



Young Carers

The Hidden Faces

Wirral Connect

May 2016



*Supporting those who
support others*



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Abstract

Young Carers are our real life unsung heroes but they largely go unnoticed and hidden from our understanding. Some can be as young as five years old, however because of the love they have for their family member and out of a desire to do the right thing, they help, they care for and support their older relative.

This document looks at what little information and understanding we have for Young Carers, but specifically those who live on the Wirral Peninsula. It highlights the negative impacts it has to a Young Carer's personal development and how at a time when these young people should be experiencing new and exciting things. Young Carers could be socially isolated, lonely, have little empathy from their peers and little support from the services that should be helping them. It concludes with suggestions of how to engage with Young Carers to discover how we can help them either step away from their caring role or assist them to have a better balance between being young and caring for someone. By identifying, acknowledging and recognising Young Carers should enable us to provide meaningful support to redress the imbalances they face from day to day, allowing them to be the young person that they actually are.

Introduction

Wirral Connect (formerly Wirral CVS) has over 25 years' experience of providing front line services to those living on the Wirral at most need of help and support. It prides itself in being able to adapt and change to the ever evolving Wirral need. During 2015 the then Wirral CVS became very conscious that directed support for Carers and Former Carers living on the Wirral was very sporadic at best. They took about conducting exhaustive and extensive consultation with a cross section of the Wirral populous. Their findings showed that actually timely support for Carers and Former Carers was not tailored to need nor was the support provided within a time suited to need. Over the years Wirral CVS has created a very successful mentoring model of education and support and following the findings during its consultation, it became apparent that this model was well suited to meet the individualised needs of Carers and Former Carers living on the Wirral.

Towards the end of 2015 Wirral CVS were successful in obtaining four year funding for a Carers Project to:

1. Recruit and train volunteers in becoming mentors
2. Mentors progressing on to become active Volunteer Mentors
3. Identify hidden Carers and Former Carers living on the Wirral
4. Match the Carers or Former Carers with a qualified volunteer mentor who would work directly with them to enable them to recognise themselves and their own individualised needs
5. Set up and facilitate Carer and Former Carer Support Groups, focusing on targeted groups i.e. mental health, parent Carers, families affected by bereavement through suicide, domestic abuse and dementia mentors.

From this proactive and meaningful approach Wirral Connect are also concerned with regard to the help and support that is or is not available to Young Carers who live on the Wirral. This this end a study was conducted to discover what is available for Young Carers.

This document will demonstrate statistically what is known across the UK as well as on the Wirral. What we know is that according to the recent Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, this highlighted that there are over 40,000 adult Carers living on the Wirral but that only around 4,000 accesses any form of help or support. This does not take into consideration nor record any information regarding Young Carers living on the Wirral. It is unknown at this time as to why this is. Through this document it will demonstrate how little is actually known about Young Carers living on the Wirral and that due to this, the report has had to reflect on what is known across the UK with the hope that this will give us some idea of what may be going on the Wirral.

Young Carers

'I only realised my Mum wasn't the same as other mums when I was six and we had to do this thing at school and say why you love your mum.. Others said stuff like, 'I love my Mum because she tucks me up in bed' and I was like' I love my Mum because she says thanks when I cook her dinner,' and everyone just looked at me...'

Anon

According to The NHS, the definition of a Young Carer is 'anyone under the age of 18 who looks after a relative who has a disability, illness, mental health condition or drug or alcohol problem.'¹ A Young Carer can become vulnerable when the level of care-giving and responsibility becomes excessive or inappropriate, impacting on their health, well-being, educational achievement or life chances². It could be argued that there are limitations to the definition of 'excessive or inappropriate' as this only looks at school attendance and the amount of time spend looking after their loved one. This does not include information or any analysis of the nature of the caring responsibilities. Each Young Carer is entitled to an assessment by their local authority in the form of the MACA-YC18 assessment form (See Appendix A). This enables the local authority to ascertain if the caring responsibilities are excessive or inappropriate. It is unclear how accurate these assessments are and how honest a Young Carer is in disclosing what they do for their loved one for fear of not coping for unwanted intervention from the local authority.

