

Young adult carers: policy and practice

Identifying and supporting young people who are carers to lead happy and fulfilling lives as they make the transition to adulthood



For young adult carers, it's time to be heard



Moira Fraser

Welcome to this special young adult carers supplement. I'd like to thank *Children & Young People Now* for focusing on this vital issue and the changes that are taking place that we hope will improve things for this group of young people.

Because things do need improving. Carers Trust's research with the University of Nottingham shows that nearly four out of five carers aged 14 to 25 are not getting a formal assessment of their needs by the local authority – the assessment that is such a vital step in ensuring that carers and their families are able to get the support they need.

They also miss or cut short an average of 48 school days a year because of their caring role, and they are four times more likely to drop out of college or university.

In addition, they have higher rates of poor mental and physical health, and experience higher rates of bullying. And we already knew they were 2.5 times more likely than the general population to be not in education, employment or training.

Even so, young adult carers are not a visible or vocal group in society, which is why we have launched a campaign called Time to be Heard.

It calls on the government and public bodies to secure a positive future for the UK's young adult carers and aims to give them a voice and address the barriers they face in education and employment.

Proper funding of the implementation of the Care Act 2014 is vital, so that young adult carers are protected from excessive caring responsibilities and can put their energy into education, training and employment.

Finally, this investment needs to be reflected in government policy so that young adult carers are recognised as a vulnerable group who are prioritised for support to fulfil their potential.

Moira Fraser is interim chief executive of Carers Trust

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POLICY REFORM SUPPORTING YOUNG ADULT CARERS

Entitlements for young adult carers at last come of age

Carers Trust is championing the contribution of young carers and funding projects, as landmark legislation sees local authorities become legally responsible for assessing their needs and providing services to support these needs. *Jo Stephenson* investigates what's at stake

Hundreds of thousands of young people across the UK provide essential care and support for parents, siblings and other loved ones every day. Yet their needs have until recently been largely ignored. Carers Trust estimates there are 375,000 young adult carers aged 14 to 25 across the country. Many are silently struggling on, to the detriment of their own wellbeing and aspirations.

Young adult carers provide practical and emotional support, managing households, looking after younger siblings, administering medication and carrying out intimate care tasks.

Research by the University of Nottingham, commissioned by Carers Trust, shows they are less likely to do well at school than their peers and more likely to drop out of college or university and end up not in education, employment or training (Neet).

The survey of 295 young adult carers found that a quarter were bullied at school because of their caring role. Sixty-five per cent had at least one disability or health issue, with 45 per cent reporting a mental health problem.

A major problem is that the transition from children's to adult services often involves a sharp drop-off in support, even though nothing has really changed in their situation apart from turning 18. But this April sees the introduction of groundbreaking legislation designed to ensure more consistent and better support.

Anna Morris is senior policy and development manager at Carers Trust. "The law used to sit across three pieces of legislation so it was very confusing," she says. "Lots of local authorities didn't know young carers' rights. Neither did young carers and their families."

However, key changes contained in both the Children and Families Act, and the Care Act, should make the situation clearer.



Young adult carers, seen here enjoying a day trip to Bath, are set to benefit from key legislative changes in April, enshrined in the Children and Families Act and the Care Act

Young carers have been entitled to an assessment of their needs if they were providing regular and ongoing care for someone else, but they have had to ask for it. This means they must first recognise themselves as a carer, know their rights and then approach social services.

Research has consistently found fewer than 20 per cent did so. Provisions in the Children and Families Act mean they will now have a right to an assessment if they seem likely to need support. Moreover, when a child is identified as having caring responsibilities, there must be an automatic assessment of the adult's needs.

Whole-family approach

The Care Act emphasises the need for a whole-family approach. When an adult is being assessed, professionals must ascertain if any children have caring responsibilities, to aid earlier identification. Councils must also consider the impact of an adult's needs on children's wellbeing and development, and whether they are undertaking "inappropriate" caring duties, as well as look at the adult's parenting role.

A significant change is the approach to transition, with councils required to assess young carers' needs as they approach adulthood.

"This is about transition planning and raising and fulfilling the aspirations of young adult carers," says Morris. All these changes, which councils must implement by April, are welcome, she says. But Morris says councils' readiness is

IN NUMBERS

48 On average, young adult carers miss or cut short 48 school days a year because of their caring role

4 They are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than students who are not young adult carers

22% Only 22 per cent who responded to a survey commissioned by Carers Trust had a formal assessment of their needs by their local authority

65% had one or more disabilities or health difficulties, while 45 per cent reported a mental health problem

46% said their family received good support and services

Source: Carers Trust

mixed – some have started planning, while others barely acknowledge the need to change.

Alan Wood, president of the Association of Directors of Children's Services, believes the new legislation will help. "What we haven't had until recently is a universal framework that is as effective at solving difficulties for children and young people as it is at meeting the needs of adults," he explains. "These two acts will support greater individual choice by enabling young adult carers to transition at the most appropriate time for them."

Cash-strapped councils may wonder how they can afford to fulfil their new duties to young adult carers when cuts are eating into core services including child protection. Morris says: "If you identify these children early then the cost of supporting them or their families is lower than if you let it reach crisis point."

Wood says doing things differently can actually save money. "Taking a whole-family approach via closer and more effective working between children's and adults' services provides early opportunities to avoid crisis and makes the best use of resources available."

Carers Trust is running a multi-pronged campaign to support implementation of the reforms, thanks to £6m raised by the Co-operative Group, which made the trust its charity of the year in 2013. The About Time programme has five key strands. Time to be Noticed is a two-year campaign to boost public awareness of what it means to be a young carer; Time to be Heard is a

campaign giving young adult carers the skills and confidence to push for change themselves; and Time to Connect has seen the creation of a new website and 24-hour online support service for young adult carers, and a site for professionals containing an array of resources.

The programme also features two grant schemes: Time To Change is providing grants of up to £43,000 to 55 projects to develop services for young adult carers; and Take Action and Support provides funding for shorter-term interventions to reduce the risk of young people becoming socially isolated or Neet.

One of the biggest challenges is getting services and agencies to "understand these children and young people exist", says Morris. This will only happen, she adds, if their needs are recognised through eligibility for key policies such as the pupil premium and the government's 16 to 19 Bursary Fund to support vulnerable young people to stay in education.

At the moment, good work is often down to one passionate professional. Alice Miller, young adult carers officer at Bath and North East Somerset Carers Centre, is one of those grappling with the challenge of providing good all-round support for young adult carers, who she says "can get lost in adult services". Her centre has benefited from the Time For Change grant funding – receiving £42,700 over 18 months, allowing it to create a dedicated role and a support project for young adult carers. All get an assessment, individual action plan and assistance with everything from opening a bank account and getting a bus pass to meeting personal tutors to help young people explain their home situations.

Comprehensive support

Young adult carers have also gone on a cookery course and got help to stop smoking and reduce other risks. The centre has worked with partners including Strona Care & Health, substance misuse organisation Project 28 and the council's active lifestyles and health improvement team, which gives all young adult carers a health check.

"We've supported young people into full-time work, while others have got to grips with their health and become more active, or made that transition to further education," says Miller

Such good practice must become the norm, says Morris. Carers Trust will continue to push for implementation of the legislation and the support that should follow and keep a close eye on whether it is being adequately funded. "The lives and futures of these children and young people should not be put at risk because the needs of their families are not being met by adult social care and support," she concludes.

Sunderland Carers' Centre has been able to provide more intense support to young adult carers thanks to funding it has been awarded by Carers Trust's Time for Change programme

Putting the needs at the centre

Sunderland Carers' Centre has been able to develop a targeted approach to work effectively with young adult carers as a result of a successful application for funding from Carers Trust's Time for Change programme.

This approach enables young adult carers to receive tailored support when they most need it.

This year marks the 21st birthday of Sunderland Carers' Centre, which has provided support to young adult carers in Sunderland since opening in 1994. "The centre supports carers throughout the city including young adult carers," explains the centre's chief executive officer Graham Burt. "Through the work of the young carer development workers, we identified a gap in the support we were able to offer to young adult carers from 15 to 25 years of age. They found it difficult to fit into young carer or indeed adult carer support packages. This is why the Carers Trust's Time for Change funding was vital in the support we are able to offer these particular carers."

Two-year plan

Sunderland Carers' Centre's successful bid will help support young adult carers during the next two years. Sue Callaghan, young carer development worker at the centre, says: "The centre staff asked young adult carers what kind of support they would like to be available to them, which then formed the basis of our application to Carers Trust. Through our 'whole family approach', we identified the gap in support provision. With the help of the young adult carers, we were able to put forward an application to Carers Trust."

