

Being a Young Carer – Your Rights

A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who helps to look after a relative who has a condition, such as a disability, illness, a mental health condition, or a drug or alcohol problem.

Most young carers look after one of their parents or care for a brother or sister. They do extra jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning, or helping someone to get dressed and move around.

Some children give a lot of physical help to a brother or sister who is disabled or ill. Along with doing things to help your brother or sister, you may also be giving emotional support to both your sibling and your parents.

Your Choices About Caring

Some people start caring at a very young age and don't really realise they are carers. Other young people become carers overnight. If someone in your family needs to be looked after, you may really want to help them, but young carers shouldn't do the same things as adult carers, nor should they be spending a lot of their time caring for someone, as this can get in the way of them

doing well at school and doing the same kinds of things as other children or young people.

It's important that you decide how much and what type of care you're willing or able to give, or whether you should be a carer at all.

You need to decide whether you're the right person to offer the care that the person you look after needs. All disabled adults are entitled to support from their local authority, depending on their needs, so they should not have to rely on their children to care for them. It's important for social services to ensure the whole family feels supported and comfortable with your role.

Find out more about visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/help-for-young-carers.

Young Carers' Rights

The law is changing for young carers, and since April 2015 a social worker from your local authority must visit to carry out a '*Young Carers Needs Assessment*' to decide what kind of help you and your family might need if you or your parents request this.

If the local authority has already carried out one of these assessments before, they must carry out another one if you or your parents feel that your needs or circumstances have changed.

A young carer's needs assessment must decide whether it is appropriate for you to care for someone else – and this includes taking into account whether you want to be a carer. The local authority must also look at your education, training, leisure opportunities and your views about your future. When assessing a young carer they must always ask about your wishes and involve you, your parents and anyone else you or your parents want to be involved.

All these people should receive a written record of the assessment. This should include whether the local authority thinks you need support, whether their services could provide you with that support, and whether they will give you that support. It should also explain what you can do if you or your parents disagree with the assessment.

Provided that you both agree, the local authority can assess both your needs as a young carer and the needs of the person you care for at the same time.

If you're 16 or over, and you're not in full-time education you may be eligible for help finding work (www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide) as well as help with your family's finances, for instance through benefits such as Carer's Allowance (www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/benefits-for-carers). Your assessment is the best place to find out about what is available in your situation.

Our independent advice is developed with Allied Health Professionals and experts from across the UK. This document was developed in conjunction with North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership.