

Do you care?

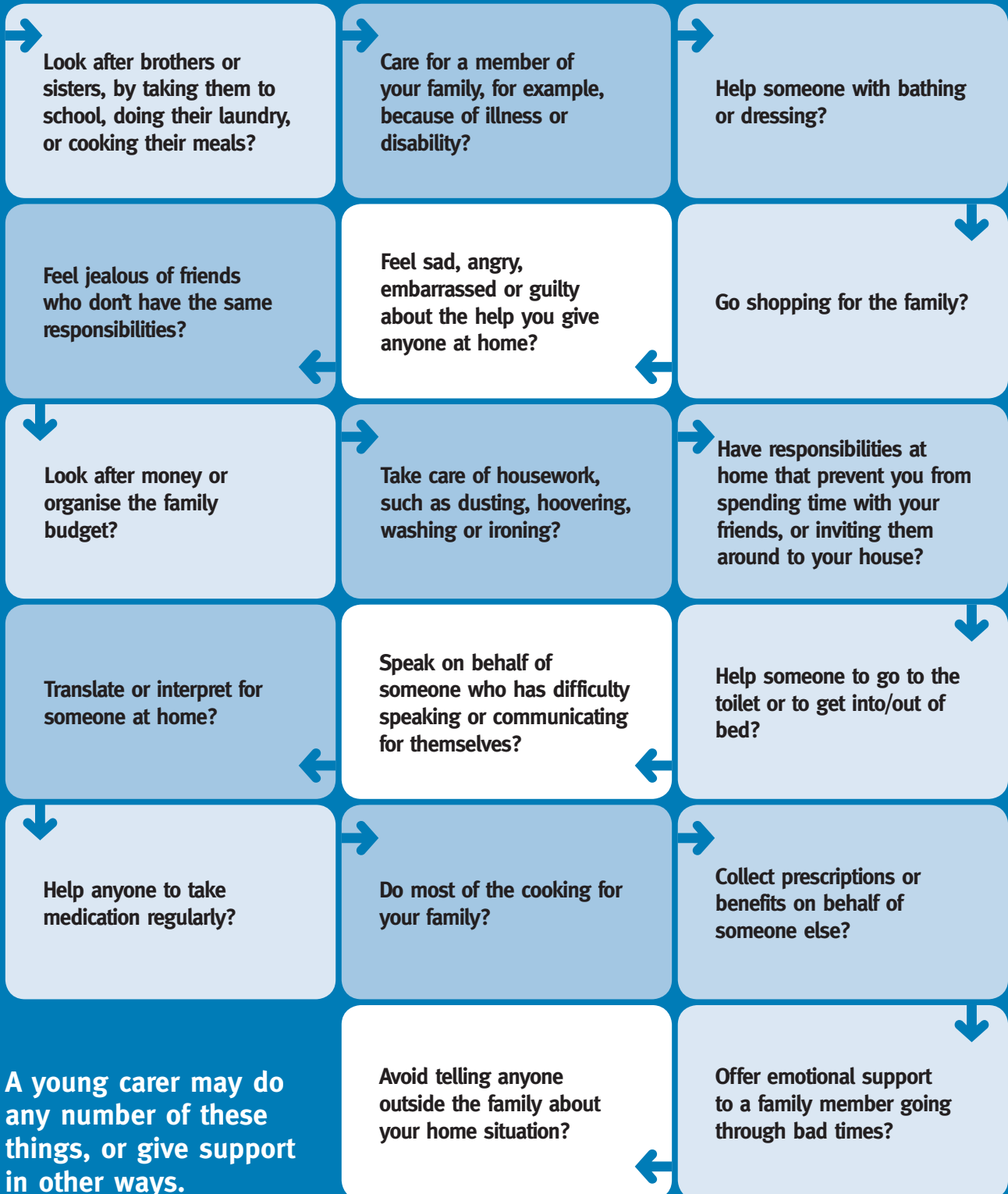
Information for
young carers
living in Essex

Don't think this guide is for you?

Many young people don't see themselves as carers. As a result, they may be missing out on essential parts of their life, or not realise that there is practical help and emotional support available in Essex.



Do you...



Who cares?

Who is a young carer?

Young carers are children and young people whose lives are in some way different because they provide care, assistance or support to another family member. The person they care for is often a parent but could be a brother, sister, grandparent or other relative. A young carer may be dealing with a range of situations, such as disability, chronic illness, mental health difficulties or problems with drugs or alcohol misuse.

Caring for other people at home can affect how you feel, and how much free time you have. If you are still not sure if you are a young carer read the stories in this guide. These are the lives of ordinary young people, about your age, caring for people in various ways... could this be you, or someone you know?

This guide is...
a way for you to help yourself and for others to help you.

This guide is not...
a way for others to get information about you and use it against your wishes.

Remember:

Most of the time adults in authority will not share your personal information with anyone. They will respect your privacy, and ensure your details remain confidential. However, if you give your permission, and/or tell them that you or someone else are in danger or being harmed in some way they will pass information on to others in order to protect you.



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Does this sound like you?

Here are some examples of the different types of situation young carers in Essex are dealing with every day.

Simon's story

Simon is 11 years old. He helps his mum (who has mental health problems), to care for his grandmother with Alzheimer's disease, an illness which is made worse by her occasional violent outbursts. They all live together in the family home.

During Simon's last year of primary school he was referred to the Young Carers Project by the learning mentor in school.

Simon's school was planning a residential trip for all final year pupils. As his family couldn't afford to fund the trip it seemed that Simon would have to miss out on this last opportunity to spend time away with his peers.

What happened next?

The family successfully applied for a grant from the Young Carers Direct Support Fund. This paid for Simon's three day trip and gave him some extra money for personal items.

Since the trip Simon has been attending the Young Carers Project. He is now able to enjoy some regular time out with friends, and switch off from home life for a while.

As a result Simon is a much happier, more confident young man, which has made a real difference to all his family. Relationships with the professionals supporting them (the Children's Team, the Older People's Team, teachers at Simon's school) have also improved - everyone is now pulling together and Simon knows there is always someone ready to listen or to help when he needs them. Support from the Young Carers Project has continued with Simon's transition into secondary school.

Paul's story

Paul is 9 years old. He helps to look after his sister who has learning disabilities. Paul's mum contacted the Young Carers Project as she was really concerned about a change in his behaviour. She discovered that he was stealing large amounts of money from her - something that was totally out of character for him.

What happened next?

A member of staff spoke with Paul, who admitted that he was being bullied at school for money. Staff then spoke with mum and explained the situation to Paul's teachers. The bully has been dealt with and Paul's behaviour is greatly improved. He is now back to his happy self and attending his local Young Carers Project regularly.





Jennifer's story

Jennifer's mum has a long-term illness and relies on Jennifer for her daily care. As part of her routine Jennifer has to do the shopping and take her brother to school. She is often late and has to miss school when Mum is too ill to be left alone. Jennifer is 14 years old.

What happened next?

An Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visited Jennifer and her mum to discuss how best to support Jennifer in school. The EWO also spoke with Jennifer's head of year, who made sure that other teachers were aware of Jennifer's situation. Jennifer now has a private place to telephone home at lunchtimes to check that her mum is okay.

With Jennifer's mum's permission, the EWO contacted Social Care, who praised Jennifer for all the help she gives. They arranged for mum to receive help with shopping and housework and personal tasks like washing and dressing.

Childminders now collect Jennifer's brother from school two days a week, so Jennifer can enjoy some free time with her friends after school, and attend the local Young Carers Project. Jennifer still collects her brother on the other three days, as it is something she really likes to do.

Lucy's story

Sometimes Lucy's mum finds it very difficult to cope and drinks too much. Lucy has to cook her own tea and look after her sisters when mum is having a bad time. She worries about leaving her mum and regularly misses school. Lucy is 10 years old.

What happened next?

