
Provision for young carers in secondary schools, further education colleges and pupil referral units across Wales

May 2019



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Introduction

This report is published in response to a request for advice from the Welsh Government in the Minister's annual remit letter to Estyn for 2018-2019. The report is intended for the Welsh Government, leadership teams and all staff in secondary schools, pupil referral units (PRUs), further education colleges (colleges), local authorities and regional consortia.

The report evaluates the quality of provision made for young carers in secondary schools, PRUs and colleges in Wales. It identifies strategies to support providers in improving provision and outcomes for young carers. The report includes effective practice case studies that exemplify how providers successfully support young carers.

The findings of the report draw on the evidence listed on page 18.

Background

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (National Assembly for Wales, 2014) defines a carer as, 'a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or disabled child'. A young carer is defined as being under the age of 18 years old. The care provided might include physical, emotional and personal care, household jobs, looking after siblings, or advocating on behalf of the person being cared for. This caring role can have an adverse impact on young carers. Research by the University of Nottingham (Sempik and Becker 2013, 2014) found that young carers:

- miss or cut short an average of 48 days of education a year because of their caring role
- were four times more likely to drop out of college than their peers
- have higher rates of poor mental and physical health than the average young person
- experience higher rates of bullying

In 2000, the Welsh Assembly Government launched its Carers Strategy Wales Implementation Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2000). The strategy aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of carers and those whom they care for. In the strategy, the Welsh Assembly Government made a commitment to address the complex and specific needs of young carers. The strategy was refreshed in 2007 and again in 2013 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007, 2013).

From 2001 to 2006, the Welsh Assembly Government strengthened the voice of young carers through setting up the Young Carers Advisory Panel. The panel provided advice for the Welsh Assembly Government on the views of young carers and the issues affecting them. In 2004, the panel produced 'Caring for young carers – a training resource for schools' (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004). From 2006

to 2018, the Young Carers Network was the main point of consultation for the Welsh Government on the views and needs of young carers. However, in 2018 the Carers Trust, working with partners, established the Welsh Youth Carers Council to provide young carers from across Wales with a voice. Two members of this council were elected to the Welsh Youth Parliament. The Welsh Youth Parliament works directly with the National Assembly for Wales to raise issues of concern for young people in Wales. This ensures that young carers' views are represented at a national political level.

In 2009, the office of the Children's Commissioner for Wales published the views of young carers in a report, 'Full of Care, Young Carers in Wales 2009' (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2009). This report noted that young carers felt that the wider community, including teachers, did not always recognise and appreciate their caring role. Young carers reported experiencing worry, anxiety and stress. While the majority of young carers valued the support they received, others felt that this support only became available during times of crisis. The report quoted an evaluation of the Welsh Assembly Government training resource for schools 2004 carried out by Children in Wales. The evaluation found that the resource was not widely known by many schools and also that many schools did not know how many, if any, young carers were on their roll.

The Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010 (National Assembly for Wales, 2010) recognised that schools, colleges and PRUs have an important role in supporting young carers, and are often where children and young people with caring responsibilities are first identified. The measure, which came into force in 2012, highlighted the need to raise awareness of carers among professionals in health, social care and education, so that they can identify carers as early as possible and know how to respond to their needs. However, education was not specifically included in the list of 'designated authorities', who would be responsible for taking action.

The refreshed Carers Strategy of 2013 (Welsh Government, 2013, p.2) aimed to:

Provide a framework within which agencies across Wales can work together to deliver services and support to carers, promote and share good practice, and find innovative and sustainable ways of supporting carers more effectively.

The Strategy set out the following intended outcomes for carers of all ages:

- carers are appropriately identified, and receive the right information at the right time and in appropriate formats
- carers are listened to and treated with respect, and achieve proper recognition
- carers are not disadvantaged or discriminated against as a result of taking on a caring role
- carers are genuinely involved in all decisions that affect them and the people they care for, including decisions about the level of care they are willing and able to provide
- carers are consulted and involved in the strategic planning, delivery and evaluation of health, social care and other relevant services
- carers' needs are appropriately assessed and met

- carers receive timely and appropriate practical and emotional help, support and training
- carers are supported in maintaining their own health and wellbeing
- carers are able to maintain as normal a life as possible, are enabled to have life outside of the caring role, and are supported when the caring role ends
- carers are able to access employment, education and training and leisure opportunities (Welsh Government, 2013, pp.5-6).

The Strategy noted a further intended outcome specifically for young carers, that:

young carers are enabled to enjoy their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and all agencies which support them will give due regard to these Convention rights (Welsh Government, 2013, p.6)

The strategy states that:

Teachers need to be aware of the role of young carers, and make a positive difference when this affects punctuality, attendance or homework. There should be training and funding to support this, and general awareness raising among school staff and pupils. More needs to be done to help and support young carers and young adult carers in colleges and universities as well as schools (Welsh Government, 2013, p.26).

In April 2016, the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (National Assembly for Wales, 2014) became law. The Act superseded previous legislation and gave carers enhanced rights. Under the Act, local authorities and local health boards must work in partnership to assess the needs of young carers and agree a support plan for them that ensures that their needs are met. This includes health, care and educational needs.

Assessing a carer who is aged between 16 and 25 must include an assessment of any current or future transitions the carer is likely to make into further or higher education, employment or training. Local authorities must ensure that the ability of the carer to provide care is sustainable and that they comply with their general duty to promote the wellbeing of the carer and the person cared for.

To support providers in identifying and addressing the needs of young carers, the Welsh Government (2017) published an online training aid for health, education, social services professionals in the form of a toolkit.

In November 2018, the Minister with responsibility for carers announced three priority areas for action to improve the lives of carers (Welsh Government, 2018). These replace and build on previous strategies and are as follows:

- **Supporting life alongside caring** – All carers must have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain their capacity to care, and to have a life beyond caring.
- **Identifying and recognising carers** – The need to improve carers' recognition of their role and ensure they can access the necessary support.
- **Providing information, advice and assistance** – It is important that carers receive the appropriate information and advice where and when they need it.

Main findings

- 1 There is a lack of reliable data to identify how many young carers there are in schools, PRUs and colleges across Wales. Many providers do not know which of their pupils and learners have a caring role. A consequence of this is that the provision for young carers at secondary schools, colleges and PRUs varies widely.
- 2 Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that are most effective in meeting the needs of young carers have robust systems to identify these learners. They track their wellbeing needs regularly and adapt their provision carefully to meet the individual needs of each young carer. However, only a minority of the schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed use an information management system to track and report on the progress young carers make compared with their peers.
- 3 Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that have a named lead member of staff for young carers generally provide a high level of care, support and guidance for this group of learners. In these providers, young carers are confident to raise concerns, assured that the lead member of staff will champion their rights and liaise sensitively with parents and other professionals.
- 4 Following the implementation of the Carers Strategies (Wales) Measure 2010, the Local Health Boards (LHBs) and local authorities within their regions have developed valuable strategic partnerships to share information, promote interagency co-operation and complete appropriate assessments of the needs of young carers. The requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act Wales 2014 (National Assembly for Wales, 2014) further strengthen partnership working through establishing Regional Partnership Boards. These regional boards include representation from young carers and ensure that services and resources are used in the most effective way to improve outcomes for people within their area, including young carers. This partnership working is starting to include education providers.
- 5 Young carers benefit considerably where local authorities have a clear strategic plan for carers and a named person to drive forward the strategy in educational settings. In these local authorities, providers share information effectively when pupils transfer between primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. They have a consistent approach to identifying young carers and signposting them to appropriate support.
- 6 There are a small range of awards schemes that provide secondary schools, colleges and PRUs with useful resources and toolkits to shape their provision to meet the needs of young carers. However, too many providers have not accessed them.
- 7 Specialist agencies provide high quality resources and support to raise awareness and meet the needs of young carers. But many secondary schools, colleges and PRUs do not engage well enough with these agencies and have not accessed this valuable support.
- 8 The Welsh Government sponsored training on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is starting to have a positive impact on the work of schools. Generally, schools that provide well for young carers understand how the caring role might adversely affect a child's experiences and life chances.

- 9 The use of one-page profiles to record what is important to and for children is helping to give young carers a voice and enables schools, colleges and PRUs to target support to meet their individual needs.
- 10 There is a range of useful training courses available to raise staff awareness of the needs of young carers. However, too many staff in schools, colleges and PRUs have not received this training.
- 11 Only a very few schools visited have a clear understanding of the enhanced rights of carers under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Most schools are unaware of the requirement for young carers to have their needs assessed and the role of education in contributing to this assessment.

Recommendations

Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs should:

- R1 Ensure that they have sound procedures to identify which of their pupils/learners have a caring role
- R2 Have a named member of staff with lead responsibility for young carers who acts as a point of contact for young carers and champions their needs
- R3 Raise staff awareness of young carers' needs
- R4 Engage with specialist services to review and improve their provision to meet the needs of young carers
- R5 Track and monitor the progress and outcomes for young carers as they currently do for other groups of vulnerable learners
- R6 Evaluate their provision for young carers with reference to the checklist in Appendix 1 or available toolkits.