According to The Children and Families Act (2014) any child has the right to:

- a childhood
- have an education
- be healthy
- be heard, listened to and believed

¹ <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/pages/young-carers-rights.aspx>, Accessed 17/05/2016

² ADASS, ADCS and The Children's Society (2012), **Working together to support young carers and their families**, <http://www.adcs.org.uk/download/position-statements/2012/MoU%20young%20carers%202012.pdf>

- be protected from physical and psychological harm
- be consulted and fully involved in discussions which affect their lives
- have privacy and respect³.

This is in conjunction with The United Nations Convention on The Rights of a Child, in particular, a Young Carer has the right to:

- an assessment to see if they can be supported
- the right of choice of how much support they want
- protection from excessive or inappropriate caring that could impact on their rights of a childhood
- information and advice.

As laid out in the children and families act of 2014⁴.

What is known?

According to the recent Census, there are a total of 177,918 Young Carers within England and Wales; 54% female and 46% male. Within the North West there are 24,561⁵. It has been suggested that on the Wirral alone there are 748⁶ Young Carers. However, it is likely that this is large underestimation. During this research no reputable source documenting the number of Young Carers was found for those living on the Wirral, calling into question both the reliability and validity of the data source used in this study. However, it could be suggested that this is likely to be an underestimation of the actuality.

³ <https://professionals.carers.org/what-rights-do-young-carers-have>, Accessed 26/04/16

⁴ Children and Families Act (2014), **Part 5 Welfare of Children, Children and families Act (2014)**

⁵ Office for National Statistics (2016) **Providing Unpaid Care may have an Adverse Affect on Young Carers'** **General Health** London: ONS

⁶ <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/child-carers-merseyside-thousands-figures-7128143>, Accessed 21/04/2016

These are the figures within England and Wales for Young Carers;

Age	2011	2001	Increase	% increase
	England & Wales	England & Wales		
Age 5 to 7	9985	5465	4520	83%
Age 8 to 9	12148	7834	4314	55%
Age 10 to 14	72266	62661	9605	15%
Age 15	23848	21402	2446	11%
Age 16 to 17	59671	52580	7091	13%
Totals	177918	149942	27976	19%

Figure 1, shows the amount of Young Carers in England and Wales and the percentage increase⁷

What we do know is that since 2001, there has been an increase of 19% (n= 27,976) demonstrating a year on year increase of 2797 Young Carers. More surprisingly is the increase in those between the ages 5 and 7⁷ documented at an 83%. These figures may not be reliable due to the fact that the census is filled in by a parent and if they would want to put their son/daughter down as a Young Carer. However, many Young Carers remain hidden according to a study completed by the BBC, a questionnaire formed by Nottingham University Academics. This showed that the census figure could be a lot lower than it actually is. It suggested that 1 in 12 out 4,029 said they had caring responsibilities. If it reflected the whole of the UK this could mean that there are 700,000 Young Carers.⁸ The research further identified that there are possibly thousands of hidden or unknown Carers. These could be hidden Carers due to;

- They do not realise that they are a Carer or that their life is different to their peers
- Their parent's do not realise that their children are Carers
- They worry that the family will be split up and taken into care
- They don't want to be any different from their peers
- Their parent's condition is not obvious so people don't think that they need any help

⁷ Census Figures (2012) **Census 2011** London: Carers Trust

⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11757907>, Accessed 26/04/2016

- There has been no opportunity to share their story
- They see no reason or positive actions occurring as a result of telling their story⁹.

Some people believe that Young Carers care for their parents only, but this is far from the truth, it can be a parent, a brother / sister, another family member or in some cases even a friend.

As identified in the longitudinal survey by Hounsell (2013) of young people in England it showed that 51% of Young Carers cared for their brother or sister, 28% cared for mother/ father, 12% cared for grandmother/grandfather, 6% other child relative and 2% other adult relative¹⁰. This doesn't follow the trend of previous research which found that two thirds cared for their parent/s and one third had cared for the siblings¹¹. All that said, it does highlight that Young Carers do not care just for their one of their parents their caring goes much wider than thought. This research not only covers known Carers but also included non-Carers and unknown Carers. However, its methodology was quite narrow as it only conducted questionnaires. The data could have been further substantiated with focus groups and individual interviews, allowing researchers the opportunity to explore a much more meaningful understanding of Young Carers and their caring role.