The centre was determined that any good work kick-started by the grant could be sustained. "That was vitally important to us before we considered applying to the Time for Change programme," stresses Callaghan, who has led the initiative since it launched in February 2014. The funding has enabled the centre to engage sessional workers, which in turn has freed up staff time to allow more specialist work with young adult carers.

Sunderland Carers' Centre can now provide one-to-one support and has also set up a group offering activities aimed specifically at young adult carers. This included bringing in partners to talk to the young adult carers about issues that affect them directly. It is also providing

training designed to boost confidence and deal with anger and stress. This work is assessed and monitored using the Carers Star outcome evaluation tool and has allowed the centre to highlight individual and family needs.

"We were delighted at how thorough the Carers Star process is, and how it can highlight areas we had not previously thought required attention," says Callaghan.

Burt adds: "The Carers Star highlights very clearly what the needs of carers are. It also ensures carers who may be experiencing difficulties in their caring roles are identified. This early identification can clearly assist carers in their roles while caring at home or around their social life, education or work."

Many young adult carers find it difficult to find time for themselves, so a key part of the project is to ensure they can access social and leisure activities. This has included hosting taster sessions for sporting activities such as badminton, fencing, tennis, bowling and ice-skating, and go on a 10-week skiing course.

Furthermore, Sunderland Carers' Centre can provide grants to carers up to the value of £500 as part of the Carers Breaks and Opportunities Scheme. This aims to give carers respite from their caring role. For example, one young adult carer was awarded funding towards a bike to pursue his passion for cycling.

Another priority has been to ensure young

adult carers can access education, training and employment. Sunderland Carers' Centre has worked in partnership with other organisations to provide help with writing CVs and interview techniques, and is now helping young adult carers enrol onto courses or secure work placements. The centre has been given the target of helping 40 young adult carers access some form of further education, training or employment within two years, which it is confident it will achieve comfortably.

A concerted effort has been made by the centre to reach out to young adult carers. Many have been contacted directly to make them aware of the new, intensive and tailored support available. Two young adult carers have been employed by Sunderland Carers' Centre to champion the views of their peers and help raise awareness. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the personal development of both, with one currently studying towards a qualification in youth and community work. Both were heavily involved in developing a young carer policy, which has since been adopted by 53 GP practices throughout the city.

"The biggest thing we are giving the young adult carers now that we couldn't before is time," says Callaghan. "That's what's made the big difference. Time. It's all about ensuring they have aspiration and the belief that they have a future."



Carers Trust funding has enabled the Sunderland centre to provide tailored support to young adult carers

Small steps to a bright future

After spending his adolescence caring intensively for his mum, support from Sunderland Carers' Centre has allowed 20-year-old Damian to see himself as a young person and develop aspirations for his future

When Damian first found out there was support available for a young adult carer like himself, he admits he was stunned.

From the age of 15 he had struggled on alone, looking after his mum, who has schizophrenia. Then one day there was a knock at the door and his life began to change for the better.

Claire Alderson, a young carer development worker at Sunderland Carers' Centre, had called to inform Damian about the help she and her colleagues could provide.

"Claire came around, introduced herself and explained what she did and how she could help," recalls Damian. "I was shocked because I'd never experienced anything like that before."

He was 19 at the time.

In the four years since he has become the sole carer for his mum this was the first time a professional had acknowledged the vast responsibilities on his shoulders and offered to help – despite the fact the police, social services, his school and others were all involved with, and concerned about, his family.

After his dad died and his sisters left the family home, Damian was in charge of the household, making meals, cleaning and doing other domestic chores.

He also ensured his mum took her medication and provided her with emotional support. But his school work and attendance suffered and he soon fell behind. The strain he was under began to show. "As a result of all the stress, I had a bit of an anger problem and kept getting kicked out of school," he explains. He left school aged 15 without any qualifications.

Following school, Damian signed up for military training with the intention of joining the Army. He struggled on the course and dropped out after arguing with his instructor.

Damian did not look for another course, instead devoting himself to caring for his mum who had become increasingly reliant on him.

"I just carried on caring for mum," he says. "I didn't have much confidence and I wasn't going out. I didn't know there was any support available."

All he could see was a future as a full-time carer. It was only when Sunderland Carers' Centre was alerted to the fact that Damian was



Damian has benefited from one-to-one support

a young adult carer by one of his mum's mental health workers and Claire made contact that he realised he was not on his own.