Local authorities should:

- R7 Focus carer strategies on increasing the capacity of schools, colleges and PRUs to identify and meet the needs of young carers

The Welsh Government should:

- R8 Produce reliable, nationally-collected data to help identify young carers

Arrangements for identifying young carers

- 12 The most recent source of statistical information on carers comes from the 2011 Census, which recorded 29,155 carers under the age of 25 in Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Research shows that many young carers may hide their caring roles from official sight for a host of reasons, including family loyalty, fear of stigmatisation or bullying, and not knowing where to go for support (The Children's Society, 2013). Others may not recognise that they are a young carer. Consequently, there is a lack of reliable local and national data to identify how many young carers there are in schools, PRUs and colleges across Wales.
- 13 Nearly all secondary schools, colleges and providers surveyed reported that they know which of their pupils are young carers. This contrasts with information provided by the young carer support groups who responded to the survey. These groups report that procedures to identify young carers vary widely in schools, colleges and PRUs across Wales. The eight schools in Wales who piloted the Young Carers in Schools programme¹, run jointly by the Carers Trust and The Children's Society, found that the scheme helped them to identify young carers in their school who they were not aware of previously.
- 14 A minority of young carers who contributed to the survey stated that they had not made their school aware of their caring role. A few others stated that they had told senior staff about their caring role but that the wider staff team were not aware of the provision agreed with the senior staff. As a consequence, provision that had been agreed with senior staff (such as support for punctuality, attendance and homework completion) had not fully been put into place.
- 15 A minority of schools and colleges gather information about caring roles to identify young carers as part of their admissions procedures. For example, at Coleg y Cymoedd, the entry-screening tool for all learners asks a question about whether the young person has a caring role. Similarly, St John the Baptist High School in Aberdare includes a specific question around any known caring role that pupils have in the information it collects from its feeder schools. Leaders use this information to make helpful transition plans for the pupils that consider their caring role well.
- 16 Around a half of the schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed had suitable arrangements in place to raise the awareness of pupils concerning the role and needs of young carers through personal social education, assemblies and displays. A minority of schools, colleges and PRUs reported that these awareness-raising activities had helped young carers to identify themselves and come forward for help and support.

¹ This programme provides a useful framework and toolkit for schools to review and improve their provision for young carers.

Leadership in schools, colleges and PRUs

- 17 Schools that support young carers well provide a nurturing environment across the whole school. Senior leaders in these schools communicate an inclusive ethos that focuses strongly on meeting the academic and wellbeing needs of all pupils.
- 18 Most of the secondary schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed have a member of staff who leads on ensuring that they identify and meet the needs of young carers. A minority of these lead staff are members of the senior leadership team or middle leaders. A few are members of the wellbeing teams within their schools, colleges or PRUs. The survey of young carers' projects identified the need for schools to have a named lead member of staff for young carers as essential to improving provision.
- 19 In many providers visited, the lead member of staff provides strategic leadership for raising the awareness of staff and governors and the development of policy. For example, at Bryn Eliau High School in Conwy, the young carers lead made effective use of the Young Carers in Schools programme toolkit (Carers Trust, 2017) to raise the awareness of all major stakeholders. The lead member of staff delivered whole school training to raise staff awareness, displayed information around the school and provided training and support for the governing body. After securing the support of the staff and governing body, the lead then held assemblies for each year group to raise the awareness of pupils. The school then provided information about young carers to all parents. This increased understanding and awareness means that staff, pupils and parents work productively together to respond sensitively to young carers' changing needs and circumstances.
- 20 A few of the young carers who contributed to this review stated that the provision for young carers at their school had decreased due to the lead member of staff changing their role or moving to another school. Where the lead member of staff liaises closely with other staff responsible for learner wellbeing, such as pastoral heads and education welfare officers, providers build strong and effective teams to support the varying needs of young carers. For example at Rhyl High School, the pastoral team meets weekly and has the needs of young carers as a standing item on the agenda. This enables the wider pastoral team to share key messages and maintain a regular overview of the welfare and progress that each young carer makes. It also shares the expertise and knowledge of young carers and their needs across the team. This enables lead responsibilities to change without having an adverse impact on the support provided to young carers.
- 21 In many secondary schools, colleges and PRUs, the lead member of staff for young carers acts as the main point of contact for parents and multi-agency partners. Generally, they liaise sensitively with a broad range of specialist support agencies to provide a co-ordinated approach to meeting young carers' personal and social needs. For example, at John Frost School in Newport, the lead member of staff for young carers is also the family engagement officer. Part of their role includes visiting young carers at home to gain a deeper understanding of the family's needs and the young carer's individual role and needs. They liaise with school staff to ensure that

school-based plans reflect young carers' needs, and with the multi-agency team to ensure that the young carers' assessment of need is accurate and up-to-date. Young carers value the school's support for the family and their own needs.

