools were very positive about the YCiS programme and on the impact that it had on staff awareness and ability to respond to the needs of young carers.
5. The materials of the YCiS programme were generally seen as useful and of good quality, especially the Step by Step Guide. Certainly the baseline review was valued as a good starting point. Several commentators suggested that similar small, more easily digestible, formats may be easier for schools new to the area to understand and apply.
6. The Award scheme was valued by many schools, especially those that had progressed through the different levels. Two thirds of schools with bronze Awards suggested they intended to apply for the next Award level, so the experience seems to have been positive for most schools. Some schools reported that they found some of the Award criteria overly rigid at the bronze stage and that some of the criteria were not applicable to all schools, especially primary schools.
7. It was also noted that the name of the programme did not make it attractive to colleges, and that more should be done to make the programme appealing to them.
8. Introduction of YCiS results in the identification of a quantity of young carers that is often a surprise to the school. It also leads to an increase in referrals to local agencies about young carers.
9. Once identified as young carers, children benefited from participation in a group activities and access to a supportive peer group.
10. Schools reported that staff had an improved understanding of young carers compared to when they were first involved the YCiS programme
11. Young carers also benefited from the flexibilities and understanding that they received from school staff that helped them to manage their school work and enabled them to deal with their worries and participate more fully.
12. Schools reported that young carers were demonstrating widespread improvements in wellbeing, happiness and confidence since becoming involved in the YCiS programme. Eighty-five percent agreed that wellbeing had improved, 83% felt that young carers were happier.
13. Schools reported improvement in academic engagement and attainment, with higher motivation to learn and improvements in ability to complete homework and classwork. Examples were provided of young carers who improved their attendance and attainment through the support provided to them.
14. School often acted as a gateway to community-based carers' services that gave the young carers opportunities outside of school that they otherwise would have been denied. Young carers spoke very positively about these activities and they had a particular importance during school holidays.

15. Schools greatly valued the contribution of carers' services in terms of the opportunities they provided for young carers, but also for the way they were able to advocate for young carers and link families up to early help and other services when they were needed.
16. Resource constraints meant that some carers centres were unable to promote the programme to new schools to the level that they previously had and instead were focusing on advice to schools that were already engaged.
17. There was a strong belief that making young carers eligible for the pupil premium would send a helpful signal to schools of the importance of this work and may also make funding trips and external activities a little easier.
18. There was a belief that a more explicit focus on young carers as part of the Ofsted inspection framework would make schools more motivated to deliver services to young carers.
19. Young carers identified a range of services that they valued in school and outside but also stressed that support and help with their caring tasks (either in the form of transport for those they care for or help in the home) were also services that they would make a difference to their lives.

The evaluation

Coram was commissioned in October 2017 to undertake an evaluation of the programme. This report is part of a wider evaluation that sought in part to explore the implementation of the programme and young carers' relationship with education and their academic progress. The main approaches were a) a survey of schools and b) sets of interviews with i) schools, ii) local stakeholder organisations, iii) focus groups of young carers and iv) descriptive interviews with staff in trailblazer sites that had observed young carers over several years.

This report presents the findings of the quantitative and qualitative phases, but begins with four illustrative vignettes.

Four Vignettes

As part of the evaluation we wanted to get a picture of what schools had observed about individual young carers over a period of time. We therefore asked some of the schools to supply a portrait of specific young carers to illustrate where good support can lead. While the names and some details below have been changed their stories are real and provide a context for the more structured analysis featured later in this report.

Vignette 1 'Jane'

Background

Jane is 10 years old and entered the school a year previously (she's in year 5). Her attendance was very poor at the old school and her mum said she was getting bullied.

When she came to the school there was no indication that she was a young carer. Staff started getting concerned about her attendance because she was often not coming to school and they couldn't get hold of mum. When she was at school she looked really tired and was a bit neglected in that her uniform was a bit grubby and she hadn't had breakfast sometimes.

Her mum was not happy to talk to the school. In the end her mum was called in and was very anxious, and she broke down when staff asked what was wrong. She had a major illness and some days could not get out of bed. Mum was not aware of the support available from social services or charities and her daughter had to be there to give her mum her medication. Mum's fears were heightened because she had already had a child removed into care.

After absences from her previous school educational welfare services had initiated court proceedings and sought to fine her. Mum was worried that this would happen again. The previous school hadn't picked up that her daughter was a young carer.

"She [the mum] didn't want to answer our calls because she was worried that we would report her to social services. We explained that we are here to support you. The first thing we wanted to do is to think about the support we can put in place."

The effects on the child were really quite significant but her parent was unaware of the immense strain that hiding the fact that they were a young carer could have on a child. The school had to explain the impact that this unexplained absence was having on her daughter and her friendship group.

Action

It was agreed that Jane would come into the drop in for young carers in school to meet other young people similar to her. The school identified a school teaching assistant to support her 1:1 to help her to catch up on her work.

If she had to be off because her mum was unwell the school would send work home.

The school also made sure that the educational welfare services were aware that she was a young carer so that they did not seek to fine her.

Mum recently had an operation and Jane had to stay with someone else. The school knew that she wouldn't be at school so gave her work and reassured her that it was okay for her not to be here and to tell school staff the truth.

She is now linked in with the young carer's charity which mum has agreed to, and she has acknowledged that her daughter is a young carer. Mum has also received support from the Carers Centre as well as adult social care (she's now making an application and is waiting for an assessment).

Response

The school safeguarding lead and family support worker described the change in the situation in the following way.

Jane's attainment was said to be improving; she now talks to staff and speaks up if she doesn't understand some school work. If this happens the teachers spend extra time explaining it to her. The school also has a nurture room where she can eat breakfast so she is ready and fuelled for the day.

Jane used to isolate herself because she felt that she had to explain herself. Her friends now understand that the reason why she is sometimes not there is because her mother is unwell. Her friends understand it and they don't exclude her. She was described as building much stronger friendship groups. Jane was reported as having said *"I am really pleased that everyone knows and I don't have to lie all of the time"*.

The safeguarding lead said that emotionally she presents as much happier and more confident. She used to look like a really vulnerable little girl. Recently she was observed playing table tennis with another boy and got in to a bit of an argument, a bit of banter where she stood up for herself. Previously she would never have done that; she would have walked away instead.

"She has built confidence. She used to take herself off to other parts of the playground and none of the teachers would understand why. Now she feels a lot happier to be in that playground and to play with other children".

Before if someone said something to her she might break down and cry, and now she doesn't. She can hold her own a little bit and she has friends and support.

The relationship that the school has with Jane's mum was described as being much better. This was seen by the school staff member as a result of being honest with her and being clear that they were not going to refer her to social services unless they felt they had to. *"Now she will grab me in the playground and tell me anything I need to know such as an impending hospital appointment"*.

Vignette 2 'Grace'

Background

Grace is a girl who was identified in year 3 and she was with the primary school until year 6 (she is now in year 7).

Her Mum has learning difficulties; she was known to children's services and was not looking after her children very well. Grace was caring for her 3 younger siblings from the age of seven. The school knew that this was happening and was giving her mum a lot of support. Her mum did not identify Grace as a young carer and had limited understanding of what this meant for her.

Grace was getting the children up, dressed and fed. She had taken on many of the responsibilities of an adult at a very young age.

Her learning was poor because she was distracted and hardly ever in school. The other children would go to school but mum would keep Grace at home to do things. Her learning was described as being at the level of a four year old instead of a seven year old.

She was described by the young carers lead as presenting with a lot of emotional anxiety, for both her siblings and her mum. She was said to be anxious that something would happen to her mum while she was at school and a lot of the time her emotions were causing her to be upset.

Response

The school put Grace in a nurture class and she did all of her learning in that class of six children. It was described by the young carers lead as very successful in helping her to increase her attainment.

The school also made sure that her transitions to secondary school were good. They took her to her new school for a visit every week for a month and the teachers there were made aware of the support that she needed. She is now in year 7.

Effect

Grace was described as having moved away from the mind-set of being a carer. She was said to have begun to accept that she did not have to take care of her siblings, and to recognise that her brother had her aunt to look after him. Previously she was always worried and was described as 'hyper vigilant'. School staff said that by contrast she is now more relaxed and her behaviour is more typical for a girl of her age.

They observed that previously Grace could break down quite a lot and that this really affected her friendship groups, which were quite fragile. Now she is was described as doing really well and building herself up, she has grown up and her attainment and emotional wellbeing has increased. There have also been changes in her living

arrangements which have helped. She knows that her mum is safe now and has help.

Vignette 3 'Bridget'

Background

Bridget attended primary school. Her mother had a mental health problem which had resulted in a potentially fatal safeguarding incident.

Response

Bridget had access to the full set of young carer services that the school provided. These included regular group sessions, breakfast provision, access to a special breakout/homework room and links to local young carers activities. In addition school staff wrote out a list of triggers for Mum, so that she could identify when her mental health was deteriorating and let the school know.

When Bridget's mum was ill the school got hold of her nan, who lived in a different part of the country, and arranged for social services to pay for somewhere for her to stay. Arranging for someone to come down meant that Bridget could still perform in her dance show, which was important to her as it was something she had worked on for months.

Transport was paid for so the child could stay in at her nan's for two weeks when her mother was discharged.

Effect

It had taken her mum months to recover from her previous episode, and was a source of anxiety for her daughter. The break made it easier for mum to focus on getting herself together. When Bridget returned to the family home things were settled, the house was tidy and the mother was taking her medication and attending therapy. It was a good environment for the child to return to.

When Bridget came back she said *"My mummy got so much better quicker because of what you have done for me. Thank you so much, you've really helped my mummy"*.

At sports day Nan was reported to have said *"I just can't believe what you have done for my family; I can't believe that this is what schools do now"*.

Vignette 4 'Charlotte'

Background

Charlotte was a 16 year old girl who had gone all the way through lower school (years 7-11), and she was identified as a young carer only when she went to sixth

form. She was identified when her attendance became poor. There were maternal mental health issues and her sister had ADHD.

Response

As a result of her being identified as a young carer the school has put systems in place. When she misses lessons she can have 1:1 with teachers who will prepare catch-up work for her. The school gives her leeway when she needs it on homework and attendance. The school also linked her up with the local young carers centre.

Effect

The school learning mentor described how Charlotte's attendance improved and was now at 85% when previously it was 75%. She reported major changes in Charlotte's self-esteem and confidence. She is now in year 13 and she applied to a top university this year.

Staff said that for Charlotte it had been a huge turn around in terms of circumstance at home and her ability to tell us what is going on. The local Young Carers Centre was described as having been amazing at getting support put into the home.

Background and Methods

This report is the result of a partnership between Coram and Carers Trust that was funded by the Queens Trust.

The project had four elements

1. Evaluation
2. Dissemination and promotion of the results of the evaluation
3. Development of a new service offer for schools and young carers
4. Marketing/digital support/consultancy.

