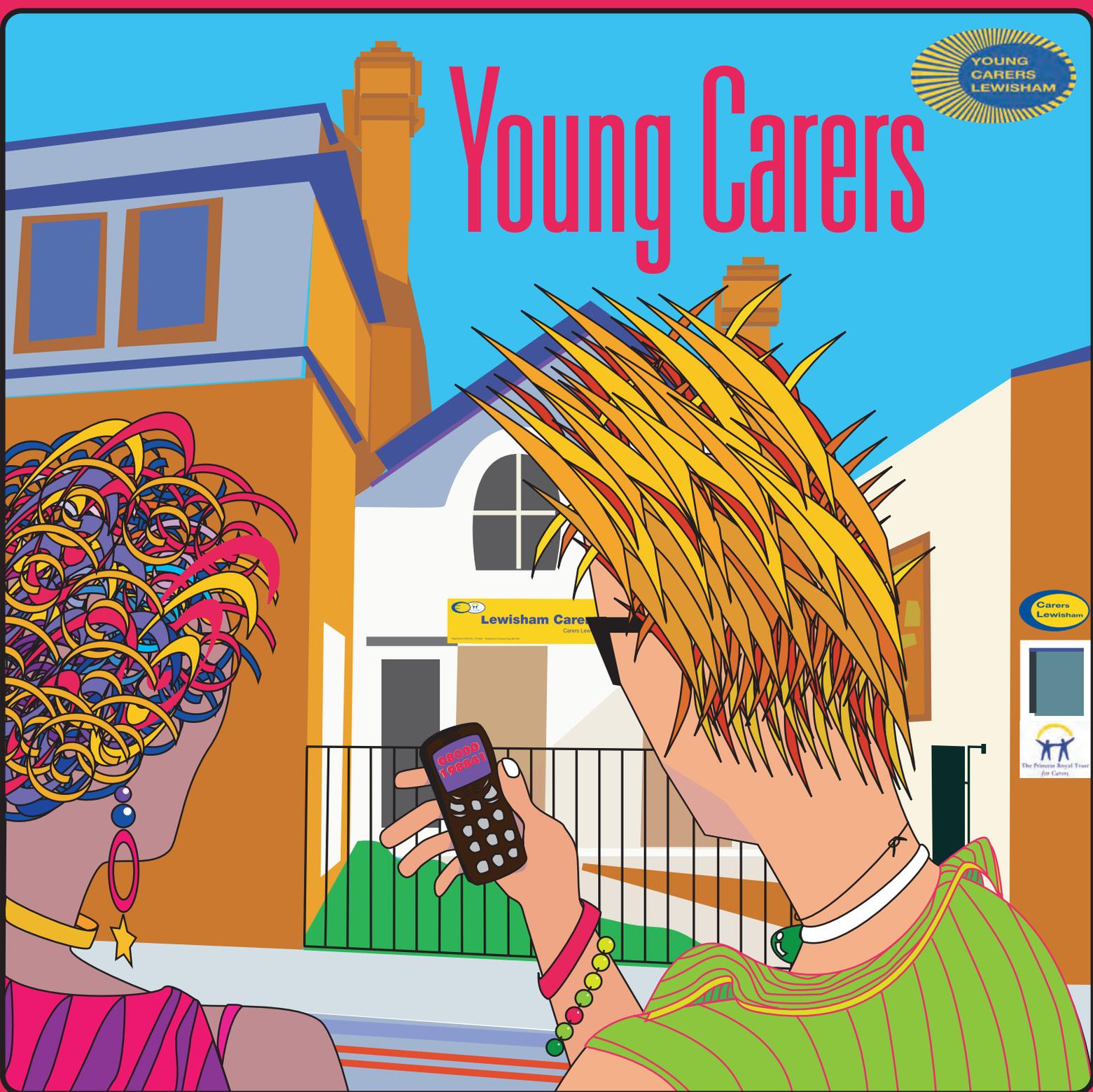




# Young Carers



Still Unseen and Unheard:  
Supporting Young Carers in Primary School

# A REPORT ON YOUNG CARERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL 2005-2008

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CARERS LEWISHAM MAY 2009

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## INTRODUCTION

The hope of this report is that all schools acknowledge they have many Young Carers, decide they are worth supporting and follow our recommendations so these amazing young people have a chance to reach their full potential.

Whilst working on this project we worked with dedicated teachers and schools and at times this report may come across as if we think the schools are not doing a good job. That is not true and would serve no purpose. We worked with some great schools and some great staff.

From a Young Carers Service point of view we see what happens when the Young Carers are not supported. We see what happens when the young carer can't concentrate on their work, or has no time left to do their homework, or is being bullied, or doesn't go to school and ends up being excluded or sent to a pupil referral unit.

We and other services try and do the best we can to stop the downhill spiral that some Young Carers find themselves in. How great would it be if, by being supported in school, we could stop Young Carers from getting on the spiral in the first place?

We know that more and more is expected of schools and that their remit is always changing. The one constant is the children, there will be Young Carers and in each school there will be many.

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### Funder

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### Lewisham Primary Schools taking part in the Project

#### Project Year 1

Edmund Waller Primary School	Brockley Primary School
Marvels Lane Primary School	Coopers Lane Primary School
Christ Church CE Primary School	Rushey Green Primary School
Dalmain Primary School	Monson Primary School
Kender Primary School	St James Hatcham CE Primary School
Perry Mount Primary School	Athleney Primary School

#### Project Year 2

Ashmead Primary School	Deptford Park Primary School
Haseltine Primary School	Holbeach Primary School
Horniman Primary School	Hither Green Primary School
Fairlawn Primary School	Lewisham Bridge Primary School
St. Augustine's RC Primary School	St. Mary's CE Primary School
Turnham Primary School	Gordonbrock Primary School

#### Project Year 3

Merlin Primary School	John Ball Primary School
Baring Primary School	Eliot Bank Primary School
St William of York RC Primary School	St Winifred's RC Primary School
Lucus Vale Primary School	Tidemill Primary School
St. John the Baptist CE Primary School	St Joseph's RC Primary School
St. Mary Magdalen's RC Primary School	Rathfern Primary School

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**This report comes from the work carried out in 36 primary schools in Lewisham over three years and confirms our belief that Young Carers need to be identified and supported in both Primary and Secondary Schools not only for their emotional well being, but also for their educational attainment.**

The Project staff liaised with the Head Teacher and/or senior member of staff; held presentations for the school staff; provided a series of 5 lessons to pupils in years 4 – 6 (age 8 – 11), which totalled over 600 hours of lesson time; plus each child who identified themselves as a Young Carer was followed up individually and where the parent allowed was offered support through our services.

The Project provided an insight into how schools work and the challenges that entailed. While some schools welcomed our involvement, others choose to hold back or block parts of our work. This raised concerns for Young Carers in some schools as they may not receive the support they need.

However our findings show that the numbers of Young Carers identified through the project still do not reflect the true number of Young Carers in the Borough, as the proportion of children caring for someone with mental health or substance misuse issues is smaller than anticipated. This means these children still remain hidden and unsupported. We need more education for parents, teachers the general public at large for them to understand the needs of Young Carers and the role work of both Social Services and the Voluntary Sector.

### **Our Recommendations**

- **All school staff to be trained in Young Carer awareness.**
- **Every school to have a designated member of staff to support Young Carers.**
- **Every school to have a Young Carers group at least once a term.**
- **Every school delivers Young Carer awareness lessons.**
- **Every school participates in National Carers Week.**
- **Schools to sign up to a Young Carers Charter**

## THE NEED FOR YOUNG CARER SUPPORT

### The need is there because:-

- The 2001 Census indicated there are 139,000 children and young people under 18 in England and 175,000 in the UK providing some care to family, friends or neighbours.
- The majority care for up to 19 hours per week.
- Across England, 16 per cent (22,000 children and young people) are reported to be caring for between 20 and 50 or more hours per week.