- 22 A few of the secondary schools, colleges and PRUs visited include a section on young carers within their development plans. For example, at Coleg Gwent, the support for young carers is part of the college's development plan for vulnerable learners. At Ysgol Rhydywaun, the whole-school development plan supports planning for ongoing improvements to the provision for young carers well. This attention to planning ensures that the needs of young carers remain a focus for these providers and that leaders set targets and allocate resources to improve their provision.

Leadership at local authority and regional levels

- 23 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (National Assembly for Wales, 2014) requires local health boards, local authorities and third sector organisations to work in partnership to improve outcomes for people including young carers. The Regional Partnership Boards have produced a range of carers' strategies and action plans for each region that provide appropriate support and direction for this partnership approach. For example, the West Wales Carers Strategy and Delivery Plan for 2018-2019 (West Wales Care Partnership, 2018) that covers Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion includes a clear indication of the role that education providers have in addressing the priorities and targets to improve the support given to young carers. This includes increasing the number of schools completing the Investors in Carers Award. In the Aneurin Bevan Health Board area, the Local Health Board, local authorities and Carers Trust work in partnership to promote and support the Young Carers in Schools programme. This has resulted in around 33 schools in south-east Wales participating in the programme.
- 24 Young carers benefit considerably where these regional plans are supported by local authority services that have a clear commitment to supporting schools, colleges and PRUs to improve the provision made for young carers. This is clear, for example, in the strong link between the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board carers' strategy and the effective support provided for schools to improve provision for young carers in the Bridgend local authority area. Another example of the effects of strong partnership working is between Rhondda Cynon Taf local authority and the Cwm Taf University Health Board. Their joint Carers Strategy has a strong emphasis on improving outcomes for young carers and makes suitable reference to the role of schools in delivering against targets. Rhondda Cynon Taf have a strong, well-co-ordinated approach to implementing this plan and supporting schools and colleges in this aspect of their work.

Case study 1: The Rhondda Cynon Taf Carers Support Project

The Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Carers Support Project supports approximately 300 young carers across the local authority. The project supports schools in the local authority to identify young carers and make effective provision to meet their needs.

Context and background to the practice

The Cwm Taf Carers Partnership board has identified the RCT Young Carers School Award as a key priority in identifying young carers in schools across the authority. The local authority-funded RCT Carers Support Project works in partnership with all RCT schools to implement the Young Carers School Award.

Description of activity/strategy

The Young Carers Schools Award consists of three levels (Bronze, Silver and Gold), with each level consisting of a comprehensive set of standards that the school is required to achieve to gain the award.

On successful completion of a level, the school receives an award for their participation. A worker from the RCT Carers' Support Project re-assesses the school's standards each year to ensure that the award is still valid.

The Carers Support Group provides training and ongoing support for members of staff at each school who lead on implementing the award. They also provide lesson plans for personal and social education lessons and lead assemblies in school.

Impact on provision and standards

- Over the last five years, the number of young carer referrals from RCT schools to the project has increased by 30%, thus supporting the identification and recognition of young carers.
- Young carers are actively involved in the evaluation of the young carers' schools award. They have made presentations in school assemblies to show what life is like for a young carer.
- Young carers have fed back to project workers that they feel far better supported in school and feel better about going to school.
- Schools have made funding available to support young carers with their participation in school activities.
- Feedback shows that young carers are confident that they have someone to talk to in school who understands the nature of their caring role.

Toolkits and award schemes

25 There are a small range of free and easily accessible toolkits and award schemes that provide schools with valuable support and advice on how to develop a whole-school approach to meeting the needs of young carers. Leaders in schools across Wales who have used these schemes and awards value them highly. However, not enough schools make use of these resources to review and improve their provision. The following schemes featured prominently in the work of the most effective providers:

- The Carers Trust Wales has introduced The Young Carers in Schools Wales programme (Carers Trust, 2017). This programme is an adaptation of an award scheme developed by The Children's Society and Carers Trust that schools in England use to improve outcomes for young carers. The programme in Wales provides a useful framework and toolkit for schools to review and improve their provision against a set of clearly defined standards. The programme is available at three levels and promotes reflective practice well, using peer review and young carer ambassadors to evaluate the school's progress in meeting the standards. Schools across Wales are making effective use of the programme to improve their provision for young carers. Further information is available from: <https://gweddiill.gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/young-carers-toolkit/?skip=1&lang=en>

Case study 2: Young Carers' Provision at Ysgol Cwm Rhymni

Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni is a large Welsh-medium secondary school (1,625 pupils) with two school sites in the Rhymney valley. Cwm Rhymni is the only Welsh-medium secondary school in the Caerphilly local authority.

