

Supporting Young Carers Aged 5–8

A Resource for
Professionals Working
with Younger Carers



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This project is one of Carers Trust's Innovation Generation projects. It was managed by Daniel Phelps.

The Carers Trust Innovation Generation Projects are collaborative projects between Carers Trust and local services that aim to develop new and effective practice in supporting young carers, young adult carers and their families. Learning from local projects is subsequently disseminated to the wider young carers sector and relevant stakeholders to encourage replication.

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Introduction

Many people are shocked to hear that children as young as five years old have caring responsibilities.

However, the 2011 Census found that there were nearly 10 000 young carers aged 5–7 in England and Wales. Furthermore, the figures showed an 83% increase since 2001 in the number of 5–7 year olds providing **unpaid** care (UK Census, 2011).

This worrying rise in the number of very young children caring for family and friends, along with the many unidentified young carers, clearly demonstrates the need for the law to protect this vulnerable group of children and young people.

The Children and Families Act 2014 now gives young carers in England a right to an assessment of their own needs, no matter how much caring they do. Local authorities must proactively identify young carers, prevent them from having excessive and inappropriate caring roles and use a whole family approach to consider how the needs of a young carer or young adult carer are linked to the needs of a person receiving care.

Despite the fact that there are children under eight who have caring responsibilities, many services for young carers only start working with children once they reach eight years old. One of the reasons for this is uncertainty around whether a service working with very young carers is required to register with Ofsted.

As a result, many services are not targeting young carers under eight years old and young carers services in general may not have the expertise, resources or knowledge to work with this age group.

Part one of this resource aims therefore to bring clarity for services working with young carers, as to whether or not it is necessary for them to register with Ofsted if they choose to work with children under eight years old. This will of course depend on what a service delivers, however for some, as the guidance shows, registration may not be necessary.

Part two presents some local practice being undertaken by Carers Trust Network Partner, Carers Lewisham, with young carers aged 5–8 and sets out what has been achieved by working with this young age group.

We hope that taken together, this resource will inspire services to start supporting very young carers and will provide them with ideas about what support is useful, as well as how to deliver such a service.

As a consequence of dedicated support for this age group, it is also hoped that awareness of younger carers by other services and professionals will also improve, so that children and their families are identified earlier and receive timely support.

Daniel Phelps,

Project and Development Manager, Carers Trust

Although Part 1 of this resource is specific to England, many of the ideas and practice in Part 2 are applicable across the UK.

About Carers Trust

Carers Trust is a major new charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

We do this with a UK wide network of quality assured independent partners, through our unique online services and through the provision of grants to help carers get the extra help they need to live their own lives. With locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

Our vision is of a world where the role and contribution of **unpaid** carers is recognised and they have access to the trusted quality support and services they need to live their own lives.

Part 1

Guidance and responsibilities for childcare providers

Do you provide or plan to provide support for young carers aged eight and under?

Do you have questions about delivering support to these young carers, such as: Do you have to register with Ofsted? What will this mean? How much will it cost?

This chapter simplifies what you need to know and what you need to do to provide such a service.

Who regulates childcare providers?

The body that regulates childcare providers in England is Ofsted. Ofsted stands for the Office for Standards in Education. Ofsted is legally required to inspect registered childcare services.

Do I provide childcare?

The Childcare Act 2006 states that childcare is 'any form of care for a child including education or any other supervised activity'. A carers service for young carers under eight would generally be classified by Ofsted as childcare provision on non-domestic premises.

Do I need to register?

Most childcare providers caring for children under eight years old must register with Ofsted. There are two registers that might apply:

1. The Early Years Register.
2. The Childcare Register.

The Early Years Register

The Early Years Register applies to children aged five and under. Five in this instance refers to five year olds until 31 August following their fifth birthday. Generally this will mean that this register applies to children up to and including reception class in primary school.

The Childcare Register

The Childcare Register applies to children aged five to seven. Five in this instance refers to five year olds from 1 September following their fifth birthday. Generally this will mean that the Childcare Register applies from Year 1 in Primary school, until the individual child turns eight.

The voluntary part to the Childcare Register

There is also a voluntary part to the Childcare Register for childcare provided to children aged eight and above, until they turn 18. Registration on the voluntary register is not compulsory, but childcare providers can voluntarily choose to apply to this register. See below for some of the advantages of being a registered childcare provider.

Who makes the application?

A 'nominated person' must be appointed to make the application if you are applying as an organisation. Examples of who this person may be is given in the Ofsted guidance. It could include a committee member, partner, director or someone in a comparable position in the organisation. A separate registration form must be made for each premises where you plan to take care of children.

Prior to registration, you will also need to sign up for an approved pre-registration training course and a first aid course. If the nominated person does not manage the childcare themselves then a manager should also be appointed before registration.

What are some of the key responsibilities?