This report covers the first element of that project.

Work on an evaluation plan began in October 2017 and the project plan was agreed at the end of October 2017. Originally the intention was to produce a final report by September 2018, but this timescales was later contracted to May 2018.

The agreed research questions were:

- 1) How successfully have schools and young carers services been able to implement the different parts of the programme?
- 2) To what extent does implementation of the programme improve the ability of schools to identify and respond to the needs of young carers?
- 3) How well have young carers been able to improve their relationship with education and their academic progress?
- 4) Do young carers experience wider improvements in terms of personal wellbeing?
- 5) How does service provision connect to or inspire the wider network of services?
- 6) What are the policy messages that emerge from the findings?

The approach agreed was to obtain an overview of implementation from the schools via an online survey which ran between December 2017 and January 2018. The subsequent stages were interview based. Interviews supplemented the survey by obtaining a more nuanced view of how implementation was achieved in the schools, the role played by local carer support agencies and by taking a more in depth look at the experience of specific young carers.

Survey Results

Survey Key Findings

- Fifty-seven of the 103 schools that participated in the survey had received formal recognition for the achievements in supporting young carers and had received a YCiS Award.
- Respondents reported that the online step-by-step guide was the most useful tool provided by the YCiS programme (73; 79%), followed by the YCiS Award guidance or award pack (70; 76%) and the baseline review (57; 62%). Very few respondents found the live (3; 3%) and recorded webinars (5; 5%) most useful.
- The YCiS programme was effective in helping schools to identify young carers: on average schools said that 59% of their young carers had been identified as a result of their participation in the programme.
- The programme was seen as having a positive impact on the confidence of staff. Ninety four percent of schools indicated that staff, compared to when the school first got involved in YCiS were now knew what to do if they identify a pupil who may be a young carer, The same percentage of schools (94%) said that staff have a better understanding of the types of support young carers may need. While 92% of schools said that staff had an improved understanding of the potential signs a pupil is a young carer. Respondents in schools with an Award were significantly more likely to suggest that staff were more confident than respondents in schools without an Award.
- Respondents saw the most improvements for young carers in wellbeing, confidence and happiness. Respondents in schools with an Award were significantly more likely to report that young carers were happier than respondents in schools without an Award (t-test, $p < .05$). This suggests that schools with an Award are better able to promote happiness in their young carers.
- There were positive improvements in other areas including attendance and achievement, e.g. in the standard of homework and classwork, but these were not at a statistically significant level.
- Outcomes reported by staff in primary and secondary schools were largely similar, with no significant differences between the two types of schools.
- Respondents rated the programme highly. Eighty-seven percent of schools rated the scheme as good or very good and 94% would recommend the programme to other schools.
- Suggested improvements to the programme were related to issues with the awarding system (21; 20%), the need for more guidance or resources (20; 19%), greater opportunities for peer learning (14; 14%) and more direct contact or better communication with YCiS staff (13; 13%). These covered topics such as specific information on how to support older students, more

support of collaborative work across schools and sharing of good practice and more hours allocated to each school for support.

- Recommendations were made around simplifying the award system so that it was time consuming to evidence and send all the information required and direct contact with schools.

Who took part in the survey?

Three hundred and sixteen schools from across England were invited to take part in the survey. These were schools that had previously expressed some interest in the YCiS programme. Some had an Award; others were at the initial stages of contact. The invitation was sent out in mid-December 2017 for completion by late January 2018. Responses were received from a third of these schools (103; 33%). This is a self-selected sample of schools that chose to take part, so it should be borne in mind the results may necessarily not be representative of the other two thirds.

Of the respondents 51 (50%) represented secondary schools and 48 (47%) primary schools. The remaining schools were two pupil referral units (that were part of one multi-site school), a middle school and a college.

The schools varied in number of pupils and young carers. The mean number of pupils at the schools was 747. The smallest school had approximately 78 pupils and the largest that had approximately 2,304 pupils. The schools also varied in the number of young carers in attendance. There was a mean of 23 young carers in each school; this ranged from one school that had only identified one young carer to another school with 125. The number of young carers was often not relative to the total number of pupils (i.e. larger schools did not always have larger numbers of young carers).

Most of the respondents to the survey were the leaders for young carers within their schools (80; 78%). Other respondents (15; 17%) included support workers, managers within the school and a family liaison officer.

Providing support for young carers in schools

Just over half the schools that took part had been able to demonstrate their ability to support young carers and had received formal recognition for the achievements of their school. Fifty-seven schools had received a YCiS Award (55%), 43 (42%) did not have an Award and 3 (3%) did not know if they had an Award. Of those that had an Award: seven had a gold Award, six had a silver Award and the majority had a bronze Award (44).

Fifty per cent (3) of those with silver Awards and 66% (29) of those with bronze Awards suggested they would

“As a school we are overwhelmed with the support that [the YCiS programme has] provided. With [the programmes] help and encouragement we have been able to achieve the Bronze and Silver awards and submit our evidence for the Gold award.”

Secondary school Lead for young carers

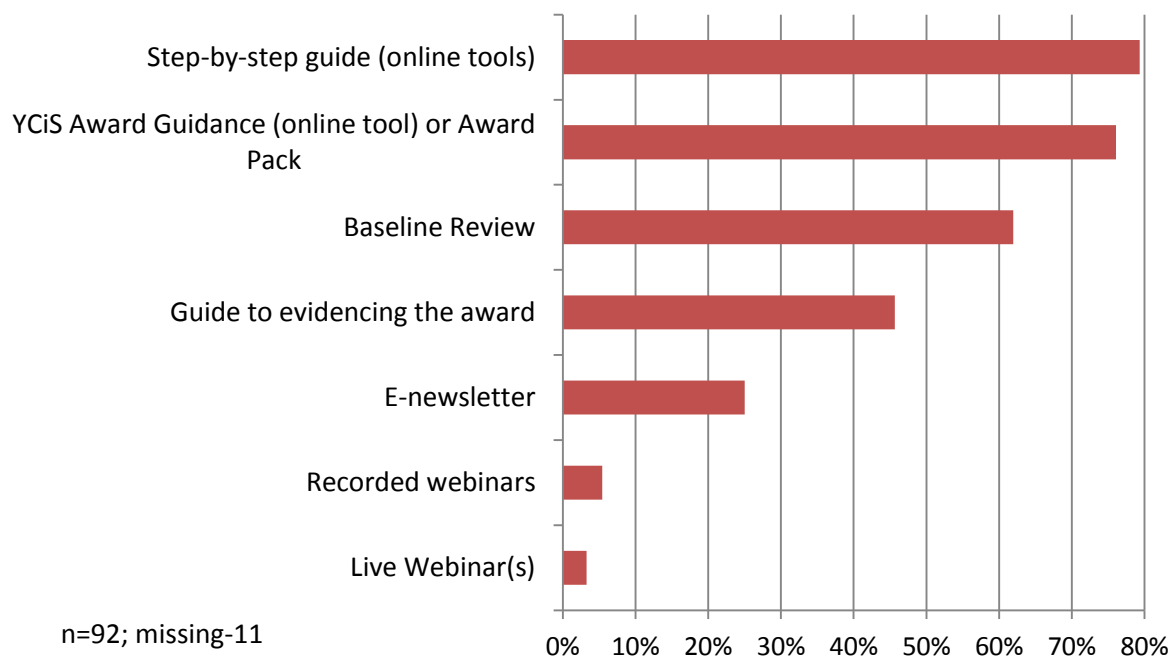
apply for the next Award. If schools did not intend to apply for the next level of the Award, it was most often related to the time commitment required for the application and limited staff resources.

As part of the programme schools are able to access a number of tools and support. Respondents reported that the online step-by-step guide was the most useful tool (73; 79%), followed by the YCiS Award guidance or Award pack (70; 76%) and the baseline review (57; 62%). See figure 1.

“By becoming involved in the programme we then began to run lunch time groups, deliver assemblies and generally make our school (both parents and staff) aware of young carers. This included who our young carers are, what to do if you think your child could be supported further, how to raise concerns that a child in their class may be a young carer etc.”

Primary school Lead for young carers, Bronze award

Figure 1: Tools and support accessed through the YCiS programme



Very few respondents found the live (3; 3%) and recorded webinars (5; 5%) most useful. A few respondents indicated that this was because webinars were not convenient given their time constraints or that the material they discussed was covered to their satisfaction in written material.

Outcomes and impact of the YCiS programme

As a result of the YCiS programme schools reported that they were more able to identify young carers. Schools were asked how many young carers they had and how many had been identified as a result of the school's participation in the Young Carers in Schools programme. Seventy (68%) schools suggested that over half of their young carers were had been identified as a result of their school being involved in the programme. Schools, on average, said that over half (59%) of the young carers had been identified as a result of participating in the young carers programme.

“By becoming involved in the programme we then began to run lunch time groups, deliver assemblies and generally make our school (both parents and staff) aware of young carers. This included who our young carers are, what to do if you think your child could be supported further, how to raise concerns that a child in their class may be a young carer.”

Primary school Lead for young carers, Bronze award

Impact on school staff

Respondents also reported the difference the programme had made to their staff in understanding young carers. They were asked to compare the competency of their school staff, from before they were involved in the YCiS programme compared to after, on a scale from “0 – strongly disagree” to “50 – about the same” to “100 – strongly agree.”

Figure 2 shows the mean scores were all above 70 suggesting the majority of respondents had seen improvements in their staffs confidence in identifying young carers, understanding of the support their may need and ability to support young carers needs.