The school is located in one of the 25% most deprived areas in Wales. The three-year rolling average of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 14%, which is just below the average for Wales. The school places a significant focus on supporting learners' wellbeing.

Context and background to the practice

In 2016, the school agreed to pilot the Carers Trust Young Carers Toolkit. The school had already identified and was providing support for eight young carers.

Description of activity/strategy

At the start of the pilot the school used the toolkit's baseline review tools to assess the school's strengths and areas for development in identifying and meeting the needs of young carers. This highlighted that there were more young carers in the school than the eight that the school had identified and were supporting. The school then used the toolkit to improve its strategy and to provide training for staff.

Within one academic year of undertaking the baseline review, the school identified 47 additional young carers. The school consulted with each of the young carers to identify how they wanted to be supported. A very few did not want direct support but wanted staff to be aware of their caring role.

The school provides a wide range of support for those carers who want extra support. The support is tailored to each young carer's individual needs and includes mentoring, counselling, modified timetables, and the use of a one-page profile to be shared with staff containing relevant information. The school also provides a quiet place for young carers to use before the school day and during breaks. Young carers can also access additional support through the wellbeing room where staff work with individuals and advocate for the learners. The school works effectively with outside agencies such as Barnardo's Young Carers and Children's Services to ensure that pupils across the school are aware of young carers and their needs and to signpost young carers to additional support.

Impact on provision and standards

- Of the 47 learners identified, many have improved their attendance record at school in comparison to previous years (where applicable) and prior to identification as a young carer.
 - Most young carers have stated that the support they have received from school following identification has helped them emotionally.
 - Many young carers have stated that the support they have received from school following identification has helped them perform better in class and their monitoring progress grades have improved.
 - Very few young carers identified wanted support from school. However, they stated that being acknowledged as a young carer helped them with confidence and it was enough just to be identified.
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- The Carers Trust Wales has also worked with the Learning and Work Institute to develop 'Supporting Students with Caring Responsibilities: A Resource for Further Education Providers to Help Young Adult Carers Succeed in Further Education in Wales' (2017). The resource draws on existing effective practice to provide helpful guidance in relation to admissions, advice, support and creating the right conditions within the college to provide effective support.
 - The Welsh Government (2017) has made a Young Carers Toolkit available online for health, education and social services professionals. The toolkit includes useful advice, worksheets and videos that schools can use to evaluate their provision. The resource is available from: <https://gweddill.gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/young-carers-toolkit/?skip=1&lang=en>
 - The Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) Young Carers Schools Award has been running for around 15 years. The award is available at three levels, bronze, silver and

gold. The RCT Carers' Support Project has a lead officer who works with schools to complete an action plan and evaluate provision against a set of standards for each level of the award. The RCT Carers Support Group has provided a series of lesson plans that schools can use to raise awareness of young carers. They also present assemblies, deliver staff training and provide information displays. The award has a strong focus on bringing lead members of staff from each school together to share good practice. It is available to all schools, colleges and PRUs in the local authority, although not all schools choose to take part. More information is available from the RCT young carers service from: youngcarerssupportteam@rctcdc.gov.uk

- The Investors in Carers Award, is a scheme that is used widely by health and care providers across the Hywel Dda University Health Board area. A few schools in the area are using the scheme to evaluate and improve their provision for young carers, including Ysgol Y Strade in Llanelli. There are firm plans in place to increase the number of schools completing the award over the next three years. The scheme explores six themes and is available on three levels. More information is available from: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/862/page/66977>

Case study 3: Ysgol y Strade – Investors in Carers award

Information about the school

Ysgol y Strade is an 11-19 Welsh-medium secondary school in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire. Currently, there are 1,052 pupils on roll. Around 7.8% of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below the national average. The school identifies around 8.9% of pupils as having special educational needs, which is also below the national average.

Context and background to the practice

The school has built strong partnerships with external agencies to develop a pastoral system that supports pupils from all backgrounds, including those that are caring for others. The school has developed a strong community ethos that provides effective support for pupils' social and emotional needs to ensure that all are given the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Description of activity / strategy

The school has developed robust procedures to identify and support young carers. Leaders make effective use of a wide range of information linked to pupil wellbeing to identify pupils who are facing difficulties outside of school. The pastoral team use the results of this tracking to arrange pupil focused forums, where key staff meet to discuss what is working for a pupil and what can be done to support them further. The pastoral lead then uses this information to conduct person-centred practice meetings with families.