The Young Carers in the UK: the 2004 Report captured the number of hours a Young Carer provides with almost half completing less than 10 hours a week, a third completing between 11 to 20 hours a week, 14% between 21 and 40 hours a week and finally 4% completing over 41 hours¹². Similarities were found from the 2011 Census recorded with 8% of Young Carers providing 50 hours or more of care and 10.9% of Young Carers providing between 20 and 49 hours per week. It could be argued here that this shows that some Young Carers only help out when they can and are needed with the hope that they may still be developing physically, mentally,

⁹ <https://professionals.carers.org/who-are-young-carers>, Accessed 26/04/16

¹⁰ Hounsell, D. (2013) **Hidden From View: The experiences of young carers in England** London; The Children's Society

¹¹ Dearden, C. and Becker, S. (2004) **Young Carers in the UK: The 2004 Report** London: Carers UK

¹² Dearden, C. and Becker, S. (2004) **Young Carers in the UK: The 2004 Report** London: Carers UK

spiritually, morally and socially, however, further understanding regarding this is urgently needed.

Figure 2, below show us the illnesses or disabilities of the people that Young Carers care forⁱⁱ.

Illness/disability	%
Physical health	50%
Mental health	29%
Learning difficulties	17%
Sensory impairment	3%
Total	99%

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding

Figure 2, highlights the fact that half of Young Carers care for someone with physical health problems, while a significant proportion care for someone with mental health problems. This shows that Young Carers are dealing with a great deal of problems that they will need help with. According to the Carers Trust there are 50,000 Young Carers within the UK caring for someone with severe mental health problems. This puts Young Carers at risk for the own physical and mental health but their wellbeing and their ability to grow and develop as any young person should.¹³

The impacts to Young Carers

Young Carers take on the burden of looking after a family member for many different reasons, but without thought to their own needs – they do it because they do. However, the impacts it has to them on a personal level are far reaching. These can and do include feeling or being socially isolated, not being able to interact with their peers, negative psychological impacts to their health and mental wellbeing and poor educational achievement.

¹³ Mental Health Foundation (2010) **MyCare The challenges facing young carers of parents with a severe mental illness** London Mental Health Foundation

For most, they are trying to juggle their needs against those of the person they are looking after and this can make them feel lonely, tired, frustrated and in some cases, angry or depressed.

Social Isolation

The lack of socialisation is concerning as this prevents or stunts the developmental needs of Young Carers. It impacts on their school life as they generally can't do things with their friends or spend extra time away from the person requiring care. They generally don't have the time nor the resilience to attend out of school groups/clubs/activities for fear that this will hinder the care needs of their family member. The decrease in their health and wellbeing is also reported by many sources; for example Young Carers who are an only child or from a lone parent reported feeling lonely more often than Young Carers in other family structures. While some Young Carers receive therapeutic support for anger, behaviour, anxiety and eating disorders. Others develop coping strategies for example a worry book or relaxing activities like watching TV together or drawing. The impacts on the Young Carers can be normally stress, tiredness, depression or anxiety.

Educational attainment

In Education it seems to affect the Young Carers in different ways. Some can feel motivated and enjoy their education. It could be suggested that this may be largely due to the fact that they are able to 'take a break' from their caring role. However, not all do with some feeling that their caring responsibilities are more important and will dedicate their time to the task in hand and the support needed at home. This could mean that are more likely to ignore homework or even miss school to make it easier for the person they are caring for. It has been reported that 22% of Young Carers miss high school or experience educational difficulties with 13% of all primary school Young Carers experienced some problems relating to academic progress and attainment, and social interactions. This proportion of Young Carers is high.

This is even more worrying when you break down the data further, with 27% of 11 to 15 year-olds missing school or having educational difficulties right at a time when they should be deciding for their future in education or work.

