

# Supporting Young Carers in Primary Schools

I've got to  
look after **my mum**  
because **she's ill**

Oh, you're a  
**Young Carer!**  
We did it at school





## **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.**

### **Supporting Young Carers in School • A Primary Resource Pack**

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**FOREWORD**

The aim when putting this resource pack together was to: -

- Help primary schools identify young carers as is recommended by government guidelines
- Bring awareness of young carers issues to both pupils and staff at Primary schools
- Bring some awareness and understanding of physical disability
- Bring some awareness and understanding of mental ill health
- Bring awareness to the community through a letter to parents/carers about young carers and the work being carried out at their children's school

If you are a young carers worker the information, although detailed at times, is there to help the lessons be informative for both you and the pupils. Please note a teacher must always be present during your lessons. If you are a teacher you may not need as much information, therefore take what you need and ignore the rest.

This pack was piloted in six schools. Pupils understanding of the lessons can vary by class, whether in the same school or the same age. This seems to depend mainly on their personal experience. It could also be linked to their concentration or what the children have done before they see you, for example "in door" playtime because of bad weather, if they are excited, etc. therefore, if you are a young carers worker, you need to be flexible and understand that sometimes the lessons will work better than at other times.

When working with schools I started with year six (age 10-11) and worked down to year 3 (age 7-8). As a general rule year 5 and 6 can do all lessons at their desks and year 3 and 4 on the carpet. Ask the class tutor where their class work the best.

On the page opposite you can see the negative affects caring can have on children. Through our work at Carers Lewisham we realised that if we identified young carers at primary school we were in a much better position to help them both personally and educationally.

Young carers do an amazing job and deserve to receive all the assistance and support they can get. Unfortunately many young carers are bullied because they are different. If they can receive understanding and support from school it can stop bullying, it can go a long way to help with their education and also allow them to be children doing things children do, which in turn could be beneficial to their health.

I hope whoever uses this book gets as much from teaching these lessons as I did. The children I have worked with have been incredible, some a little shy and quiet but many so happy to share their stories and so eager to participate, and I thank them for their input.

**Marilyn Hodsdon**

Key educational difficulties identified through research on young carers

<b>Absence</b>	May be regular, protracted or occasional May result in referral to educational welfare services
<b>Lateness</b>	May be persistent or occasional
<b>Tiredness</b>	May be identified by lack of concentration, lack of attention, falling asleep
<b>Difficulty joining extra curricular activities</b>	Due to time constraints as a result of caring
<b>Bullying</b>	May be a direct result of caring/family disability but may be unrelated
<b>Restricted peer networks</b>	May have little in common with same age peers, may be mature in school beyond their years, may be a result of time constraints due to caring
<b>Poor attainment</b>	May be reflected in lack of qualifications, low grade qualifications or underperformance
<b>Homework/coursework</b>	May be poor quality, not submitted on time or at all this may be persistent or occasional
<b>Anxiety</b>	Concern over ill/disabled relative
<b>Behavioural Problems</b>	May result in referral to educational psychologist or child and adolescent psychiatrist

Information for Carers UK Young Carers and Education by Chris Dearden, Loughborough University

**LESSON 1                      WHO CARES FOR ME?**

**AIM:**                                      To help the children to think about caring, and what it means.

**Introduction:** - Introduce yourself and your young carers project and explain that over the next few weeks they are going to learn about young carers.