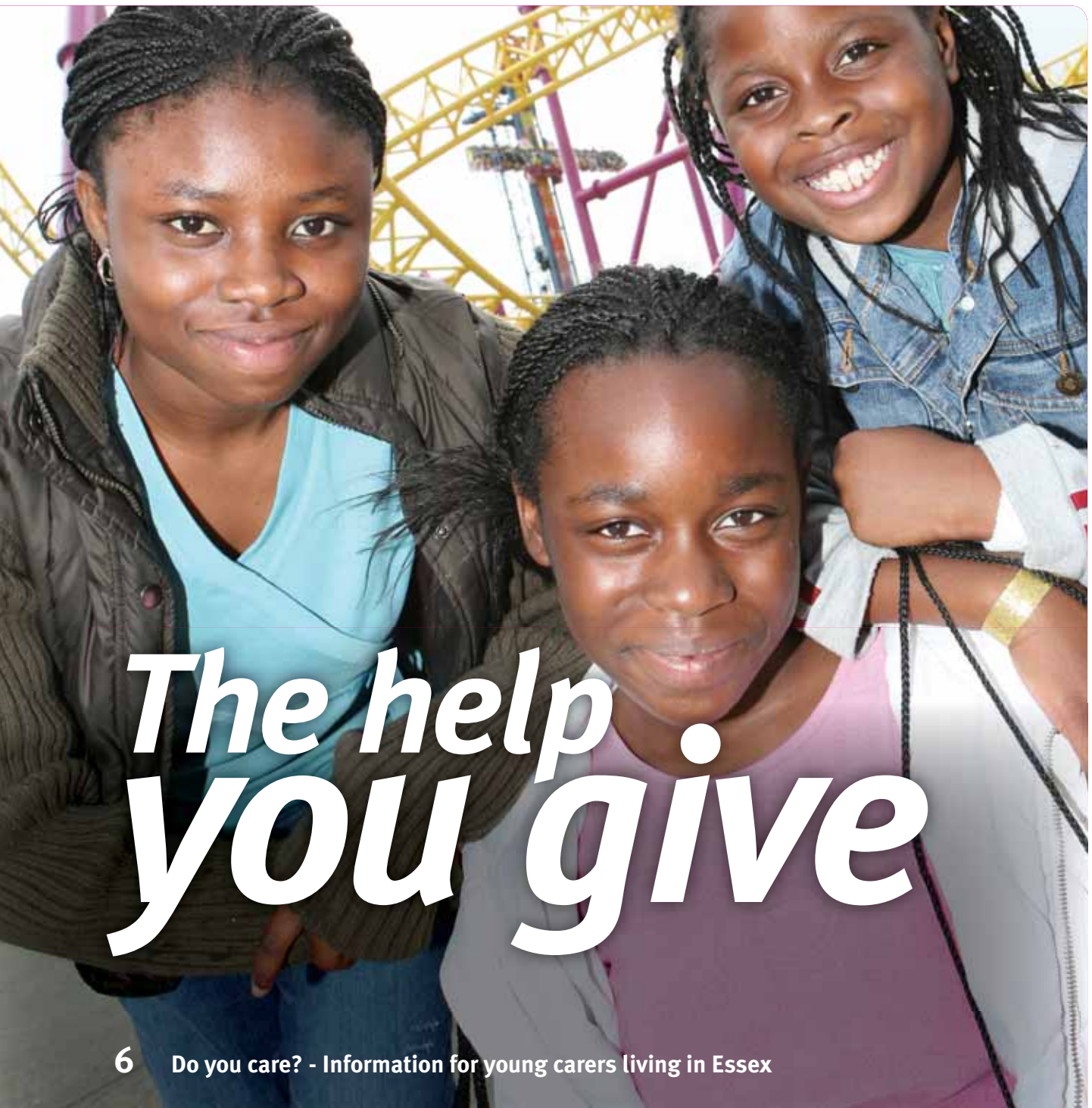
Lucy spoke to her teacher about her mum's problems, and was referred to the Young Carers Project in her area. Staff were able to offer counselling and support for Lucy, and also directed her and her mum to a local Alcohol Support group, where they continue to receive help.

Remember:

You may not see yourself as a young carer. In your opinion you are just a brother, sister, daughter or son, helping a loved one who is having a tough time. To you it could be part of your 'normal' routine, and something you accept as part of everyday life. Besides, most people would help someone with an illness, or a problem, wouldn't they?

As a carer you have a choice about the jobs you do or would prefer not to do. Don't be afraid to ask for help - or to tell someone if you are struggling to cope.