We know that the figures above are just the tip of the iceberg as there was no question on the Census regarding substance misuse, the person answering the question regarding mental ill health may have preferred to say no one is caring for them because of feared repercussions and general stigma.

**The Princess Royal Trust for Carers  
estimates that the figure is nearer  
1,000,000  
Young Carers**

**Below is a quote from Carers Lewisham's Young Carers Schools report 2001 Unseen and Unheard and is still true of many professionals:**

*"It has long been recognised that Young Carers rarely identify themselves as such - they do not necessarily have the knowledge or vocabulary to perceive the care they give to a disabled, physically or mentally ill relative, or one who abuses drugs or alcohol, as a caring responsibility.*

*Without entering into a child's environment, be it their home or school, identifying children with caring responsibilities is extremely difficult - much depends on the awareness of the existence of Young Carers by professionals across all sectors of the community. However many remain unaware of them, let alone the issues they face. Identification is therefore problematic."*

## HISTORY OF CARERS LEWISHAM YOUNG CARERS SERVICES

Carers Lewisham is a local charity which was set up in 1988 to support anyone in the London Borough of Lewisham with unpaid caring responsibilities for a mentally or physically disabled frail or ill child, partner, relative or friend.

In 1992 Carers Lewisham worked with School Nurses to highlight the issue of Young Carers. In response to their raised awareness the nurses carried out a mini survey in their schools by asking a question about caring when they carried out their yearly health checks. 24 children of primary age and 30 children of secondary age were identified as having caring responsibilities.

In 1993 a Social Work student, Michael Sheppard, on placement with Carers Lewisham, carried out some outreach work with two local Primary Schools, Gordonbrook and Hither Green. He did story telling sessions with the children where they were asked to contribute the major facts and characters. The children in the story faced a dilemma about caring for their mother or father and their school demands. Through this process it came to light that several children in each group did have caring responsibilities. He found that although the teachers knew that some of their pupils had caring responsibilities none of the teaching staff were aware of the extent of the issue. *Many were surprised at how reluctant the children were to tell their teacher what was going on at home.*

In 1995, Pauline Kennedy, then a Turning Point Community Work Apprentice based at Goldsmith College, part of the University of London, dedicated her placement at Deptford Green School to identify and raise awareness of the issue of Young Carers amongst pupils in Years 8 and 9 (pupils aged 12-14). Pauline delivered assemblies and some awareness raising lessons on the subject of Young Carers - as a result twenty-five pupils were identified as caring for a relative at home. By liaising with Carers Lewisham's Young Carers Services, appropriate follow-up casework was carried out with these pupils and their families to ensure they were in receipt of all the services and benefits to which they were entitled.

It was recognised, even at this early stage, that the number of Young Carers identified may only represent a proportion of pupils in that school who were caring for an ill and/or disabled relative at home. Therefore, when Pauline's apprenticeship ended in June 1997, she, the school and Carers Lewisham believed a dedicated Young Carers Schools Worker would be an excellent resource. By the end of the year, Carers Lewisham submitted a successful funding proposal to the Bridge House Estates Trust Fund, to run a 30 hour a week Young Carers Schools Development Project over a three year period within two Lewisham Secondary Schools. Deptford Green School had already agreed to participate in the Project and Malory School (now Haberdashers Askes Knights Academy) was appointed as the second school to participate in the Project.

Although other Young Carers Projects had already begun to work in schools to identify Young Carers, most worked quantitatively with *all* secondary schools in their locality or district – for one such project this meant working with 42 Secondary Schools!

What made the principle behind Carers Lewisham's Young Carers Schools Development Project unique was that it was qualitative – designed to carry out in-depth work with just two secondary schools. The benefit of this was that there was, potentially, a greater opportunity to forge a relationship with pupils. This was crucial if they were to identify themselves as a Young Carer and share aspects of their private and personal world of caring.

In October 1998, Carers Lewisham's Young Carers Schools Development Project had begun – the same year that national research had shown that, on average one in three Young Carers regularly missed school, or experienced educational difficulties because of their caring role.<sup>1</sup>

After the Development project came to an end there was a gap until 2002 when new funding was obtained from The Lewisham Community Sector Fund which enabled us to continue schools work albeit in a smaller way. The funding was for a part time post to work with one secondary school and one primary school per year. Because of the success of the Secondary School Resource pack it was felt a primary school resource pack was needed to allow not only us but schools to do their own Young Carers awareness lessons. Because our reputation for work with schools and Young Carers preceded us we were fortunate to secure more funding from the Lewisham Children's Fund which meant our primary pack was piloted in 6 schools before going to print.

With our new primary resource pack and our previous work with The Bridge House Trust (now City Bridges) we again approached them for funding to work more intensely in the boroughs primary schools. We secured funding for three years to work with 36 schools.

There has been much work and research done with regards to Young Carers over the past few years and it needs to be said that as much as we recognise the great work that these young people are doing for their families, we do not condone this situation. This is why the work in schools is so important. We need and want to see a change of attitude towards Young Carers in school and an introduction to personalised learning for all Young Carers **now**.

**Published in January 2007, the Teaching and Learning in 2020 Review, describes the hallmarks of personalised learning and made the case for why all schools need to work towards this vision:**

*“Personalised learning, tailoring teaching and learning to individual need, is essential in helping children to achieve the best possible progress and outcomes. It is critical in raising standards and narrowing the attainment gaps that exist between different groups of pupils”.*

In this report you will find information on the numbers of Young Carers we have found, the difficulties and challenges we had and our recommendations for the future.

## OUTLINE OF THE WORK WITH PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2005-2008

The project funded by The Bridge House Trust (now City Bridges,) was to work with 36 Primary Schools in Lewisham.

The Project outreached Young Carers in those schools by encouraging self identification. To raise awareness of caring and the issues relating to caring with the school staff, through presentations, and to the pupils through the lessons from the Primary School pack. and to highlight Young Carers to the school community, through a letter sent by the school on our behalf.

The Primary School pack was used to deliver a series of 5 lessons to school years 4-6 (age 8 -11) to help young people have a better understanding of caring issues, physical disability and mental ill health (including drug and alcohol misuse). During the last lesson the children are asked to evaluate the lessons and are given the opportunity to identify themselves as Young Carers.

The lessons aim is to recognise the work and support that the Young Carers give to their cared for person. For some young people who do nothing to help at home this can be quite shocking and often make them not only feel grateful that they are not Young Carers but see their Young Carer class mates in a different light, with more empathy and pride. The lessons also aim to break down prejudices about illness and disability that can often lead to Young Carers suffering from bullying by their peers.

***See Appendix 1 for a summary of the lessons and sample evaluations Appendix 2***

Once we have identified the Young Carers we offer them our services however they are not always taken up. We believe this is for a variety of reasons such as:-

- The parent may not think their child is a young carer
- The parent is in denial of their condition (mental ill health/drug/alcohol problems)
- The parent is in denial of their child helping as much as they do
- The parent doesn't want the school to know their problems/business because they are embarrassed or ashamed (mental ill health/drug/alcohol problems are often known to the school staff but not spoken about)
- The parents think that social services will take the children away
- The family doesn't feel they want/need 'charity'
- The child doesn't pass the letter on
- The child doesn't want to be singled out
- The child doesn't want his parents to know s/he has been speaking about their family situation

There are many other reasons, and if the family get in touch with us we can explain why we identified their child as a young carer. We can also answer any queries they may have and they may then understand that their child does need support. Unfortunately, as we do not have direct contact with the family, because of data protection a letter is given to the young carer to take home, we

have to wait until they contact us; often, sadly, we do not hear from them.

