



Building stronger families



Making A Difference For Young Carers

Introduction

Every day children in the UK face the struggle of providing care and support to family members affected by physical or mental ill health; often with little or no support.

Studies suggest that as many as one million children may be providing a care role, but around three out of four of these are 'hidden' and their home situation is not known to schools or local services.

The challenges young carers face aren't limited to extra workload in their home life.

Often the overwhelming burden of their responsibilities can also put pressure on their school life and often lead to them getting into trouble at school for attendance, punctuality and problems with homework.

This pressure can have an impact on the child's mental well-being and physical health.

In County Durham Family Action's Young Carers service - known locally as "The Bridge" (pictured) - is taking the next step and reaching out to schools, organisations and communities through a "Young Carers Charter" to increase their awareness and ability to support young carers.



"I would highly recommend that any organisation who supports children and young people undergo this Charter Programme.

"I certainly now have a better understanding, which I relay to my staff, ensuring that we provide the correct support for the well-being of any children and young people we engage with"

- Julie Costello, Cultivate 4 Life (Horticultural Support Project)

What is the Charter?



The Charter aims to ensure Young Carers are identified and supported at the earliest opportunity and that there is no “wrong door” for a child or young person with a caring responsibility.

The Charter is co-produced by Family Action and Young Carers living in County Durham with support from the Bishop Auckland and Shildon Area Action Partnership. The Charter engages the local community to expand support and services for Young Carers across County Durham.

Those gaining Charter status showcase their commitment to supporting young carers in their community and working together to build on this commitment and provide additional help, support and signposting for young carers and their families - building a stronger neighbourhood for young carers.

Those wishing to gain Charter status are required to:

- Undertake an audit within their school, organisation or group
- Participate in a young carers training workshop
- Provide evidence against specific pledges of support that were developed with young carers.

On the back of growing interest from other organisations, Family Action have stepped up the Charter to form a new and exciting ‘Neighbourhood Charter’ which further extends support into GP surgeries, agencies and other voluntary groups in the community

The Charter’s Impact

- The Charter process enables schools, organisations and community groups to learn and adopt key principles to help identify more young carers earlier.
- The Charter fosters a culture of change, shared understanding and duty towards supporting young carers. In this way the Charter becomes self sustaining and reaches beyond our direct service delivery.
- Young carers themselves designed the Charter and are fully involved in the process in auditing, reporting and awarding Charter status. They tell us that it makes a difference.
- The work of the Young Carers Charter was given national recognition in 2014 when it was short-listed for an award by Children and Young People Now.

Our Vision

Our vision at the Bridge is to get the Young Carers Neighbourhood Charter out to as many schools, colleges and organisations in County Durham as possible to ensure there is 'no wrong door' for young carers to ask for support.



Who's Signed Up?

Each hand-print in the diagram below represents an accredited location - that's an amazing 80 schools and local services!



But... We Need You!

Even just rolling out the charter to County Durham's 270 schools is a mammoth task - and one we can't do alone.

We need the support of people, organisations and companies in the local community to support the growth of the charter through:

- Volunteering
- Fundraising
- Grant support

If you think you can help please drop us a line via the details below

Family Action The Bridge Young Carers, Butterwick, Woodhouse Lane, Bishop Aukland, DL14 6JU
T: 0191 383 2520 E: durhamyoungcarers@family-action.org.uk W: www.family-action.org.uk