Everyone's home situation is different. The things you do to help out at home will depend on the illness, problems or needs of your relative. For example, you may help them to do things they can't do for themselves. Perhaps you have to look after another person (or people) in the family because a parent is ill, or unable to cope. You may even find that you help by simply listening and being caring, rather than by doing anything practical.



The help you give

Use this space to write down any thoughts or ideas you have, or the adults you know you could talk to about your home life...

The help you receive

Whatever your role at home, you can always find help and support available nearby. Start by asking those close to you, perhaps in your own family, if they can help out. There are also people outside the family who can provide practical support, such as your school health adviser, play and youth workers, teachers, the Connexions service, learning mentors, social workers, charities, counsellors, as well as helplines and websites.

Ask yourself:

- Who do I care for?
- What do I do to help out at home?
- Am I caring for someone on my own?
- What is a typical day like for me?
- How much time do I spend helping each day?
- Would equipment, such as a hoist, walk-in shower, stairlift or Community Care Alarm make it easier for me to care for someone?

Remember:

If you're not sure how to get help, or who to ask, contact your local Carers Centre or Essex County Council who will signpost you to your local Young Carers Project. Their details, plus a list of other support organisations can be found in the 'Who can help?' section at the end of this guide.

Please see the 'Who can help?' section in this guide for more information on the support organisations, groups and agencies already helping other young carers in Essex.



Although you might feel as if you are the only one in your situation, there are actually around 5,000 young carers in Essex, and more than 175,000 in the UK - that's nearly double the number of people needed to fill the new Wembley stadium.

You are definitely not alone!

While every young carer's situation is unique to them and their family, many young carers share similar feelings and experiences. **By doing what you do, you are not different or strange.**

You might feel proud, angry, sad, embarrassed or frustrated about being a carer at home. You may think that your friends or others don't understand what you're going through. **Coping with your feelings on your own can be tough.**

You might think that talking never solved anything but you'd be surprised. Talking to someone you trust about your feelings can really help. Who you choose will depend on who you feel you can trust and who you are happy to tell about what goes on at home.

There may be opportunities in your local area for you to meet up with other young carers. This can be really helpful, particularly if you don't have anyone to talk to at home. It will also give you some valuable time away from the house, to socialise and have some fun with people of your own age. To find out about this kind of support contact your local Carers Centre (see the 'Who can help?' section in this guide for details).

Remember:

There **ARE** people out there who can help you, but they may not realise what you are going through if you don't tell them what's happening at home.

Your feelings

Ask yourself

- How does being a young carer make me feel?
- Do I get any thanks for what I do?
- Do I worry about the person I look after?
- How stressed do I feel?
- Who knows about what I do?
- Do I feel that people understand the responsibilities I have?
- Do I wish I had someone to talk to about how I feel?

Remember:

Don't bottle things up.

Let other people know if things are starting to get on top of you, or if you are feeling stressed. Find someone you can trust and feel comfortable sharing your feelings with, such as a friend, neighbour or teacher.

Time and relationships



Being a carer may take up most of your day, or just a few minutes. Either way, it means that you have less time to do the things you want.

Not having enough time for yourself may make you feel unhappy or even angry with the person you care for, or others around. It can also creep up on you so that you don't even notice that you have less time for friends or homework, or simply to watch your favourite TV programme.

You might feel that spending your time looking after someone is the

most worthwhile thing you can do. It is important, but so are you! You need time to develop other relationships, with friends, family and other special people. You should be able to **have fun**, to **relax** and just **be yourself**. You need time for your education so that you don't fall behind, or feel that you can't cope. You also need time to be able to talk to others about how you are feeling.

Use this space to write down any thoughts or ideas you have about your time and relationships...

Ask yourself

- How much time do I have for myself?
- What do I do in my spare time, if I have any?
- Do I have any friends? Who are they and are any of them close?
- Does my role as a carer stop me from having time for friends?
- How do the things I do at home affect my relationships with other people in the family, such as brothers or sisters?
- What would I do in an emergency? Have I got an emergency plan? Your Young Carers Project could help you.
- Would I like to meet up with other young carers?

