Information Booklet for Young Carers
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DO YOU CARE?

Do a number of the following points apply to you?

- Do you care for a member of your family, for example, because of illness, disability or a mental health issue?
- Do you ever feel sad, angry, or guilty about the help you give to others at home? Or are you ever jealous of friends who don’t have the same responsibilities?
- Do you have to do the shopping for your family?
- Do you help someone with bathing or dressing?
- Do you help someone to go to the toilet or get into bed?
- Do you take care of housework, for example, dusting and hoovering or washing and ironing?
- Do you look after money or organise the family budget?
- Do you do most of the cooking for your family?
- Do you help anyone to take medication?
- Do you speak on behalf of someone who has difficulty speaking for themselves?
- Do you translate or interpret for your parent(s)/sibling(s)?
- Do you avoid telling anyone about your home situation?
- Do you offer emotional support to help parents through bad times?
- Do you collect prescriptions or Social Welfare on behalf of someone else?
- Do your responsibilities at home prevent you from spending time with your friends, or inviting them around to your house?

It may be surprising, upsetting or confusing to think of yourself as a young carer.

However, by identifying as a young carer, you can feel acknowledged for the role you play in your family. With support in place, caring for a loved one can have a positive impact.

Research reveals that the challenges of caring can lead young people to develop new life skills as well as maturity, compassion & stronger family bonds.
WHAT IS A YOUNG CARER?

Young carers are children and young people who are under the age of 18 whose lives are in some way affected because they provide care, assistance or support to another family member. Young adult carers are recognised as a separate group, and are aged between 19 - 25.

The person they care for is often a parent but can be a sibling, grandparent or other relative who needs care, support or supervision because of disability, chronic illness, mental health difficulties or problems with drugs or alcohol misuse.

Caring for other people at home can affect how you feel, and how much free time you have. This will be looked at later in the booklet, but if you are still not sure that you are a young carer read the examples on the next page.

This booklet is a way for you to help yourself and for others to help you.

This booklet isn’t a way for others to get information about you or your family.
SOUND LIKE YOU?

Sean’s story

Sean is fourteen years old. His brother has an illness which means he often gets very sick. Sean has to help his dad look after his brother. He cooks meals for his brother and looks after him when their dad is at work. Sean has his Junior Cert exams this year but he doesn’t get much time to study. Sean likes caring for his brother but he knows that he needs to pass his exams. Sean is a young carer.

What happened next?

Sean was asked to speak to a teacher, called Mr Flynn, at school. Mr Flynn then spoke to Sean’s dad about services that could help the family. For example, Family Carers Ireland could help in getting care for Sean’s brother to enable Sean to have the time he needs to study. After this, Mr Flynn spoke to Louise, the Home School Liaison Teacher at Sean’s school. She talked to Sean’s teachers so that they understood his situation, and arranged for a quiet place for Sean to study.

Ciara’s story

Ciara is twelve years old. Her mam is very ill, so Ciara has to look after her. Ciara has to do the shopping and take her brother to school. She can’t go to school sometimes because she’s too busy. Ciara is a young carer.

What happened next?

An Education Welfare Officer called Clare, visited Ciara and her mam to talk about what things might help Ciara at school. After this, Clare spoke to Ciara’s Year Head who made sure that teachers were aware of Ciara’s situation and arranged for a private place for her to phone home at lunchtimes to make sure her mam is okay. Clare spoke to the Public Health Nurse with Ciara’s mam’s permission. The Public Health Nurse praised Ciara for all the help she gives. To support her mam she arranged for help with housework and personal tasks like bathing and dressing. A neighbour now collects Ciara’s brother from school two days a week so Ciara can go to the local youth club. Ciara still collects him on the other days as she enjoys doing it.

Conor’s story

Conor is fifteen years old. He helps look after his mam and his gran. His mam has a back injury and his gran has severe arthritis. He does everything for them. He’s scared to talk to anyone about it, in case he would be placed in care. Conor is a young carer.