Nominated person

The nominated person has overall responsibility for the provision of childcare and is legally responsible for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Early Years Register or Childcare Register regulations and any conditions of registration imposed by Ofsted. It is therefore, the nominated person's responsibility to ensure that any person caring for, or in regular contact with children, is suitable to work with children.

Early Years Register

All those registered on the Early Years Register must deliver the requirements set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework (Department of Education, 2014). This is the framework for the care and education of children aged five and under.

Within the EYFS Statutory Framework there are mandatory learning and development requirements as well as safeguarding and welfare requirements. The EYFS Statutory Framework also sets out the relevant

qualifications and skills needed of staff and the required staff to child ratios.

Ofsted has regard to the EYFS Statutory Framework when it carries out inspections and reports on the quality and standards of the childcare service.

For more information on the EYFS Statutory Framework, see www.foundationyears.org.uk/files/2014/05/2014-EYFS.pdf.

How do I apply?

You should contact your local council's family information service for help with your application and to sign up for the approved pre-registration and first aid courses. You can apply online using Ofsted's online services at <https://online.ofsted.gov.uk/OnlineOfsted/default.aspx>.

To apply you must:

-  Have the right to work in the UK.
-  Be 18 or over.
-  Be allowed to work with children.
-  Be physically and mentally capable of caring for children.

To satisfy that you are allowed to work with children, applications for Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks should be made and registration with the DBS update service must be completed prior to registering with Ofsted online.

To show that you are physically and mentally capable of caring for children, health declaration booklets also need to be completed by anyone working directly with children.

Registering usually takes up to 25 weeks for a childcare provider on non-domestic premises. For more information on registering as a childcare provider, see www.gov.uk/register-childminder-childcare-provider/overview.

How much does it cost?

The following fees are for childcare providers on non-domestic premises (correct at the time of publication):

Register	Fee
Early Years Register	£220
Childcare Register (compulsory and voluntary parts)	£114
Both registers	£220

Childcare providers on domestic or non-domestic premises can pay a reduced fee of £35 for the Early Years Register if they work for less than three hours a day, or less than five days a week, or less than 45 weeks a year.

You also have to pay an annual fee of the same amount listed above to continue your registration.

When will I be inspected?

If you are on the Early Years Register, you will usually be inspected within the first 30 months of registration and then at least once in every inspection cycle.

You could be inspected at any time if you are only on the Childcare Register.

For more information on inspections, see www.gov.uk/ofsted-inspection-childcare-provider.

What happens if I do not register?

You can be fined £5,000, sent to prison, or both, if you provide applicable childcare services without being registered.

What are the exemptions to registering?

Depending on the service you run, you may not have to register.

The exemptions to registering are set out in Ofsted's Registration not Required document, see www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-childcare-registration-not-required.

There are 18 exemptions in total to registering on either the Early Years Register or the Childcare Register and to be exempt from registration only one of these exemptions needs to apply. Carers Trust has identified four exemptions below that may apply to carers services offering services to children under eight.

However, should you decide that the service you intend to provide falls within one of these exemptions, Carers Trust recommends emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk, or contacting your local council, to get confirmation in writing that you do indeed fall within that exemption.

1. If you provide care where a child does not stay with you for more than two hours a day, even if your childcare service is open for longer than two hours.

'Child' in this instance refers to children under eight. Therefore, if you provide care for children under eight for less than two hours a day, you may not have to register with Ofsted. This could allow you to, for example, run after-school clubs for under-eights for no more than two hours a day.

2. If you provide no more than two activities from the following list:

- School study support or homework support.
- Sport.
- Performing arts.
- Arts and crafts.
- Religious, cultural or language study.

This exemption only applies when the main purpose of what you intend to offer is specific *instruction or tuition* in the activities, such as football coaching or art classes. In addition, this exemption only applies if you care for children who are aged three and over, and you do not care for children aged under five for more than four hours in any one day.

This exemption could apply if you offer specific instruction/tuition in no more than two of the above activities over a substantial period of time, that is, you cannot offer two activities one day and then two activities the next day. More information on this exemption can be found in Ofsted's Registration not Required document.

3. If you provide an open access scheme for children who are not in the early years age group.

An 'open access scheme' is described as a scheme which 'offers play-based provision for children in the later years age group only, that is, from 1 September following their fifth birthday'.

Therefore, if you offer play-based provision for children in the later year's age group, you may be exempt from having to register with Ofsted. Carers Trust recommends emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk, or contacting your local council, to get confirmation in writing that you fall within the exemption.

4. If you care for children under eight from specific premises for 14 days or less in any year, and you let Ofsted know in writing at least 14 days before starting the service.

This exemption could be used if, for example, you offer a monthly service (that is, one day a month) for carers under eight years old from a specific premises and let Ofsted know at least 14 days in advance.