This therefore demonstrates the negative effect it has to GCSE attainment. For example, within a small group of Young Carers, a quarter achieved no GCSE grades at all¹⁴.

According to the LSYPE 'the average total GCSE points score for a young person who had caring responsibilities in year 9 was 333, compared to 386 for young people who were not Young Carers in year 9. This is a difference of 53 points, equivalent to nine GCSE grades overall, or the difference between nine B's and nine C's¹⁵'. The study further highlighted that young people supporting a family member who is misusing drugs or alcohol are especially at risk of missing school¹⁶.

Young Carers aged over 16 years

Being a Young Carer over the age of 16 years brings with it further pressures as they are more likely to drop out of school altogether and not be in employment or training; becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). Being NEET has a range of negative outcomes for the Young Carer, especially in later life due to poor health, reduced earnings and higher probability of depression. According to the Audit Commission (2010) they found that 75% of the young adult Carers identified were categorised as NEET at least once and that 42% were not in education, employment or training for 6 months. This compares with 25% of all young people who were non Carers not in education, employment or training, with 10% of all young people not in education, employment or training for 6 months.¹⁷ This demonstrates the disparities for those who are Young Carers compared to their peers.

¹⁴ Dearden and Becker (2000) **Growing up caring: Vulnerability and transition to adulthood – young carers' experiences** Foundation by the National Youth Agency

¹⁵ Hounsell, D. (2013) **Hidden From View: The experiences of young carers in England** London; The Children's Society

¹⁶ Dearden, C. and Becker, S. (2004) **Young Carers in the UK: The 2004 Report** London: Carers UK

¹⁷ Audit Commission (2010) **against the odds: Targeted briefing – Young carers**. London: Audit Commission

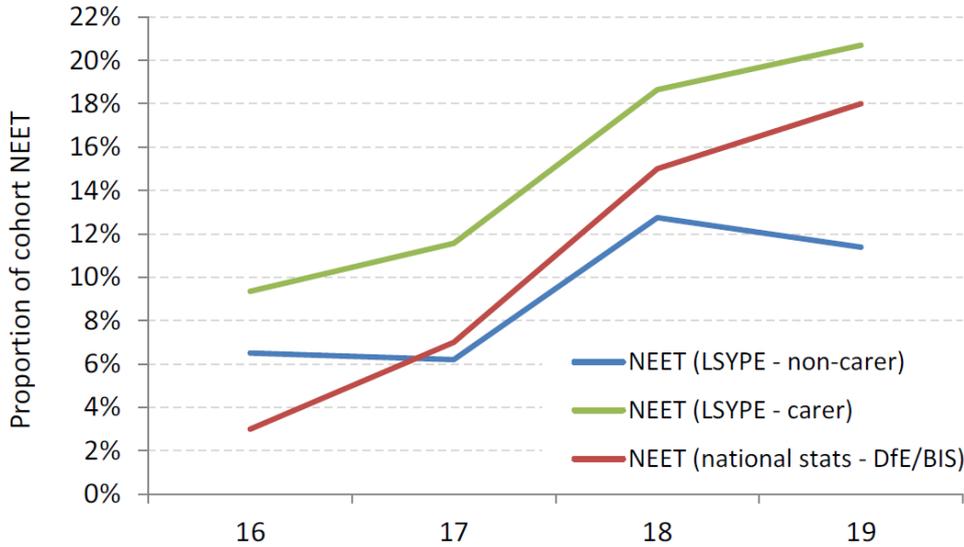
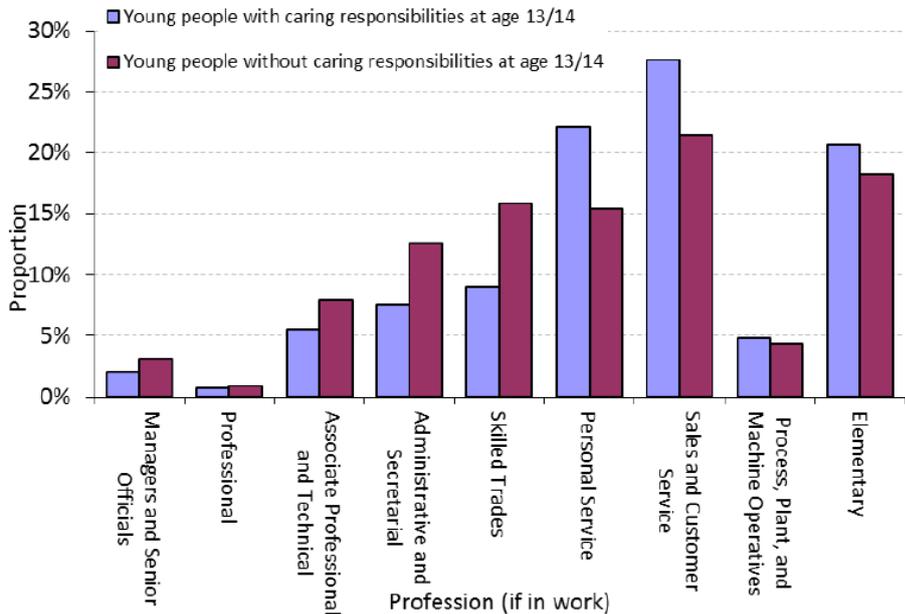