Remember:

Make time for yourself, doing what you want to do. Talk to someone at school or college about any difficulties you may be having there because of your responsibilities at home. They may be able to arrange for some support to help you out e.g. extra time for homework.

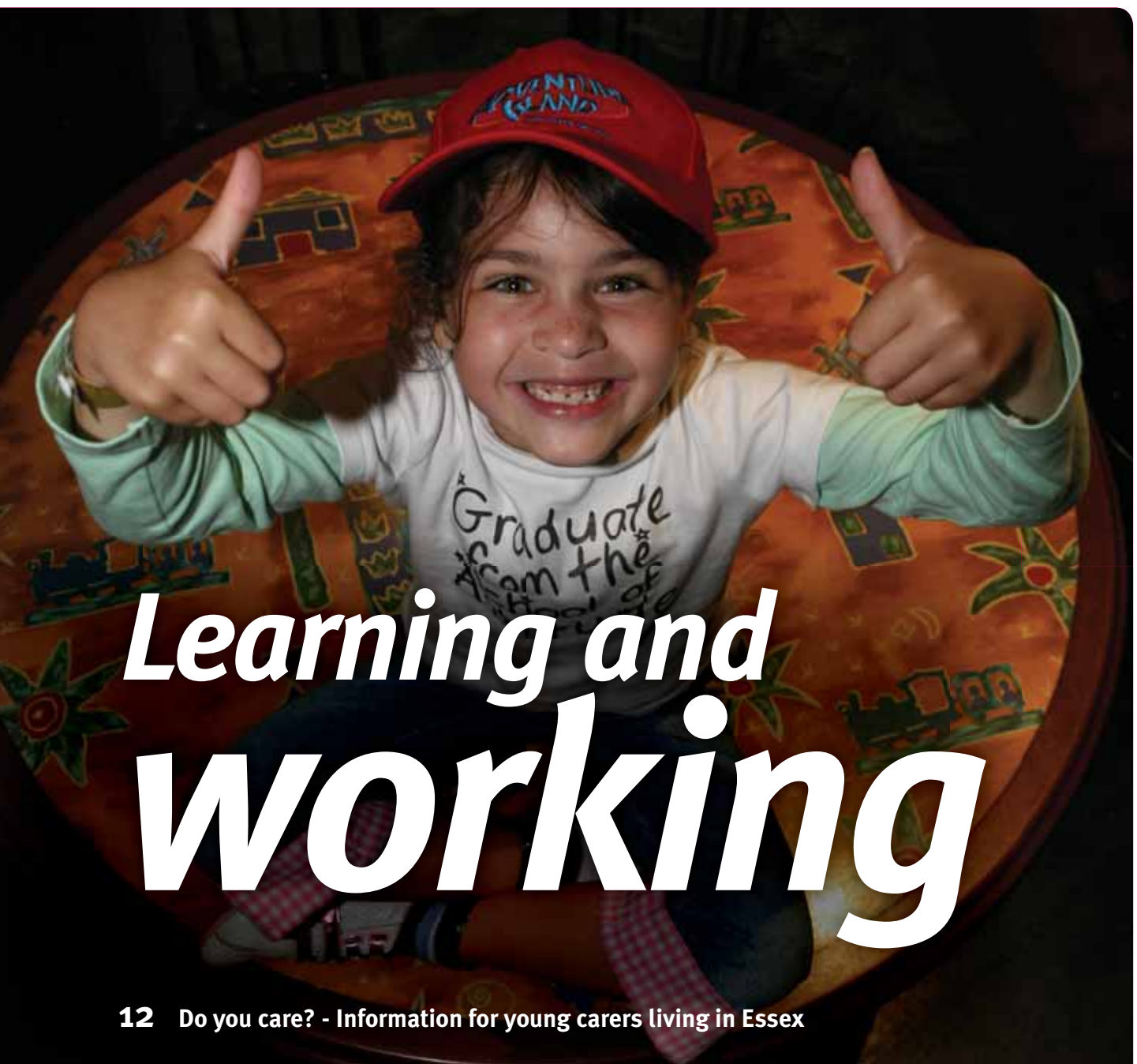
Please see the 'Who can help?' section in this guide for more information on the support organisations, groups and agencies already helping other young carers in Essex.