**What's needed for the lesson:**

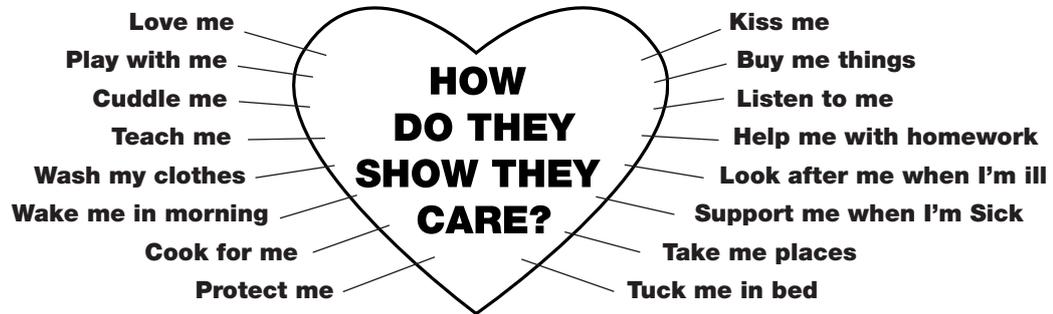
Lesson one can be written work for year 5 and 6, they can write on a sheet of paper or they can write in their citizenship book. The answers can be shared with the class and put on the board. (As diagram below and overleaf). With year 3 and 4 the answers can go straight on the board but they may need a little time to think about the questions or a little help to work out all the things that are done for them.

**Question 1.      Who cares for me?**



The children should be reminded that all families are different and that their lists could be totally different from the person next to them or it could be exactly the same.

**Question 2. How do they show they care?**



**Question 3 Working in groups (or on their tables or in pairs).  
Having thought about caring and who cares for you, what do you think a young carer might be?  
Have a few minutes to discuss it. What do you think a young carer is?**

Ask every group, table or pair what their answer is, if someone gets it right or has the right idea go back to them, some children know or can work out what a young carer is.

Show the **definition of a young carer** explaining anything which is not understood. Explain that the illness would be long term, e.g. not flu or a broken arm where the person would be better within weeks.

**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.**

To end the lesson ask if they have any questions. Tell them about the local young carers project and the support offered in the school, and advise them what to do or who to speak to if they feel they are a young carer, it is beneficial if a specific person is designated to support and refer to the appropriate organisations. Thank them for listening and participating.

**LESSON 2                  YOUNG CARERS TASKS**

**AIM:** Using role-play, show the tasks a young carer may have to do, this includes general tasks and personal care.

**Introduction:** First recap on last week's lesson; find out what they can remember from last week – can they remember your (the project worker's) name also?

**What's needed for the lesson:**

Some cards will need to be prepared in advance with a task written on each card. I have found that two different colours works best one for general tasks and one for personal tasks. Most children love this lesson and the role-play, but it must be voluntary. A good way to choose the participants is to put their names in a hat (they can write them on small pieces of paper) or to go round the class trying to use everyone who wants to participate.

Examples of general tasks, one person needed: -

<b>Washing dishes</b>	<b>Ironing clothes</b>
<b>Vacuuming</b>	<b>Cooking</b>
<b>Washing Clothes</b>	<b>Shopping</b>
<b>Mowing the lawn</b>	<b>Dusting the house</b>
<b>Etc.</b>	

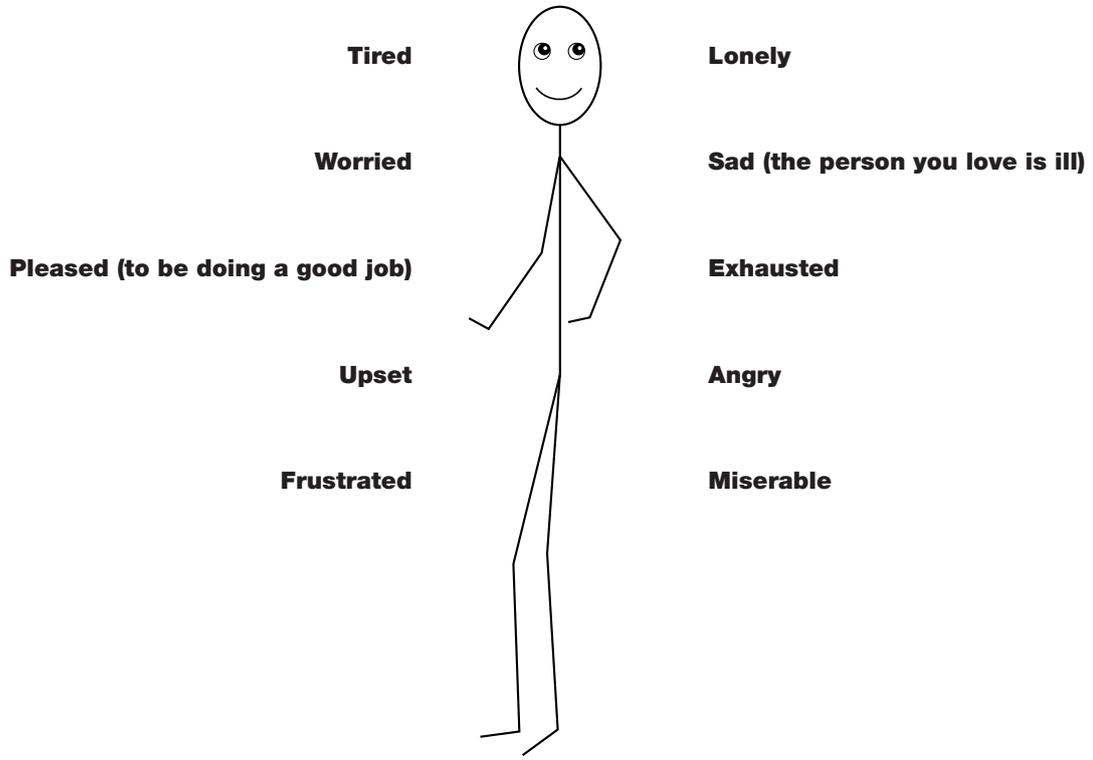
Examples of personal tasks, two people needed: -