To do so, you can fill out the Ofsted online Exemption Notification Form, see www.gov.uk/government/publications/exemption-notification-form-for-childcare-providers-that-operate-for-14-days-or-less-in-a-12-month-period.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of registering?

Some of the advantages are:

- You receive a certificate of registration once you are approved and details about your registration will be published online.
- Parents of the children you care for may be able to get other types of support if you are registered, such as help with childcare costs.

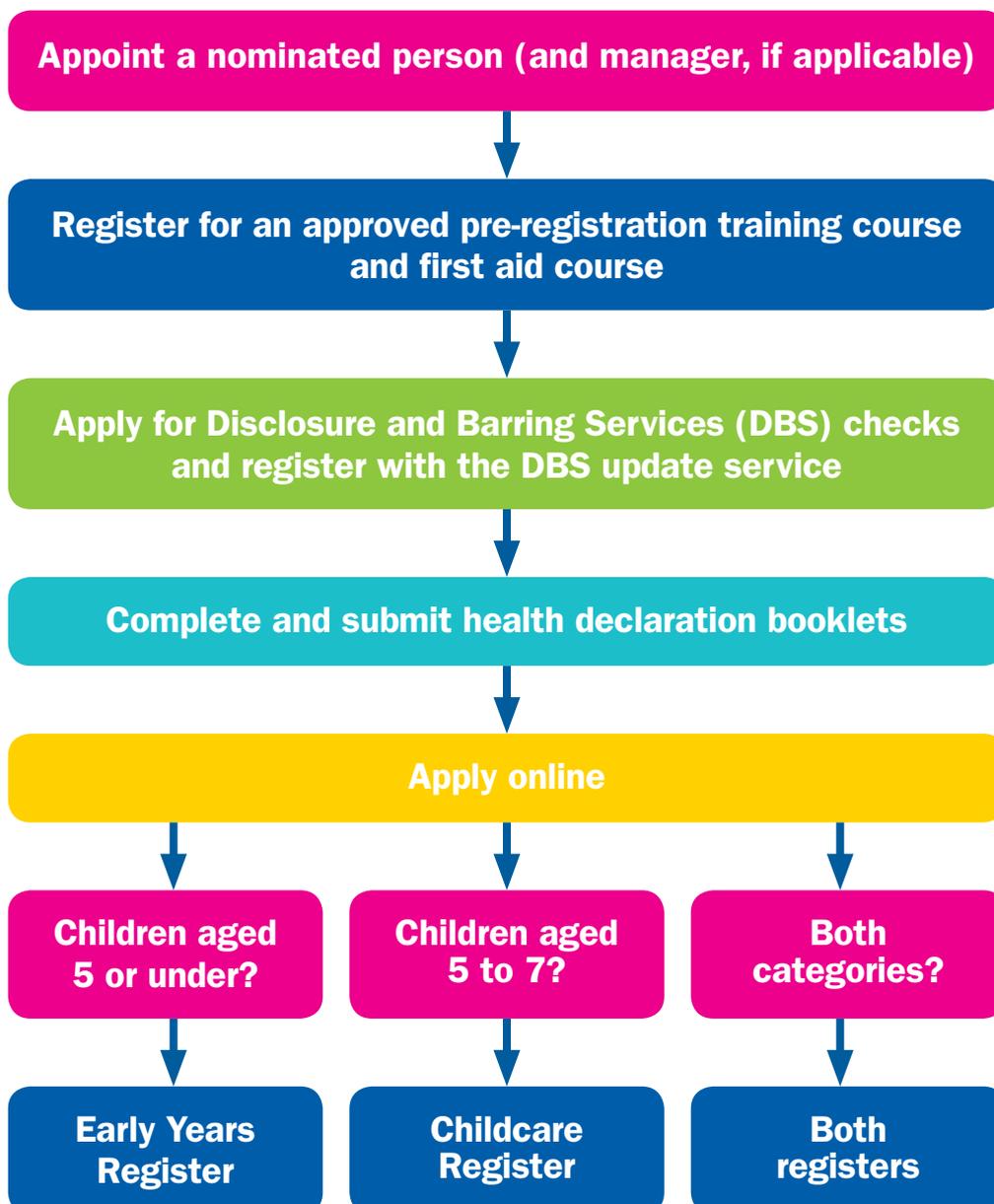
Some of the disadvantages of registering are:

- The time spent and expense of registering.
- Annual fees and regular inspections.
- Ensuring compliance with regulations.
- Ensuring compliance with any conditions of registration.

Carers Trust recommends emailing enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk, or contacting your local council, to get confirmation in writing that what you intend to deliver for young carers under eight is indeed exempt from registration.

