

Essex Young Carers Report



July 2022

Introduction

A young carer is someone under 18 who holds caring responsibilities for a family member/s. Life can be very demanding for young carers, they are committed to their caring responsibilities and need to study, take exams, look after themselves, and not lose sight of their dreams and ambitions.

The Children and Families Act (2014) places a **statutory duty** on local authorities to provide **Young Carer Assessments** to children under 18 years of age.

In September 2017, ECC Cabinet responded to the **lack of consistency** of young carer provisions across Essex and made the decision to fund a new 'in-house' young carers service to be delivered by the Youth Service from April 2018. The new model included:

- Statutory assessment and bespoke action plans.
- A three-tier key worker scheme linked to level of need.
- Targeted respite and training workshops.
- Access to universal youth provision.
- Young carers and family forums.
- Young carer in school coordinators

3,184

**Statutory Young Carer Assessments
completed over the lifespan of this
delivery model**

Young Carers in Essex

It's been a Journey...

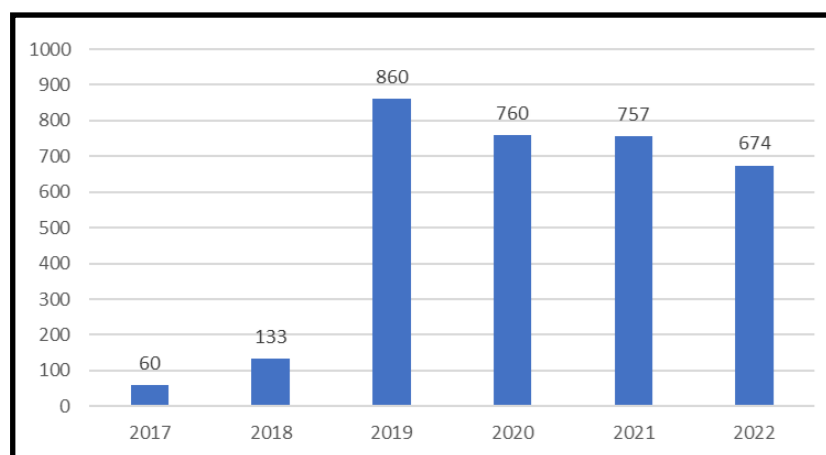
In April 2018, the team were recruited and trained. The new service launched in September of that year.

The service has developed into a **vibrant 'can do' provision** which is well respected across the county by stakeholders, communities, organisations, young carers, and their families.

Several other Local Authorities have approached us for advice and support to develop their young carers offer after we presented our delivery model at a national young carers conference.



Young Carers Statutory Assessments



Despite the impact of the pandemic and the disruption to service provision, the number of young carer statutory assessments has significantly grown since the launch of the service.

The data for the first quarter of 2022 shows the assessments are on track to exceed the results of 2019 whilst maintaining a steady growth throughout the pandemic

The role of Key Workers

Key workers work with young carers and their families to complete assessments, identify issues that are negatively impacting on their lives and set out an action plan to improve situations that enable young carers to have a healthy balance between their caring roles, study, and social life. Plans include organising respite and educational activities, trips to dentists and other health care services, mentoring, coaching, signposting and facilitating quarterly young carer and family forums in each quadrant. They work closely with a wide range of services, organisations and schools to bring about positive changes and opportunities for young carers and their families.

The **voice of young carers** and their families are included in all aspects of the key workers tasks and regular young carer and family forums have proven to be a good space to capture their views and lived experiences that influence service delivery plans and respite activities.



Young carers met with Cllr Louise Mackinlay and PFCC Rodger Hurst during their Pirates respite activity in Feb 2022. They discussed the support they receive from the young carers team and the difference it makes in their lives.

Casework - action plans and group forums influence the work keyworkers undertake with a range of partners across Essex. Here's a sample of the type of interventions and the impact

Issues	Intervention	Outcomes	Impact
Young carers often marked late for school due to caring duties	Key workers set up meetings with young carers and school staff and agree support plans	Schools change late reporting processes for young carers	Young carer feels able to continue with caring role and feels supported by school. Reduction in number of poor attendance/ lateness letters issued to families
Fear of leaving cared for at home. Unable to focus and concentrate in lessons	Schools Coordinators provide onsite training and support for school staff.	Schools recognise young carers feel more secure if they can call their cared for family members during lesson breaks	Reduce anxiety, stress and worry. Increase focus and engagement in learning Identified point of contact in schools
Inappropriate housing unsafe for young carer and siblings	Referrals made to Adult Social Care for Needs Assessment and Occupational Therapist Appointments made with housing providers and local councils.	Planned repairs completed. Planned accommodation moves made Processes in place to inform banks, doctors, schools etc of new contact details	Families feel safer. Housing providers are more aware of young carers and their family's needs
Young carers feel isolated and lack social mixing opportunities	Referral to youth clubs and online events. Access to respite and education workshops.	Young carers have opportunities to engage in positive activities that are educational and stimulating	Reduced isolation and increased peer network and social life Increased regular time away from caring responsibilities Having fun

“Cooperation is the thorough conviction that nobody can get there unless everybody gets there” Virginia Burden



Doing things differently – the pandemic response

The impact of the pandemic left so many children and young people hidden from view. That is especially relevant for young carers. They have spent more time at home taking on more caring duties during the last 2 years. The Youth Service stepped up quickly to support young carers and their families in many ways including:

- Doorstep welfare checks undertaken to deliver activity and food parcels
- Young carer families received weekly calls, texts and video check in's
- Young carers contacted weekly for a catch up and wellbeing check in's
- Some young carers met their key worker for 'walk and talk' sessions
- Signposted families to organisations to collect prescriptions and shopping for families shielding.
- Families received winter food and fuel vouchers
- Laptops delivered enabling access to online education, respite activities and socialising.
- Daily online Zoom sessions including household treasure hunts, den building, keep fit & Zumba

Young Carers Training workshops are an essential element of the service offer, these opportunities enable young carers to be fully equipped to undertake their caring role safely. To date, the team have delivered **130 training sessions** on a wide range of relevant topic including:

Manual Handling	Understanding Autism	Cooking easy meals
Health and wellbeing	Emergency safety planning	Managing medication
Travel training	Online safety	First Aid

Young carers expressed that they were having difficulties with **low moods, self-esteem, and confidence**. The pandemic has increased these issues for many young carers due to not being able to socialise and has affected the way they are able to interact and develop their social skills.