Sometimes if the school has a good relationship with the family they get permission from the parents and register their child with us or if the family are receiving services from other agencies who recommend us they change their minds and sign up.

Carers Lewisham have an average of 420 Young Carers (aged from 8 – 18) registered, yet we know through this work that the number in the borough is around 10% of schools population. So what of all the other Young Carers who do not register for our services, where are they getting support? The answer; they are not.

**In Lewisham there are  
65,000 children of school age which  
equates to  
6,500 Young Carers  
in this Borough alone**

**This is why it is so important that schools  
support their pupils who are Young Carers**

## WHY WORK WITH SCHOOLS?

There is now a body of evidence regarding how caring responsibilities can have an adverse impact on Young Carers, resulting in friendship difficulties, limited time for social and leisure activities, limited time for school work and homework, and can limit opportunities and make transitions into adulthood more problematic.<sup>2</sup> The two previous national surveys indicated that a high proportion of Young Carers miss school as a result of their caring responsibilities.

It's our belief that understanding of Young Carers issues in schools is the way forward for permanent every day support for Young Carers. Up and down the country as well as in Lewisham, Young Carers organisations are overstretched and under resourced and while they do great work with their Young Carers they are limited to what they can do and how many they can work with.

The advantages schools have over any other establishments are:-

- Schools are resourced to give all children an all round education (academic, social and emotional)
- Schools are to be open from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm
- School staff are known to the children
- Schools are aware of a child's attendance and if they are not in school, why not?
- Schools are aware if a child is tired and falling asleep in class.
- Schools are aware if a child is unwashed or unkempt
- Schools are aware if a child is distressed or behaving badly
- Schools are aware if a child is withdrawn and isolated

The list could go on, it's no longer appropriate for schools to say it's nothing to do with us or it's not our job.

The Government is in agreement with this. The new National Carers Strategy 2008 makes it very plain in Chapter 6 that schools have a responsibility to identify and support children in their schools who may have caring responsibilities.

***See Appendix 3.***

**Our experience is that if Young Carers are identified and supported from primary school they are better able to cope and to deal with school and their caring responsibilities.**

## CASE STUDIES WITH SERVICES FROM CARERS LEWISHAM

### Case 1

Elizabeth and Julia identified themselves as Young Carers in an evaluation lesson following the delivery of the Young Carers lessons in their school. They were caring for their mum who had been diagnosed with depression and were helping with three younger siblings.

The children were invited to our Saturday club and I became instantly concerned about them. They were inappropriately dressed for the time of year. Their clothes were dirty, they appeared to be unclean and they carried an unpleasant odour. They were evidently hungry and ate their packed lunch on the minibus, which was inadequate and unhealthy. They did not socialise with other children during the session and Elizabeth enjoyed the company of adults rather than her own peer group and was very protective of her younger sister.

I contacted the school to obtain further information about the family and was invited to attend a meeting. It transpired that the children were known to social services and they had been on the at risk register in both Lewisham and in Dorset under neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.

I spoke to the social worker involved with the family who also had many concerns but was reluctant to call a case conference. The parents were simply not engaging. They were notorious for refusing to answer the door to callers and failing to keep appointments with various organisations. However, with persistence and after many failed attempts to arrange a home visit, mum eventually agreed to meet with me at the school to discuss the support and services which Carers Lewisham were able to offer Elizabeth and Julia. I felt that it was helpful to point out to mum that I worked for an independent charity and I was there to offer support and services, and not to judge. As a result she was very honest about her mental illness, her own family history and the fact that the family appeared to be in crisis. I also offered to liaise with both statutory and voluntary agencies that I felt may be able to offer the family support, to which she agreed.

Eventually Carers Lewisham called a case conference in conjunction with Social Services to help obtain the services and support the family needed to help both the cared for and Young Carers. We worked with both children until Elizabeth decided to live with her father in another part of the country.

Julia continues to attend the Saturday club each week, weekly holiday activities and has been on a residential weekend. I attend all core group meetings and case conferences, providing written reports for each. Regular contact is made with both the social worker and school to obtain regular updates and to report any concerns accordingly. The school have noticed many positive changes in Julia, in her self-confidence, social skills and her academic achievements which they attribute mainly to her involvement with Carers Lewisham. She speaks often of her involvement with the Young Carers Project in school, the friends she has made and the relationships she has with the staff.

As a result of all the support that was put in place for the family at the case conference by both statutory and voluntary sectors, Elizabeth was taken off the “at risk” register for neglect and sexual abuse initially and then more recently, completely deregistered and is now regarded as children in need.

## Case 2

Morris is a ten year old boy who cares for his parents who are both misusing drugs and alcohol. The referral came through Social Services and Carers Lewisham had just started to work in his school. Although Social Services were involved with the family, they had failed to return my calls. I eventually obtained permission from the school to attend a core group meeting. Morris has experienced much disruption in his home life as he has been removed from his parents to live with his Grandmother, then moved back to his Mother and then moved back to his Grandmother again. Thankfully, his Grandmother is seeking a more formal agreement through the legal system and is considering registering as an adult carer to receive some support for herself. Both of Morris' parents have been imprisoned recently and his Mother is intending to attend a residential rehabilitation unit in the future. During a core group meeting, it was revealed that Morris had been having outbursts where he would storm out of the classrooms etc. This was not the case at Carers Lewisham where he would discuss difficult situations with staff and other Young Carers. Morris' Grandmother is keen for him to receive mentoring through Carers Lewisham who have offered him consistent support and he has established a trusting relationship with the staff and Young Carers alike. He regularly attends and thoroughly enjoys the Saturday club every month, holiday activities and residential weekends and obviously feels safe in the group. The school and Morris' Grandmother feel that it may be beneficial for him to be referred for some therapeutic help in the future.

What we believe has helped in this case is offering support to the whole family and not just to the Young Carer. This input is imperative as families are often isolated and Carers Lewisham may be the only organisation offering support until services can be obtained from the statutory and other voluntary services. Contacting all agencies involved with the Young Carer is also essential but frequently very time consuming and needs persistence.

## Case 3

Sylvia is 10 years old. She cares for her mother, (a former carer) who suffers with ME. Sylvia does most of the household duties and sometimes, the shopping. Fulfilling this role had become very stressful for her, as she had to cope with so much responsibility and had little outlet for her pent-up frustration. She became emotionally drained and her confidence was very low and school had also become a struggle for her.

Carers Lewisham was able to provide respite for Sylvia through their Young Carers Saturday club, and various outings, and trips. This gave her the opportunity to have time for herself and once again to enjoy her childhood, mixing with her peers and sharing experiences with other Young Carers.

To quote her mum, *"Without the Carers Lewisham Centre I don't know how we would cope"*.