- Feeding someone**
- Helping someone to get out of bed**
- Helping someone to get dressed**
- Giving medicine**
- Helping someone to have a bath**
- Listening to someone feeling down**
- Etc.**

Ask if there are any other tasks they feel a young carer may have to do, and invite them to role-play them.

Some young carers have to do **some** of these tasks but; others may have to do **all** of them, perhaps someone who is looking after a parent and has no other family to help, so you can see it can be very hard being a young carer.

How do you think you might feel if you were a young carer?



REMIND THE CLASS of the project, **who a young carer is**, who **they** may care for, and who there is to talk to. Thank them for their participation and listening.

**LESSON 3                      DISABILITY**

**AIM:** - To bring awareness and some understanding of disability. This lesson often has great input from the class towards the end when talking generally about disability.

**Introduction:** - Recap on last week. This week we are going to look at disability. Does anyone know what disability means? (You only need to know if they have some idea of what it means)

Listed below are five questions about disability, which the children can answer (by putting their hands up) either, yes, no or not sure. Reassure them that it's **not** a test.

**Question 1**      Can you always tell if someone is disabled?

**Answer**              No. Ask the pupils who said no to put their hands up again and ask if anyone can give an example. i.e. Deaf, mute, learning disabilities, etc.

**Question 2**      Are people always born with their disability?

**Answer**              No. Ask for examples, e.g. disabilities can be caused through accidents or illness.

**Question 3**      If someone is disabled does it mean they are ill?

**Answer**              No. Ask for explanation. But they may find some tasks difficult.

**Question 4**      Can people with a disability work?

**Answer**              Yes. Can you give examples or do you know anyone?  
Again depending on the disability they may find some tasks difficult.

**Question 5**      Can blind people read?

**Answer**              Yes. Do they know how? (Braille) Do they know how it works?  
Invented by Louis Braille who was French. Bumps on paper read by running your fingers over the bumps. You can find Braille on bleach bottles. Also at pedestrian crossings the paving slabs have bumps to signify a crossing.



Well done; now can you name some disabilities?

You can say the ones we have already talked about, but do you know any more?

<b>Paralysis</b>	Can't walk Can't move anything	like Christopher Reeve (Superman) – he had a horse riding accident like Stephen Hawkins who has cerebral palsy
<b>Arthritis</b>	Difficulty moving joints, sometimes it's in one or two joints but it can be in all joints, making it very painful to move.	
<b>Missing limb</b>	making it difficult to do some tasks or to walk.	
<b>Learning difficulties</b>	many reasons for it but generally people are slow to learn or to understand.	
<b>Deaf / blind / mute</b>		
<b>Stroke</b>	Often leaving the person paralysed down one side.	

Remembering the tasks we did last week, what tasks might you have to do as a young carer of someone with a disability?