What happened next?

Conor dropped into his local youth service, while he was out shopping on a Friday evening.
There he spoke to a Youth Information Officer called Andy who explained that Child Protection Services are not there to take young people like Conor into care but to help them and their families. After this, it was arranged for Conor’s gran to go to a day centre three times a week. They also arranged for his mam to have a personal alarm as well as a home carer to help her. The alarm is linked to a service which will contact Conor if something happens to his mam and she can’t manage on her own. Conor can now go out with his friends without worrying about what is happening at home.

**What happened next?**

Ava told her doctor about her worries about her mam and together they agreed that it was a good idea for him to talk to her mam. After speaking to Ava’s mam the doctor contacted the Community Mental Health Team, on her behalf. The Team were able to arrange some counselling and support for her.

**Ava’s story**

Ava is seventeen years old. Sometimes her mam gets sad and drinks too much. Ava has to cook her own tea when her mam is sad. She’s too embarrassed to take friends home in case her mam’s not well. She doesn’t mind doing all this because she likes helping her mam. Ava is a young carer.

**Remember!**

Many people do not see themselves as being young carers. They think of themselves as a family member, a brother, sister, daughter or son and can presume that all families provide this sort of support. As a result they often don’t realise that there is practical help and emotional support available for them.
Everyone’s home situation is different. The things you do to help out at home will depend on the illness, problems or needs of your relative. For example, you may help them to do things they can’t do for themselves. Or you might help look after others in your family because your relative can’t do this themselves, for example, looking after your brothers or sisters because your mam is ill. You may even find that you help by simply listening and being caring.

REMEMBER!
Whatever tasks you do at home to help out, there are a few important things to remember:
If your relative needs to be lifted you could hurt yourself.
There are people who can provide your family with help and give you a choice about what things you do or don’t want to do at home. This may include equipment to make things easier at home.

EQUIPMENT
There are different types of equipment that can help.
Here are some examples:
- A hoist
- A walk-in shower
- A stair-lift
- A Personal alarm

ASK YOURSELF
- Who do you care for?
- What things do you do to help out at home?
- Does anyone else help out?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- How much time do you spend helping?

THINGS TO DO
- Ask for help from people who are close to you such as other members of your family.
- Find out about people outside your family who can provide support and practical help.
- Contact FCI who can help/guide you.
YOUR Feelings

Although you might feel as if you are the only one in your situation, you might be interested to know that there are at least 56,000 young carers in Ireland. That’s over twice the capacity of Thomond Park. You are not alone! Although everyone’s situation is special to them and their family, many young carers have similar feelings and experiences. You are not different or strange.

You might feel proud of what you do at home or you might feel angry, sad or frustrated. You may even feel all of these things at different times. You might feel that your friends or others don’t understand what you’re going through. Coping with your feelings on your own can be tough.

You might think that talking never solved anything but you’d be surprised. Talking to someone you trust about your feelings can really help. There are lots of people who can help. Who you choose will depend on who you feel you can trust and who you are happy to tell about what goes on at home.

REMEMBER!

There are people who can help you but they may not realise what you are going through if you don’t tell them about it.

ASK YOURSELF

- How does being a young carer make me feel?
- Do I get any thanks for what I do?
- Do I worry about the person I look after?
- How stressed do I feel?
- Who knows about what I do?
- Do I feel that people understand the responsibilities I have?
- Do I wish I had someone to talk to about how I feel?

THINGS TO DO

- Don’t bottle things up. Let other people know if things are starting to get on top of you or if you are feeling stressed.
- Find someone you can trust and feel comfortable sharing your feelings with, for example, an adult who you trust or a friend.
Not having enough time for yourself may make you feel unhappy or even angry with your relative or the people around you. It can also creep up on you so that you don’t even notice that you have less time for friends or homework or simply to watch your favourite TV programme. You might feel that spending your time looking after someone is the most important thing you can do. **It is important, but so are you!** You need time to keep up the important relationships in your life, like friends and family. You need time to have fun, to relax and just be yourself. You need time for your education so that you don’t fall behind or feel you can’t keep up. And you need time to be able to talk to others about how you are feeling.