He started attending a group for young adult carers. "They said it would be good for me to go down and meet with other carers, so I started doing that," says Damian. "It was something to do. I was meeting other people and it was building my confidence."

"The carers' centre said it would be good for me to go down and meet with other carers. I was meeting other people and it was building my confidence"

Damian, young adult carer

As well as attending the group, making new friends and enjoying trips and activities, Damian began getting intensive, one-to-one support from Claire, who helped him explore his own needs and aspirations.

"We talk about how I am doing and if there is anything I need help with," says Damian.

"I wanted to do some courses and Claire has helped me with that. It makes a difference to mum too because I'm not getting into trouble as much. I know if I need help I can go to Sunderland Carers' Centre and the staff will help, so there is less tension around the house."

While Damian, now 20, still has a way to go to achieve his goals, Claire and others have already seen a dramatic change in his outlook and attitude.

"A big part of it has been confidence, because for so long he hadn't been doing anything," she says. "It has been about taking small steps to show Damian it is possible to do other things, such as having a job and having friendships, instead of being isolated."

Damian recently completed a course through the Prince's Trust, which was a major achievement and has proved a real turning point. About six weeks in, Damian became angry with his tutor and stormed off.

Previously, he might have given up but this time he turned to Claire, who went with him the next day to sort things out.

The support he has been getting has included emotional development training and an anger management course, both of which have helped him tap into and control his feelings.

"Now I'm not as angry," he says. "I was getting stressed and flying off the handle, but I've learned to take myself out of the equation, maybe go for a walk."

Damian's ultimate goal is to find employment – he says he does not mind what he does. He has been getting advice from a specialist careers worker, who has helped him draw up a CV and explore employment options.

His mother's condition fluctuates from day-to-day so it can be difficult to look ahead, but overall he says he feels a lot more positive and is full of praise for Sunderland Carers' Centre.

"If they hadn't come along I'd just be sitting at home with my mum," he says. "The help they have given me is fantastic. The courses and activities are fun and you learn a lot. I feel better about the future now."

CYP Now joined forces with Carers Trust to host a national summit in November to prepare commissioners of services for their new duties in supporting young carers and help disseminate good practice and advice. *Jo Stephenson* reports on an inspiring day

Poised and articulate, 21-year-old Emily Clinton is the epitome of a confident young woman despite challenges she has faced in her life so far. Having spent 11 years looking after her mum, her experiences made her the perfect choice to chair a national summit on young adult carers in November.

"It was really hard on myself and my family, but we've been really well supported by services for her and for me and my dad," she told the gathering of professionals from children's and adult services, health and education. "But a lot of people don't have those opportunities, which is why we have to make things a lot better for young adult carers today and in the future."

This rallying call set the scene for a day that shone a spotlight on the needs of the 375,000 young adult carers in the UK. The challenges faced by 14- to 25-year-olds caring for relatives and other loved ones were highlighted by University of Nottingham research looking specifically at experiences of young adult carers at school, college, university and in employment.

Anna Morris, senior policy and development manager at Carers Trust, said the research addressed the need for hard evidence of the issues these carers faced. In particular, difficulties at school were a "big deal" for the 295 young adult carers surveyed. "Even if they had left school 10 years before, it was still something they wanted to talk about," she said.

The statistics were telling, but the picture they painted was brought to life by a group of young adults carers in a video they had made as part of the Carers Trust's Time To Be Heard campaign. They described the impact of caring on their own wellbeing, education and aspirations – the isolation, exhaustion and frequent lack of support and understanding. But they also spoke of the positive side of caring – the maturity, life skills and incredible family bonds. Above all, they called for change so that they are no longer overlooked as a group.

Children's minister Edward Timpson promised reform in a video message that highlighted changes to legislation designed to

Real stories and good practice shared at carers summit

stop young people taking on inappropriate caring responsibilities and ensuring all could reach their potential. "The existing legislative framework was confusing and disjointed to young people and professionals alike," he said. "So the changes we've introduced are designed to tackle that deficiency and make it easier to provide that protection by allowing all young carers to get an assessment of their needs for support that would, crucially, consider the needs of the whole family. Fine new words in legislation mean nothing if practice on the ground doesn't also change, so we must now ensure we get the implementation right."

New guidance will be available and he promised that the Department for Education was working closely with colleagues in the Department of Health to "ensure those working in both adult and children's services get consistent joined-up messages about how we see this working and working well".