"I would like to thank you for all the support you gave my son during this difficult time. I really do think you gave him the break that he needed and helped him open about his feelings and how to deal with them. I honestly believe that without your support it could have been a different outcome. I will be forever grateful" Parent

Respite Activities are designed to provide young carers with a break from caring

responsibilities, meet with their peers in a safe space, have fun and relax. Young carers are involved in the planning of these activities.

They have visited **Sky Academy** learning about careers in the media and trying out various roles, young carer festivals, young carer talent show, golf and lunch, science party, theatre trips, Kidzania - a town for children where they can experience different jobs via roleplay, young carers choir, residential trips including outdoor adventure learning, team building, water sports and sailing

489 respite activities have been delivered to date with lots planned for the upcoming summer break.

During lockdown the online respite activities were extremely popular, with many young carers attending sessions regularly.



Birch Hall Adventures summer 2021

In June 2022, a group of young carers travelled to the Royal Harwich Yacht Club to board the boat *Faramir*, for a two-night and three-day sailing voyage. They agreed a working rota and took responsibility

for cooking all meals, cleaning the boat, carrying out safety checks, ensuring all sails were stowed away correctly and pulling up the anchor. During the day the whole group worked together to tack down the river. Both evenings were spent with the skipper reviewing how the day went, tracking how far they had sailed, completing weather checks, checking tide times and sailing routes for the following day.

On Saturday they took part in the **Festival of the Sea** in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. They sailed as part of a flotilla with a 100 other boats. The young carers gained so much from this experience. They demonstrated increased confidence and showed resilience and leadership. The trip was full of new and challenging opportunities. They learned so many new skills and were awarded with an **accredited Royal Yachting certificate**.



The Young Carers in Schools

The Children's Society states that 27% of young carers aged 11-15 miss or have difficulties at school due to their caring responsibilities.

The young carer schools coordinators work with schools to build their own policies and procedures to identify, support and safeguard young carers. They offer training and encourage schools to identify young carer champions to implement changes that improve attendance, attainment, safeguard and promote the welfare of young carer students ensuring they have the same life chances as their peers.

The coordinators facilitate awareness raising events in school assemblies, teacher and governors' meetings, networking events, countywide conferences, and work with schools to engage with the Children's Society National Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) Award by guiding them through the process of meeting the criteria and gaining the award status. Implementing the YCiS programme has resulted in increased **confidence, well-being** and **achievement**. Schools have worked so incredibly hard to manage the impact of the pandemic and adapted their teaching methods to sustain students learning through lockdown and Covid restrictions. The school coordinators were restricted from going into schools for large periods of time between March 2020 until September 2021 and subsequently the focus on the YCiS's Award was put on hold. During that period, the coordinators supported the wider young carers team to develop online provisions and welfare support.

The school coordinators are now working to full capacity to help schools to meet the YCiS standards and gathering evidence to complete their awards. Essex remains the Local Authority with the highest number of schools achieving the national standards.

Bronze 110

Silver 7

Gold 2

Total 119



A further 22 schools are preparing their evidence for the award and will submit later this year which will take us to a total of :

140 awards

"In the last 3 years we have achieved both our Bronze and Silver Young Carers Awards. None of this would have been possible without the support and guidance of the Essex Young Carers Schools Co-ordinator, who helped and supported me whenever I had a question or needed support. They have even attended school to deliver training to all staff and assisted in assemblies for the children."

Karen Berrada Operation Lead for Young Carers, Felmore Primary School

Awards and Recognition

In 2019 Essex young carers service were highly commended in the “You Make a Difference in Essex” Team of the Year Award. The service was also highly commended by the national Children and Young People Now Awards for Public Sector Team of the Year

Kool Carers Southeast in partnership with Essex Youth Service received Highly Commended at the Children and Young People Now awards 2021, Young Carers category.



Next Steps

The young carers and staff have been supporting commissioners to develop the All-Age Carers Strategy which outlines six commitments. These commitments provide the benchmark for good quality services for all carers in Essex and are already strongly embedded in the Young Carers delivery model.

Easily accessible information, advice, guidance, and support

Develop professional practice and processes

Improve transitions

Carers will have increased opportunity to access good quality support

Carers' needs and rights will be understood and recognised

Carers will be the experts that influence, shape and be involved in decision making

Being directly involved in the consultation and design of the All-Age Carers Strategy has really helped sharpen the focus as we continue to be ambitious for young carers in Essex and build on the successes to date. We are committed to further **amplify the voice of young carers and their families** and generate participation opportunities. We intend to develop a training programme for young carers to inspect our work and tell us what we are doing well and how to improve.

Young adult carers have told us they find the transition into adulthood a scary and often isolating experience. We will develop an Essex Young Carers in Higher Education Award and standards framework. We will work with YAC's to co-produce transition resources and work closer with adult services to ensure smoother transitions.

We will promote the role of Young Carers in Essex and **celebrate their amazing achievements** with them.