Figure 2: School staff's understanding of young carers compared to when they were first involved the YCiS programme

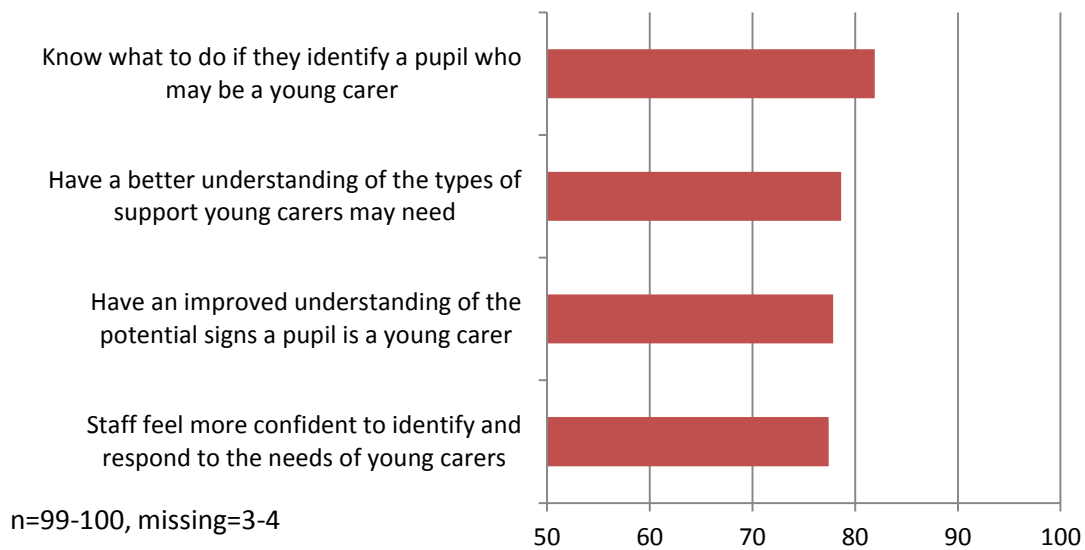


Figure 2a: School staff's understanding of young carers compared to when they were first involved the YCiS programme

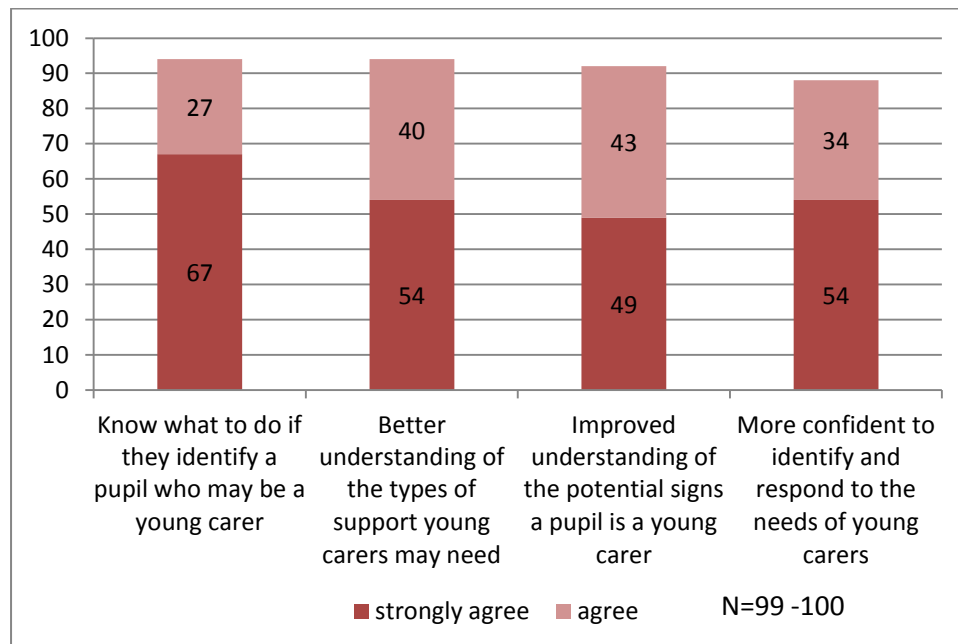


Figure 2a indicates that 94% of schools indicated that staff were more likely to know what to do if they identified young carer, and the same proportion of schools indicated that staff had a better understanding of the support that young carers needed.

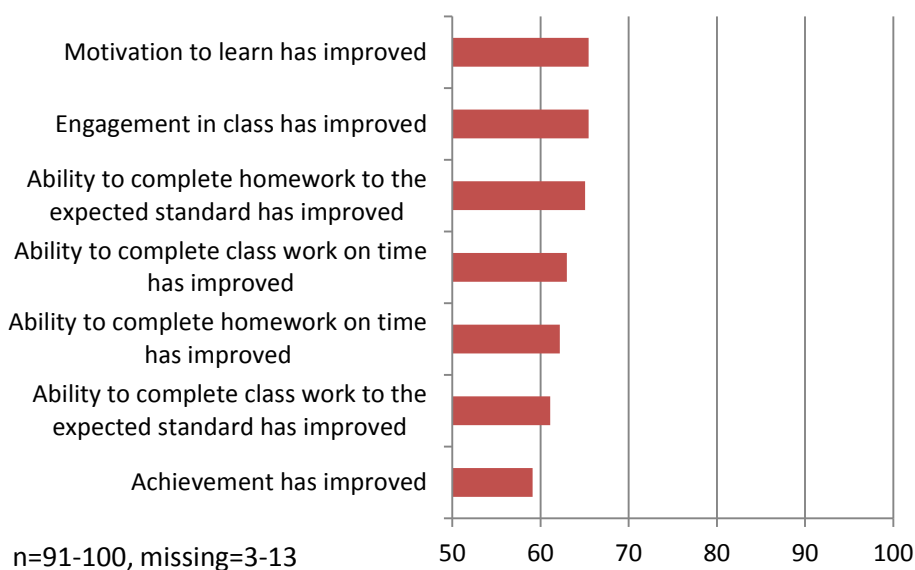
There were no statistically significant differences between the scores of staff at primary and secondary schools (t-test, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that both primary and secondary schools that completed the survey had a broadly similar impact on staff.

As may be expected there was a difference in the impact of the YCiS programme on staff who attend schools with or without the YCiS Awards. Respondents in schools with an Award (gold, silver or bronze) were significantly more likely to say that staff were more confident in in each area outlined in Figure 2 than those without an Award (t-test, $p < .05$).

Impact on young carers

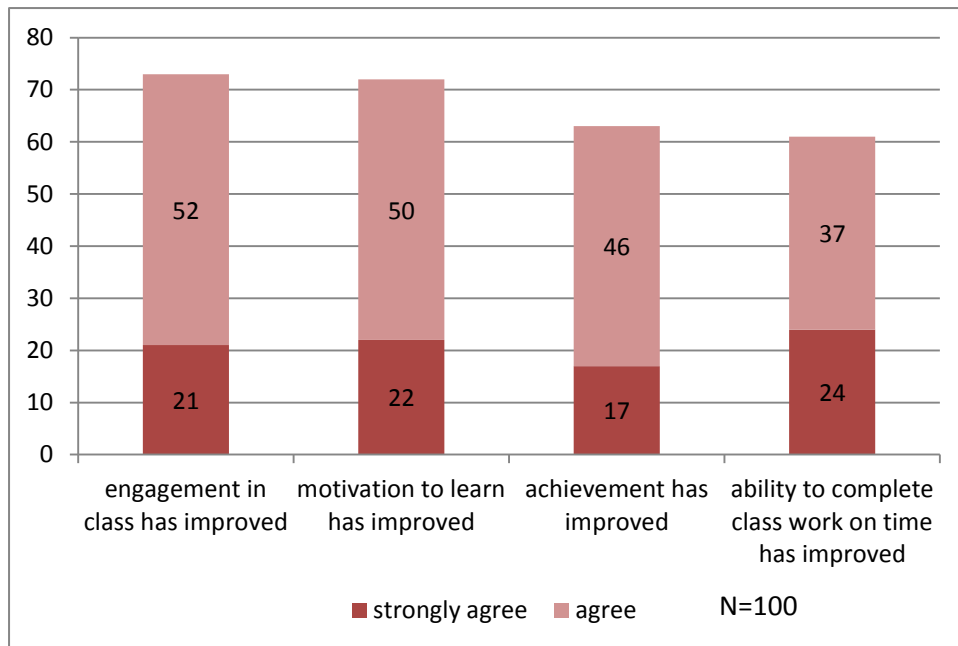
In order to explore the impact of the programme on young carers, respondents were asked about the achievement and participation, the attendance and the well-being and confidence of the young carers in their schools. This was also measured on a scale from “0 – strongly disagree” to “50 – about the same” to “100 – strongly agree.” The respondents reported mean improvements in all areas (see figures 3 to 5).

Figure 3: Young carers achievement and participation compared to when they were first involved in the YCiS programme



Motivation to learn and engagement in class and homework completion were the three most highly rated improvements. Looking at this in more detail 73 (73%) of schools thought classroom engagement had improved, 72 thought motivation to learn had improved and 63 pointed to improvement in the achievement of young carers.

Figure 3a: Young carers achievement and participation compared to when they were first involved in the YCiS programme – selected items



It also appeared to be associated with reduced absence and better timekeeping.

Figure 4: Young carers attendance compared to when they were first involved in the YCiS programme

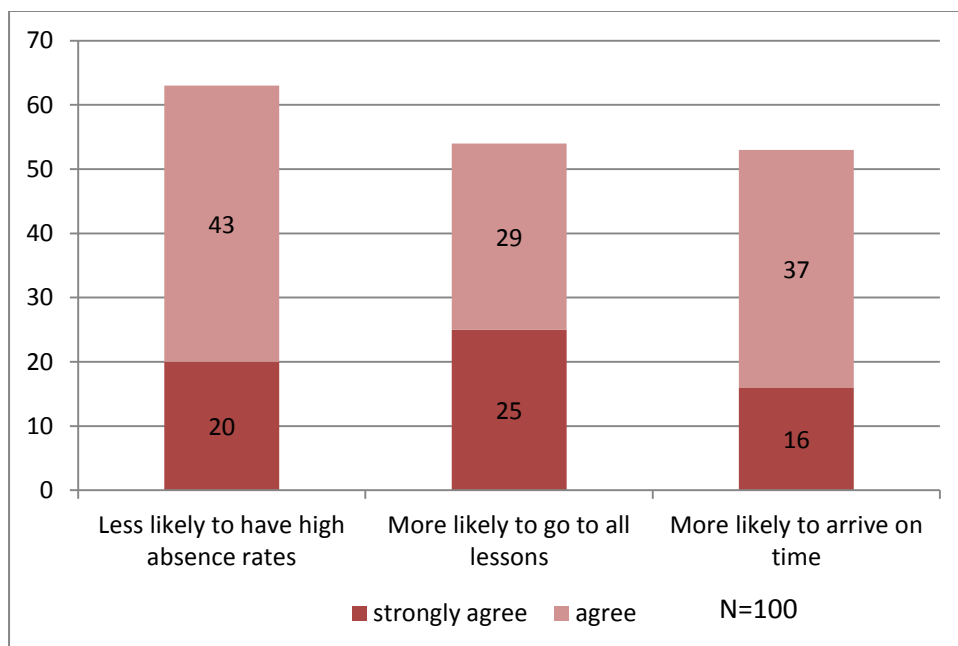
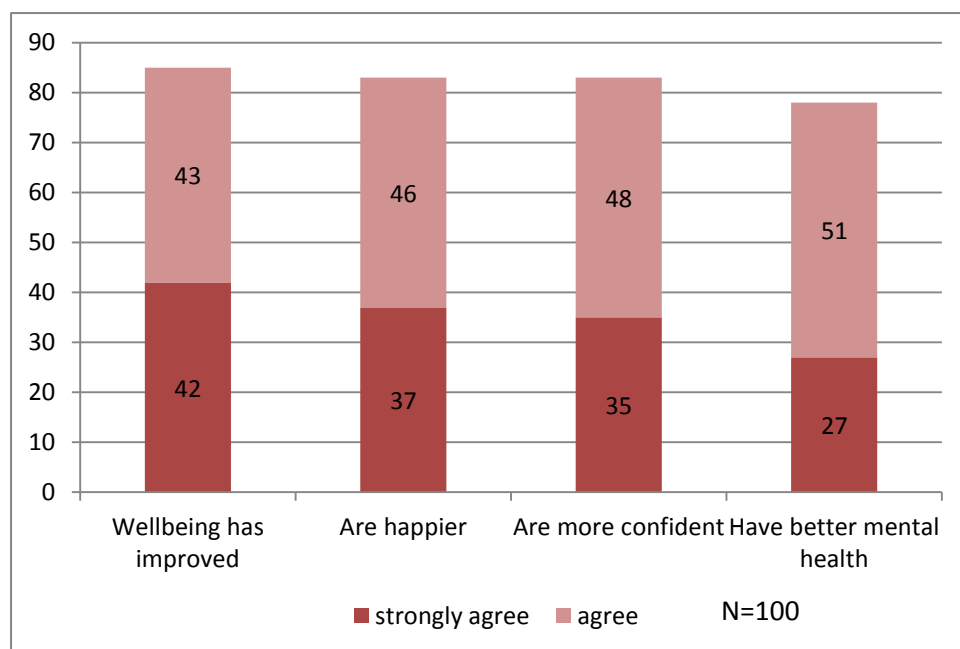