The school has been awarded the Investors in Carers Bronze Award for its work in identifying and supporting young carers. The school raises

awareness of the role and needs of young carers well through a prominent notice board display, in personal and social education lessons and through assemblies. This has helped staff and pupils to identify young carers and signpost them to support and advice.

The school liaises well with outside agencies who provide pupil workshops and the opportunity for young carers to meet and receive advice and support at lunchtimes.

Impact on provision and standards

The school has established an ethos that focuses well on inclusion and support for all. Pupils, including young carers, have their specific social and emotional needs met through a personalised intervention programme that includes timetable adjustments and specialist one-to-one support. All partner agencies work together effectively for the benefit of the pupils. Young carers feel that the school recognises their caring role and adjusts their provision to support their wellbeing needs.

Wider provision to meet young carers' needs

- 26 The most effective providers have bespoke and comprehensive personal, social education (PSE) programmes that focus specifically on raising awareness of the role and diverse needs of young carers. Assemblies, information displays and visits by outside speakers from specialist agencies such as the Young Carers Trust support these sessions well. For example, Ysgol Bryn Elian in Conwy includes the role of young carers as part of the Year 9 PSE provision. Focused assemblies, a digital presentation for use in tutor group sessions and an annual whole-school celebration of young carers' day ensure that the school maintains pupils' awareness of young carers and their needs throughout the year. This has helped pupils to identify themselves and their peers as being young carers.
- 27 Generally, secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that have a person-centred approach to planning create effective plans to support learners. For example, one-page profiles for young carers at Ysgol Bryn Elian, Rhyl High School and Treorchy Comprehensive School set out clearly what is important to the young person, what the young person's needs are, their hopes for the future and how the school can support them. A few secondary schools, colleges and PRUs reported that this approach had identified pupils or learners with a caring role that they were not aware of previously. At Coleg Gwent, all new admissions complete a one-page profile with their personal tutors. This provides a useful focus for discussions around any caring role a learner has and identifies how the college can support them to overcome any barriers to learning. At Monmouthshire PRU, staff use the outcomes of monthly reviews to update each pupil's Individual Development Plan. These plans consider the needs of young carers well.

- 28 Many secondary schools, colleges and PRUs visited had well-considered strategies to help young carers to access activities that enrich the curriculum. For example, they ensure that young carers have a place to complete homework and provide a wide range of cultural and sporting activities during lunchtimes. Young carers that are unable to access after-school clubs due to their caring role make good use of these opportunities to socialise with their peers at school. Young carers at Treorchy Comprehensive School benefit highly from the 'iwork' after school homework club and from the Youth Engagement Programme that offers a wide range of activities each Friday afternoon. At Ysgol Rhydywaun and Ysgol Llanhari, transport is provided for extra-curricular activities one night each week. This helps pupils who would otherwise have difficulty travelling home to access after school activities.
- 29 A few secondary schools visited provide sensitive support for young carers to access phones so that they can contact home during the school day. This helps young carers to manage any worries they have over the health and wellbeing of those who they care for when they are at school. A few schools also make items of school uniform, books and writing equipment available to vulnerable learners. This provides valuable, discreet support for pupils who would otherwise be worried about not having the correct kit or equipment. This includes young carers who, due to the demands of their caring role, may not have the time to obtain the right equipment. A few schools also ensure that young carers access breakfast clubs and provide meals at lunchtimes when young carers arrive at school without a packed lunch. Young carers value this sensitive support.
- 30 In a very few cases, and where appropriate, leaders use the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) and European grant funding to provide financial support for young carers to take part in enrichment activities. At the Bridge Alternative Provision Portfolio PRU, leaders use grant funding to provide support for young carers during school holidays and to support young carer involvement in a wide range of off-site visits.
- 31 A minority of secondary schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed have identified safe places where young carers can go during the school day to access a high level of support. For example at Ysgol Cwm Rhymni, young carers benefit from being able to access a new wellbeing centre where staff are available throughout the day to provide support and advice. At Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Ysgol Rhydywaun and Ysgol Llanhari, learning coaches have bases where young carers can access individual support. At Ysgol Y Strade, similar support is available at the school's Hafan Centre.

Tracking and monitoring outcomes for young carers

- 32 Many secondary schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed tracked and monitored important aspects of young carers' wellbeing, such as attendance and punctuality. Generally, leaders use this information well and work effectively with support agencies to put systems in place to support young carers to improve their engagement with learning. In a few cases, young carers reported being punished by schools for poor attendance and lateness connected to their caring roles. Secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that are most effective in meeting the needs of young carers track their wellbeing needs regularly and adapt their provision carefully to meet the individual needs of each young carer.
- 33 Only a minority of secondary schools, colleges and PRUs use an information management system to track and report on the academic progress that young carers make compared with their peers. For example, leaders at Llantwit Major School, Ysgol Cwm Rhymni, Ysgol Llanhari and St John the Baptist High School use a management system to track the progress that young carers make in subjects across the curriculum. They use this information well to monitor young carers' progress over time from their starting points and in relation to their peers.