Figure 3, shows the proportion of Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) within the age 16 to 19. These compare Carers and non-Carers and national statisticsⁱⁱⁱ.

The LSYPE data shows that for those young people with caring responsibilities who are able to hold down a job they are more likely to be in low paid, low skilled jobs compared with people without caring responsibilities. Figure 4 shows the proportion of this;

Figure 4, Occupations of young people in employment^{iv}



What is known on The Wirral

The Wirral has a total population of 320,200,¹⁸ of that 75,059 are under the age of 19¹⁹, approximately 23.5%. This compared with the UK shows a small difference of 0.5%. The biggest ethnicity is white British within the Wirral having 94.7% of the total population²⁰. This is an increase of 14.2% compared with the national percent of 80.5%²¹. The Wirral has eight districts sitting within the top 200 of Indices of Deprivation, with one in the top 25%.

It has been suggested that there are 748 known Young Carers according to the Wirral Census. It is important to note that this figure is likely to be much higher than indicated as the 748 does not reflect the unknown or 'hidden Carers'. It is also worthy to note that as discussed earlier on in this document, it is unclear how robustly valid this figure is due to the data source. No other documents were found during the search of the number of Young Carers living on the Wirral. It is therefore strongly suggested that further research be conducted to ascertain a more accurate number of Young Carers living on the Wirral, is urgently needed. Young Carers are 'referred to' in *The Vision for Carers in Wirral (2013)*²² and *Wirral's Strategy for Carers 2014 and 2017*.²³ These only mention that in 2013 '*the Young Carer's advisory group is currently reviewing the referral process for Young Carers.*'²⁴ This is rather shocking to note as it could be argued that the Young Carers of the Wirral are not a priority and remain very much hidden.

Young Carer Support

There is support out there for Young Carers, which is currently provided by the national charity Barnardo's.

¹⁸http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/Wirral%20Economic%20Profiles/Wirral_Economic_Profile_January_2014.pdf, Accessed 21/04/2016

¹⁹http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/JSNA2013/2%20Wirral%20%20Population%20June%202013%20Update%20Final.pdf, Accessed 26/04/2016

²⁰ http://info.wirral.nhs.uk/document_uploads/JSNA2013/WirralJSNA-BME-chapter-FINAL-December2013.pdf, Accessed 27/04/16

²¹<http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11> Accessed 27/04/16

²² Wirral Council (2013) **the Vision for Carers in Wirral**. Wirral: Wirral council

²³ Wirral Council (2014) **Wirral's Strategy for Carers 2014 – 2017**. Wirral: Wirral Council

²⁴ Wirral Council (2013) **the Vision for Carers in Wirral**. Wirral: Wirral council

According to their website (accessed 27-4-16), which was last updated in April 2015, they provide specialist support to Young Carers aged 5 to 18 and Young Adult Carers aged 18 to 24 living on the Wirral.²⁵

This takes the form of Young Carer assessments, Young Carer breaks and Young Carer support groups offering help and advice.²⁶ Most young people are technology savvy and will use these medium to their advantage. At a time when Young Carers spend most of their time at home, it is important for organisations to have their coverage as up to date and accessible as possible. It is unclear at this time of writing the number of young cares Barnardo's work with.