Young carers are all ages. Some are likely to be at school or college, while others could be at work.

As a young carer you might feel that you simply don't have enough time or energy to spend on studying for qualifications or holding down a job.

It's not easy trying to keep up with other young people who don't have to care for someone. However, if you talk to someone in charge, like a teacher or your boss about what you do at home, this will help them

to understand what you can and can't manage, and to hopefully find ways to help you. For example, they may be able to put you in touch with a support organisation or group to make life easier. Or it could be something simple like giving you the time to make calls home, extra time to do your homework or more flexible hours at work.



Ask yourself

- Am I at school, college, on a training scheme or do I have a job?
- Does being a young carer affect my ability to do any of these things?
- Does anyone I learn or work with know that I am a young carer?
- Am I picked on because of what I do at home?
- Do I wish I had time to attend college, a training scheme or job (if you have left school)?
- Have I missed out on anything during my education or employment, such as career advice, trips or social opportunities?
- Have my grades or qualifications been affected by being a carer?

Remember:

Everyone has the right to an education and to go to work and you are no different! You don't have to be the main carer for the rest of your life.

If you don't tell anyone about what you do at home, they will not be able to help you. This is also very important if you are being picked on or bullied by people who think you're different because you are a young carer. You should never put up with bullying. Speak to a teacher or a manager who can put a stop to it. Talk to your family about what you can all do to help you get the education, training and career you want.

Please see the 'Who can help?' section in this guide for more information on the support organisations, groups and agencies already helping other young carers in Essex.



When you're looking after other people it's very easy to forget about your own needs. However, it's essential that you have time to look after yourself properly, such as going to the doctor or dentist, keeping clean, eating healthily and regularly and having time to relax.

You may also need someone to turn to if you feel ill or stressed. Although you might find it hard to see past the care you give to others... **remember, you have a right to be cared for too!**

Some young people find ways to make themselves 'feel better' that aren't necessarily good for them, such as drinking, taking drugs or deliberately hurting themselves (self harm). If this sounds like you, don't be ashamed or feel bad about what's happened, but **do talk about it with an adult that you trust.**

Looking after yourself

Use this space to write down any thoughts or ideas you have about looking after yourself...

Ask yourself

- Do I often feel stressed, tired or depressed?
- Do I have enough time to look after myself properly?
- If I get ill, who cares for me?
- Am I doing anything which is meant to make me feel better, but that I know isn't good for me?

Remember:

Tell your doctor about your caring responsibilities and how they affect your health. Make time to relax and look after yourself properly. Talk to an adult you trust about anything you may be doing that you know is bad for you. Try and take regular exercise. Any kind of activity such as swimming, running or even just walking can help relieve stress.



Please see the 'Who can help?' section in this guide for more information on the support organisations, groups and agencies already helping other young carers in Essex.

Everyone should have hopes and dreams. They help us to plan ahead and strive for the things we really want out of life.

Do you have hopes and dreams, or do you find it difficult to think past the day-to-day tasks you do? You may even feel that there is no point having dreams because of your responsibilities and commitments to someone at home.

Remember:

You are entitled to plan ahead and have goals for the future like anyone else. You don't have to try and work out how to achieve them by yourself. Essex County Council and other organisations can help you make plans for the person you care for, as well as for yourself.



Hopes and dreams



Be informed

As a young carer information is one of the most important things you can have. With the right information you can make choices for you and your family, find out about a relative's illness or disability, or discover what and where appropriate support is available.

There are lots of places you can go for information. You might want to start by looking at the 'Who can help?' section in this guide. Perhaps you already have a few contacts of your own; write them down in the spaces provided so they are easy to find when you need them.

This section talks about rights to benefits and services. To get either of these for yourself, the person you care for or your family, you will need something called an ‘assessment’.

A number of different people can carry out assessments. These include personal advisers from Connexions, education welfare officers, social workers, benefit advice workers and nurses.

Social Care staff are required by law to carry out an assessment before they can provide any support. They can become involved for a variety of reasons; to help people with mental health, drug or alcohol problems, children not attending school, or people who are in hospital or in a hospice (a place where patients with life threatening illnesses are treated).

