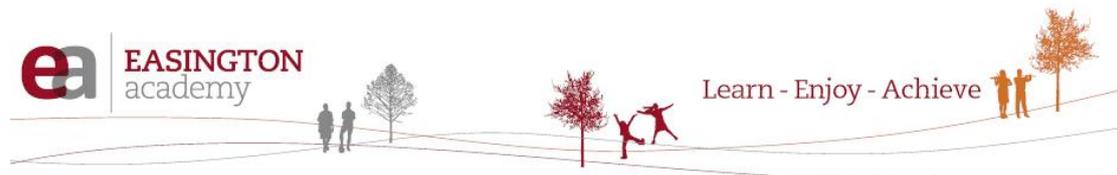




Young Carers Policy

As part of Easington Academy's Pastoral Care Policy



YOUNG CARERS POLICY

At Easington Academy we believe that all children and young people have a right to an education, regardless of what is happening at home. When a young person looks after someone in their family who has a serious illness, disability or substance misuse problem, he or she may need extra support to help him or her to get the most out of school. This policy indicates how the school will assist any student who helps to look after someone at home.

Definition

Young carers are children and young people under 18 who help to look after a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally ill or has a substance misuse problem. Helping out around the house is a normal part of growing up, but young carers regularly carry out significant or substantial caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility which is inappropriate to their age. Caring can involve physical or emotional care, or taking responsibility for someone's safety or well being. Many young carers spend a lot of time doing household chores or looking after younger siblings in addition to helping a sick or disabled parent with tasks such as administering medication, helping someone to get up and get dressed or helping someone use the bathroom. Some young carers help parents to look after a disabled sibling.

Most young carers are not known to be caring by school staff, so being a young carer can be a hidden source of poor attendance, under achievement and bullying, with many young carers dropping out of school or achieving no qualifications. Most children affected by family disability, health problems or substance misuse do not become young carers and it is important to be wary of making assumptions about people with disabilities or other health issues and labelling young people or their parents.

Warning Signs

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

- Regular or increased lateness or absence. Many young carers may be late for school on a regular basis as a result of caring within the home or as a result of over-tiredness.
- Concentration problems, anxiety, tiredness. Many young people will have interrupted sleep patterns or feel tired as a result of having to complete household tasks.

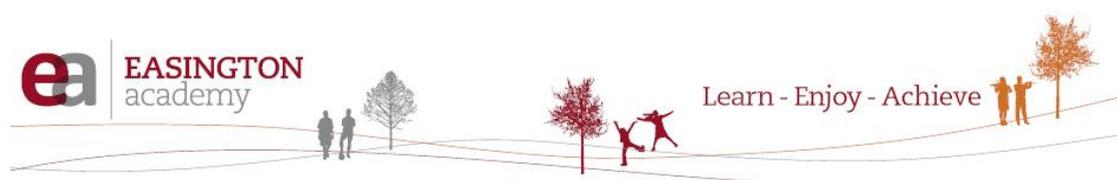


- Non-attendance. Some young carers will take time off school because they are worried about the person they are caring for, or because they are carrying out caring tasks that prevent them attending.
- Under-achievement and late or incomplete homework. Many young carers will find it difficult to find the time to complete homework assignments and may have no one at home who can offer assistance.
- Few or no peer friendships. Some young carers will be unable to develop school friendships outside of school as they may not be able to invite other children home or visit friends in their homes.
- Victim of bullying, sometimes linked to a family member's health or disability.
- Behavioural problems, sometimes a result of anger or frustration. Young carers may exhibit challenging behaviour in environments away from the home setting, to offset the fact that they have to take on adult responsibilities and behave in an adult fashion in the home.
- Unable to attend extra-curricular activities. Many families of young carers will be totally dependent on benefits and activities may be difficult to afford for many families. Many young carers will also be unable to stay at school or access other activities if they have to rush home to support family members.
- Difficulties in engaging parents; parents not attending parents' evenings. Parents will often be unwilling or unable to attend school functions, thus becoming more isolated from the school environment and unaware of issues and problems their children may be experiencing.
- Poverty. Many families will be dependent solely on state benefits for their income, affecting their ability to afford clothing and materials for school and the ability to access school trips.
- Poor education/career choices. Young carers will often not achieve as well as they could do at school and may have poor initial exam results. They will often feel they are good at caring and should therefore automatically go into a care profession, without thinking through the implications of this choice.

The School

The school has recently signed up to the Young Carers' Charter, which aims to offer a support group to the Young Carers within school. The aim of the charter is to help young carers, to give them the opportunity to be listened to and supported throughout their time at school. This will consist of practical help and support.

- The school has a member of staff with special responsibility for young carers and lets all new students who they are and what they can do to help.
- This member of staff will put young carers in touch with the local young carers service.
- The member of staff will be accessible to young carers and their parents.
- Each young carer will have a private, half-termly meeting with the named member of staff.
- The school will consider alternatives if a young carer is unable to attend out of school activities e.g. detentions, after school study sessions.
- The school will allow young carers to telephone home during breaks and lunchtimes if they are worried about a relative.



- The named teacher will consider whether the student is entitled to an assessment from Children's Services, especially in cases where the student meets the Child in Need criteria.
- The named member of staff will ensure that the teaching staff are aware that they have a young carer in their class.
- The school will liaise with the young carer's parents.
- If necessary, negotiate deadlines for homework when the student's caring role increases.
- The school will consider giving lunchtime detentions rather than after school detentions.
- If necessary the school will make referrals to outside agencies: drugs and alcohol services, CAMHs.

If you feel that your child is a young carer, please contact the school or Family Action.