REMINDE THE CLASS of the project, **who a young carer is**, who **they** may care for, and who there is to talk to. Thank them for their participation and listening.

**LESSON 4                      MENTAL ILL HEALTH**

**AIM:** To bring awareness and some understanding of mental ill health. Again the class often has a lot to bring.

**Introduction:** Recap on last week

**PLEASE NOTE:** It should be explained to the children that this is a difficult lesson (especially for years 3 and 4) however, 1 in 7 people will develop a mental health problem during their lifetime. A third of young carers look after someone with a mental health problem, so this is an important lesson. (See Quotes from Teachers, page 17).

**Do you know what mental ill health is?**

This is often a difficult concept, the questions asked should give the children more understanding. To help, this is how the Charity *MIND* explained it: -

**What does mental health mean?**

The word *Mental* means *of the mind*; that is your thoughts, feelings and understanding of yourself and the world around you.

The word *Health* means the *working order of your body and mind*

So **mental health** = the working order of your mind.

**Mental Ill health** means *our mind becomes ill*.

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As with **lesson 3**, below are five questions about mental ill health, answering in the same manner.

**Question 1**      Is depression a mental illness? (Check they know what depression means)

**Answer**            Yes. Does anyone know why? Many people feel down for lots of reasons and often say they feel depressed. If something bad or sad happens - say someone dies - then it's natural to feel sad or down but depression is when that sad or down feeling goes on most of the time and stops a person coping with their everyday life.

**Question 2**      Can bullying cause mental ill health?

**Answer**            Yes, can you give an example? It can cause depression. Adults can be bullied at work. (Often good feedback with this question, which give an opportunity to talk about bullying and how it can affect young carers)

**Question 3** Do people with mental illness sometimes say and do things they don't really mean?

**Answer** Yes, can you give an example? The illness or the medication the person is on can affect how a person thinks, speaks and behaves to others.

**Question 4** Do only adults suffer from mental illness?

**Answer** No, can you give an example? Depression can affect children. (If they are bullied they could become depressed)

**Question 5** Can exercise help to stop people feeling depressed?

**Answer** Yes. Do you know why? When we exercise our body produces endorphins (often called the happy hormone) which helps a person relax and feel less stressed, some doctors now prescribe exercise classes for depression instead of giving them medication!

**This is a hard question;** most of today's lesson has been about depression, but do you know of any other mental illnesses?

<b>Depression</b>	Feeling sad or down all the time
<b>Anxiety</b>	Always feeling really nervous or anxious
<b>Schizophrenia</b>	Their thoughts are often mixed up which can frighten others – they can tend to be very nervous
<b>Obsessive-compulsive disorder</b>	often doing something over and over again like washing your hands
<b>Phobias</b>	Phobia is the Greek word for fear:
	<b>Phobophobia</b> fear of phobias
	<b>Scholionophobia</b> fear of school
	<b>Ophidiophobia</b> fear of Snakes
	<b>Arachnophobia</b> ear of spiders
	<b>Zoophobia</b> fear of animals
	<b>Aerophobia</b> fear of flying
	<b>Acrophobia</b> fear of heights
	<b>Hydrophobia</b> fear of water

Some phobias do not affect everyday life but agoraphobia would, does anyone know what it is? (Not being able to go out) would make life very difficult.

**Bearing in mind that last time we talked about physical disability, what tasks might you have to do as a young carer of someone with a mental health problem?**

Think about it for a minute or two before you answer.

**Answer** Of course you may have to do any or all of the tasks we have talked about but it's very likely to be things like listening to, supporting, comforting and cheering up.

Living with someone with mental health problems can be very difficult for a young carer, they may need a lot of emotional support also. Imagine coming home from school feeling really good about your day and the person you care for is feeling down.

REMIND THE CLASS of the project, **who a young carer is**, who **they** may care for, and who there is to talk to. Thank them for their participation and listening.

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**Lesson 5****EVALUATION**

This evaluation is very important as young carers who have not yet come forward may feel safer identifying themselves here.

What can you remember most from the work we have done over the past four weeks?