For example:

A person with physical disabilities might be assessed by the Physical Impairment team to find out exactly what help they need.

This could mean providing equipment in their home, such as handrails, or arranging for someone called a home care worker to help out with shopping, getting in and out of bed, dressing or cooking.

Remember:

An assessment is a way of gathering information to find out what help someone needs or is entitled to.

Your rights

What rights do carers have?

Carers of all ages have a legal right to have a personal assessment at the same time as the person they care for is being assessed. This right is provided by a law called the ‘Carers (Recognition and Services) Act, 1995’.

If you are a young carer aged 16 or over, you have the right to have your own assessment, whether the person you care for is being assessed or not. This right is provided by a law called the ‘Carers and Disabled Children Act, 2000’.

If you are a young carer aged under 16 your assessment is carried out under a law called the ‘Children’s Act, 1989’. You are then described as a ‘child in need’ and your assessment is carried out by someone from the ‘Children’s Services’ team. Your assessment will look at the things you do and how they affect your development. Children’s Services can provide help for you and your family to make sure that your development is not affected by being a young carer.

Katy’s story

Katy looks after her mum who has multiple sclerosis and is in a wheelchair. She sometimes has to miss school to stay at home and look after her mum. As a result, she is falling behind in her schoolwork.

Katy’s mum contacted Social Care and a social worker from Children’s Services came to assess both her and Katy.

Mum now has home carers coming in every day to help her manage at home. This means that Katy can now go to school and is also receiving help to catch up with her studies.





Social Care staff will always try to help and support you and will always discuss any concerns with you as soon as possible. Many parents, carers and children worry that social workers may take children and young people away. In fact, most children and young people stay living at home with their parents.

You, or someone acting on your behalf, can ask for an appointment to have your needs assessed by calling **Contact Essex** on **0845 603 7627**. They will be able to arrange for a first assessment of what you might need within seven working days.

Sometimes, other people may contact Essex County Council if they are worried about you (perhaps because of health or child protection issues) to see if they can help. People such as doctors, support workers or teachers should always tell you before they contact Essex County Council and explain why. Essex County Council Adolescent Services or Contact Essex (Children's Services) carry out assessments on young carers in Essex - or can put you in touch with someone else who can help.

Essex County Council supports children and families

Benefits

Benefits are funds given to people by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to ensure that they have enough money to live on. It's always worth checking to find out if you (or your family) is getting all the money you are entitled to.

Ask yourself

- Do I or my family get any help or support?
- Is my family getting all the benefits they are entitled to?
- Would an assessment of need help me or the person I care for at home?



Remember:

Talk to your family about applying for a benefits check. Ask them whether you should also have an assessment. If you are aged 16 years or over you could ask for a Carers Assessment. The 'Who can help?' section in this guide will give you details of who to contact about benefits and assessments.



The following pages contain information about the main people and places that can help you and your family, by providing information, advice, support or services. Some of the contacts are more useful for your family or an adult that you trust, but others are aimed just at young people or young carers. For information on any topic not included in this section, or if you are not certain who to ask for help, contact your local Young Carers Project or Contact Essex.

Please note

The services and websites listed in this section have been contacted to ensure their details are accurate at the time of going to print. However, please bear in mind that information can change very quickly, particularly on the internet. Essex County Council can not take responsibility for the quality of services or the content of websites listed in it or any resulting loss, damage or distress.

Who can help?

Important contacts

Contact Essex

0845 603 7627

The first point of contact for information, advice and support for young carers in Essex. Staff can also refer you to your nearest Young Carers Project - or you can call them direct using the numbers below.

Young Carers Projects

01245 437314

Located in all areas of the county these projects are a mix of voluntary and council-run services. Participants are given practical help, emotional support, information and advice, as well as a regular opportunity to 'take a break' and socialise with other young carers in their area.