While every care has been taken in the compilation of the information contained in this guidance, Carers Trust makes no representations as to the accuracy or completeness of the information. It is the responsibility of the reader to check the accuracy and completeness of the information. Carers Trust will not be held responsible for any loss, damage, liability or inconvenience caused as result of any inaccuracy or error contained in this guidance. Should you wish to use the information provided in these pages please obtain separate confirmation that the information is correct from either Ofsted or your local council.

How to apply for the Early Years or Childcare register



Part 2:

Supporting infant young carers (aged 5–8 years) – an overview of the Carers Lewisham service

Why the Carers Lewisham service was started

Carers Lewisham recognised the need to improve access to respite and play opportunities for children under eight years old with caring responsibilities, as well as the need to increase signposting and support for parents who require specialist services. To address these gaps an approach was made to Family Pathways to partner with them on this new Supporting Infant Young Carers Project.

Aim of the Carers Lewisham service

The aim of the service was to provide early intervention support and help to reduce inappropriate caring carried out by young carers aged 5–8.

The objectives:

- To offer young carers aged 5–8 respite breaks, holiday day trips and clubs.
- To improve access to play opportunities for young carers aged 5–8 to enable them to make new friends and have fun.
- To identify and signpost parents to relevant practical and emotional support.
- To introduce an informal monitoring system for young carers aged 5–8.

Family Pathways

Family Pathways has been developed to provide a rapid response service embracing the ‘no wrong door’ policy, taking a whole family approach to work with families.

It is led by the Pre-School Learning Alliance Lewisham and supported by voluntary sector partners. It provides holistic support to children and families who are not reaching social care support thresholds, and where the eldest child in the family is between 5–10 years at the start of the project. Partners include Family Action, School Home Support, New Cross & Deptford Families First Ltd, Clyde Early Childhood Centre, Carers Lewisham, Place 2 Be and child and adolescent mental health services.

The Family Pathways Partnership also provides other support for families through a range of different programmes, including one-to-one family support, parenting programmes and a community groups programme for children aged 4–11 who have witnessed domestic violence and abuse.

How the Carers Lewisham service operates

The project targets young carers aged 5–8 years living in Lewisham who have caring responsibilities for a family member with a physical disability, illness, mental ill health or substance misuse problem. It provides respite opportunities through play sessions and day activities, and signposting families for specialist support where necessary.

The key objectives of the work involve:

- The use of the My Star tool in partnership with families.
- Engaging local services particularly within the voluntary sector.
- Establishing links with local families.
- Supporting families to build resilience for their future.

Publicising the Carers Lewisham service

The Supporting Infant Young Carers Project is publicised through Family Pathways and Carers Lewisham's communication networks, regular newsletters, the website and through links with those who already refer to the service.

Referrals to the Carers Lewisham service

Referrals are generated by Carers Lewisham and Family Pathways and are received from parents and guardians, social services, schools, children's centres and voluntary groups. As soon as Carers Lewisham receives a referral form, it is forwarded to the Family Pathways Project Manager for approval and for input onto its centralised tracking system.

Home visits and assessment

The Lead Worker is responsible for conducting home visits for all new referrals approved by the Carers Lewisham Young Carers Service Manager and the Family Pathways Project Manager. The worker uses Carers Lewisham's home visit form to gain a better understanding about the caring situation including identifying the child's caring roles and any impact on them. Other information is also gathered about the child and parent relating to their educational experience, household income and family support networks. The worker also completes My Star which is used as a tool to measure and summarise change in different areas of a young carer's life when working directly with others.

At this point, families also receive a Young Carers Family Information Pack consisting of a young carers factsheet and useful information and links relating to young carers' issues and common conditions affecting families. Parental consent is sought so that the child can access respite activities, clubs and trips.

About My Star

My Star has been developed to work with children and young people in a wide range of settings. It is a version of the Outcomes Star and is designed to be child-centred rather than context-specific and helps to look at what a child's life is like. The eight different areas which are important to all children and young people are categorised under two main themes:

Theme 1: How well other people are supporting the young person:

- Physical health: how others look after you and keeping yourself healthy.
- Where you live: feeling at home and liking where you live.
- Being safe: how safe you are.

- Relationships: your relationship with your parents.

Theme 2: How the young person is managing:

- Feelings and behaviour: how you deal with difficult feelings.
- Friends: how you make and keep friends.
- Confidence and self-esteem: feeling at ease, knowing you matter.
- Education and learning: doing well at school and enjoying learning.

A second home visit is usually carried out within a six month period to discuss and track changes in the young carer's experiences. My Star is used a second time to see how well the young carer is managing and how the support they receive from others is impacting upon them.

Respite offered by the Carers Lewisham service

Respite is provided through monthly Saturday clubs that take place at different venues across the London Borough of Lewisham. Day trips are also offered to various venues within and around London such as trips to the cinema, adventure parks, play centres and restaurants. The Lead Worker supervises and supports two sessional staff to run sessions and trips. For all activities there is an adult:child ratio of 1:4. Minibuses are used for transporting the young carers during holiday periods.