What do you think it would be like to be a young carer and how do you think you would feel?

How do you think you can help a friend who is a young carer?

Go through the evaluation one question at a time reminding them what the lesson was about.

**Everyone who says they are a young carer or they think they are needs to be seen and assessed.**

At the end of the lesson REMIND THE CLASS of the project, **who a young carer is**, who **they** may care for, and who there is to talk to. Thank them for their participation and listening.

Young carer workers may like to write to the class and teacher thanking them for working with them.

## EVALUATION SHEET

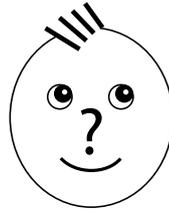
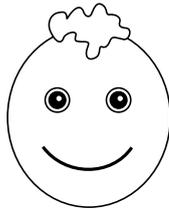
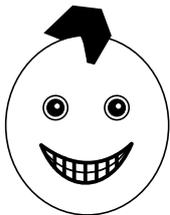
Now we have come to the end of our lessons on caring I would like you to answer the questions below. All you have to do is fill in a smiley face.

I understood

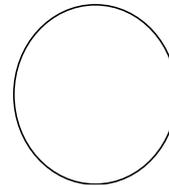
I understood a bit

Made me think

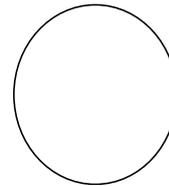
I didn't really understand



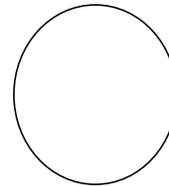
- 1) Do you think lesson one explained about caring and what a young carer is?



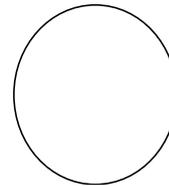
- 2) Do you think the role-play in lesson two helped you to understand some of the tasks a young carer may have to do?



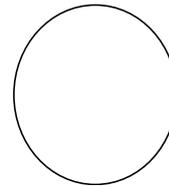
- 3) Do you think lesson three helped you to understand disability?



- 4) Do you think lesson four helped you to understand mental ill health?



- 5) Do you think you understand what a young carer is?



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Are you a Young Carer? \_\_\_\_\_

The following letter can be sent to parents to bring awareness and to help identify carers both young and adult in the community.

TO PARENTS OF PUPILS AT **NAME** **SCHOOL**

Do **you** have any of the following?

A relative who lives with you who, due to illness or disability, is cared for by you?

A disability, a physical or mental health illness yourself?

A drug or alcohol problem?

If you said **yes** to any of the above questions, then you may find yourself relying on your child or children for help with the following: -

**General household chores**

**Providing care (to yourself or the cared for person) when the child is meant to be at school, or before or after school**

**Childcare of younger siblings**

**Collecting benefits, prescriptions or shopping**

**Attending doctor or hospital appointments**

There are many young people who help both physically and emotionally to support someone at home because of physical, mental ill health, disability, or drug or alcohol problems. However the school is linked with an organisation that has a **young carers project**, which supports families in these circumstances.

With the support of (projects name) you and your family can receive the following services: -

List the services your project offers

If you feel your child/children are young carers and give you a lot of support with caring, then call us to ensure you and your family receive the support you are entitled to.

\_\_\_\_\_ **PROJECT DETAILS** \_\_\_\_\_

**REMEMBER our young carers project gives support to over \_\_\_\_\_ families within \_\_\_\_\_ YOUR AREA - you are not alone.**



**YOUNG CARERS STATISTICS**

Figures from the 2001 Census states that there are 174,995 carers under 18 in the UK. This includes 12,168 caring for over 50 hours per week.

In England and Wales the figure is 149,446 young carers with 10,000 providing care for more than 50 hours per week.

- 3,000 primary school children provide more than 50 hours per week
- 5,300 primary school children provide more than 20 hours per week

These figures are likely to be low because: -

The question asked in the Census makes no mention of drug or alcohol problems – many members of the public do not think of these conditions when asked about disability or ill-health  
 The form was filled in by parents on behalf of children under 16 – many parents, especially those with stigmatised conditions, will not have recognised or revealed this information.

