



HUNTERHOUSE COLLEGE

YOUNG CARERS POLICY

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Previous: April 2008

Next Review due: December 2019

This policy is available in pdf format from the College website

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Inclusion & Diversity

The College aims to establish an inclusive community where all students and staff are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of individual differences including, but not limited to, culture, race, religion, beliefs, sexuality, gender orientation, appearance and ability.

Rationale

At Hunterhouse College, we believe that all children and young people have the right to an education, regardless of their home circumstances. When a young person looks after someone in their family who has a serious illness, disability or substance misuse problem, they may need extra support to help them to get the most out of school.

Aims

Ensure that:

- all students know who to talk to if they are in a Young Carer role through Assemblies and the Personal Development programme
- relevant information is given to all students who are Young Carers regarding the advice and support which is available
- a bespoke support package is in place in school for all students who are Young Carers – co-ordinated by the Head of Year and overseen by the Pastoral Care Co-ordinator and that contact with home during the school day is built in where necessary
- the College is accessible to parents/carers who have mobility and communication difficulties and involves them in parent/carer events
- information about any student's role as a Young Carer is shared with staff on a need to know basis so that all staff who work with that student are aware their responsibilities outside school and the potential impact of those responsibilities on the ability to reach their potential
- The College gives parents/carers advice about how to get their children to school where transport is a problem.
- Referral to relevant support agencies, eg Crossroads Young Carers Project, are made as appropriate

Linked Documents:

Pastoral Care Policy

Attendance Policy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Appendix 1

Definition of a Young Carer

There is no consensus for defining a young carer, but the following provided in a survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Department of Health in 1996 is a useful starting point:

“... a child or a young person who is carrying out significant caring tasks and assuming a level of responsibility for another person which would usually be taken by an adult. The term refers to ... young people under 18 years caring for adults ... or occasionally siblings ... [not those under 18 caring for their own children]. Nor does the term refer to those children who accept an age appropriate role in taking an increasing responsibility for household tasks in homes with a disabled, sick or mentally ill parent.”

However, it is important to be wary of making assumptions about people with disabilities or other health issues and labelling young people or their parents. Most children affected by family disability, health problems or substance misuse do not become young carers. Support for young carers and their families should always aim to strengthen families and support parenting.

Appendix 2

How do I identify a young carer?

Warning signs

Young carers are not easy to spot and many actively try to conceal their caring role from teachers, pastoral staff and peers for fear of bullying or outside interference in their families. All of the warning signs below could be indicators of another problem. However, staff noticing these signs should consider approaching the Head of Year who might decide to ask the pupil if they are helping to look after someone at home.

- Regular or increased lateness or absence.
- Concentration problems, anxiety, tiredness, withdrawal.
- Under-achievement and late or incomplete homework/coursework: may be a sudden unexplained drop in attainment.
- Few or no peer friendships; conversely the pupil may get on well with adults and present as very mature for their age.
- Isolated or victim of bullying, sometimes explicitly linked to a family member's disability, health or substance misuse problem or because they lack social skills when with their peers.
- Behavioural problems, sometimes the result of anger or frustration expressed inappropriately. There is often a big difference between the young person who seems “mature beyond their years” in their home environment where they are very protective of a disabled relative, and the young person who takes out their pent-up frustration or stress at school.
- Unable to attend extra-curricular activities.
- Difficulties in engaging parents; parents not attending parents' evenings.
- Physical problems such as back pain from lifting an adult.

Appendix 3

How can I help a young carer?

Teachers' Action list

1. If any subject teacher or Form Tutor becomes aware that a student may be a young carer, they should speak to the student's Head of Year.

2. The Head of Year should speak to the young person in private, explaining the College's pastoral structure is there to help, if possible.
3. The Head of Year should try to establish what caring tasks the student is performing and why. How their caring role affects them should also be explored re. relationships with other students, ability to undertake and complete homework, involvement in extra-curricular activities, worries about contact with home during the day. The student should be asked if any assistance with school life can be provided through the pastoral system.
4. The details should then be passed on to the Pastoral Care Co-ordinator.
5. The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator should contact home and discuss the young person's caring role and the impact this may have on their education. It may be possible to explore if there are other forms of support open to the family or another family member who could help more. (NB. few parents/carers choose a caring role for their child: it is often the only option they are aware of and many feel very guilty about the effect their illness/ disability has on their child.)
6. Both parents/carers and children may be entitled to an assessment of their needs from social services, who may be able to help them.
7. The College may be able to help the family to access help through the school nurse or other projects such as the Crossroads Young Carers Project.
8. In cases where absence is a problem, a plan should be worked out with the family through the Education Welfare Service. This should be realistic and manageable but should allow the young carer to attend school and get the most from their education.

School's Checklist

1. A Policy on Young Carers has been drawn up.
2. Issues affecting young carers and issues around disability, illness and substance misuse are part of the training calendar for teachers.
3. The Anti-Bullying Policy is appropriate to help all students including Young Carers.
4. Young Carer and disability/ illness issues are raised in PD/ Citizenship lessons and assemblies through contact with Crossroads Young Carers Project.
5. Contact with Crossroads Young Carers Project helps to raise awareness of Young Carers' issues and the help available, so that young carers can seek help before their education begins to suffer. Proactive work of this kind can be a resource-efficient way of improving truancy and achievement figures for the school.
6. Young carers are allowed to telephone home if they are worried.
7. School parents' evenings are accessible to parents with disabilities and, once school is aware of the situation, information is relayed to those who find it difficult to leave the house without support.