**ASK YOURSELF**

- How much time do I have for myself?
- What do I do in my spare time? Do I have any friends?
- Who are they and are any of them close friends?
- Do the things I do at home stop me from having time for friends?
- How do the things I do at home affect my relationships with other people in my family, such as brothers or sisters?
- Would I like to meet other young carers?

**THINGS TO DO**

Make time for yourself to do the things you want to do.

Talk to a teacher or someone who can help at school about any difficulties that you are having because of your responsibilities at home.

They may be able to arrange for some support to help you, for example, extra time to do your homework.
**REMEMBER!**

Everyone has the right to have an education and to go to work and you are no different! You don’t have to be the main carer for the rest of your life.

**ASK YOURSELF**

- Do I go to school or college or a training scheme or have a job?
- Does being a young carer affect my ability to do any of these things?
- Does anyone at my school, college, training scheme or job know that I am a young carer?
- Does anyone pick on me because of what I do at home?
- (If you have left school) Do I wish I had time to attend college or a training scheme or job?

**THINGS TO DO**

Talk to an adult you can trust such as a teacher, lecturer, or your boss, about the problems you are having. Don’t put up with bullying. Talk to someone who can help put a stop to it.

Talk to your family about what you can all do to help you get the education and career that you want.

**LEARNING**

**Young carers are all ages.** Some might be in school or college or they might be at work.

**As a young carer you might feel that there simply isn’t enough time or you don’t have the energy to spend on getting qualifications or having a job.**

It’s bound to seem hard trying to keep up with other people who don’t have to care for someone. However, if you talk to someone in charge about what you do at home, such as a teacher, lecturer or your boss, this will help them to understand what you can and can’t manage and to hopefully find ways to help you. For example, they may be able to put your family in touch with a service who can provide support to ease the burden. Or it could be something simple like giving you the time to make calls home, extra time to do your homework or more flexible hours at work.
LOOKING AFTER Yourself

When you’re looking after other people it’s very easy to forget about looking after yourself.

However, it’s very important that you have time just for you to look after yourself properly, for example, going to the doctor or dentist, keeping clean, eating healthily and regularly, and having time to relax.

It’s also very important to have someone to turn to if you feel ill or stressed.

Although you might find it hard to see past the care you give to others... remember, you have a right to be cared for too!

Some people find ways to make themselves feel better that aren’t good for them, for example, drinking, taking drugs or hurting themselves (called ‘self-harm’). If this sounds like you, don’t be ashamed or feel bad about it, but do talk about it to an adult that you trust.

ASK YOURSELF

- Do I feel stressed or tired?
- Do I feel depressed?
- Do I have enough time to look after myself properly?
- If I get ill, who cares for me?
- Do I do anything to make myself feel better that I know is not good for me?

THINGS TO DO

- Tell your doctor about your caring responsibilities and how it affects your health.
- Make time for yourself to relax and look after yourself properly.
- Talk to an adult that you trust about anything you are doing that you know is bad for you.
- Do some exercise, any kind of active exercise such as swimming, running or even just walking can help relieve stress.
GETTING INFORMED

Information is one of the most important things you can have. It can help you make choices and to know where to go for help.

Information can help you with lots of things. For example, finding out about your relative’s illness, disability or health problem; finding out who can help you and your family; and finding out what other kinds of help are available. There are lots of places you can go for information. If you look at the back of this guide, there is a list of helpful services that can give you information.

ASK YOURSELF

Do I know enough about my relative’s illness, disability or health problems?

Is there anything I wish I had more information about?

THINGS TO DO

Ask for information about your relative’s illness, disability or health problems. To find out who to ask, see the back of this guide.

Think about what information you need, make a list and use the information at the back of this guide to find out who to get it from.

