

## WHY SCHOOLS SHOULD RECORD YOUNG CARERS IN THE SCHOOL CENSUS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EDUCATION SETTINGS

Across England, thousands of children and young people provide care for a family member due to illness, disability, mental health needs or substance misuse. Many of these pupils remain hidden in plain sight within classrooms.

Schools play a vital role in helping young carers feel recognised, supported and able to succeed. Recording young carers not only helps schools provide appropriate support, it also ensures that the national picture reflects the true scale of need.

The Department for Education introduced the Young Carer Indicator within the School Census so that schools can contribute to improved understanding of how caring responsibilities affect education.

However, national data consistently show that many schools record zero young carers, despite research indicating that young carers are likely to be present in most schools.

Recording young carers helps ensure pupils are: Seen. Supported. Succeeding.

It also helps schools demonstrate:

- awareness of vulnerable groups
- commitment to inclusion
- evidence of early help approaches
- understanding of barriers to learning
- a whole-school culture of support

Identifying and recording young carers does not mean lowering expectations. With the right support in place, young carers can thrive academically, socially and emotionally.

Schools are not expected to do this alone. Derbyshire All Age Carers Support Service can support settings to develop simple, proportionate approaches that work within existing safeguarding and pastoral systems.

# Why recording young carers matters



Young carers may experience challenges that impact attendance, attainment, well-being and participation in school life.

Without identification, these pupils may be at greater risk of:

- persistent absence
- lower attainment outcomes
- reduced participation in enrichment activities
- anxiety, tiredness or emotional pressure
- feeling different from peers
- difficulty completing homework on time
- limited opportunities to socialise

Recording young carers enables schools to:

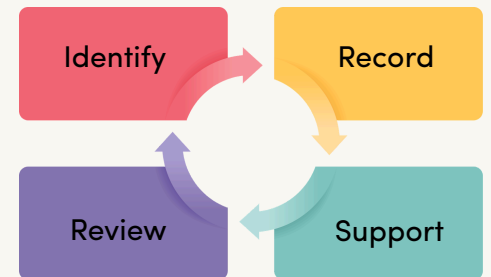
## **Understand barriers to learning**

Caring responsibilities can affect punctuality, homework completion, concentration and energy levels.

## **Provide appropriate support**

Small adjustments can make a significant difference, such as:

- flexibility around deadlines
- access to a trusted adult
- quiet space at break or lunchtime
- homework support opportunities
- understanding when family circumstances change



## **Demonstrate inclusive practice**

Recording young carers shows that the school understands its pupil community and can respond to needs.

## **Contribute to national understanding**

School Census information helps improve understanding of how caring responsibilities affect education across England.

This strengthens the evidence base for future policy, support services and resources for young carers.

## **Strengthen safeguarding and early help**

Young carers may benefit from early support before challenges escalate.

Recording caring responsibilities can help ensure appropriate support is offered at the right time.

# Recording young carers in the School Census

The School Census includes a Young Carer Indicator which is collected annually (Spring census).

Schools are asked to record whether a pupil has been identified as a young carer.

## Census codes

Code	Meaning
N	Not declared
P	Declared by parent or guardian
S	Identified by school (including pupil self-declaration)

The S code allows schools to record young carers where the caring role has been identified through professional judgement, pastoral conversations or pupil voice.

This means that parental confirmation is not required in order for a school to record a young carer on the census.

Schools should still work sensitively with families and respect wishes and feelings, but the census allows schools to record known needs in order to support the pupil appropriately.



## Important reassurance for schools

Recording a young carer:

- does not create a statutory label
- does not automatically trigger referral to external services
- does not require extensive evidence gathering
- can be updated if circumstances change
- can remain confidential within safeguarding systems

The census simply enables schools to indicate that a pupil has caring responsibilities which may impact their education.

# How schools can record young carers confidently

Many schools already hold information that could help identify young carers, including:

- safeguarding records
- pastoral information
- well-being conversations
- attendance discussions
- transition information
- parent communication
- pupil voice activities
- trusted adult conversations

Schools may choose to record young carers on:

- safeguarding systems
- pastoral records
- SEND or inclusion notes
- pupil information systems
- internal vulnerable pupil lists

From this information, the school can determine whether the young carer indicator should be included in the Spring census return.



Not every young carer will need a referral to external services. Often, simple school-based support is enough to reduce pressure and help pupils feel understood.

DAACSS can support schools to:

- develop identification approaches
- introduce simple recording processes
- provide staff awareness training
- offer guidance on proportionate support strategies
- work towards the Young Carers in Schools Quality Mark
- strengthen whole-school approaches

Young carers have the Right to Dream about their future.

When schools recognise caring responsibilities early, pupils are more likely to feel supported, confident and able to achieve their potential. If you feel that your school would benefit from support with Young Carer Awareness, please email us at [education@derbyshirecarers.co.uk](mailto:education@derbyshirecarers.co.uk)