Figure 5: Young carers well-being and confidence compared to when they were first involved in the YCiS programme



Mean scores were over 50 in every area indicating that on average young carers are demonstrating widespread improvements since becoming involved in the YCiS programme. The most improvements were seen in well-being (Figure 5), where mean scores are over 70 for improvements in well-being, confidence and happiness.

Figure 5a: Young carers well-being and confidence compared to when they were first involved in the YCiS programme – selected items



Looking at the for top areas we see that eighty-five percent agreed that wellbeing had improved, 83% felt that young carers were happier and the same percentage

thought that they were more confident while 78% thought that they had better mental health. Only 36% thought they had better physical health

As with the impact on staff, group differences in improvement between types of schools and whether the school had an Award. There were also no statistically significant differences between the scores of young carers at primary and secondary schools (t-test, $p < 0.05$).

Respondents in schools with an Award (gold, silver or bronze) were more likely to report that young carers were happier than those in a school without an Award. This was a small but statistically significant difference (t-test, $p < .05$). This suggests that schools with an Award felt that they were better able to promote happiness in their young carers. This was the only area where there was a statistically significant difference in the reported impact of the YCiS programme on the wellbeing of young carers between those who did or did not have a YCiS Award. So schools that did not have an award appeared overall to be just as positive about the impact of the programme as schools that did not.

Overall satisfaction with the YCiS programme

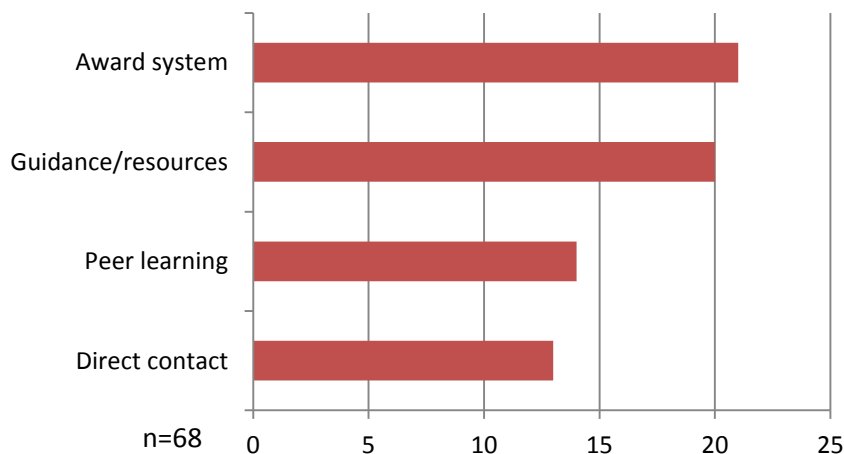
Overall respondents to the survey were very satisfied with YCiS and would recommend it to other schools.

Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with the YCiS programme from “0 - very dissatisfied” to “50 – neither satisfied or dissatisfied” to “100 – very satisfied.” Respondents average satisfaction score was 76%, indicating generally high levels of satisfaction with the programme. In fact, 69 (94%) respondents scored 70 or over indicating they were very satisfied with the programme. Only six respondents (6%) were less than “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.” In spite of this, three of them would still recommend the YCiS programme to other schools.

The large majority of respondents would recommend the YCiS programme to other schools. Ninety-one (94%) of respondents would recommend the programme and the remaining 6 (6%) were not sure.

Sixty-eight responses were made by sixty-six respondents to the invitation to suggest improvements to the programme. The most common response was related to issues with the awarding system (21; 31% of suggestions), the need for more guidance or resources (20; 19%), the opportunity for peer learning (14; 21%) and more direct contact or better communication with YCiS staff (13; 19%). See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Recommended areas of improvement to the YCiS programme



When 21 respondents reported the area in need of most improvement was the awards system, a common suggestion was that the current system was too time consuming and “rigid.” As the quote in the adjacent box demonstrates, some schools found that YCiS did not accommodate the individual requirements of their students. Some respondents also suggested that *“some of the criteria are aimed at Secondary and is difficult for Primary schools to achieve.”* (Primary school Lead for young carers with Bronze Award).

“Need to understand the ways schools work in different ways so there is not a 'one box fits all'... If schools can demonstrate a way they support students in a different way to one of the suggested ways eg peer group, then that should be reasonable, based on needs of the students in that school.”

Member of the senior leader team of a secondary school with no YCiS award

Twenty respondents also suggested that they would benefit from more or improved guidance or support in particular areas, including: how to celebrate success; guidance on how to engage reluctant young carers; information to deliver tailored assemblies; guidance setting up support groups. Additional funding for activities outside of school for young carers was also mentioned as a way to improve the programme (although the programme is not a funding programme).

Fourteen respondents also wanted more opportunities to learn from peers. For example one secondary school Leader for young carers (whose school had received a gold Award) wrote that they would like *“more opportunities to network with other schools who have done the programme, to share ideas.”*

Finally, 13 respondents wanted more direct contact with YCiS staff. This included more face-to-face and telephone contact, as well as “better” and “more personal” communication.

Thematic Analysis of Interviews

Approaches were made to school and carers support organisations. A total of 16 interview sessions were conducted were consisting of the following:

Type	Count
Schools Interviews	5
Local Support Organisations	7
Focus Groups of Y Carers	2
Trailblazer Experience interviews	2
Total	16

Each type of interview has its own topic guide. The school interviewees were generally the young carers leads, usually pastoral care staff.

Description of the Sample

The school- based informants fell into the following types:

		Type			
		Primary	Secondary	Both*	PRU^
Schools Interviews	5	1	3		1
Focus Groups of Y Carers	2		2		
Trailblazer Experience interviews	2	1		1	

*one school covered both primary and secondary age ranges

^one school was a pupil referral unit for children who are excluded, sick, or otherwise unable to attend a mainstream or special maintained school.

The Award status of schools was as below:

		Award			
		Gold	Silver	Bronze	None
Schools Interviews	5	2	1		2
Focus Groups of Y Carers	2	1	1		
Trailblazer Experience interviews	2	1		1	

The seven local support organisations interviewed consisted of young carer services (4), a county council (1), a borough council (1) and a youth support service (1).

Motivation

The schools interviewed generally said that their concern for young carers arose from a wider pastoral focus and that the YCiS programme help them to take concrete steps to identify and support the young carer population:

“We were already interested in supporting and identifying the YCs in this school and this is basically how it developed. The Carers Trust Toolkit gave us ways to do this; it gave us a structure to fulfil our ambitions.”

Other schools stressed that staff shared an ethos that nothing must stand in the way of a child getting the education they need, and that they would do whatever was needed to address any obstacles that they are faced with.

For another school, their involvement with YCs was said to have started when a mum with a mental health problem ended up trying to injure both her child and herself. Appropriate safeguarding actions were taken and the safety plan reviewed. This dramatic example led to staff seeing a major need to support young carers, particularly around mental health.

Some of the carers services reporting coming across some schools at very early stages of awareness. They pointed to what was a basic lack of understanding and knowledge by many schools.

Schools often had a lack of time. One carers centre reported that they had to ‘wave the Ofsted card’ a lot more than originally expected. Centre staff had thought that schools would want to do it; but some schools saw it as a lower priority than children’s grades. Ofsted’s interest was mentioned as one of the factors that encouraged at least one school to develop a more dedicated focus on young carers.

Other carers’ centres also acknowledge the appeal of the attainment impacts of a young carers programme for schools:

“To get other schools involved the biggest draw is the knowledge and robust evidence that suggests that young carers do less in attainment, attendance and are at significantly greater risk at bullying...Looking at other schools they will be attracted to a programme that helps them develop strategies to support young people with attainment. If you think about most schools want every child to achieve their most potential.”

However even then it was seen as a struggle. Carers services promoting YCiS suggested that schools often didn't have time or staff commitment or resources. It was noted that there had been a streamlining of staff posts across schools and academies which meant that levels of support could vary e.g. one school may have a lot of pastoral staff whilst others may only have a part-time family liaison role. So progress in engaging schools often depended on finding the right person at the right time.

The view of the Award providers was that their applicants involved a mix of schools. Most came to the Award because they were actively looking for ways to help vulnerable children and develop staff, while a relatively small number were schools who were initially drawn to the recognition and idea of a 'new award' for their school. So the existence of the award scheme itself appears to encourage some schools to start to act in this arena.

Implementing the programme

Schools were asked about which parts of the programme they had found useful and which parts they had difficulty implementing.

The principal resources of the programme are:

- Base-line-review
- Step-by-Step guide (online tools)
- Live Webinar(s)
- Recorded webinars
- Professional Development Events
- Young Carers in Schools Award Guidance (online tool)
- Award Pack
- Guide to evidencing the award
- E-newsletter

Schools repeatedly mentioned the checklist in the baseline review as being a good starting point; it was felt to be a good indication of where you are at the beginning and what you need to achieve.

it was suggested that the examples in the Step by Step guide on *Reviewing your School's Provision for Young Carers* were useful in that they *"made us look ... to ensure that young carers were covered across all our protocols and policies and we would reassure that they were looked after"*.

The newsletters were also valued for their coverage of new policies and guidance. The (now discontinued) CD version of the Step by Step guide was mentioned as a useful resource and schools mentioned using or adapting the supplied pupil questionnaires. The Step by Step guide was described as *"really helpful, it raises different ideas to you, it's good for submitting Awards the guidelines are really useful."*

We asked about the balance in the Step by Step guide between getting commitment, raising awareness and delivery of support. The response from schools was that the balance was seen as very good. However some carers' services thought that smaller chunks might work better and that some content, such as homework club and

coursework, were too focussed on secondary-schools and less relevant for primary schools.

There were positive comments about the posters and the template letters for parents.

Some schools thought that the website had too much information and it was easy to get lost.

There was less mention of the webinars. One comment was that the Step by Step Guide would be more useful and stronger if it had actual teaching strategies for teachers in the classroom to implement.

Programme providers suggested that their experiences was that school would often say that they wanted more digital contact, but would struggle take up any opportunities provided due to other pressures on their time. One suggestion was that something low-maintenance such as a regional *What's App* group may be easier to implement than a dedicated discussion forum.

Schools struggled to identify anything that had not worked well when asked. However, some of the suggestions such as a recommendations box or staff noticeboard were seen as impractical for schools that may not have the space or a staff noticeboard.

The challenge was seen as less with the difficulty of the specific elements and more to do with finding the time to make it a priority.

Helpful features were identified such as when the head teacher was very supportive. However schools did report difficulty in obtaining appropriate materials for their young carers:

"I want to get resources – books on illnesses, alcohol and drug abuse but getting hold of child friendly ones for year 2 is very hard."

The carers services found that the Young Carers in Schools Project had been a real selling point for schools that they had not worked with before. Carers services worked to increase the visibility and understanding of young carers amongst their local professional networks. Support for the YCIS programme was one of the ways they sought to deliver this, but resource was an issue, with one commenting

"We desperately need a schools worker to respond to requests and to enable us to do outreach."

Award Scheme

A lot of the schools mentioned the Award scheme. The scheme was highly valued and offered a structured progression that schools could follow as their confidence and experience developed.

One school stated that when they began they already had most of the basics for the bronze Award in place, and that it was when going for silver and gold that it became more of a challenge:

“With the silver it helped me to bring it into a new dimension, putting content into newsletters, websites and policies which was a little challenging which encouraged me to look it in more detail ... it took me a nearly a whole school year to get the gold in place; it’s achievable but it took more time because you are relying on other people”.

There was a suggestion from a local agency that the three stages could be identified more clearly and that there may be a case for the Gold Award to be a little easier. By contrast a school that had achieved gold was of the belief that *“It has to be something you have worked for, it shouldn’t be an easy process.”*

Mostly schools were interested in pursuing the Award but with the condition that this was a means to an end:

“The Award itself is secondary and less important than what we implement. The action plan was more important that’s why I have pushed forwards in making sure that I am ticking the boxes.”

Some schools needed encouragement to pursue an Award. Indeed a local agency said that *“We do hear schools saying that they do it all but they don’t go for accreditation because they have not got the time. It is seen as too much and very time-consuming even though they are doing the work and can identify 48 young carers”.*

Some schools had struggled with the Bronze Award or had been unsuccessful. One of the local agencies suggested that the pack was a bit too heavy for schools with limited capacity to work towards the Bronze Award, so he had simplified the content onto a factsheet with 6-8 key things that they needed to do to apply for bronze.

So overall there was no consensus, but schools did feel the Award criteria were a little rigid in the way they viewed schools.

“The Award is too regimented in its approach. I did complain that the criteria were ‘one school fits all’ (I did go on a rant) for example we have to display things on staff noticeboard but we don’t have a noticeboard. ... We got criticised for having information from another LA on display, but we did this because our LA didn’t produce similar materials”.

However even this school was proud that *“we are the first primary school to get bronze in the area and we might go for the silver”*. This was not uncommon with 66% of schools with a Bronze award saying that they intended to go for silver.

The above fits with what we know about the Award itself. Primary schools are successful in attaining the award; for example, four of the 14 gold award schools in England and Wales are primary schools – so there do not appear to be any insurmountable obstacles facing primaries.

The agency that reviews applications (the Children’s Society) made the point that if a particular measure was not appropriate for a school they are always happy for a school to show it was using other means to achieve the same outcome. There is flexibility in the process to take account of this when considering an award application, but schools may not always be made aware of this.

The point was also made that the award criteria were developed in co-production with young carers and that they wanted the criteria to be reasonably stringent rather than too simple to achieve, and that it was deemed important to reflect their wishes.

The view from carer support services was that the award concept works well as some schools like it. However what did not work well is the very specific nature of the evidence eg one or two schools said that they were unsuccessful in getting an Award for one missing piece of evidence. Some schools that did not obtain an Award were said by carer support services to have subsequently struggled to stay on board with the scheme. They also saw the process as needing to be more flexible and to find a way of rewarding the positives while maintaining good standards.

Identification of Young Carers

In several secondary schools the majority of young carers had been identified while in primary school and this had been communicated as part of transition. These secondary schools had worked with their feeder schools and in some cases had helped them to get involved in YCiS. Some schools also asked about care status in the school entry application form and some young carers were identified this way. The school admission forms had been adapted to include questions on young carers at the instigation of the young carer leads.

“My Mum ticked ‘carer’ and I got dragged out of a lesson to talk about it [laugh]”.

Other approaches included assemblies to year seven pupils, highlighting that the school supports young carers and explain what a young carer is. Posters and newsletters were also mentioned.

The effect of the YCiS programme was quite dramatic and the numbers that came forward appeared generally to exceed expectations. A carers' service said that in one girls' school, at the start of the project they thought they had four young carers,

but they subsequently identified that they have 56. Another school went from thinking it had eight young carers to identifying 48.

Some primary schools did not see themselves as having a problem with stigma, and in one school the young carers had designed badges and called themselves the 'Young Carers Crew.' So now young carers in the school chose to wear their badges and were described by school staff as having a sense of belonging. In the same school when an external young carer came in to do a talk, all of the young carers wanted to sit at the front and be known *"they are really proud to be a young carer"*.

One carers' service said that since the YCiS programme had been delivered, there had been a 180% increase in referrals coming from schools.

We asked the young carers in the focus group if they thought that there were any young carers that the school did not know about. It was thought that there were some, but not many. The reason they didn't come forward was said to be *"because they don't want people to know their own business"*.

Young carers at another school said *"Some of us don't want to attend [the group] and don't want people to know that we are carers"*. Although they acknowledged that *"It is better for us if staff know that we are young carers"*.

Several schools and carers services commented on the fear that families have over what might happen if families do tell schools about what is going on at home. Indeed such a situation is a key feature of one of the case vignettes in this report.

Building trust with parents was elsewhere described as a key step that is easier when schools had good pastoral staff who knew the young carers and the families.

Response to Need

Schools described a range of strategies that they use to support young carers at school.

Group Meetings

School groups of young carers were a common feature. Most schools put a great deal of emphasis on the advantages of young carers coming together.

For example in one school the young carers described them as places where *"we chat, we talk and we play Uno (the card game)"*.

Fundraising and awareness raising activities, meals together and outings were some of the activities that the groups tended to do together, as well as meeting groups of young carers in other schools.

“We also used the school kitchens to cook and had a bake sale for Carers Trust. This was also a way of raising awareness as well as fundraising. To get a free cake you could to answer a question about young carers such as what they are.”

Young carers in one school commented that *“A good thing about the group is that you get to know people from across the school from years 7 to 11, we mingle more”*, which may not have happened without the group. This cross-year contact was a common theme for schools; it being pointed out that older young carers would look out for younger young carers.

“I know someone in year 11 and I’m in year 7. That is because we go both to the local young carers and go together from the school. She looks after me”.

A member of staff reported that:

“Our group has a strong sense of identify and older children are more nurturing towards young carers in year 7. As the group got bigger I suggested we split it by clusters of year groups but they didn’t want that. The older ones nurture the younger ones so they wanted to stick together. They will also let me know if there are any of the others are having problems.

Young carers have a connection with young carers in other years, they don’t even recognise that they are year 7s, they just share their experiences.”

However a frequent group meeting was not a central activity for every school. In one school, which did a lot for young carers, the young carers generally only met as a group for a meal at the end of term.

School Approach

A hallmark of the schools that talked about their offer to young carers was about awareness of the Young Carers being coupled with an ability to be flexible, to take into account the child’s home circumstances. One head teacher commented on the importance of:

“... having someone to listen to them and understanding the difficulties they face make it a safer environment”

This flexibility was said to lead to a better learning environment and better relationships between pupils and staff:

“We have another student, a year 10 boy, whose attitude to school has massively changed. He has a better rapport with his teachers now. He has developed better relationships with staff, because of their knowledge about him, for example they understand that he will sometimes be tired because of his circumstances, so there is less conflict.”

Homework was one area where flexibility was required. For example

“If homework is a bit of a struggle we can talk to [the Young Carers Lead] who will talk to the subject teacher and ask for an extension”.

A carers centre manager commented that what young carers need at school is some sympathy and understanding and also some flexibility eg to use their mobile phones, homework clubs in schools.

Another area of flexibility was detentions, as teachers were willing to give lunchtime detentions rather than evening detentions. Sometimes teachers would look to an alternative to detention for a young carer, a fact which young carers recognised

“Sometimes we don’t get detentions when other people would get one”.

Personal Support

The support given by individual pastoral workers to individual young carers was also significant in enabling young carers to participate in school.

“Denise’ [not her real name] spends a lot of time being helped in the morning because she has difficulty organising herself. She can be forgetful because she is in such a rush in the morning. She comes to [the Young Carers Lead] in the morning for 20 minutes so they can check she has everything she needs and get it sorted out if she doesn’t”

The Young Carers Lead was someone at the school that young people could go to and know that they would be supportive. For example it was common practice in a couple of schools that if there is an upset with a parent at home before school, young carers could go and talk to the Young Carers Lead so that they were in the right frame of mind to go into class and continue their learning.

Other ways of picking up issues was through the use of a walking bus to collect children on the way to school. Staff used the bus to assess if there are any issues, such as if young carers needed a chat, if they need breakfast, if they had their PE kit, or if there was a need to make a phone call.

Breakfasts

Special breakfasts were a common feature on specific days such as young carers awareness day. For some schools this was more routine. One enterprising school said:

“I have linked in to Warburton’s to get free toast for the children so they can have breakfast and snacks. I sell extra toast and use some of the money to fund toys for the young carers.”

In this school the provision of a free breakfast club for young carers was seen as helpful so parents can get away to any appointments on time, as well as being a nice way to start the day for the child.

Phoning Home

Another source of flexibility that was valued was to allow young carers to phone home if they were worried about what was happening at home. This was mentioned repeatedly. A typical situation was when a carer was unsure if their parent had taken their medication and wanted reassurance about this. A child commented:

“If something happens at home and you get a bit anxious or worried at school she lets you phone home so you can sure that everything is alright.”

Relationship with Education and Academic Progress

The vignettes give specific examples of improvements in attendance and attainment of young carers.

For one such young carer *“her learning had stopped in year 3. Her learning is coming on now”*.