Stay away from searching on Google to learn about the loved one’s illness/disability as this can cause more stress.
TOP 5 TIPS To Help You!

1. **TALK TO SOMEONE YOU CAN TRUST ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON**

It can be a huge relief and a release of stress to be able to get things off your chest. This could be from your teacher, another relative, a good friend, a doctor, social worker or from our young carer’s office. It could be from a telephone helpline where you can remain anonymous (not give them your name) if you prefer. Some contact telephone numbers are at the back of this booklet.

2. **LOOK AFTER YOURSELF**

Make sure you take breaks and have fun. This is often easier said than done – you can spend so much time worrying about your relative that you may forget about yourself. But this means eating properly, sleeping and making sure you find the time to spend on things you enjoy like swimming, shopping or being with your friends. **Try to stay in touch with your friends and don’t become isolated.**

3. **LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN**

Learn as much as possible about your relative’s condition and the treatment they receive. Knowledge about their illness will help you to deal with the situation and know what to expect.

4. **REMEMBER THAT YOUR RELATIVE’S CONDITION IS NOT YOUR FAULT**

You did not and cannot cause the condition or illness, and you should not feel any guilt about the situation you and your family are in.

5. **TRY NOT TO ARGUE WITH YOUR RELATIVE**

Wait until things calm down and then you will find it easier to get your point across. More often than not you are arguing with the symptoms of the illness and not the person themselves.

Arguing will only raise the tension. If the person you care for says something strange or hurtful try to remember that this may be because they are ill. **If their words or behaviour worry you, tell a trusted adult.**
HERE ARE SOME OTHER **Helpful Tips** TO REDUCE STRESS & LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH:

**GET SOME SLEEP**
Sleep is important for our bodies to rest and recharge.

**THINK POSITIVE**
It’s often easier said than done. However, it can really work! Try to take some time out to focus on something positive every day, even if it’s only something small. What good have you done today? What positives are around you?

**SNACK HEALTHILY**
Try to eat regular healthy meals (including breakfast) and limit fatty & sugary treats. Snacks based on fruit, vegetables and whole grains are the healthiest choices and will help to get you through the day.

**SWITCH OFF SCREENS**
Trade in your technology for the outdoors. Keeping active can help you to sleep better while also improving your mood. Find something you enjoy doing and make an effort to do it regularly, such as team sports, walking the dog, swimming, running or dancing.

**DRINK LOTS OF WATER**
Did you know that the average human body is 50-65% water? Water is the best way to quench your thirst and it doesn’t come with the added sugar found in fruit juices, soft drinks and other sweetened drinks.

**EXPRESS YOUR CREATIVITY**
Draw, write, paint, sing or perhaps express your creativity through interpretative dance? Try something new and don’t be afraid to experiment. It is all about communicating your feelings through whatever means suit you best as an individual.

**PRACTICE MINDFULNESS**
Sometimes it might feel like your brain is constantly going, going, and going. Mindfulness means taking some time to relax by limiting your thoughts and focusing on your breathing. This might mean listening to music and chilling out, or doing some guided relaxation.

**CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK**
Whether it is a group of friends, your family members, a favourite teacher or a professional that you trust – it doesn’t matter – as long as you have a solid support network surrounding you. Make a list of the people you trust and services you can connect with. Remember these people care about you and you can talk to them.

**ASK FOR HELP**
Don’t be afraid to ask for help. It is not a sign of weakness but a sign of immense courage. You are not a superhero and you do not need to fix everything on your own. Speak to someone within your support network or click here to ask the YC team. There are many different people and services available to help you and your family.
USEFUL SERVICES

WHERE TO START

FAMILY CARERS IRELAND
For general information about caring your contact point should be the
National Freephone Careline:
1800 24 07 24
Email: careline@familycarers.ie
Web: www.familycarers.ie

For information on young carers your contact point should be the Young Carers Programme:
Phone: 057 93 70208
Email: info@youngcarers.ie
Web: www.youngcarers.ie