"New words in legislation mean nothing if practice on the ground doesn't also change, so we must get the implementation right"

Edward Timpson,
Children's minister

Indeed, the need for children's and adult services to work closer together was a strong overarching theme of the summit.

Mark Burrows, team manager for the DfE's children in care division, which encompasses young carers, said services had already shown they could do this and the vision was for an "uncomplicated gateway" for families to get support.

Dame Philippa Russell, chair of the Standing Commission on Carers government advisory group, said good support for young adult carers is as much about good support for those they look after. She highlighted the challenge in defining what "inappropriate care" actually means, and the fact that a caring role can change over time. Dame Philippa also called for more recognition for young carers' skills and the important role they play in society. "They have a right to be proud of themselves and often feel they can't be," she said.

Services must get better at asking young adult carers what they want to do with their lives and helping them "think big", she added. "Why can't young adult carers have an



Speakers address delegates at the Young Carers Summit held at The Hutton conference centre in Farringdon, central London, which was hosted by CYP Now and Carers Trust

education, health and care plan like a disabled person?" Dame Philippa asked.

Moira Fraser, interim chief executive of Carers Trust, spoke about Imogen, who had come to interview her about the lack of support for young and young adult carers. Imogen started caring for her mum, who has a mental health condition, at the age of nine, although she was 15 before anyone noticed. Stories like this are the driving force behind Carers Trust's multifaceted About Time programme for young adult carers, explained Fraser.

Ensuring young adult carers are identified and supported through the transition from school to further education, training and employment is a key facet of work in Norfolk. Stuart Betts is service development manager for vulnerable children and young people at Norfolk County Council and John Lee is under-25s services manager at Norfolk Carers.

They told delegates how the council and



charity work together to improve support since young people had told them that services "drop us at 18". They stressed the need to listen to young people. The Norfolk Young Carers Forum has played a key role in shaping policy and a range of forums and advisory groups for young adult carers have also helped recruit and interview support workers.

There is "huge power to be found in partnerships", said Jen Kenward, head of patient experience at NHS England, which published its *Commitment to Carers* in Spring 2014 and is promoting integration between health and social care through its £3.8bn Better Care Fund. Health is, of course, a key part of the equation. GPs are often treating the people being looked after, putting them in a unique position to identify young or young adult carers at home.

Kenward highlighted the importance of data, saying that valuable sources of information such as the GP patient survey are currently



poorly used. She described how a Young Carers Call to Action event saw young adult carers tell their stories to senior NHS figures, who pledged to take action to improve services in the form of an unbreakable "pinky swear" – the solemn entwining of little fingers.

Schools too are a vital partner. Emily Carter, schools policy and development officer at Carers Trust, and Toni-Marie Smith,

"Young adult carers have waited a long time for change. We need to look at how we make that change and go that extra mile"

Moira Fraser, interim chief executive
Carers Trust

operational co-ordinator for The Children's Society's Young Carers in Focus programme, highlighted results from the Young Carers in Schools initiative, which includes guidance and an awards scheme for schools. The programme – a joint initiative between Carers Trust, The Children's Society and Young Carers in Focus – was piloted in Central Bedfordshire with four schools that already had fairly good practice. All achieved the gold standard thanks to work including raising awareness of young carers and their needs among staff and pupils.

"All these schools were already good but all identified new young carers – there was far more to be done," said Julie Overton, young carers manager at Central Bedfordshire Council. The programme has since been rolled out to 16 areas, each introducing it in at least five schools.

Stockport is one area striving to do better with support from the highest level at the council. Schools there previously had no system to identify young carers. Each has now appointed a lead for young carers while governing bodies undergo training. Schools that once referred the lowest number of young carers for extra support are now making the highest number of referrals, explained Phil Beswick, the council's director of education.

Delegates wanted to know how to handle schools reluctant to take part in such work. Carter recommended showing them the positive impact on attendance and attainment achieved by those supporting young adult carers.

Carers Trust Cambridgeshire receives grant funding from the Time for Change programme. While it had previously done work with young adult carers, gaining £43,000 has enabled it to offer more intensive and individual support.

Its young adult carers manager Tracy Hyland explained that it runs groups for young adult carers aged 16 to 25 in two areas of the county, called STRIVE (Strong Together Real Vulnerable Equal). Members benefit from workshops and attending university open days.

The Cambridgeshire service also runs an innovative family carers prescription scheme with the local clinical commissioning group. Young adult carers in need of a break can go to see their GP, who can prescribe a free period of respite for up to 24 hours. Meanwhile, a philanthropist has funded leadership and development courses for eight young adult carers and a year-long internship for someone.