Another school said they used to have children who were absent and that absence would be marked as unauthorised. Once they discovered that a person was a young carer they would get in touch with the parent and use a different code on the register.

The pupil referral unit had a number of children who had a poor record of attendance in their previous school. They were flexible and attendance was not seen as a challenge.

The potential of young carers services to improve the attainment of these young carers was very attractive to staff and school leadership, as noted above was seen by carers services as a key part of school motivation to get involved. The relationship between social, emotional factors and attainment can be complex, but a fundamental feature was summarised simply by one member of school staff who observed that *“her attainment is based on her happiness at school”*.

Wider Personal Improvements

The vignettes have already presented powerful examples of young carers benefiting from school support. For ‘Jane’ this took the form of being much happier and more

confident, with stronger friendship groups. For 'Grace' there was a reduction in anxiety, reduced isolation and improved attainment. For 'Bridget' this was a stable and settled home environment, and for 'Charlotte' improved attendance and attainment.

Similarly, in the survey (see figure 5) schools reported increased wellbeing, happiness and confidence in their identified young carers, who had better mental health and were better able to make and keep friends. Schools also identified improved motivation to learn, have better engagement in class and more homework completion as well as reduced absence and better attendance and timekeeping.

These were not isolated examples and such changes were mentioned frequently by the schools. Young carers making connections with other young carers in their school across the years was regularly mentioned.

“The way they have become friends is amazing, they are so lush when they are together. They really relate and support each other”.

For others it was noted that some young carers had limited opportunities to go outdoors or to play.

“One girl has a brother with cerebral palsy and worries about him and is like a mini-mum to him. When she first joined us she would sit on a chair and watch us play.... Now she is in there: messy, loud and chatty.”

In another school a young carer who signed up for summer events at their local carers services was asked what he would be able to do over the summer without it the response was “not a lot” and that social opportunities for him were very limited.

Another example offered was of a girl who was said to worry less, was more confident and more positive about her future.

“She doesn't hang off my coattails anymore. She was really struggling, there was a time when she was self-harming, but it stopped. She is ready to go to college whereas before she said “I never want to leave this school, they won't help me.”

Links to wider services

For the schools we spoke to, the local young carer services (usually based in carers centres) was a strong and valued presence.

They were usually mentioned either because they ran regular weekly activities in the centre, like a youth club, or because they had a range of activities and excursions that young carers could sign up for both in term time and over the school holidays.

Local professional football clubs were mentioned several times as organisations that offered experiences to young carers via the carers centre, e.g. for coaching or to be part of the lead out at a professional game.

Schools would also make referrals to carers centres and get support on accessing the LA's early help offer. It was also a two way relationship as with referrals would also come to the carers centre from the 'Early Help Hubs' leading to work with individual young carers through schools.

For some carers services a large proportion of the family support work was said to involve helping frontline staff to acknowledge young carers as children in need and advocating for that *"We have to fight their corner"*.

A manager of one of the young carers services was very eloquent when describing how they responded to what young carers needed:

"They want to be understood and for school it's to have a key link who understands them. If generalising, they don't need money or to be whisked away to Disneyland every year or lots of charitable activities, but just someone to understand them and somebody to be there if things change, which we can do; providing time, sympathy, and understanding. Also, on a practical level, transport to and from activities. Also having a network of friends and being out in groups with other YCs who understand what they're going through."

Carers centres wanted to engage with schools but resource often precluded any outreach work to recruit new schools. For example one LA had commissioned work with young carers with a budget of £145k which was subsequently reduced to £100k then again down to £70k. In its original form this would have paid for three young carer support workers but now that was no longer possible. Another centre noted that as a result of funding reductions they were no longer able to engage new schools.

"We do not do any outreach. We do pick up requests and have regular conversations with schools about the work they are doing and have active dialogues. We are not developing new relationships. Our relationships are strong with about a sixth of the schools. The majority of school referrals come from these schools, but others are connected through school networks".

The carers centres saw the centrality of school in young carers' lives but were concerned about what happens for support when the schools are closed and the need for additional programmes and support them.

Policy messages

Resources and the Pupil Premium

We asked schools if young carers should be eligible for pupil premium in their own right. The universal view was that it would be good if once they are identified as a young carer they would get the pupil premium.

The prime reason suggested that this would give an added impetus to schools that currently did not prioritise young carers and encourage them to do so.

The second reason was that such a measure could potentially increase the size of the pupil premium pot in the school – although it was recognised that many young carers may already qualify under the free school meals criterion. Some schools foresaw problems in defining the eligibility of young carers, and thought that funding via pupil premium might create a restrictive definition of what makes someone a young carer which could dissuade schools from providing more universal support.

Staff in the schools we spoke to had access to the school's pupil premium funding. In general it seemed to be used as a fund to help disadvantaged pupils rather than tightly ring-fenced for looked after children and children who met the free school meals and looked after criterion.

Access to the pupil premium funds was often on an ad-hoc basis and schools young carer services did not generally have a dedicated budget, which in turn made planning difficult and added to uncertainty. In one school supplies for afternoon activities were funded by the member of staff herself (at low cost), with the pupil premium being spent on other elements rather than on them as young carers. So there is an argument in favour of pupil premium being extended to young carers.

Examples of use of the pupil premium included: arranging for a pupil to have a taxi straight from school to the hospital when their parent was unwell; to supply or fund things like uniform or PE kit; and sleeping bags so Young Carers could take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's award. Other examples were trips to places such as water parks and opportunities to go horse riding. Pupil premium money was also used for an outside counselling service for young carers who required extra specialised support such as bereavement counselling.

Many schools also undertook fundraising activity for young carers' activities and undertook sponsored events like row-a-thons and bike rides. One had accessed Key Fund investment to help with raising money. Another had made £200 by selling chocolate marshmallows for a £1 on Young Carers Day and were going swimming with this money.

Many of the aspects of helping young carers were described as essentially low cost activities:

"I think we have a moral duty. If you start concerning yourself with finance then you haven't got it, because it doesn't cost anything. It's not a cost implication for us or the school because we can always find time for them and we can use pupil premium if they need equipment or to go on a trip. If any school says that tells you it's financial restrictions [that prevent them supporting young carers] then they haven't got it, they just haven't got the

whole notion of being a young carer. It's just about providing a safe place, a place where they feel safe and comfortable."

But the external activities and trips come with a cost and the school staff we spoke to were always on the lookout for ways of funding these.

Ofsted Inspections

The experience of Ofsted appeared to be varied. It was suggested that Ofsted could do a lot more for young carers and that sometimes they came in and hardly mentioned young carers. A carer centre manager was of the view that:

"If Ofsted don't ask specific questions about young carers it is just an additional thing for schools. We are one of 17 or so vulnerable groups. If this was being asked at a policy level then I think that more schools would accredit themselves [ie pursue the award]"

By contrast, in one of the schools we were told by the staff member that the Ofsted inspector spoke to the young carers, after which the young carers took the inspector to the young carers' activity room, and told her how they felt about being a young carer in the school.

However schools and carers services both felt that there was a distinct lack of focus on young carers in Ofsted inspections and that a greater focus would encourage more schools to better support their young carers.

Case for Support

Carers services suggested that a case setting out how much money can be saved by investment in young carers services needs to be assembled and recognised nationally. The 'Against The Odds' report (Audit Commission 2010) emphasised the value of interventions that helped young people to avoid becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training, which can be a risk for young carers as they enter adulthood.

Young Carers' Priorities

In the focus groups with young carers we asked them what they would like to say to decision-makers and politicians on what would make life better for young carers. Their response was that decision-makers need to be aware of the following (in the order they arose):

- Young carers need information and help to understand what a carer is.

- Support groups for young carers were very important and should be available in all schools.
- Each school should have a 'go to' person for young carers.
- Local after school clubs that young carers can access should be supported.
- Trips and visits for young carers are important, especially during the school holidays, so funding needs to be provided for them.
- Funding school transport for a sibling would help young carers get to school in situations when caring for a younger sibling causes them to be late.

The focus was not just on what was happening within the school (which was seen as positive) but also on what would impact on the lives of the young carers.

“It would help if someone could come in at home for free and help mum do a bit of cleaning, so I don't have to do it when I get home.”

Finally one focus group joked that their school should get a gold Award *“once we have no detentions, cheaper school meals, and someone does everything for us at school and home ... and we a have a hot tub”*.

Summary and Recommendations

Overall this study considered the following questions

- 1) How successfully have schools and young carers services been able to implement the different parts of the programme?
- 2) To what extent does implementation of the programme improve the ability of schools to identify and respond to the needs of young carers?
- 3) How well have young carers been able to improve their relationship with education and their academic progress?
- 4) Do young carers experience wider improvements in terms of personal wellbeing?
- 5) How does service provision connect to or inspire the wider network of services?
- 6) What are the policy messages that emerge from the findings?

The findings are summarised below.

- 1) How successfully have schools and young carers services been able to implement the different parts of the programme?

Where schools have the motivation they have been very successful in using the resources to implement support for young carers. Perhaps surprisingly the nature of implementation varied from school to school with some having a strong emphasis on a regular group and others focusing more on individualised support. Schools found the resources useful and particularly valued the baseline review and the step by step guide.

Schools rated the current programme highly. Eighty-seven percent of schools rated the scheme as good or very good and 94% would recommend the programme to other schools. However there is a market for a simple list of actions that some local carers services were seeking to support.

- 2) To what extent does implementation of the programme improve the ability of schools to identify and respond to the needs of young carers?

The YCiS programme 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.

The programme was reported as having a positive impact on the confidence of staff to identifying young carers, understanding of the support they may need and ability to support young carers' needs. Ninety-four percent of schools indicated that staff were more likely to know what to do if they identified a young carer, and the same

proportion of schools indicated that staff had a better understanding of the support that young carers needed.

- 3) How well have young carers been able to improve their relationship with education and their academic progress?

Schools identified improvements in the young carers' relationship with education. Almost three quarters of schools (73%) reported that classroom engagement had improved, while 72% thought that young carers' motivation to learn had improved, while 63% reported improvement in the achievement of young carers.

Young carers benefitted from the flexibilities and understanding that they received from school staff, helping them to manage their school work, deal with their worries and participate more fully.

Sixty-three percent of schools also said that young carers were less likely to have high absence rates since the schools became involved in the young carers programme.

- 4) Do young carers experience wider improvements in terms of personal wellbeing?

Both the survey and the interviews furnished examples of young carers having their needs better met. In the survey young carers were reported as having improved wellbeing (85%), as being happier (83%) and more confident (83%).

The ability of young carers to make connections with other young carers in their school across the years was regularly mentioned as a positive impact of the programme. Examples were supplied of young carers worrying less, becoming more confident and more positive about their future. It was also noted that friendship groups were more secure when a person identified as a young carer as peers would now understand why a young carer would sometimes need to be elsewhere.