However, there does seem to be a mismatch of information and how current and up to date this information is. The pull that medium such as Twitter has, is huge and their potential to get information out that is up to date and current is vital to its concurrence as oppose to the current twitter feed which hasn't been kept up to date.

This is in stark contrast to other boroughs in the North West. For example within the borough of St Helens they have a dedicated Young Carers Centre where there are over 500 Young Carers being supported by the Centre. Support takes the form of Young Carers assessments but goes further to offer more meaningful support such as emotional support, advice, respite activities, advocacy, diagnostic information, focus groups and sign posting when needed, staff or volunteers can attend meetings on behalf of the families. St Helens Young Carers Centre post regularly on twitter and have press releases within the local newspapers. Over in the neighbouring Borough of Knowsley, Knowsley Young Carers Centre does relatively the same however, this is more concentrated on supporting the Young Carers and integrating them back into a young life, but again, it is unclear how accurate this is as their website has not been updated for some time.

²⁵ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/adult-social-care/support-carers/support-young-carers>, Accessed, 24/05/16

²⁶ http://www.barnardos.org.uk/youngcarersnorthwest/young_carers_north_west_how_we_can_help.htm, Accessed, 24/05/16

There are smaller charity's on the Wirral that offer support for Young Carers, but this is only via word of mouth and sporadic in its approach. There does not appear to be a 'place' where young cares can access help and support other than through Barbados's via the local authority. This can and does put people off for fear of repercussions. It would also appear that there is no 'hard evidence' as to how many Young Carers actually live on the Wirral nor how they would wish to be supported.

Conclusions

Young Carers are our real life unsung heroes. They largely go unnoticed and hidden, especially on the Wirral. Due to this, very little is known regarding what services and support Young Carers need and how many young carers there actually are. We do know that Young Carers are dealing with issues at home that can be very stressful and quite complex and that this negatively impacts upon them as a human being at a time when they should be experiencing new and exciting things in life. This is the time that they should be growing and developing as a young person, not being the one whose focus is on looking after 'Mum'.

We need to be able to engage with young people in a way that is appropriate to them. This will open up other avenues of meaningful understanding of their needs. In doing so, we will be better educated as to how or in what way a Young Carer would like to be supported. As highlighted throughout this document, we know too little, we are not reaching Young Carers in the right way and what information and support there is sporadic at best.

They are our future and we need to be able to help them, to look after *them* and to nurture them to enable them to live a life with aspirations and goals. We, the adults should be supporting and helping them at a time when they do not know where to go for that help and support.

Appendix A

The caring jobs I do

MACA-YC18

Below are some jobs that young carers do to help. Think about the help you have provided **over the last month**. Please read each one and put a tick in the box to show how often you have done each of the jobs in the last month. **Thank you.**

	Never	Some of the time	A lot of the time
1 Clean your own bedroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Clean other rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Wash up dishes or put dishes in a dishwasher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Decorate rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Take responsibility for shopping for food	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Help with lifting or carrying heavy things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Help with financial matters such as dealing with bills, banking money, collecting benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Work part time to bring money in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Interpret, sign or use another communication system for the person you care for	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 Help the person you care for to dress or undress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 Help the person you care for to have a wash	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 Help the person you care for to have a bath or shower	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 Keep the person you care for company e.g. sitting with them, reading to them, talking to them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 Keep an eye on the person you care for to make sure they are alright	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 Take the person you care for out e.g. for a walk or to see friends or relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 Take brothers or sisters to school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 Look after brothers or sisters whilst another adult is near by	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 Look after brothers or sisters on your own	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MACA-YC18
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Multidimensional Assessment of Caring Activities-Young Carers (MACA-YC18)

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^{iv} Hounsell, D. (2013) **Hidden From View: The experiences of young carers in England** London; The Children's Society