## FEEDBACK FROM PARENT/GUARDIANS

*"I suffer from Bipolar disorder and have done so for many, many years. On occasion my CPN would mention Young Carers to me but I never really thought more of it as despite my illness I was still able to go to work, socialise, have fun and all the rest of it. I didn't really feel my condition affected my Daughter very much then one night I went to bed and woke four hours later unable to move my arms or bare the weight of the duvet on top of me.*

*After around two years or maybe even longer I finally got diagnosed with [in both arms] Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, fibromyalgia and also M E. By now my Daughter was ten years old and had gone from going out on day trips with her Mother, on many days having to help her get out of bed, shopping and even psychologically, basically, any task you would normally see an adult carer have the responsibility of. I can not express how important Young Carers is to us. I didn't even realise how upset my Daughter was and how worried she was about me until Sue visited my Daughter's Primary school to talk about Young Carers and Gillian broke down in tears. – and that's the thing about children who have a caring role, often on the outside they cope.*

*Other people don't even know about all the extra duties they have and all the upset they may have inside where they worry about their parents. But since Gillian has been going to Young Carers she has met many children in the same position as herself and so doesn't feel as though she is the only one and knows that there are others that know and understand what she is going through.*

*I do not know what we would do without Young Carers, it gives Gillian the chance to get out and socialise as I now find it very difficult to visit friends, many of whom had children which Gillian was friends with. Funnily enough, Gillian has even reformed old friendships with people that she had lost touch with [because of my illness] at Young Carers. Because of Young Carers my Daughter also gets the opportunity to do things she wouldn't normally do on the day trips.*

*As being sick seems to be so expensive, I never thought doing so little could cost so much there isn't any money left for any visits or day trips out with me, I had to give up work a long time ago not that we could just get up and go on a long journey anyway! But on a serious note, I do not know what my Daughter would do without Young Carers. As an adult I can't bare to see my Mother cry, yet Gillian deals with me crying all the time and will be on stand by with tissues. She will not tell me if it upsets her or is hard for her – that's just not the carers way, or so it seems. They tell other carers, it's like they speak a special language to each other and they would understand, and it makes everyone's life better – most importantly, theirs. They wouldn't be able to do this without Young Carers and all the marvellous, marvellous people that work there.*

*I really, truly thank God for them because the very last thing I want is for my Daughter to be as upset as me – and she isn't, thanks to Young Carers. God bless them all."*

Anon

*"My daughter has benefited from the Young Carers service for several years and it has made a real difference to her life and helped us as a family. She has a younger brother who is severely autistic and life can be tough for her at home sometimes. Going to Young Carers gives her the opportunity to meet other children who are in similarly difficult and stressful situations and shows her that she is not alone. She also gets the chance to go on outings and take part in activities which are interesting and fun, and not have to worry about her brother disrupting the occasion. Young Carers is a fantastic service and long may it last!"*

Anon

*"I am very pleased with the service that my grandson Michael has received, he always looks forward to meeting up once a month and doing activities that he enjoys."*

Regards, Kathleen Mullane

**Names and some details have been changed to protect confidentiality**

## OUR FINDINGS

### IDENTIFIED YOUNG CARERS IN SCHOOLS

The Young Carers identified over the three years cared for the following:-

Parents	131
Siblings	77
Grandparents	54
Other	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>

The illness of the cared for person breaks down as follows:-

Mental Ill Health	26
Physical Disability	145
Substance Misuse	19
Illness	64
Learning Disability	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>279</b>

Total Young Carers divided by the schools  $279/36 = 7.75$

Young Carers per school divided by 3 school years  $7.75 = 2.58$

Breaking down to approximately 8 Young Carers in Years 4, 5 & 6 per school, approximately 3 per Year group.

#### Comment

We believe this figure is far from being the whole picture because we know looking at the break-down there are fewer cared for people with mental ill health and substance misuse than we would expect from the local prevalence of these problems. As with the 2001 census, numbers are still not being picked up. There are many cared for people on our system already with mental ill health and we know for example that drug and alcohol misuse is widespread in many parts of the Borough. One of our workers encountered an inebriated parent coming to collect his child who was unhappy he wasn't allowed in the school!

There is also a stigma within the area about letting outsiders know about family business and some children will be aware of this. It is also reflected in the take up rate of our services.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Our recommendations come from our direct work with schools and the Young Carers.

- All school staff to be trained in young carer and vulnerable children awareness. This training should be at a level that enables the school staff to understand what Young Carers may have to do, how they may feel, how they may be treated by others and how it can separate and isolate them.
- Every school to have a designated member of staff, preferably a teacher or learning mentor for children to go to. It is vital that the designated person is seen by the pupils as an important part of the school as this will show them they are valued.
- Every school to have a Young Carers group at least once a term. Again this shows they are valued and an important part of the school. They will have a space of their own and the opportunity to realise they are not the only one in a caring situation.
- Every school to deliver young carer awareness lessons. The lessons (see appendix 1) give the opportunity for the pupils to look at their lives and see if they are Young Carers and if they are to be given support. Raised awareness of Young Carers amongst other pupils brings understanding of difference and helps to stop bullying.
- Every school participates in National Carers Week (the second week of June). This will also involve the community and will recognise adults who may be carers. This would include lessons, assemblies and displays on Young Carers and a letter to the community.
- Schools to have a separate register of Young Carers in the school, as with looked after children, so patterns of behaviour can be monitored. We know that Young Carers often miss school or are late because of their caring responsibility; with a separate register schools will be able to see the depth of their problems.
- Schools to sign up to a Young Carers Charter. The charter will be as follows :

### **Schools will:**

- **Recognise Young Carers**
- **Value Young Carers**
- **Support Young Carers**
- **Regularly take part in National Carers Week**

## CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES

Some of the challenges we faced were with a few schools that felt the lessons were not appropriate for some of the younger children. Yet some of the most open and honest life stories came from the younger pupils.

Year 6 has SATS (state exams) in May which form the school league tables and some schools thought the lessons would interfere with their learning.

Some schools were concerned about Carers Lewisham sending letters home to the parents and wanted to approach the parents themselves. This means that we have no knowledge of whether the schools did contact the parents and sadly we did not hear from any of the families of these identified Young Carers.

There are many outside agencies working with schools so they sometimes found it difficult to fit us in.

### **There were some schools who said they didn't have any Young Carers in their school!**

Fortunately we had great workers and they dealt with the challenges very well. As guests in schools there were a few occasions when we didn't complete the work to the standard we would have liked.

In some areas of Lewisham where there are big problems with drug and alcohol misuse we found that very few children identified themselves. This is where the school if they had the awareness could support the Young Carers in their school. We were also able to pass this information on to other agencies in the area for them to do more specialised work.

Every Child Matters states that all children should have the opportunity to thrive; unfortunately unrecognised Young Carers can fall through the net. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers has written a report showing how Young Carers could miss out and how these challenges can be met.

***See Appendix 4***

One thing that is very disappointing is that hardly any schools continue to do Young Carer awareness work or give support to their Young Carers. We know that very little has to take place for Young Carers to feel supported.

## FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOLS

One teacher wrote:-

*"Thanks Sue for some really valuable work it has been great. I found the sessions really informative and felt the children really gained a deep level of understanding of what it is like to be a young carer. I also found it very useful in hearing children speak about issues."*

Anon

*"I believe that the sessions provided to our KS2 children by Young Carers of Lewisham has highlighted a role that many children undertake without school being aware. These sessions certainly heightened awareness, enabled some families to involve themselves in the Young Carer Organisation and provided the children with an opportunity to talk about their situation.*

*The follow up to this has been that during a recent provision mapping day within school teachers were clearly more aware and responsive to the needs of these children, some of which have now been provided with an additional group session during the week to allow them to discuss their own needs and how they can be supported in school. I believe this was a very valuable intervention and one in which the school would be keen to have further involvement with."*

Sue Riley,

Learning Mentor

*"I have seen the work that Young Carers Lewisham has undertaken have a significant positive impact on a number of pupils. In my role I have used Young Carers Lewisham to provide support to pupils who we know are helping to care for a family member with a long term illness, disability or addiction. Young Carers Lewisham has provided recreational respite, advice and the feeling of "not being alone" for pupils whose home situations have at times been distressing and/or draining. Often we have seen these pupils become much happier at school and more verbal about things that have been worrying them. We make sure that Young Carers Lewisham speak at our school every year to ensure that we are aware of all those pupils who have the extra responsibility of caring for a family member. We know that the support they can offer can be a lifeline to these pupils. In our next school prospectus we are planning to include information on all the additional support agencies our school works with. We know that we let parents and carers know that Young Carers Lewisham is one such agency we will continue to work with to ensure the best support (when needed) for our pupils."*

Sacha Tuxford

Learning Mentor

*"In June 2007, Adamsrill celebrated Young Carers week, using some of the Primary School Resources Pack that YC provided.*

*I was already mentoring 3 children who I knew to be Young Carers, and they were keen to take part*

*in the assemblies.*

*While they didn't want to tell their own stories, they were excited that caring at home had a raised profile in school for two weeks.*

*During the course of the year, a couple of other children whose parents had mental health problems were brought to my attention for attendance reasons. I referred them to Lewisham YC and the children and their families were very happy with the non-judgmental and supportive approach that YC had. The children were also relieved and excited that their situation was being understood and there was help at hand.*

*Gradually the YC in Adamsrill were realising that they were not alone. Sometimes they came out with me an 'ad hoc' basis when they chatted together informally.*

*However, a recent 'recruit' to Young Carers expressed an interest in helping to establish a Young Carers Club (YCC) at Adamsrill. She pointed out that some children she knew were anxious about members of their family, but would probably not be classed as a carer.*

*We have discussed that we would begin by sending out flyers to all of KS2 children and a notice on the school newsletter, explaining the purpose of the club. We plan to meet once a month at a lunch time and once a month after school – hoping to cater for children's different circumstances. We would have a flexible approach, according to who came. We also said that no-one would be turned away, even if there did not appear to be evidence that they were carers, as a child would only come to the Club if they felt that it had something to offer that he/she needed. We would have arts, crafts, board games and books available, and some music and headphones. We would close with a co-operative game that involved everyone.*

*In conclusion, the establishing of a YCC at Adamsrill is in its infancy, but the fact that it is something that they themselves want, makes it a greater probability that it will be a successful venture.*

*Gail Banks*

*Learning Mentor*

Many school teachers said after the lessons their pupils had a better understanding and awareness of:

- Young Carers issues
- People's needs
- Difference and responsibility
- Of other children's lives
- Of how mental ill health can affect all members of society
- Each others home situation
- The difficulties others may face in their families
- Understanding and Empathy

## SOME QUOTES FROM TEACHERS

*Any young carer identified now can be supported by the pastoral management system.*

*Children have felt a greater compassion for other, respecting the differences of others.*

*Greater awareness of the responsibilities children of their own age have to face.*

*The class showed more respect of each other and talked openly about their existing knowledge.*

*I think it made them [the children] question their lives and how they care or are cared for and to appreciate that.*

*Some parents have commented that it made their children consider their own experiences – many gaining clearer understanding of how lucky they are.*

*I think you all [Carers Lewisham] do a fantastic job and I know that Cheryl not only looks forward to coming along to Young Carers, but has a wonderful time when she is there. She has definitely benefited from spending time with other Young Carers.*

***Comment: This is a fantastic quote for our organisation but if you look at the last sentence, Cheryl could be doing that in school if there was a Young Carers group. These last case studies come from Sedgemoor Secondary School where they have been running Young Carers clubs and one to one sessions for the past two years. The Young Carers were picked up in year 7 and demonstrates how the support they have received has made school life easier for them:***

Rachel Bloggs from Sedgemoor School writes: *The Young Carers group that I run at school gives carers a chance to meet with each other and work in a group setting. The group is run by two mentors. The carers are given different activities to complete every time they meet. There are two groups, one for students that are in year 7 and 8 and the other for years 9 – 11. However, there are plans to split the younger group into two and the older group are going to become their mentors.*

### Case Study 1

James is a young carer whose mum suffers from arthritis and has had several operations on her hip. His family have also had a lot of fallings out with each other and his older brother and sister are known to the school for their bad attendance and lack of willingness to learn.

James comes to the Young Carers group to get support from his peers and it gives him a chance to meet other carers within the school. He is very good at socialising and other carers are instantly drawn to him through his politeness and warmth. He has benefited from being in the carers group because he gets comfort out of knowing that he is being monitored and his home situation can be discussed when it needs to be. He enjoys being around other people his age and he likes the

friendly atmosphere that the group provides as his home life has been known to be quite hectic and sometimes very challenging. James is someone that takes everything in his stride and since being in the group his confidence has gone up and he is keen to learn and do well. The group has been enough support for him as he is someone that wants the best for himself and seems to have learnt from his brother and sisters mistakes which has led to his attendance being very good and his levels going up in school.

## Case study 2

Sarah's mum suffers from Lupus. She has recently had an operation and was in hospital for a fair amount of time. Sarah is very close to her mum and feels the strain when her mum is unwell. She helps her mum around the house but has her stepdad there who also does a lot of the caring. Sarah comes to the Young Carers support group but she also has one to one sessions with a mentor. She was seen at the start of Year 7 as very vulnerable. It was not made aware to the school that she was a young carer until the school was notified that her mum was going into hospital for an operation. She was then picked up and joined the Young Carers group. She has benefited from being in the group because she is able to be around other Young Carers and she has realised that she is not alone which has helped boost her confidence in school. She is very protective of her mum which can cause her to be very sensitive. What the group has taught her is that there will always be people who are cruel about other people's misfortunes but there are also people out there who understand and are in similar situations themselves. Sarah likes a lot of attention and what she has also learnt but still needs some work on is getting the right attention at the right time. Sarah is very easily upset and when she does get upset she likes to make everyone aware of it, however in the carers group it is advised that they share the problem there and then, if they are not able to do that, then they may need to take some time out on their own away from the group until they are ready to participate again. It has been noted recently Sarah does not get so upset during the Young Carers group as I think she has realised that the attention she attracts from it tends to be negative as the other Young Carers don't buy into it. Sarah really benefits from having one to one mentoring because it gives her space to be the person that she enjoys being. She is very creative, bubbly and chatty. She thoroughly enjoys her one to ones as she gets the attention that she likes but without being smothered or babied. Since being mentored she seems to have calmed down and does not get so wound up by other students in the school. She moans less and seems to be enjoying her school life more.

## APPENDIX 1

### Lessons summary

#### Lesson 1 An introduction to caring

Young people only know what their own lives are like and it can be assumed that others in their class live in situations the same or very similar to them. So we focus on how families can be different by looking at:-

- Who cares for them
- How they show they care.
- What is a Young Carer ? (using our definition below):

#### DEFINITION OF A YOUNG CARER

**A YOUNG CARER IS A YOUNG PERSON AGED 18 OR UNDER WHO LOOKS AFTER A MUM, DAD, BROTHER, SISTER OR OTHER RELATIVE WHO IS DISABLED, ILL, HAS MENTAL ILL HEALTH OR A DRUG OR ALCOHOL PROBLEM. PROVIDING HELP WITH TASKS USUALLY DONE BY AN ADULT.**

#### Lesson 2 Tasks Young Carers may have to do

Using role play the class act out tasks Young Carers may have to do. This can be an insight for some of the children who do nothing or very little to help around the house and can give them an understanding of what it might be like to be a Young Carer. The class also explore how they might feel if they were a Young Carer.