**A SUMMARY OF GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS**

<b>North East</b>	7,606
<b>North West</b>	22,669
<b>Yorkshire and Humber</b>	14,317
<b>East Midlands</b>	12,476
<b>West Midlands</b>	16,358
<b>East</b>	13,077
<b>London</b>	22,638
<b>South East</b>	17,756
<b>South West</b>	11,876

**250,000 UK CHILDREN LIVE WITH PARENTAL SUBSTANCE MISUSE. MANY PEOPLE WITH DRUG/ALCOHOL PROBLEMS ALSO HAVE MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.**

**MOST YOUNG CARERS LOOK AFTER THEIR MOTHER. ABOUT 15% LOOK AFTER THEIR FATHER.**

**AROUND 30% HAVE PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL.**

Figures provided by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers

PSHE and Citizenship is non statutory at key stage 2; however there are guidelines written in the National Curriculum and the issues in this pack cover the following areas: -

**KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING**

Developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities

Pupils should be taught: -

**1a** to talk about their opinions, and explain their views, on issues that affect themselves and society

**1b** (in part and relating to a young carer) to recognise their worth as individuals by identifying positive things about themselves, and their achievement.

Preparing to play an active role as citizens

Pupils should be taught: -

**2a** (in part) to discuss and debate topical issues and problems

**2c** (in part) to realise the consequences of bullying

**2d** that there are different kinds of responsibilities, rights and duties at home, at school and in the community, and that these can sometimes conflict with each other

**2e** (in part) to reflect on moral and social issues to understand other people's experiences

**2h** to recognise the role of voluntary, community and pressure groups

Developing a healthy, safer lifestyle

Pupils should be taught: -

**3a** (in part) what makes a healthy lifestyle, including the benefits of exercise, what affects mental health

Developing good relationships and respecting the differences between people

Pupils should be taught: -

**4a** that their actions affect themselves and others, to care about other people's feelings and to try to see things from their points of view

**4d** (in part) to realise the nature and consequences of bullying

**4f** (in part) that differences and similarities between people arise from a number of factors, including disability

**4g** where individuals, families and groups can get help and support

## SOME QUOTES FROM TEACHERS

All teachers asked said the lessons gave them a clearer understanding of young carers and their issues and where they would go for help.

### In relation to PSHE

“Broadened usual targets.”

“The lessons covered many areas of PSHE allowing the children the opportunity to discuss issues from their own lives, experiences they’ve had in relation to people they know and learn about the lives and responsibilities of other people in the world.”

“There were opportunities for children to develop their “speaking and listening skills.”

### What the children gained from the lessons

“They enjoyed the role-play. It made them think about some difficult situations”.

“The opportunity to listen to and to discuss experiences. The role-play provided a visual stimulus to make important points and bring it to life more. As there was limited speaking during these role-plays it gave children who were less confident the chance to engage/participate.”

“The children were so enthusiastic about the subject that they chose to use it as the topic for our class assembly a few weeks later. I am sure the children in my class will remember this experience for many years to come.”

“I feel that the sessions with my class were suitable for the age and ability within my class. The children were engaged and involved in each session.” Year 3 & 4 class

### What the Teachers gained from the lessons

“Also raised awareness for myself, many children in this area are significantly linked to this issue.”

“How real this problem is. Empathy towards children in my class who may be “young Carers’.”

“Observing my class discuss areas of theirs and others lives gave me a greater insight into their lives.”

“I particularly enjoyed the session on mental health as it raised a subject which is often misinterpreted, it helped prepare children for the facts associated with this subject.” (Year 4 teacher)

**A PLAY FOR SCHOOLS**

Many primary school children love to perform plays and can come up with some great ideas. If you would like to put on a play here is one idea you could use. The monologues can be spoken either before or after the scenarios, or you could have the scenarios between the monologues.

**Monologue**

(Talking to audience)

Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_

I live with my mum / dad

Sometimes when I go to bed I am so tired, so much so that I can hardly wake up in the morning. The first thing I do is to check and see if mum/dad is ok. I can't help but worry.