- 5) How does service provision connect to or inspire the wider network of services?

Two thirds of schools reported that since becoming involved in the programme young carers were better supported by other organisations.

Local young carer services (usually based in carers centres) were a strong and valued presence. They were usually mentioned either because they ran regular weekly centre-based activities that young carers in the school could access or

because they had a range of activities and excursions that young carers could sign up for both in term time and over the school holidays.

Schools also reported good experiences in referring to the local authority and getting support, eg through the early help offer. Sometimes the local young carers services were able to support schools and advocate for young carers to local early help services.

Some of the schools had established relationships with other schools in the area, including feeder schools, and were helping them to identify and support young carers. Local young carers services were also active in supporting the young carers in schools programme, however outreach to new schools tended to be related to the presence of funding for dedicated posts to do this. Without such posts there was a focus on supporting schools already engaged.

6) What are the policy messages that emerge from the findings?

There was almost universal support for extending the pupil premium to young carers. The principal reason given was that this would give an added impetus to schools that currently did not prioritise young carers and encourage them to do so. The argument went that if the purpose of the pupil premium is to help disadvantaged pupils of all abilities perform better, and close the gap between them and their peers, then young carers were a prime group to be considered.

It was recognised that many young carers would already be eligible for pupil premium under other criteria and that the resultant additional resource to schools may not be that great. There was also concern that funding via pupil premium might create a restrictive definition of what makes someone a young carer which could dissuade schools from providing more universal support. So any announcement of funding should stress that young carers exist in a wide continuum beyond what can easily be defined for funding purposes.

The second suggested area was for provision for young carers to be explicitly identified as part of the Ofsted inspection framework for schools. Young carers are one group mentioned in the Common inspection framework alongside many other groups. Positive examples were given of Ofsted inspectors meeting with young carers groups, so practice may be ahead of guidance, but the needs of young carers is not a major inspection focus.

Ofsted inspectors are required to assess the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils (para 65 of the Inspection Handbook), but the handbook defines disadvantaged pupils as "those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding", which excludes many young carers and does not explicitly identify them.

Another suggested driver for good practice was the inclusion of young carers in the schools' annual s175 safeguarding audit, so that schools would have to identify young carers numbers and provisions for them alongside the safeguarding and anti-bullying issues currently covered.

Joined up services between schools and external services remain important. When asked that they wanted some children indicated that what would make a difference to their lives what having help at home and in the community. If we want young carers to do well in education a lot can be done in school to support this. This study saw many positive examples of real change being achieved. However equally valuable is the support given to them to reduce their caring role, to give them permission to worry less and provide them with wider opportunities to enjoy their childhood.

References

Carers Trust (2017) Supporting Young Carers in School: A Step-by-step Guide for Leaders, Teachers and Non-teaching Staff <https://professionals.carers.org/stepbystep>

Carers Trust and Children's Society (2017) Young Carers in Schools: Award Pack - A guide to implementing support and applying for a Young Carers in Schools Award <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/ycis-awards-pack.pdf>

Carers Trust and Children's Society (2017) Young Carers in Schools A guide to evidencing the award <https://youngcarersinschools.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/young-carers-in-schools-a-guide-to-evidencing-the-award.pdf>

Ofsted (2017) School inspection handbook - Handbook for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730127/School_inspection_handbook_section_5_270718.pdf

Appendix 1 - Schools Topic Guide

EVALUATION OF YOUNG CARERS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT (YCiS)

Topic Guide for Interviews with School Staff

Name	
Organisation	
Role	
Date and Time	

Intro

Purpose – good practice, what others can learn from the experience. Please be candid what working well and what needs more thought.

Will write up and send for correction/amendment.

Anonymity of interviewee in any later report.

1. Can you tell me what level of award your school currently has or is working towards

Prompts: none, GSB; static or working towards next level

2. Given the many demands on schools, what was it that galvanised your school to develop a focus on young carers?

Prompts: had you started looking before you came across the YCiS programme? What do you think would attract other schools?

What do you think would attract other schools to develop the work? [is there something which appeals to schools?]

3. What would you say YCs most need help with?

Prompt: e.g. school attendance, being on time, behaviour, homework, hobbies, friendships, health, exercise or diet, getting the right support from school? EXAMPLES

4. Has the programme resulted in young carers being able to improve their relationship with education?

Prompts? Do young carers progress to expected levels at similar rates to peers /has any gap changed? Are they achieving their potential? EXAMPLES

5. Who do you think young carers would like to provide them with support?

Prompts: is the school the best placed agency?

6. How easy has it been to implement different parts of the YCiS programme?

Prompts what resources (website, webinars, face to face, tel support, your local young carers service) did you find most useful. Can you give examples of how they helped you?

7. How familiar are you with the Step by Step Guide? What do you think of it?

Prompts: Which parts most useful? Are there some things in the step by step guide that you don't think you'll ever do? Why not?

- a) Does the step by step guide have the right balance between getting commitment, raising awareness and establishing systems to identify, assess and support young carers?

one out of 10 steps (step 6) establishing systems to identify, assess and support young carers

Homework/coursework support

Support to enable young carers to socialise with and gain support from others

Emotional Support(staff/peers/external referral)

Behaviour support / flexibilities

- b) Have you implemented anything that was not in the Step by Step guide?

8. What have you done that has worked really well?

Prompt: and what feedback has been obtained from young people?

9. What has not worked so well?

10. Do you think you are now able to identify all of the young carers at your school?

Prompts what made the biggest difference? Will there be a cohort that is always invisible? How should we tackle that?

11. What do you see as the key barriers to providing the support young carers require? (budgets, resources, changing funding formula and loss of pastoral staff, access).

12. Have you been able to use the pupil premium to benefit young carers?

Prompts: if so in what way? Would making young carers eligible for pupil premium as a group have any impact?

13. Thinking about other service providers, how well have you been able to link with them to help young carers?

14. Is there a group of young carers we might talk to as part of the next stage of the research please?

15. Is there anything else you'd like to say about young carers?

Thank – mention write up and confirm email to send notes

Appendix 2 - Local Support Organisations Topic Guide

EVALUATION OF YOUNG CARERS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT (YCiS)

Topic Guide for Interviews with Young Carers Stakeholders/Deliverers

Name	
Organisation	
Role	

1. Please explain your organisation's role in supporting young carers (incl. any statutory responsibilities)
2. Can you provide an overview of the services on offer for young carers by your organisation?
3. Do you hold any specific contracts to support young carers? (if so, from where, contract values, key contract aims and objectives, timings, extent of support, outputs/outcomes etc)
4. In your personal role, what activities do you undertake to support young carers both in schools and as individuals (explain school based work and other networks and services that support young carers as well as any schools based work).

5. Thinking about other service providers, what are the other main elements of support for young carers provided in your area (both in schools and in the community) e.g. young carers' assessment.
6. How does your organisation identify young carers in schools and in the community? (how proactive is this, what is the role of schools and other education institutions in terms of identifying young carers?)
7. What has been your involvement with the Carers Trust and with the Young Carers in Schools Project specifically?
8. Are there particular resources that you have found useful in helping to identify or support young carers in schools? e.g. YCS toolkit, branded resources, SLA
9. What do you see as the key barriers to identifying young carers?
10. What would you say are the key support requirements of young carers? (what do they most need help with? e.g. school attendance, being on time, behaviour, homework, hobbies, friendships, health, exercise or diet, getting the right support from school)?
11. Who do you think young carers want this support from?
12. What do you see as the key barriers to providing the support young carers require? (budgets, resources, changing funding formula and loss of pastoral staff, access).
13. Thinking about your experience of the Young Carers in Schools project, what more do you think that the Carers Trust and the Children's Society could do to improve the project? (positives and negatives – what works well, what could be improved?)
14. How does your organisation and/or you in your role, assess the outcomes and impacts of activity to identify and support young carers?
15. Can you suggest some schools and young carers we might talk to as part of the next stage of the research please?
16. Do you have any other issues you would like to raise or information to add?

Appendix 3 - Focus Groups of Young Carers Topic Guide

Young Carers Focus Group Guide

- a) Introduce self
- b) Thank for the invitation.
- c) Refer to info: I asked the school if I could talk to a group of young carers as part of research we are doing with the Carers Trust.
- d) I'll ask the group their opinions about what is doing the most to help young carers.
- e) Your names won't appear in any report. Sound alright? Probably take up to an hour
- f) Groundrules – everyone's opinion is okay. No-one is right or wrong so we need to give everyone the chance to speak about their thoughts and experience.
- g) As always if anyone raises a safeguarding concern it will be dealt with in accordance with schools and Coram's safeguarding policy.
- h) I will write this up and I find it helpful to record the session to check things that my notes don't cover. Is that okay?

1. Can you tell me how good the school is helping young carers and the sorts of things it does?

2. What difference has it made in the life of young carers that you know?
 - Do you have any examples of what has got better? [spend time on this, probe for examples]

3. Are the changes across home, at school, your social life with friends?
 - What did the school do that made it better?

4. What does the school do that works really well?

Is there anything the school does that doesn't work so well?

5. What else could the school be doing to help young carers?

6. Are there important areas of life where young carers not getting the help they need?
Do you have a chance to chance to tel the school about these?

7. Do you think that there are young carers here that the school doesn't know about?

What made young carers in your school come forward? [probe event, poster, and talk]

8. How important is the help from the school compared any help you get from other places?

9. What would you like me to say to other schools and politicians about how best to help young carers?

Supplementary

1. Have you heard of the YCIS award? What should a school have to do to get an award?

2. Are you happy for us to contact you/the school with a survey towards the end of the year that you can complete online?

Appendix 4 – Trailblazer Example Topic Guide

Young Carers Focus Group Guide

- i) Introduce self
- j) Thank for the invitation.
- k) Refer to info: I asked the school if I could talk to a group of young carers as part of research we are doing with the Carers Trust.
- l) I'll ask the group their opinions about what is doing the most to help young carers.
- m) Your names won't appear in any report. Sound alright? Probably take up to an hour
- n) Groundrules – everyone's opinion is okay. No-one is right or wrong so we need to give everyone the chance to speak about their thoughts and experience.
- o) As always if anyone raises a safeguarding concern it will be dealt with in accordance with schools and Coram's safeguarding policy.
- p) I will write this up and I find it helpful to record the session to check things that my notes don't cover. Is that okay?

10. Can you tell me how good the school is helping young carers and the sorts of things it does?

11. What difference has it made in the life of young carers that you know?

- Do you have any examples of what has got better? [spend time on this, probe for examples]

12. Are the changes across home, at school, your social life with friends?

- What did the school do that made it better?

13. What does the school do that works really well?

Is there anything the school does that doesn't work so well?

14. What else could the school be doing to help young carers?

15. Are there important areas of life where young carers not getting the help they need?

Do you have a chance to chance to tel the school about these?