Effective partnership working

- 34 Many secondary schools and colleges visited benefit from the advice and support of workers from young carer projects. However, there was little evidence of these projects engaging with PRUs. Where providers form strong partnerships with their local young carers' projects, these projects provide a high level of beneficial support for the school and individual young carers. In the most effective examples, schools integrate these workers into the wider staff team. For example, at John Frost School in Newport, workers from the local carers' project hold regular meetings during lunch breaks with a group of young carers. They work closely with the staff wellbeing team and young carers' families to ensure that the school's provision meets each carer's needs well. At Rhyl High School, a worker from the local young carer support group attends monthly multi-agency team meetings, delivers staff training, leads assemblies and visits feeder schools to support the transition of young carers into the school. At Coleg Gwent's Newport campus, the young carers' project has a drop-in centre where young carers can call in for advice and support. College leaders are working with the carers' project to evaluate the impact of this service.
- 35 Many schools engaged in the various award schemes and the Young Carers in Schools programme have developed strong practice in sharing relevant information to ensure that a wide range of professionals understand the needs of young carers. For example, at St Joseph's Roman Catholic High School in Newport, a multi-agency team meets weekly to discuss the needs of vulnerable pupils. At these meetings, representatives from the school, the education welfare service, health authority,

social services and educational psychology discuss, as appropriate, the ongoing needs and assessments of individual young carers.

- 36 Nearly all schools who are following one of the award schemes or the Young Carers in Schools programme make substantial improvements in arrangements to listen to young carers. For example, in a few schools, learning coaches provide dedicated time each week to meet with individual young carers to discuss aspects of their wellbeing and any issues that the young carer raises. A few schools also arrange regular meetings of young carers where they can share their experiences and raise issues of concern. In a very few cases, schools co-produce staff training materials and lesson content with young carers to ensure that the information provided is accurate and represents their views and experiences effectively. At Coleg y Cymoedd, learner-led support groups are in place, where learners meet socially inside and outside college to support each other.
- 37 A particularly strong aspect of provision in most PRUs is the strong partnership working between the staff and pupils' families. The relatively small number of pupils in these units and the close working relationships that exist between staff and pupils help staff to know the needs of each pupil well and communicate effectively with parents. For example, at Monmouthshire PRU, the comprehensive assessment information for each pupil on entry, regular placement reviews and close liaison between parents and staff, often on a daily basis, give staff a secure knowledge of pupils' needs. The effective communication between the PRU and parents enables the PRU to provide a high level of support for individual young carers, including support for the completion of course work assignments, attendance at hospital appointments and signposting young carers to appropriate support. At the Bridge Alternative Provision Portfolio PRU in Bridgend, leaders have made important adjustments to their provision to meet the needs of parents, including those of young carers. They have replaced parent consultation evenings with tutor days where parents can come in at any time during the day to review their child's progress. They have also improved their website to provide more detail for parents who are unable to visit school and who are at risk of losing touch with the PRU. Both of these initiatives support the needs of parents of young carers well.

Staff training

- 38 Of the secondary schools, colleges and PRUs surveyed, only a very few have trained all members of staff about young carers' needs. A minority have trained the majority of their staff and a few have trained over half of their staff. A minority have only trained a few members of their staff.
- 39 Generally, the secondary schools, colleges and PRUs that take part in award schemes and the Young Carers in Schools programme have strong systems in place to train staff about young carers' needs. This is because staff training is a standard in each of the schemes. For example, key staff at Ysgol Y Strade benefited from accessing a useful online training resource available to schools in the Hywel Dda

University Health Board area following the Investor in Care Award. Schools following the RCT Young Carers Schools Award also benefit from the support of an online training package. Providers such as Coleg y Cymoedd have used this resource to train key staff in the needs of young carers.

- 40 Welsh Government initiatives to promote the wellbeing of young people, such as the training to raise awareness of the impact of adverse childhood experiences, (ACEs), are starting to have an impact in schools. Schools that have accessed the training have widened their focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable learners to include young carers alongside children who are looked after and those who are eligible for free school meals. Generally, staff in these schools are aware of the possible impact of a caring role on young carers' life chances. A few schools and colleges visited had a sound understanding of both the enhanced skills developed by many young carers due to their caring role and the possible negative effects. These providers made sure that young carers made use of their skills in the school community, such as taking on leadership roles in school councils or acting as mentors for other young carers.
- 41 In Ceredigion local authority, a group of young carers and staff from Penglais School have completed an innovative intervention training programme with local authority staff. The training provides staff and pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to support the wellbeing needs of young carers. The course helps to address the needs of those who have had adverse childhood experiences, including having a caring role. The course aims to give carers and those who support them a toolkit to improve their resilience.