Summing up, Fraser said young adult carers have waited a long time for change. "We need to look at how we make that change and go that extra mile," she concluded. "We need real commitment from all of you."

A week in the life of a young carer

Becky Hammerton's life changed when she was eight and her mum was injured in an accident. Becky started helping out more at home but her caring role soon escalated. Now the 19-year-old from Dorset looks after both her mum and dad, as well as attending university part-time.

Here's a typical week in the life of Becky.

MONDAY

On days when Becky does not go to university, she gets up at about 8am.

Her first priority is to see that her mum is okay, which can include helping her to get dressed.

"On a Monday, I'd be finding out what food we need, doing the shopping and sorting out bills," she says. "I try to do a bit of uni work, but that doesn't happen very much."

She sorts out other practical issues around the home.

For example, the grab rail in the toilet has come off the wall, so she has been trying to get in touch with her mum's occupational therapist to have it fixed.

Becky also cooks meals for the days ahead. "I cook in bulk, so I know on the days I'm coming home from uni that I've got something I can quickly whip out of the freezer."

TUESDAY

Tuesday is a university day, which means getting up at 5am.

"I have about an hour and a half in the morning when I juggle everything, as well as getting myself ready to go," says Becky.

It is a two-hour journey to Sparsholt College, near Winchester in Hampshire, where she is doing a foundation degree in animal management and applied science. Her dream is to work in primate conservation.

"I hope I'll achieve my goals, but I am restricted," she says, admitting if she'd had the choice she would have done a specialised zoology course at Bangor University.

In between lectures she may make further phone calls to sort out issues at home.

She gets back at about 6.30pm to prepare dinner and spends time with her mum until about 9pm. "Then it's bed and it starts again," she says.

WEDNESDAY

Becky is at university again on Wednesday, where she tries to get as much work as possible done during the day.

"We did a task to work out how many spare



Becky Hammerton juggles caring for her mother and father with her studies at Sparsholt College in Hampshire

hours you have per week," she says. "Some people had 78. I had three."

The college is aware she is a young adult carer so she does get support, but adds: "Sometimes it feels like because you're an adult and doing a degree, you should be able to manage."

THURSDAY

It's another day off uni. Becky's dad suffered a nervous breakdown as a result of his wife's accident, has ongoing mental health problems and can't work. "I'll sit down with him to look at our financial situation – is there anything we're behind on or anything we need for the house?" says Becky. "At the moment our washing machine is on its last legs and we need to save up for a new one."

Sometimes she goes out with her mum during the afternoon. "Because mum is physically disabled, she feels quite isolated, so it's good for her to get out and have a bit of a girly day with me," says Becky.

Again, she will try and get in a couple of hours university work.

FRIDAY

Becky's university course-mates have a "completely different" lifestyle.

"I've learned a lot from being a young carer, so I have life skills such as cooking and budgeting when some people my age don't have a clue," she says. "They get more time to socialise, but it means when I do get the chance I appreciate it more."

However, her situation does get her down. She has suffered from depression for the past 18 months. "There are days when I feel useless and can't face the situation I'm in. But it has made me the person I am, and the bond I

have with my parents is so strong," she says.

Becky sees her boyfriend at the weekend and every other weekend goes to stay with him on a Friday night, while her older sister looks after her parents.

SATURDAY

Saturdays at her boyfriend's place are a chance to relax. "I would like to see him more," says Becky. "But it helps just knowing he is there and that every other weekend I get to go to his house and don't have to cook."

She rarely gets time to socialise with friends. "Maybe half-term or Christmas holidays if I am lucky. Apart from that, we talk by text but usually I am just trying to cram things in so there's not enough time to see people."

SUNDAY

It's the end of another busy week. Becky started caring when she was eight and was only identified as a young carer at 16.

She started getting support from Dorset Young Carers and valued the chance to enjoy trips and activities with other young carers.

Since turning 18, support has dropped off. Dorset charity Pramacare runs a young adult carers group, but has less funding and far fewer young people attend. But she has a "really nice" worker with whom she can talk.

Support from adult services, Becky says, is poor. For example, her father has had counselling in the past. "It's six sessions and that's it, so short-term. If he had better support, maybe he could do more."

On the future, she says: "It's unclear what could happen because mum's physical health isn't getting any better. It's just a question of managing her pain. So I just go day by day."