Case work and referrals

The Lead Worker provides basic casework and support for young carers aged 5–8 as well as parents. Where appropriate, the Lead Worker will liaise with other professionals and signpost, refer and support families to access further Carers Lewisham services such as parent carers support, counselling and respite as well as external specialist services, for example the local children's centre that runs a parent-child holiday scheme or an intensive family support programme.

Carers Lewisham will also advocate for carers to access community networks of support in order to build family resilience, and access support and respite opportunities. The worker will also support and advocate for families at Team Around the Child/Family meetings to ensure caring needs are identified, where necessary.



Part 3

Supporting infant young carers (aged 5–8 years) – the learning from Carers Lewisham

Referrals, signposting and training

Since its inception in January 2013, Carers Lewisham has received over 50 new referrals from schools, local children's centres, parents and other voluntary organisations. Additionally, some of the children were identified during home visits for older siblings referred to the service. The fact that there is such a high number of new referrals highlights the significance of early identification and the need for a young carer service for this age group, especially where families were hidden to services.



I am consistently flabbergasted by just how many referrals you get because prior to working with you I don't think we had any clue of the enormity of work that needs to be undertaken with that age group.”

**Family Pathways
Project Manager**

During this period ten families were signposted and referred to a wide range of family/adult social services including Family Action's Building Bridges (a Family Pathways' partner) and local children's centres' family support services. Additionally, two young carers were referred for Child in Need assessments by Carers Lewisham to Lewisham Council.



The delivery of Carer Awareness training and support to the other partner organisations on Family Pathways gives opportunities to share experiences of working with children with caring responsibilities. Learning takes place, and a range of professionals working with families gain an insight into the family needs and situations.”

**Family Pathways
Project Manager**

The intervention has also led to the identification of eight parent carers who were unknown to services. They have since been supported to access wider Carers Lewisham services such as groups for parent carers. Additionally, Carers Lewisham and Pre-School Learning Alliance workers have co-facilitated four two-hour parenting workshops for parents/carers of children with autism spectrum disorder and other specific educational needs.

Furthermore, Carer Awareness training was delivered to the Family Pathways network, informing professionals about issues affecting young carers.

Outcomes from My Star

Carers Lewisham currently has 43 children engaged in the service of which 42 are open cases. Below represents a sample of 11 of those children who have had a second or intermediate outcome recorded. These young carers are still receiving support. The data is taken from the Family Pathways Outcomes Star Report Summary (Ball, K, 2014). It shows data for the period October–December 2014.

Gender, age and ethnicity of a sample of 11 young carers

Four are girls and seven boys.

Of these, five are seven years old, one is six and for five children, age is not stated.

All the children are young carers and two have also experienced abuse.

Ethnicity of a sample of 11 young carers

Ethnicity	Number
Black or Black British – African child	1
Black or Black British – Any other Black background child	1
Black or Black British – Caribbean children	5
Mixed – Any other mixed background child	1
Mixed – White and Black African child	1
White – British children	2

Average increase and decrease in scores for each scale on the Carers Star

The table below shows the average first and last scores for children included in this report. The difference between these two is the change, or outcome, shown in the column on the right.

Average first and last scores for children

Scale	Initial	Final	Change
Physical health	4	4.3	0.3
Where you live	3.2	3.7	0.4
Being safe	3.2	4.1	0.9
Relationships	3.2	3.7	0.4
Feelings and behaviour	2.4	3	0.6
Friends	2.4	3.7	1.2
Confidence and self-esteem	2.7	3.2	0.6
Education and learning	2.8	3.4	0.7
Average	3	3.6	0.6

There has been an average positive change across all aspects of the Carers Star. The biggest changes for the young carers is for Friends, Being Safe, Education and learning and Feelings and behaviour which are key intended outcomes of the Carers Lewisham service.

In terms of the journey of change, the children moved through stages of accepting *help* to *trying* new ways of doing things.

Percentage increase and decrease for each scale

Scale	Decrease	Same	Increase
Physical health	0%	67%	33%
Where you live	0%	67%	33%
Being safe	0%	44%	56%
Relationships	0%	78%	22%
Feelings and behaviour	11%	33%	56%
Friends	0%	44%	56%
Confidence and self-esteem	0%	56%	44%
Education and learning	11%	33%	56%

Another way to view the data is to look at the average proportion of children included in the report whose score for a scale has increased, decreased or stayed the same.

While positive progress is achieved in all areas, the highest number of steps from the initial baseline are seen in the areas of Friends, Being Safe and Feelings and behaviour. These areas show signs that the children overall are managing better and the support they receive from key adults around them has contributed positively to this outcome.

Learning from focus groups

In January 2015, Carers Lewisham ran a series of focus groups with young carers, parents and partner organisations (professionals) in order to evaluate the impact of the service.



Feedback from service users including young carers and their parents

Respite breaks

Young carers said:

“I’ve never been to the cinema before.”

Young carer, aged six

“I like young carers it fun.”

Young carer, aged seven

“I liked making bread, it was taste nice.”

Young carer, aged seven

“Thank you for organising this trip, can we go camping next time?”

Young carer, aged seven

Comments from parents about their children indicate that the Carers Lewisham service is improving children’s overall wellbeing and social skills. They told Carers Lewisham that their children:

- Have gained more confidence in playing and sharing.
- Are happier because they’ve met new friends who they have something in common with.
- Look forward to trips and meeting new friends.

Better accessibility

The provision of transport for school holiday outings has met the challenge of covering a large geographical area as well as setting up clubs in two different locations.



The location and staff is indescribable, helpful, friendly, funny, caring. Easy to locate and get to.”

Parent

Communicating with families

Parents recognise the importance of maintaining good communication with staff. It is valued highly. They report that staff are caring, kind, friendly and understanding.

How families heard of the service

Families told Carers Lewisham they heard about the provision either through social services, schools, voluntary services or word of mouth. Carers Lewisham also referred parent carers already known to them.

Overcoming stigma and fears about social services



I was not sure what to expect and thought the services was linked up to social services.”

Parent



I have some reservations because I wasn't sure about the benefits at first and didn't know how it will work.”

Parent

Feedback from partner organisations (professionals)

Raising the profile of young carers aged 5-8

Family Pathways fed back that:

- The project highlights the importance of whole family work, especially when thinking about early identification beginning with children under five years old.
- Stronger links have been established with local families who are increasingly benefiting from wider family support provided through the partnership.
- Up to ten parents have been signposted to a range of family support services within the Family Pathways network.



The provision has helped us to meet some of the overall aims of the Family Pathways project.”

**Family Pathways
Project Manager**



We have received more than 50 new referrals which far exceeds the targeted number of 24 referrals. These are mainly generated through Carers Lewisham.”

Family Pathways
Project Manager



Family Pathways are committed to creating a sustainable model for integrated joint working across children and families workforces and recognises the potential for developing this piece of work.”

Family Pathways
Project Manager

Grove Park Community Group – Ringway Centre fed back that:

-  The partnership is mutually-beneficial and supportive. Ringway provides a space which includes access to a nature reserve where young carers can rediscover their childhood, and Grove Park residents get to hear about young carers.
-  Having access to Ringway has improved the opportunity for social interactions where other groups the same age come together.
-  More and more people are becoming aware of the issues impacting younger carers.



Young carers have improved opportunities to learn new things such as bee-keeping and gardening.”

Ringway Centre Chair



The public who were once alien to the concept of a five year old looking after their parent discover that they do exist ... assumptions often made by adults are being broken down.”

Grove Park Community Group Chair



Through our events local people are hearing about younger carers. For example, the Head of Lewisham Council attended a screening at the group of the film the Railway Children. The next day his wife came down with some wellington boots for the group . . . if they're at home nobody knows they exist.”

Grove Park Community Group Trustee



There is now greater awareness of support for younger carers particularly within primary schools and children centres.”

Learning Mentor

Respite breaks

There has been a range of positive outcomes from Carers Lewisham’s work with younger carers with feedback on the impact of the project on early identification and initiating whole family support.

The project has led to early identification of the needs of young carers aged 5–8 and increased their access to respite opportunities. Over 30 different younger carers have attended breaks. 37 monthly clubs and school holiday day trips were delivered between February 2013 and December 2014. Critically, young carers reported that attending clubs and trips makes them feel happier and has helped them make new friends, get a break, play games and talk to staff.



The annual survey carried out in 2014 shows that younger carers highly value time spent with friendly staff and the opportunity to participate in a wide range of exciting and fun clubs and breaks. Most say that accessing respite breaks has helped them feel more confident, less stressed, more understood and happier.



It gives them a chance to be children.”

Ringway Centre, worker



The Infant carers project creates valuable space and time, to allow for support and enrichment of children’s lives.”

**Grove Park Community Group
board member**



Young carers can come here on a Saturday and when you see them arrive they look very low, down and unhappy but they're leaving they look a total different lot of children. I think this place is uplifting for them, I really do. Out in the woodlands it was a joy to see their faces having a good time.”

Grove Park Community Group board member



It's a good opportunity for the children to have some time to themselves and make new friends outside home and school environment.”

Parent



My boys enjoy their time at the club. They ask when it is on again when they leave, and wish it is was on every week. They've made new friends and can't wait to see them too, them and staff.”

