

Dear Sutton schools, academies, and colleges,

We are writing to you today for three reasons: firstly, to remind you that next **Wednesday, 16th March, 2022** is national Young Carers Action Day, and why; secondly, to inform you about what support we, as Sutton's Young Carers Service, can offer to you as a school/college; and lastly, to ask you to give us your pledge for this year, and maybe even your song choice, so we can take action together.

Young Carers Action Day

A Young Carer is someone who cares for, or is impacted by, someone in their family – usually a parent or sibling – who has a physical illness or disability and/or mental health or substance-misuse issue. As you will know, caring responsibilities can affect Young Carers in many areas and in many ways - some positively as they develop qualities and build skills, proud of what they do for their families - but some negatively.

Sutton's Young Carers Service (run by Sutton Carers Centre) is looking forward to celebrating Young Carers Action Day 2022 on Wednesday 16th of March, an annual event organised by the national charity, *Carers Trust*.

It's a day for raising public awareness of Young Carers and Young Carers, the pressures and challenges they face, and the incredible contribution they make by caring for their family members and friends – Carers Trust

Most importantly, it is a day to call for more action to support Young Carers in educational settings. The pandemic has severely affected many Young Carers. Many have taken on increased caring roles, in turn affecting their wellbeing, their potential, and further isolating them from their peers.

The theme this Young Carers Action Day is **'Taking Action on Isolation'**. Young Carers and Young Adult Carers have highlighted how having the right support in place – such as regular short breaks from caring, meeting other young Carers in peer support sessions, and a protected environment conducive to learning – can have a positive impact, giving them the best opportunity of succeeding in all areas of their lives.

National research reports (Carers UK, Carers Trust, Children's Society):

- **89%** of Young Carers surveyed under 24 years old said that they had felt lonely or socially isolated as a result of their caring role.
- **64%** of Young Carers said that they receive no support, whether formal or informal. Of those receiving help, the most common source was a **Young Carers' project**, followed by their **school or college**.
- **79%** of Young Carers reported that they had not received a Young Carers assessment by the local authority.

- Carers are estimated to save the country at least **£132 billion** a year in the unpaid caring they do and **Young Carers** contribute to this saving.

Young Carers tell us they are:

- Lonely or feel as though no one else understands - often hiding their caring role, as they do not want to feel different. They may not even realise that they are a Young Carer.
- Isolated - they may miss school, out-of-school activities, or meeting-up with friends. They have little free time because caring takes priority over socialising.
- Anxious - worrying about the person or people, they support when they are away from them.
- Overwhelmed - Managing lots of responsibilities can mean that they don't have time or the right environment to complete homework. Some Young Carers miss school completely as caring duties mean they feel they can't leave the person they support, often facing sanctions on return to school, further isolating them.

We have many Young Carers in the Sutton educational system...

as many as 1 in every 6 children is a Young Carer, and many remaining hidden.

The support we can offer

We have worked closely with 8 primary schools, 5 secondary schools and 2 colleges. With our initial, and where needed, ongoing help, they now support their Young and Young Adult Carers by:

- Delivering Young Carer Awareness staff training.
- Delivering Young Carer Awareness assemblies.
- Running peer support and homework clubs.
- Completing and achieving the 'Young Carers in Schools' award.

As a result, Young Carers tell us:

- *Having a named person in school who understands Young Carers' needs has made a difference.*
- *I didn't know there were other Young Carers in my school, peer support has changed that.*
- *Having a space in school to complete work means I no-longer have detentions.*
- *I love school now, I can concentrate on my learning and leave the adults to do the adult things, which I didn't know were adult things!*

We are excited that BBC Children in Need has funded another 3 years for our **Sutton Young Carers in Education** (SYCiE) project. The experience we've had over the past 4 years has taught us that offering resources directly to our education colleagues, whilst also helping to build that ongoing capacity, is key to creating systems-wide and community change. We believe that increasing the capacity within educational communities to

specifically identify and support Young and Young Adult Carers will mean that these young people have a more satisfying educational experience.

Upcoming plans?

- Setting up a network of schools and educational establishments working together for Young Carers
- Continuing to offer schools/colleges direct service and support.
- Sharing best practice and offering key, focused solutions.
- Termly networking meetings - virtually and face-to-face
- Providing identified Young Carers and their families with our targeted, specialist support, as needed

All the support and training we offer is **FREE**.

Please make your pledge, submit your song!

This Young Carers Action Day, we urge all schools, academies and colleges to **pledge support**. You can help raise awareness of Young Carers in education by writing a pledge card which you can download [here](#) and posting it on your website and/or social media channels. Please also tag and share it with us on Instagram [@SuttonYoungCarers](#), Twitter [@SuttonCarers](#) and Facebook [@SuttonCarersCentre](#).

By taking action, together, we can protect the futures of Young and Young Adult Carers and let them know that they are not alone.

Also, please check out what the Young Carer Ambassadors are doing via our website and social media channels as they creatively explore their Sutton theme of **#StoriesNotStatistics**. They will be launching a digital resource, amplifying their voices, as well as publishing a **Music Playlist for times of 'Solitude'** – to lift their spirits if feeling lonely, or to help them enjoy a break, blocking out the noise of the world! You, too, are most welcome to submit your personal song choice - now, on the day, or afterwards as they continue to build it – by clicking [here](#).

If you would like more information with regards to the SYCiE programme or general information with regards to Young or Young Adult Carers, please feel free to contact me by email julia@suttoncarerscentre.org or by phone 07860 847989. You can also check out information on our website [here](#).

What will you do to ensure Young Carers feel seen, heard and supported?

With kind regards and thanks for your partnership this past year.

Julia

Senior Support and Development Worker (Education) and SYCiE Lead