For individual Young Carers Projects contact:

Basildon

Telephone: **01268 632271**

Judith.longden2@essexcc.gov.uk

Braintree

Telephone: **01376 320572**

braintreexroads@aol.com

Brentwood

Telephone: **01277 201789**

brentwood.district@crossroads.org.uk

Castle Point

Telephone: **01268 511142**

staff@crossroadsyoungcarers.com

Chelmsford

Telephone: **01245 223335**

Rebecca.ballard@essexcc.gov.uk

Telephone: **01245 353575**

infocus-@fish.co.uk

Colchester

Telephone: **01621 851640**

yccolchester@maldoncarerscentre.org.uk

Telephone: **01206 560997**

CCCfrC@aol.com

Epping

Telephone: **01992 572557**

eppingforest.harlowdistrict@crossroads.org.uk

Harlow

Telephone: **01279 308314**

youngcarers@harlowcarers.org.uk

Maldon

Telephone: **01621 851640**

ycmaldon@maldoncarerscentre.org.uk

Rayleigh

Telephone: **01268 775255**

rravs@rravs.org.uk

Tendring

Telephone: **01255 860960**

tendcrossroads@aol.com

Uttlesford

Telephone: **01799 523645**

or **01371 871389**

Linda.barnes@essexcc.gov.uk

Voluntary Organisations (including Carers Centres and Crossroads)

These operate in each local authority and offer practical help, emotional support, information and advice to all carers.

Benefits and Welfare Rights

Department for Work and Pensions

- Jobcentre Plus (for people aged under 60) - for your local office visit www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk
- Jobseeker Direct
Telephone **0845 6060 234**
This service is available to anyone who is looking for work 8am - 6pm weekdays and 9am - 1pm Saturdays. Calls are charged at local rates.
- The Pension Service (for people aged 60+)
Telephone: **0845 6060 265**
Textphone: **0845 6060 285**
Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm

Connexions Direct

Connexions Direct offers quick access to information and advice on a wide range of topics. Personal Advisers are on hand to listen to young people, and can offer confidential advice and practical help by telephone, through web chat, via e-mail or text message.

Advisers are available from 8am - 2am, seven days a week.

Telephone: **080 800 13 2 19** (free)
Text: **07766 4 13 2 19**
www.connexions-direct.com

Connexions

Telephone: **01245 436399**
www.estconnexions.co.uk

'The Carers Grapevine'

Essential information about sources of support, help, advice and other related services, available from the Carers Strategy Team.

Telephone: **01245 434703**
carersstrat@essexcc.gov.uk

Schools, Children and Families

For information on children and young people's social care, education, special needs, early years, youth provision and Connexions.

Telephone: **0845 603 7627**

Mental Health

North Essex: Heather Harris

- Carer Support Manager, North Essex Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (NEMHPT)

Telephone: **01376 555519**
or **07810 835878**

heather.harris@nemhpt.nhs.uk

South East Essex: Carla Fourie

- Consultant Social Worker, South Essex Partnership Trust

Telephone: **01268 491353**

Mobile: **07966 046801**

Carla.fourie@southessex-trust.nhs.uk

Essex Young People's Drug and Alcohol Service

Telephone: **01245 493311**

Mark.munday@childrenssociety.org.uk

Essex Young Person and Children's Advocacy Network

Telephone: **0800 783 2187**

www.giveusavoice.com

Children's Legal Centre

An independent national charity concerned with law and policy affecting children and young people.

Telephone: **01206 874807**

Childline

Telephone: **0800 1111**

Alateen

A 24-hour helpline for anyone affected by somebody else's drinking.

Telephone: **020 7403 0888**

Young Minds

A national charity committed to improving the mental health of all children and young people.

Telephone: **020 7336 8445**

Young Carer Websites

Essex County Council Young Carers
www.youngcarer.co.uk

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers
www.carers.org

Loughborough University
www.lboro.ac.uk

Dept of Health
www.carers.gov.uk

The Children's Society
www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Carers UK
www.carersonline.org.uk

Thank you

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This publication has been published by Essex County Council and has been prepared by the Schools, Children and Families Directorate.

You can contact us in the following ways:

By telephone:

0845 603 7627

By post:

Schools, Children and Families Directorate
PO Box 47
CG 32
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM2 6WN

Online:

www.essexcc.gov.uk

Essex County Council - making Essex a better place to live and work

The information contained in this report can be made available in alternative formats: large print, braille, audio tape or disk.

We can also translate this information into other languages.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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