#### Lesson 3 Physical Disability

Using questions with a choice of answers - Yes, No and not sure – we are given an idea of the classes understanding of physical disability. As the extent of a person's physical disability can vary enormously we also look at positive physically disabled role models for example disabled athletes, the Para Olympic athletes showing how much can be achieved.

#### Lesson 4 Mental Ill Health

As with lesson 3, we have a question session and because this is a sensitive subject we base it mainly around depression as children generally have an understanding of being low or stressed which can often lead to depression. This is an important lesson as one in four people suffer with mental ill health as some point in their lives. In this lesson we also talk about substance misuse.

So as not to cause alarm we point out that with help many people can recover from their illness or contain their symptoms and live a healthy life.

Both lessons 3 and 4 are sharing based with the class talking about the people they know in their lives, family, friends and strangers who have a physical disability, mental ill health, and drug or alcohol problems. This can be very insightful for the class teachers as the pupils are talking about their own experience which would not ordinarily be brought into the class room. This is also an opportunity for the class to look at differences and encourage acceptance and understanding.

## **Lesson 5      Evaluation**

As the evaluation is being carried out we recap on the lessons, find out how they might support a friend who is a Young Carer and look at what they remember most about the lessons. We also give them the opportunity to identify themselves as a Young Carer on the evaluation form.

If anyone identifies themselves as a young carer they are seen one to one and offered our services via a letter home to their parents.

While working with the schools a community letter is sent to notify families that we are working with their child's school which gives them the opportunity to contact us directly if their child(ren) is a Young Carer.

***The Primary School Teaching Pack is available from Carers Lewisham***

## APPENDIX 2

### SAMPLE EVALUATIONS OF PUPILS UNDERSTANDING OF LESSONS

#### EVALUATION STATISTICS

SCHOOL: CHRIST CHURCH - YEAR 1

	UNDERSTAND	UNDERSTAND A BIT	Did it Make You Think?	DIDN'T UNDER- STAND	TOTAL PUPILS
<b>LESSON 1</b>					
Year 4	63%	21%		16%	19
Year 5	84%	16%			19
Year 6	68%	26%	5%		19
<b>LESSON 2</b>					
Year 4	26%	58%	16%		19
Year 5	75%	19%	19%		16
Year 6	57%	38%	5%		21
<b>LESSON 3</b>					
Year 4	57%	16%	26%	10%	19
Year 5	35%	30%	25%	10%	20
Year 6	52%	24%	19%	5%	21
<b>LESSON 4</b>					
Year 4	47%	21%	10%	21%	19
Year 5	35%	29%	29%	6%	17
Year 6	25%	25%	30%	20%	20
<b>Do you understand what a Young Carer is? (see below)</b>					
Year 4	47%	16%	10%	26%	19
Year 5	50%	35%	5%	10%	20
Year 6	66%	23%	10%		21

EVALUATION STATISTICS cont....

SCHOOL: ASHMEAD — YEAR 2

	UNDERSTAND	UNDERSTAND A BIT	Did it Make You Think?	DIDN'T UNDERSTAND	TOTAL PUPILS
<b>LESSON 1</b>					
Year 4	76%	10%	14%		21
Year 5	64%	24%	6%	3%	33
Year 6	77%	12%	4%	8%	26
<b>LESSON 2</b>					
Year 4	76%	10%	5%	2%	21
Year 5	88%	3%	9%		33
Year 6	80%	8%	12%		26
<b>LESSON 3</b>					
Year 4	33%	33%	33%		21
Year 5	36%	36%	24%	3%	33
Year 6	35%	42%	15%	8%	26
<b>LESSON 4</b>					
Year 4	43%	10%	29%	19%	21
Year 5	45%	12%	15%	15%	33
Year 6	46%	15%	23%	12%	26
<b>Do you understand what a Young Carer is? (see below)</b>					
Year 4	90%	10%			21
Year 5	70%	12%	18%		33
Year 6	77%	15%	8%		26

## EVALUATION STATISTICS cont...

## SCHOOL: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST—YEAR 3

	UNDERSTAND	UNDERSTAND A BIT	Did it Make You Think?	DIDN'T UNDERSTAND	TOTAL PUPILS
<b>LESSON 1</b>					
Year 4	82%	11%	4%	4%	28
Year 5	86%	11%	4%		29
Year 6	93%	7%			15
<b>LESSON 2</b>					
Year 4	71%	18%	4%	7%	28
Year 5	69%	17%	14%		29
Year 6	60%	33%	7%		15
<b>LESSON 3</b>					
Year 4	60%	18%	18%	4%	28
Year 5	52%	21%	21%	7%	29
Year 6	27%	40%	33%		15
<b>LESSON 4</b>					
Year 4	46%	36%	18%		28
Year 5	39%	31%	14%	17%	29
Year 6	53%	13%	33%		15
<b>Do you understand what a Young Carer is? (see below)</b>					
Year 4	79%	18%	3%		28
Year 5	79%	14%	7%		29
Year 6	80%	13%	7%		15

## APPENDIX 3

**THE NATIONAL CARERS STRATEGY 2008**  
**Published by Her Majesty's Government.**  
**Carers at the heart of 21st-century families and communities**  
**“A caring system on your side. A life of your own.”**

### KEY ISSUES FOR YOUNG CARERS

#### *With commentary by Carers Lewisham*

The promised Commitments are:-

Over £6 million to ensure Young Carers are protected from inappropriate caring and receive the broader support they need. Through:

- strengthening support from universal and targeted services;
- strengthening the quality and join-up of support around families so children are better protected from inappropriate caring.

***Comment: As there are approximately 1 million Young Carers this equates to £6.00 per person!***

#### Identified priorities

- Ensure protections for Young Carers are fully embedded: further measures to be considered in the light of research findings over the next two years.

***Comment: This is very vague, much research and work has already been done and we cannot see why more measures have not been put in place now.***

6.8 Our vision for 2018 is one in which professionals in our front-line services who are in most regular contact with young people have the knowledge they need to identify problems early and encourage Young Carers to come forward for the help they may need.

6.9 It is a vision where high quality targeted support is accessible to those who need it and based on sound evidence of what works.

6.10 Above all, it is one where prevention – protecting young people from falling into inappropriate caring – is the priority and a guiding principle behind the planning and delivery of services. Effective support for families and the person being cared for is at the heart of this. By 2018, our aim is that all areas will be delivering better joined-up, whole-family support to families affected by illness, disability or substance misuse who have Young Carers assessments and support offered will take proper account of the need to protect children from inappropriate caring while families and parents themselves will have a greater say in the shaping of services around them.

***Comment: Having a Young Carers Assessment means they have to be seen as a child in need and***

*unfortunately in Lewisham because the criteria is so high many Young Carers in very difficult circumstances are not seen as children in need and therefore not offered the support they need.*

6.11 Aiming high for children states:

“preventing poor outcomes from arising in the first place benefits children, young people and families directly. In addition, failure to prevent problems impacts not only on the family but also society more widely...”

**Comment: *Proving the importance of help and support in school for Young Carers is vital.***

6.17 There is, however, more to be done. Schools can be a vital source of support and welcome contact with peers but many Young Carers feel that the issues and challenges they face are not always understood. Too often, Young Carers feel they need to keep their status hidden, even from their closest friends. Some do so out of fear of being seen as different – many Young Carers have highlighted they feel that stigma is still attached to disability and illness. Some do so because they see family matters as private. Others – possibly those in greatest need – do so out of fear of social services’ intervention. For many Young Carers, the resulting isolation and the lack of someone to talk to are particular problems. Opportunities to pick up on problems early are also being missed.

