

## **IMPROVING CAREERS SUPPORT FOR YOUNG ADULT CARERS**

This briefing is for all professionals who provide careers support to young people – this includes staff working in schools, local authorities, the National Careers Service, Jobcentre Plus and local information, advice and guidance services for young people. Every school, class and group of young people that you come into contact with will include young people with caring responsibilities. You may or may not be aware that some of the young people you are supporting are carers, this will depend on if they identify themselves as carers, if they choose to disclose and if other agencies share this information with you.

This briefing explains who young adult carers are, why they need specialist careers support and how careers practitioners can enable young adult carers to make informed decisions about learning and work. It also includes links to useful resources and other sources of information and support.

### **Who are young adult carers?**

A young adult carer, aged 16–25, typically has caring responsibility for a family member – most often a parent or sibling and in some cases a grandparent or member of their wider family. The 2011 census showed that there are over 310,000 known young adult carers in England and Wales and research suggests that there are many more young people who have a caring role but do not identify themselves as carers.

### **Why do young adult carers need specialist careers guidance?**

A caring role often affects young people's access to and engagement with learning and work. This often results in lateness, absence and lack of concentration due to stress and anxiety. Research shows that:

- Young adult carers are at least three times as likely to be or have been NEET (not in education, employment or training) than other young people the same age (Audit Commission, 2010).
- Young adult carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers e.g. the difference between nine B's and nine C's (The Children's Society, 2013).

Young adult carers also have significantly less time than other people their age to try different hobbies, interests and types of work, or to consider their sense of self and make decisions about their identity. This can lead to carers defaulting to courses and careers in care because they have few opportunities to explore alternative options:

- Young adult carers who are employed are more likely to be in lower skilled occupations than their peers (The Children's Society, 2013).

The responsibility of caring can provide opportunities for young adult carers to develop maturity and a range of transferable skills, such as budgeting, planning, managing a household and communication, that their peers of the same age might not have. However, many young adult carers may not recognise that they have these skills as they have few opportunities to consider the transferability of their caring role to the world of work.

These challenges mean that young adult carers need additional support to help them explore the different career routes available, identify the transferable skills they have developed through caring and consider how they can manage caring alongside work.

### **Top tips for providing careers guidance to young adult carers**

In 2015, Learning and Work Institute (formerly known as NIACE) consulted a number of young adult carers about their experiences of careers information, advice and guidance. The young people we spoke to said they would prefer to receive careers support from carers services – staff and professionals who they have established relationships with, who they trust and who understand their caring situation. NIACE built on this feedback by working with a number of carers services to enable them develop and pilot effective careers support approaches and resources for young adult carers. The project developed a set of recommendations.

Here are five top tips to delivering careers guidance for young adult carers:

1. **Provide holistic advice and support.** Careers support for young adult carers needs to be holistic and address the wide range of challenges which this group may face in relation to making suitable plans for the future and realising their career aspirations.
2. **Use a range of delivery methods and approaches.** Being available by phone or email, as well as face-to-face, will give young adult carers access to support from a distance if their caring responsibilities increase. Peer support groups can also give young adult carers the time and space to consider their own needs and share sources of support.
3. **Provide access to a range of self-help resources and materials.** This will enable young adult carers to explore information and advice about learning and work when they have time away from their caring responsibilities. Where possible, these materials should be available in both printed and electronic formats.
4. **Developing strong partnerships with a range of external agencies,** particularly local carers support services, can be crucial to the development and delivery of effective and comprehensive careers support for young adult carers.
5. **Providing training and CPD for careers guidance staff** on the specific needs of young adult carers and the support they require can help improve the holistic support available to this group of young people.

### **Links to resources**

Learning and Work Institute/NIACE has produced a range of resources which careers guidance practitioners can use with young adult carers.

[Value My Skills for Young Adult Carers](#) is an interactive card game designed to help young adult carers think about their current skills, future career aspirations and potential skills gaps. The cards can be used by individuals or in a group with the help of a support worker, to start a discussion, plan for the future, and write job applications, letters, personal statements or university applications.

[WE Care Financial Capability Resources](#) can help start conversations and provide a framework for discussing and learning some of the basics of everyday finance that can easily get overlooked in the busy lives of young adult carers.

[Voices of Young Adult Carers](#) is a collection of young adult carers' own accounts of their experience of caring and the impact this has had on their lives, particularly their experiences of education. This resource can help young adult carers

We also produced [a free set of posters](#) to raise awareness of young adult carers. Putting these up around your office will encourage young people to talk about their caring role and its impact on their lives. It will also raise awareness of this group of young people amongst your colleagues.

### **Further information and advice**

For more information or advice on how to provide effective support to young adult carers, please contact Nicola Aylward, Head of Learning for Young People, at [Nicola.Aylward@learningandwork.org.uk](mailto:Nicola.Aylward@learningandwork.org.uk).

This briefing was developed by the Learning and Work Institute (L&W). L&W is a new independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the 'National Institute of Adult Continuing Education' and the 'Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion'. We strive for a fair society in which learning and work helps people realise their ambitions and potential throughout life. We do this by researching what works, influencing policy and implementing new ways to improve people's experiences of learning and employment.