Parent



We didn't consider that there would be such an impact on children that age group or they would have caring responsibilities. That's what has been great about having you as part of the partnership because we've also been able to learn an awful lot through our involvement with you ... as referrals came in it highlighted the varying needs of parents (or siblings) whether physical or mental and how many lone parents there might be and therefore how many responsibilities children have, so that gave me more of an insight seeing some of the referrals ... it's important whatever you deliver that you're looking at family as a whole.”

Family Pathways
Project Manager

Early identification and support

A centralised referral and tracking system through Family Pathways enables Carers Lewisham to better inform partners about the diverse needs and demographics of families and about how caring situations as a result of different family illnesses impact the lives of younger carers.

The partnership also highlighted the significance of identifying carers as early as possible to make sure appropriate support can be put in place to give children the best opportunity for achieving positive outcomes relating to child development.

This helps the awareness of hidden young carers who are often unrecognised as carers because the possibility of them being carers of adults is frequently overlooked. This was emphasised by others:



It identifies a need previously ignored which now is being addressed.”

Grove Park Community Group Trustee

The impact of early identification initiating whole family support

It is acknowledged by professionals that accessing early help is an ongoing issue because family members aren't always forthcoming at an early stage. Families tend to wait until crisis point before they put their hands up or ask for help. More professionals are becoming aware of the fact that early intervention reduces the risks of poor wellbeing and development in the long term. Whole family support recognises the potential impact of family illness on children.



I think sometimes families can be intimidated or might not even recognise that they might need support, what is lovely is that the Infant Young Carers club is open and an accessible access point ... it could almost become the model for finding out about families without it being intimidating or without families being labelled, whilst providing an opportunity for their children to relax and to enjoy their childhood, and to give parents a break for a couple hours. I think that works in terms of identifying families.”

Family Pathways Project Manager

Carers Lewisham identified the need to improve access to respite and play opportunities for children under eight since it began working with young carers. However, it didn't have sufficient resources and the expertise and knowledge relating to the delivery of this work.

Prior to this work the needs and issues affecting young carers aged 5–8 went unnoticed and unmet.

The importance of early support and increased access to respite opportunities for younger carers is reflected by the high level of referrals this project has received, as well as the high numbers of parents who the project have signposted to additional support. To date, the project has received over 50 new referrals from a range of professionals, a steady increase year on year, which means additional and adequate resources are required.

Future work

The parents, young carers and professionals participating in focus groups and interviews were asked about ways in which this project could be improved.

Their responses are summarised below:

- Increase the number of clubs to 2–3 per month. It's too long for them to wait between groups.
- Improve referral pathways so everyone becomes more aware of how to make referrals.
- Maintain links with schools – work alongside other services such as schools so they can encourage more young carers to get involved.
- Promote the work through GP surgeries so they are more informed about provision in the local areas. Produce publicity materials highlighting what is happening at centres where sessions are delivered.
- Access support from stakeholders to develop ideas around play work for under fives using guidance relating to Ofsted and Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Build capacity to deliver effective whole family support.
- Maintain relationship and collaborative work with family support organisations.
- Extend the duration of sessions.
- Deliver more indoor play and learning with less focus on screen time.
- Recruit trained staff who understand child development and the importance of play work.



You'll have to tackle the family. Younger children require appropriate play and learning through play. You'll move into child development when you move into work with under fives with different activities. This would mean working with parents and their child(ren) to make sure they are accessing age appropriate activities to reduce chances of their development being overlooked due to their family situation.”

Family Pathways Project Manager

Part 4

Case studies

Roger, aged seven

Roger was registered as a young carer with Carers Lewisham in 2013 when he was six years old. He lives at home with his mother who is a lone parent and receiving welfare benefits. She has osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia and heart and kidney problems. Roger's grandmother lives over five miles away and is the only family member offering support however, she's becoming frail due to old age.

Roger was referred to Carers Lewisham through Family Pathways by the SENCO worker based at his primary school. The family support from another agency had recently ended. However, his mother still wasn't receiving Disability Living Allowance and required an Occupational Therapy Assessment.

As the only child, Roger took on a great deal of responsibilities at home. When his grandmother wasn't around he acted as the primary carer for his mother which meant he often undertook various domestic, personal and emotional caring tasks. His mother often relied on Roger to cheer her up when she had low moods. A typical day would consist of helping her to get changed, keeping her company, handling heavy laundry, carrying shopping bags, packing away groceries, cleaning and also washing dishes. Roger often worried about his mother's poor health and the lack of opportunities to do things outside the house. He felt sad, lonely and upset.

Roger showed challenging behaviour both at home and school. He found it difficult to follow simple instructions and was unclear about boundaries with adults. He missed a lot of school and his family were at risk of becoming increasingly socially isolated. Roger had received additional support in school from a Learning Mentor as well as outreach provision from an outreach service to support with reintegration back into mainstream school.