**Comment: *Proving that training for school staff and awareness lessons (as in our pack) for pupils is so important for Young Carers to be valued. Our recommendation that schools should take part in National Carers Week will mean Young Carers are less likely to feel stigmatised as the school and its pupils gain more understanding.***

6.18 The major new support programmes now rolling out across our schools provide vital new opportunities for Young Carers’ issues to be addressed. The National Healthy Schools Programme, in particular, provides a framework for schools to develop positive, inclusive environments which actively promote and support the health and well-being of pupils and staff alike. For Young Carers, these developing opportunities have yet to be fully exploited. We want to ensure that they are and that all schools have the wider support and resources they need to take better account of Young Carers.

6.19 New commitment: over the coming three years, we will invest in a new programme of work to embed support and guidance of Young Carers through our National Healthy Schools Programme and to ensure tailored and up-to-date resources are available for staff to draw upon as part of their SEAL and personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programmes. We will work with teachers TV to ensure future programmes aimed at school staff capture the invaluable testimony and experiences of Young Carers gleaned through the consultation.

6.20 We will also work closely with the Children’s Workforce development Council and the training and development agency to ensure that the new resources made available inform future developments in training for school staff and everyone who works with children.

*“Schools need to ensure teachers are offered training on Young Carers and disability issues both at university and on inset days.”* Young Carer speaking at Young Carers Festival 2006

6.21 We will also provide funding to support broader awareness-raising across schools and other children’s settings on caring in families and the issues this raises.

*“Schools need to recognise that our responsibility as carers can affect our education and school-work.”* Young carer speaking at Young Carers Festival 2006

**THE VISION IS THAT BY 2018:**

**Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring  
and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive,  
to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve  
against all the Every Child Matters outcomes.**

***Comment: While it’s commendable to want these changes we are talking about 9 years. That means a Young Carer now aged 9 will be 18 so what sort of support is s/he going to receive?***

**COMMENT SUMMARY**

**Carers Lewisham welcome the changes that this strategy promises and knows that this work is vital; the more that schools can do the better. One thing that is evident is that school staff can feel they are not qualified enough to work with Young Carers and yet through good quality training they feel confident and at ease.**

## APPENDIX 4

### EVERY CHILD MATTERS BARRIERS FOR YOUNG CARERS AND CHALLENGES FOR SERVICES FROM A REPORT CALLED DELIVERING EVERY CHILD MATTERS BY THE PRINCESS ROYAL TRUST FOR CARERS.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b><i>What the theme means for Young Carers</i></b>	<b><i>Potential barriers for Young Carers and their families</i></b>	<b><i>The challenges for services</i></b>
1 Being Healthy	Encouraging and supporting good physical, mental and emotional health	Interrupted sleep due to night time caring. Stress or constant worry about another's safety or health. Back injuries due to lifting an adult Bereavement. Unhealthy lifestyles and diet. High levels of self-harm. Exposure to substance misuse. Interpreting for family member in inappropriate circumstances.	Do health services assist in early identification? Does CAMHS address the needs of Young Carers? Do adult services support their clients with their parenting role? Are support services for Young Carers funded sustainably?
2 Staying Safe	Identifying Young Carers who could become at risk of physical or emotional harm and offering early or preventative support.	Most Young Carers are hidden from children's and adults' services Chaotic home life due to parental substance misuse Parenting can be impaired by substance misuse/ mental health problems. Young Carers can be relied on for adult tasks (child care, cooking, giving medicines) at an early age. BME families can be particularly isolated from services. Some families reject support services after negative or stigmatising experiences	Do adults' services consider child protection issues and support parents to keep their children safe? Is joint working promoted? Do children's services and adults' services link together to give whole-family support? Are Young Carers treated as a low priority until there is a crisis? Is there a lead worker for Young Carers within the Local Authority? Can funding disputes be settled quickly? Are services flexible and family-led? Can parents access direct payments/ individual budgets and use them to support their parenting?
3 Enjoying And Achieving	Promoting educational attendance and attainment and providing opportunities for leisure, breaks and play.	Missing school days to care for someone. Some Young Carers drop out of school. Falling behind with homework, coursework and revision. High levels of bullying and isolation. Parents find it difficult to access parents' evenings, PTAs etc. Lack of automatic free school transport provision for Young Carers. Behavioural problems.	Are school staff aware of Young Carers? Do schools follow DfES guidance? Are Young Carers services part of Health Schools, Extended Schools etc? Does the school link with the family and children's and adults' services? Is the school accessible to disabled parents? Are Education Maintenance Allowance contracts flexible for Young Carers?

Appendix 4 cont....

<p>4 Making a Positive Contribution</p>	<p>Enabling choice and control for Young Carers. Offering opportunities beyond caring. Engaging Young Carers in decision making.</p>	<p>Lack of awareness of Young Carers services among young people. Young Carers feel they are relied on to stay at home rather than taking part in opportunities.  Young Carers' views are often overlooked. The most vulnerable Young Carers are the hardest to engage.  Young Carers not encouraged to continue further/higher education</p>	<p>Are providers of activities and volunteering opportunities are responsive to Young Carers' needs?  Is there adequate transport and respite care provision to allow Young Carers to participate?  Does the LA work with the voluntary sector to engage Young Carers in decision making?  Is the Young Carers service adequately resourced and seen as part of youth service provision?</p>
<p>5 Achieving Economic Well-being</p>	<p>Tackling the poverty faced by Young Carers. Supporting Young Carers with the transition to adulthood, and helping them to access training and employment.</p>	<p>Young Carers' families often lack a breadwinner. Disability can be expensive. Finances can be affected by substance misuse. Young Carers leave school without qualifications. Reliance on the young person can persist into adulthood.</p>	<p>How are Young Carers supported with the transition from children's to adults' services?  Does Connexions support Young Carers?  Do careers services and Job Centre Plus's identify Young Carers and link with Young Carers services?  Do FE and HE establishments identify and support Young Carers? Do they have flexible entrance requirements?</p>

## APPENDIX 5

### 'Young Carers in the UK 2004' Report — Chris Dearden and Saul Becker

Executive summary of main research data and findings

This is the report of the third national survey of young carers who are being supported by specialist young carers projects across the UK. Throughout the report, where appropriate and for comparison, we refer to the two previous surveys conducted in 1995 and 1997 (Dearden and Becker, 1995, 1998).

The 2004 Report is based on data collected from 87 projects concerning a total of 6,178 young carers – the largest survey of its kind.

- 56% of the sample are girls, 44% are boys. The average age is 12.
- 84% of the sample is white; the largest minority group being African Caribbean.
- 56% of young carers are living in lone parent families.
- People with care needs have a range of illnesses or physical or mental health problems. Half of all conditions are of a physical health nature; 29% are mental health problems; 17% are learning difficulties and 3% are sensory impairments.
- The majority of people with care needs are mothers; this is especially true in lone parent families where mothers account for 70% of people needing care. In two parent families almost half (46%) of people receiving care are siblings.
- Just under two-thirds (63%) of siblings with care needs have learning difficulties.
- Only 4% of adults with care needs are in employment (where data available).
- Where there is at least one adult in the home (in addition to any adult with care needs) only slightly more than half of these other adults are also in employment (where data available).
- Two thirds of the young carers provide domestic help in the home; 48% provide general and nursing-type care; 82% provide emotional support and supervision; 18% provide intimate personal care and 11% also provide child care. The recognised incidence of emotional support has increased dramatically since 1997.
- Intimate care is most commonly provided where the person with care needs has a physical health problem or disability. Emotional support is far more common where the person has mental health problems.
- One in ten young carers is caring for more than one person.
- Overall, girls are more involved in all types of caring tasks, especially as they get older.
- Half the young carers are caring for 10 hours or less per week; one third for 11-20 hours per week; and 16% for over 20 hours per week. Some (2%) are caring for more than 50 hours each week.

- The overall incidence of missed school and educational difficulties has reduced, decreasing between 1995 and 1997 and again between 1997 and 2003. However, 27% of all young carers of secondary school-age are experiencing some problems, and the equivalent proportion of young carers of primary school age is 13%. Four in ten children caring for someone who misuses drugs or alcohol have educational difficulties.
- 18% of young carers have been assessed, an improvement on 1997. Young carers from minority ethnic backgrounds are more likely to have been assessed, especially under the 1989 Children Act. Those caring for someone with drug/alcohol problems are more likely to receive an assessment under the Children Act (28%).
- Caring can be a very long-term commitment for many children, and can start at an early age. One third (36%) of young carers had been caring for 2 years or less; 44% for 3-5 years; 18% for 6-10 years and 3% for over 10 years.
- One fifth of young carers and their families receive no other support except for their contact with a specialist young carers project. Social Services support is the most common external service received.

### **Educational impacts**

High levels of caring can have an adverse impact on young carers, resulting in friendship difficulties, limited time for social and leisure activities, limited time for school work and home work, and can limit opportunities and make transitions into adulthood more problematic (see for example Aldridge and Becker, 1993; Dearden and Becker, 2000, Frank *et al.*, 1999).

The two previous national surveys indicated that a high proportion of young carers miss school as a result of their caring responsibilities. In these surveys we also used referral to a specialist young carers project by a school, teacher, educational welfare officer or educational social worker as an additional indicator of educational difficulties. Table 11 shows the changes over time.

Since the 1997 survey there has been much more awareness of the educational difficulties experienced by young carers. Many project staff now work within schools to raise awareness of the issues and to work with teachers and others to improve young carers' educational experiences and outcomes. It is therefore reassuring to see that, once again, the overall incidence of educational difficulties among young carers has decreased. However, where children are caring for a relative with drug or alcohol problems, the incidence of missed school and educational difficulties is much more marked; 34 per cent were missing school and 40 per cent in total were missing school or had other indicators of educational difficulties. In previous surveys the incidence of drug and alcohol misuse has been too low to further interrogate the data, but in this survey there were 432 (7%) cases of children caring for a relative with drug or alcohol problems, sufficient for this further analysis.

At more than a fifth of all young carers, the overall proportion experiencing educational problems is still high. This remains more marked in the 11 to 15 age group – the age when young people are making educational decisions, taking formal examinations and preparing for their future. Furthermore, those children helping to support a family member who is misusing drugs or alcohol are especially vulnerable to the risk of missing school and experiencing educational difficulties.

**Table 11:**

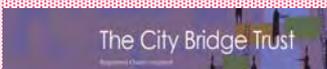
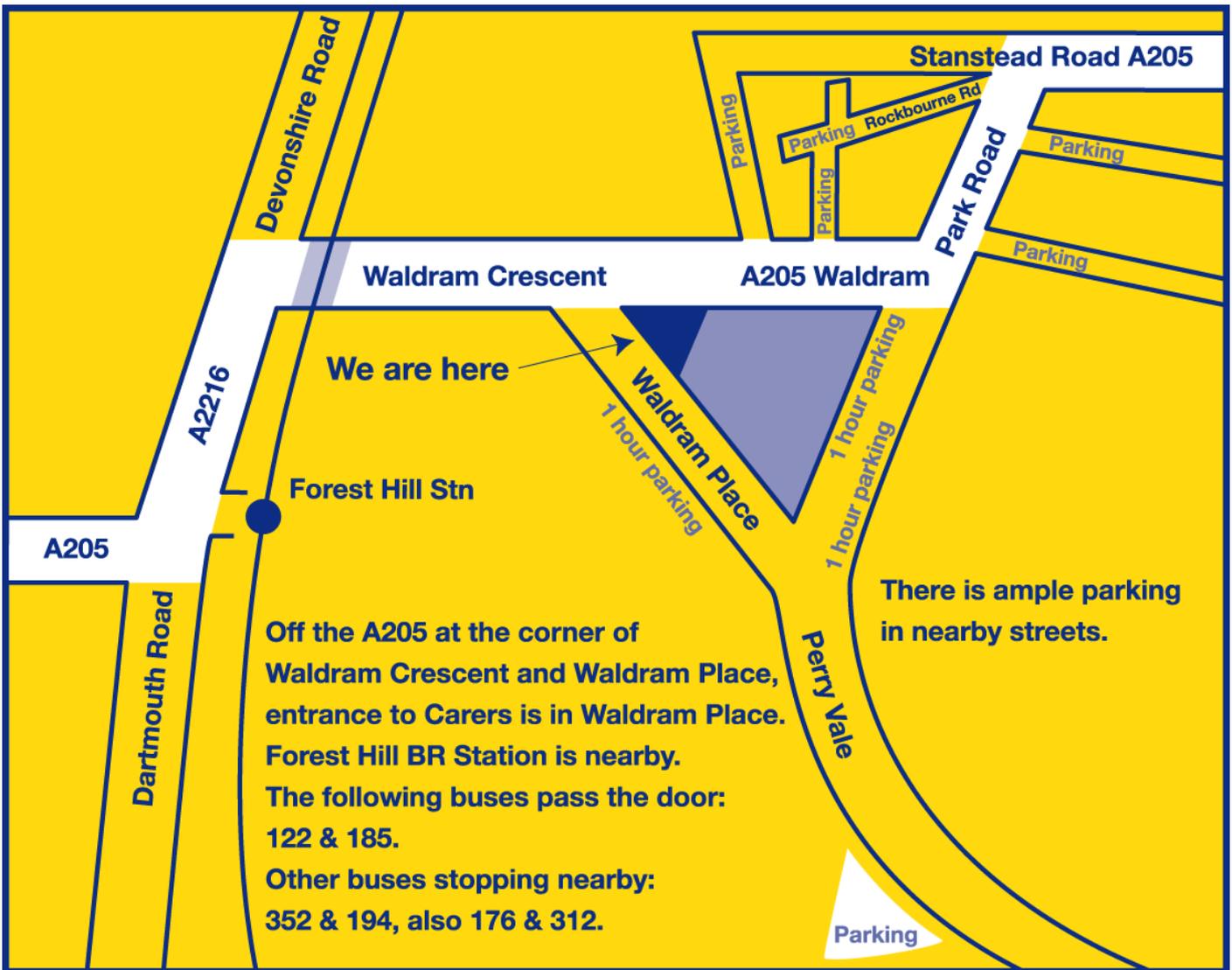
**Young carers missing school or experiencing educational difficulties 1995, 1997, 2003**

Age group	1995	1997	2003
5-10	20%	17%	13% (212)
11-15	42%	35%	27% (845)
All 5-15	33%	28%	22% (1057)

***Comment:*** *Recently a special committee in The London Borough of Lewisham has been looking at absenteeism and it was recognised that a large percentage of absenteeism was carried out by young carers. As stated previously when young carers have a separate register, schools can have an accurate picture of their young carers and their difficulties and put appropriate support and help in place to keep them in school and give them the opportunity of reaching their full potential.*

## REFERENCES

1. C Dearden & S Becker. *“Young Carers in the UK: A Profile”*, London, Carers National Association , (1988)
2. See for example Aldridge and Becker, 1993; Dearden and Becker, 2000, Frank *et al.*, 1999.  
“Unseen and Unheard The Invisible Young Carers” by Geraldine Baker 2002



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