16. Do you think that there are young carers here that the school doesn't know about?

What made young carers in your school come forward? [probe event, poster, and talk]

17. How important is the help from the school compared any help you get from other places?

18. What would you like me to say to other schools and politicians about how best to help young carers?

Supplementary

Have you heard of the YCIS award? What should a school do to get an award?

Are you happy for us to contact you/the school with a survey towards the end of the year that you can complete online?

Appendix 5 – School Survey

Young Carers in Schools - School Survey

1. About your school or college and young carers

The Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) Programme is a free initiative for schools to support young carers. It is delivered by Carers Trust and The Children's Society. By answering these questions you will:

- Help us understand the impact that the programme is having on school support for young carers.
- Help provide examples of how schools identify and support young carers.
- Support school improvement at an England-wide level.

You will not need to answer all the questions and you will be routed to the relevant questions based on your responses.

The survey should take about 8-10 minutes to complete.

* Please tell us the name of your school/college

* Please tell us in which local authority area your school/college is based?

* What type of school/college is it?

* Please tell us your role at the school (please tick all that apply)

- Head teacher
- Member of senior leadership team
- Lead for young carers
- Teacher
- Other (please specify)

* How many children are on your school's roll? (if you can't give an exact figure just give an estimate of the latest figure you have please)

* How many children in your school are young carers? (if you can't give an exact figure just give an estimate of the latest figure you have please)

* How many of these young carers did your school identify or become aware of as a result of the school's participation in the Young Carers in Schools programme? (if you can't give an exact figure just give an estimate please)

* Would you have identified these young carers if the school had not got involved in the Young Carers in Schools programme?

- Yes
- Yes, but later
- No
- Don't know

Please explain your answer

* Does your school have a Young Carers in Schools award (you might know this as a Gold, Silver or Bronze Award)?

- Yes - Gold Award
- Yes - Silver Award
- Yes - Bronze Award
- No - Applied but not awarded
- No - Not applied
- Don't know
- Other (please specify)

2. For those schools/colleges that do not have a YCiS Award

* If your school has developed its young carers' provision since getting involved in the Young Carers in Schools programme, but decided not to apply for an award, please tell us the main reason why.

* Please indicate what your school has in place to identify and support young carers (Please tick all that apply)

- Senior leadership team member responsible for young carers
- A school lead for young carers (not in the senior leadership team)
- Young carers' policy
- Have updated existing policies in the last 2 years to include clear and appropriate references to young carers
- Monitors young carers' attainment and attendance on internal management systems
- Enrolment processes include questions to identify pupils who may be young carers
- Transition plans from feeder schools include sharing information regarding identified young carers entering the school
- Has information on the staff noticeboard, shared drive and/or intranet highlighting how to identify pupils who may be young carers?
- Has a pupil noticeboard raising awareness about young carers?
- Holds assemblies/PSHE lessons about young carers?
- Gives all parents information regarding the support available to young carers at school?
- Holds staff training about young carers?
- Has drop-in sessions and/or a message box so that young carers can communicate with the school lead?
- Has homework support available for young carers?
- Has emotional support available for young carers?
- Has lunchtime detentions rather than after school?
- Runs a peer support group for young carers?
- Signposts pupils to the local young carer services?
- Signposts young carers to the school nurse or a health service?
- Works with external agencies to support young carers and their families?

Other (please specify)

3. For those schools/colleges that have a YCiS Award

* Does your school/college intend to apply for the next level of award i.e. Bronze to Silver, Silver to Gold?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Please tell us why or why not

* For schools that have achieved a Gold Award, please tell us what steps, if any, you are taking to support other schools

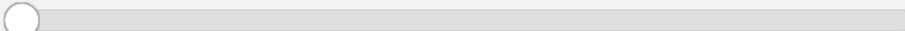
4. Understanding of Young Carers

Please answer the following questions by looking at the statements and saying if, and how far, you agree or disagree, by moving the slider to reflect your views.

Compared to when your school first got involved in YCiS, do you think school staff:

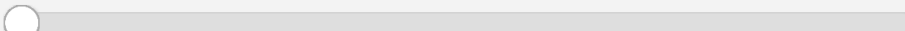
* Have an improved understanding of the potential signs a pupil is a young carer

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



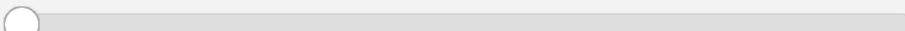
Know what to do if they identify a pupil who may be a young carer

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



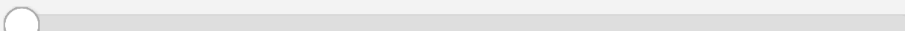
Have a better understanding of the types of support young carers may need

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



* Staff feel more confident to identify and respond to the needs of young carers

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree

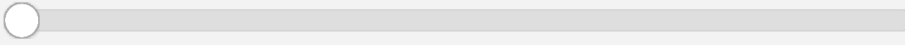


5. Outcomes for Young Carers: achievement & participation

We would like to identify how the educational achievement of young carers has changed throughout the time that schools have been involved in the YCiS programme. Please move the slider to reflect how far you agree or disagree with the following statements.

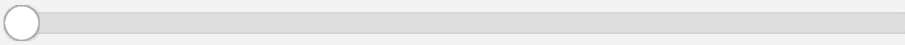
Young carers' **achievement** has improved since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



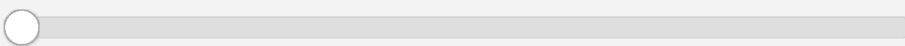
* Young carers' **engagement in class** has improved since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



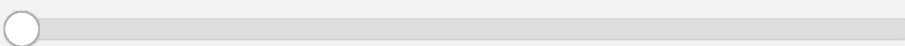
* Young carers' **motivation to learn** has improved since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



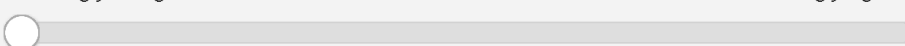
* Young carers' **ability to complete class work on time** has improved since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



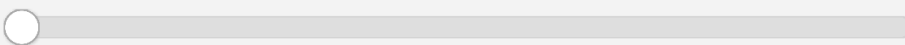
* Young carers' **ability to complete class work to the expected standard** has improved since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



* 5f) Young carers' **ability to complete homework on time has improved** since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



* Young carers' **ability to complete homework to the expected standard** has improved or got worse since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree

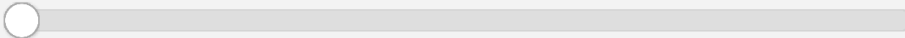


6. Outcomes for Young Carers: attendance

We would like to identify how the school attendance of young carers has changed throughout the time that schools have been involved in the YCiS programme. Please move the slider to reflect how far you agree or disagree with the following statements.

* Young carers are **more likely to arrive on time** since your school has been involved in YCiS

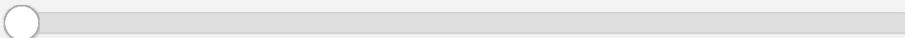
Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



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* Young carers are **more likely to go to all lessons** since your school has been involved in YCiS

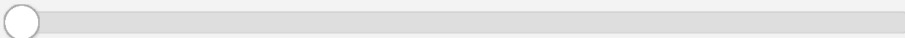
Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



A horizontal slider control with a circular knob positioned at the far left end, indicating 'Strongly disagree'.

* Young carers are **less likely to have high absence rates** since your school has been involved in YCiS

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



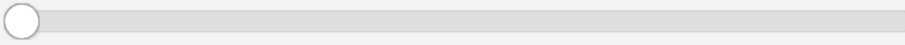
A horizontal slider control with a circular knob positioned at the far left end, indicating 'Strongly disagree'.

7. Outcomes for Young Carers: well-being and confidence

We would like to identify how the well-being and confidence of young carers has changed throughout the time that schools have been involved in the YCiS programme. Please move the slider to reflect how far you agree or disagree with the following statements.

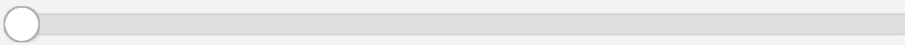
* Young carers are happier

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



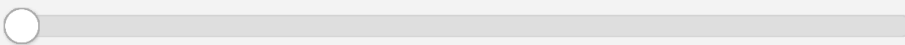
* Young carers are more confident

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



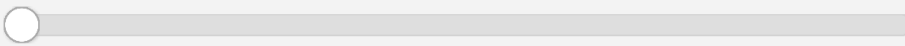
* Young carers are better able to make and keep friends

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



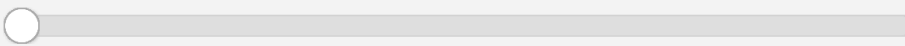
* Young carers are better able to attend extracurricular activities

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



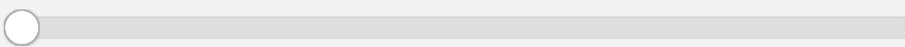
Young carers have better physical health

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



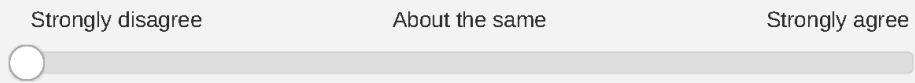
Young carers have better mental health

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



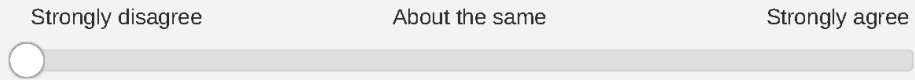
Young carers are better supported by other organisations

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



* The wellbeing of young carers at school has improved

Strongly disagree About the same Strongly agree



If you are able to provide data regarding the number of young carers whose achievement, attendance and/or wellbeing has improved since your involvement in YCiS, and you are happy for us to contact you to gather this data, please provide your email address:

8. General feedback

Which of the following tools/support did you find most useful?

- Base-line-review
- Step-by-Step guide (online tools)
- Live Webinar(s) (please indicate in comments box which webinar(s) you attended)
- Recorded webinars
- Young Carers in Schools Award Guidance (online tool) or Award Pack
- Guide to evidencing the award
- E-newsletter
- Other (please specify)

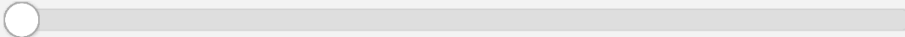
For any tools/support you did not use or engage with, please tell us which tools and why not?

* Would you recommend the Young Carers in Schools programme to other schools?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

* How satisfied are you with the YCIS programme? (please move the slider to indicate your view)

0 - Very Dissatisfied 50 - Neither dissatisfied nor satisfied 100 - Very Satisfied



* How do you think the Young Carers in Schools programme could be improved in the future?

9. Thank you for completing this survey

Your answers will help us understand the impact that the programme is having on school support for young carers.

Please click on the 'Done' button to submit your survey results.