Evidence base

The findings and recommendations in this report draw on evidence from:

- a survey of a sample of secondary schools, colleges and PRUs
- a survey of young carers' projects across Wales
- visits to schools, colleges and PRUs
- interviews with representatives of specialist agencies
- interviews with young carers in schools

Information about provision for young carers was provided by 12 young carers' projects and a further eight secondary schools, six colleges and three PRUs through online surveys. The sample took account of geographical location, socio-economic background, size of school and linguistic contexts.

The 13 schools, two colleges and one PRU selected for visits had been identified as having strong practice in provision for young carers through the online survey of young carers' projects and interviews with representatives of specialist agencies. In these visits, inspectors:

- reviewed plans and documentation to support the needs of young carers
- met representative groups of young carers
- held discussions with leaders responsible for young carers

Information was also gathered through interviews, visits and telephone contact with specialist agencies identified as having strategic partnerships with schools around the provision for young carers. These include:

- The Carers Trust Wales
- The Rhondda Cynon Taf young carers support team
- The Carers Trust South East Wales
- Pembrokeshire young carers
- Hywel Dda Unitary Health Board

Schools, colleges and PRUs visited as part of the survey were

- Ysgol Gyfun Rhydywaun, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Llantwit Major School, Vale of Glamorgan
- Ysgol Llanhari, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- St Joseph's R.C. High School, Newport
- John Frost School, Newport
- Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen, Gwynedd
- Treorchy Comprehensive School, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Rhyl High School, Flintshire
- Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni, Caerphilly
- St John Baptist C.I.W. High School, Rhondda Cynon Taf

- Mountain Ash comprehensive school, Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Ysgol Bryn Elian, Conwy
- Ysgol Y Strade, Carmarthenshire
- Monmouthshire PRU
- Coleg y Cymoedd
- Coleg Gwent

The Bridge Alternative Portfolio PRU provided evidence through telephone contact.

Appendix 1: Checklist

Schools, colleges and PRUs may find it useful to ask themselves the following questions when evaluating their provision for young carers:

- How well do we identify young carers, for example, by gathering information as part of admission procedures, through questionnaires or on-entry screening, or using awareness-raising sessions? (refer to paragraphs 12–16)
- Have we identified a suitable lead member of staff to provide young carers and families with a clear point of contact and effective support? (refer to paragraphs 17-21)
- How well does our provision for young carers fit into our strategic priorities? For example, does it appear in the development plan? (refer to paragraph 22)
- How effectively do we engage with the local health board, local authority and third sector organisations and use local strategies and action plans to support and improve our provision? (refer to paragraphs 23-24 and case study 1)
- How well do we use the resources and toolkits available from specialist agencies to evaluate our practice and help meet the needs of young carers (refer to paragraph 25 and case study 2)
- How effective is our curriculum, PSE programme and wider provision in supporting young carers? For example, do we do enough to enable young carers to attend extra-curricular activities, access the right equipment and complete homework in an appropriate environment? (refer to paragraphs 26-31)
- How well do we track and analyse the wellbeing, progress and individual needs of young carers so that we can put suitable systems in place to support their engagement with learning and improve their educational outcomes? (refer to paragraphs 32-33)
- How effectively do we work in partnership with others, including young carer projects, support groups, multi-agency teams, award schemes and learners' families to give young carers the opportunities they need to have the best chance of success? (refer to paragraphs 34-37)
- How well do we train our staff to understand the needs of young carers and to develop the knowledge and skills they need to promote the wellbeing and achievement of all pupils, including young carers? (refer to paragraphs 38-41)

Glossary

Personal, social education (PSE)	Programmes to support learners to be personally and socially effective by providing learning experiences in which they can develop and apply skills, explore personal attitudes and values, and acquire appropriate knowledge and understanding
Pupil referral unit	A type of school established and maintained by a local authority to provide suitable education for children and young people who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not receive such education (section 19 of the Education Act 1996)
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights. The UK signed the convention on 19 April 1990 and ratified it on 16 December 1991, and it came into force on 15 January 1992.
Young carer	A person under the age of 18 who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or disabled child

Numbers – quantities and proportions

nearly all =	with very few exceptions
most =	90% or more
many =	70% or more
a majority =	over 60%
half =	50%
around half =	close to 50%
a minority =	below 40%
few =	below 20%
very few =	less than 10%

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