I have to do so much before I go to school; I have to get myself ready and then I have to help mum/dad. S/he used to work but now s/he is just so sad all the time and hardly leaves the house, I love her/him so much I hate to see her/him so unhappy.

(As if talking to themselves)

I'll make mum/dad some breakfast before I go to school otherwise s/he won't eat all day. If there is time I'll put on a wash, I'm running out of clean clothes. I don't know what to cook for dinner tonight; I'd best check what food we have before I go out.

(Back to the audience)

At school I'm always being told off for not paying attention and for being tired, but I can't tell anyone, they just wouldn't understand. I don't really have any friends because I'm too busy to go out and play. Sometimes though I wish **someone** knew, so I had someone to turn to or to talk to, but I'm afraid to tell anyone.

## Second Monologue

(Talking to the audience)

Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_

I live with my mum / dad.

My mum / dad has been unwell for quite some time. When it first happened I was exhausted all the time.

I still have to help out around the house and with cheering her/him up but it's a lot easier now.

You see I'm a young carer, I didn't realise it at first and when I was told I said "What's a young carer? I've never heard of one of those."

It was my teacher; she called me aside one day and asked me how things were at home, (she'd noticed a change in me). I was unsure about telling her, but it's made so much difference because I get help at school if I'm struggling with my work and I have someone to talk to when things get on top of me.

Recently, we did young carers in PSHE, I felt a bit embarrassed at first and didn't want to tell anyone but when everyone started saying how hard it must be and how they would help if they had a friend who was a young carer, I realised I should be proud of the work I do.

Best of all though, I was put in touch with my local young carers project and I found out I'm not the only young carer in my school. I get lots of support and go on some great trips. Seems silly really but it makes so much difference knowing there are other young carers, and they really do understand what it's like.

When you hear the monologues of the young carers you realise how important it is for them to have support. Below are some scenarios to be acted out. Your class may come up with some of their own, having someone other than a parent as the person being cared for. It's a good opportunity for them to think what it must really be like to be a young carer.

**Scenario 1 – needing 4 people to act out**

Cared for person is a sibling with autism

Young Carer can be older or younger

Mum works part time

Dad works full time

Cared for person often messes up young carers room and breaks things. When young carer gets home from school it's discovered that a favourite toy is broken.

**Scenario 2 – needing 3 people to act out**

Cared for person is an elderly grandmother with dementia

Mum is at home with two young children aged 18 months and 3 years

Young carer

Grandmother is lucid some of the time but mum gets upset when she's not

Mum hasn't been able to get out all day. What happens when the young carer gets home from school?

**Scenario 3 – needing 5 people to act out**

Cared for person is Dad who has had an accident and lost the use of one leg

Mum works full time

Brother is 17

Sister is 15

Young carer is dad's favourite and wants to help as much as possible

Dad is still having difficulty getting around and has been on his own all day. What happens when the young carer gets home from school?

Forster  
Park



Primary School

Boundfield Road, Catford SE6 1PQ

Telephone: 020 8698 5686

Fax: 020 8695 9659

Headteacher: Anne Simmons

Deputy Head: Jenny Chiverton

27th February 2004

Dear Marilyn,

I am writing to thank you for your work with our children as part of the Young Carers programme.

The work undertaken highlighted the number of children in our school whom to some degree, take on a caring role at home. With our children, as you know, this ranged from a parent with severe sickle cell, to parents with various levels of depression.

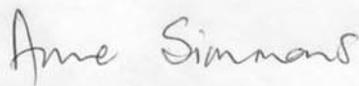
The important role played by these children was shared with other children who themselves were able to identify how they were carers in some form or other. This made the sessions very positive and the role of a young carer was seen to be valued.

Staff benefited from being more aware of the ways in which the children were supporting other family members in the home and the community. This was not just a project for nominated carers but raised awareness amongst children and staff.

As part of our school curriculum this is being incorporated into PHSE, and issues about caring are often brought up at circle time.

I look forward to seeing the published document.

Yours sincerely,



Anne Simmons



**Young Carers Lewisham, The Princess Royal Trust,  
Lewisham Carers Centre,**

**Waldram Place, Forest Hill, London SE23 2LB**

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