Carers Lewisham arranged a home visit to see the family. The family was signposted to children's services for a Child in Need Assessment. As a result, the family was also referred to adult social care to undertake an assessment of Roger's mother's care needs as well as a referral for debt management. Carers Lewisham also referred the family to a local children's centre, managed by Pre-School Learning Alliance, for family support and the parental outreach service.

Roger who is now seven years old regularly attends Carers Lewisham clubs and trips. An internal referral was also made for his grandmother to receive adult carer information and support and she is now registered with Carers Lewisham. Due to ongoing behavioural issues Roger continues to receive support at school.

Marlon, aged seven

Marlon was registered with Carers Lewisham in 2013 when he was five years old. He lives alone with mother, Andrea, who has heart problems and low blood pressure.

Two years before Carers Lewisham's involvement with the family, Marlon's grandmother had died from cancer. He was very close to his grandmother and her death deeply affected him.

The family was referred through Family Pathways by the deputy head teacher at Marlon's primary school for carers support, and poor health and bereavement management. Marlon had also been referred to the local child and adolescent mental health services and was on the waiting list for therapy. Andrea was signposted to another partner organisation for wellbeing groups.

Marlon's caring tasks included personal and emotional care for his mother as well as doing regular household cleaning, washing up, assisting with cooking and carrying heavy shopping bags. He also worried a lot about his mother's health so would often sit with her to keep her company and make sure she was okay.

The family had become withdrawn and socially isolated. Andrea was also experiencing relationship problems with her father who had started drinking excessively to manage his grief since the death of his wife. Marlon, who was very introverted, had been bed wetting and often dreamt about his grandmother. His attainment level at school had dropped. He didn't socialise with his peers outside school and would spend school holidays indoors. Marlon felt sad and lacked a sense of being valued by others, especially his own family.

A Common Assessment Framework was completed by a Family Pathway Project partner which raised child safety concerns to children's services. The family was also referred for intensive family support as well as signposted for bereavement counselling.

Marlon now participates in monthly clubs and school holiday trips with Carers Lewisham which give him the opportunity to meet new friends and enjoy fun activities. The family also received a grant from Carers Lewisham for a short family break.

Part 5:

Tips for setting up your own service

Suggestions for setting up the service

- Identify relevant funders and referral agencies who will support this age group of young carers.
- Be aware of The Early Years Foundation Stage which sets standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to five years old.
- Determine whether you need to register with the Early Years and Childcare registers (See Part 1).
- Provide transport for younger carers.
- Consult with all stakeholders to establish and agree on clear project aims, outcomes and outputs that will make a difference to the lives of younger carers.
- Decide early on what evaluation and monitoring tools/systems would be most meaningful and practical to show impact and progress.
- Keep the needs of younger carers central and look at creative ways to generate feedback.

Resources you will need for setting up a service

- A robust management information system for monitoring and evaluating data.
- Referral forms inputted onto a centralised tracking system.
- Publicity materials for example, promotional leaflets and posters.

- Mobile phone and bulk SMS texting.
- A child-centred tool to track and monitor the younger carer's journey and progress, where the worker interacts directly with the child.
- An accessible venue, preferably with outdoor space.
- Transport.
- A suitable funder.

Main challenges you might experience along the way

- How to respond effectively to a high volume of referrals which require over and above the funded staff capacity.
- Dealing with complex family needs and other issues impacting the family such as inadequate housing, financial problems, relationship breakdown and parenting issues.
- Keeping in touch with families by phone calls and home visits to provide effective follow up casework and carry out periodic reviews for My Star.
- Meeting the needs of young carers aged 5–8 by providing individuals with more frequent breaks and where necessary the need for emotional support.
- Managing the effect of the work on the existing staff team. Providing effective supervision support, dealing with the impact of an increased number of referrals, and maintaining clear and effective referral and communication systems.

Things to consider

Staffing

It would be useful for the lead worker to have:

- Substantial experience of working with the target age group of children aged 5–8 in a group setting and working with children from diverse and often difficult backgrounds.
- Experience working with young carers.
- A recognised group work, youth work or social care qualification (or equivalent).
- Understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Costs

Your budget should reflect the total cost of delivering your project and include indirect (or overhead) costs. Be sure to include costs for general casework such as effective signposting, making referrals, writing letters, emotional or telephone support and advocacy support.

In addition, it is worthwhile looking at different sources of income and for in kind support which may include free use of venues, materials or equipment, work space, transport or professional time.

Useful resources

Resources and equipment for a club for young carers aged 5–8.

www.tes.co.uk/content/early-years-hub

The Carers Lewisham website
www.carerslewisham.org.uk/

The Family Pathways website
www.familypathwayslewisham.org.uk/about/4565957854

My Star – the new Outcomes Star for children
www.outcomesstar.org.uk/outcomes-star-home/my-star-the-new-star-for-children.html

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