CONDITION SPECIFIC SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Information and support specific to the condition of the person you care for.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY IRELAND
Deliver community based rehabilitation services for people who have acquired a brain injury.
Phone: 01 280 4164
Web: www.abiireland.ie

AGE ACTION IRELAND
Support older people to speak and act for themselves.
Phone: 01 475 6989
Email: info@ageaction.ie
Web: www.ageaction.ie

AL-ANON IRELAND
Support anyone who is, or has been, affected by someone else’s drinking.
Phone: 01 873 2699
Email: info@alanon.ie
Web: www.alanon.ie

ALATEEN
Support young people aged 12 – 17 who are affected by a problem drinker.
Phone: 01 873 2699
Email: info@alanon.ie
Web: www.alanon.ie

AWARE
Provides support & information for people who experience depression or bipolar disorder and their concerned loved ones.
Phone: 1800 80 48 48
Email: info@aware.ie
Web: www.aware.ie

BRÍ
Provides support & information to people with a brain injury, family members and carers.
Phone: 01 482 4802
Email: info@briireland.ie
Web: www.briireland.ie
Brothers of Charity
Provides services and supports to people with an intellectual disability or autism, and their families, in counties Clare, Cork, Galway, Kerry, Limerick, Roscommon, Tipperary, and Waterford.
Phone: 091 796 623
Email: gmagliocco@brothersofcharity.ie
Web: www.brothersofcharity.ie

Down Syndrome Ireland
Provides information and support to people with Down syndrome and their families.
Lo-call: 1890 374 374
Email: info@downsyndrome.ie
Web: www.downsyndrome.ie

Epilepsy Ireland
Provides support, information and advice to people with epilepsy and their families.
Phone: 01 455 7500
Email: info@epilepsy.ie
Web: www.epilepsy.ie

Headway
Works to address the needs of people with brain injuries and their carers and families.
Phone: 1890 200 278
Email: helpline@headway.ie
Web: www.headway.ie

Hand in Hand
Provides practical support for families in Ireland whose lives have been affected by childhood cancer.
Phone: 091 483 694
Email: info@handinhand.ie
Web: www.handinhand.ie

Irish Cancer Society
Provide reliable cancer information and support services.
Phone: 1800 200 700
Email: cancernurseline@irishcancer.ie
Web: www.irishcancer.ie

Irish Heart Foundation
Information and advice on heart & stroke disease.
Phone: 1800 25 25 50
Email: helpline@irishheart.ie
Web: www.irishheart.ie

MS Ireland
Provides information, support and advocacy services to the MS community.
Phone: 1850 233233
Email: info@ms-society.ie
Web: www.ms-society.ie
**WELFARE & PROTECTION**

**Barnardos**
Provides practical and professional supports to children and families.
Phone: 1850 222 300
Email: info@barnardos.ie
Web: www.barnardos.ie

**ISPCC Childline**
Support children with a wide range of issues.
Phone: 1800 666 666
Text: text ‘talk’ to 50101

**Macra na Feirme**
Visit macra.ie
Network of clubs for young adults between the ages of 17 and 35.
Phone: 01 426 8900
Email: macra@macra.ie
Web: www.macra.ie

**No Name Club**
Clubs are for young people aged 15 years and over. Check out whether they have a club in your area!
Phone: 059 6400299
Web: www.nonameclub.ie

**SpunOut**
This is a one-stop-shop for almost everything that is relevant to young people’s health, wellbeing, rights and events.
Web: www.spunout.ie

**Youth Work Ireland (YWI)**
Visit youthworkireland.ie
Check out YWI to find the latest news from their clubs and see if they have any activities in your area.
Phone: 01 858 4500
Web: www.youthworkireland.ie

**YOUTH ORGANISATIONS**

**BeLonGTo**
A national online youth service for Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) young people in Ireland.
Phone: 01 670 6223
Web: www.belongto.org

**Foróige**
Find a Foróige club in your area or get involved with one of their many other programmes.
Phone: 01 630 1560
Email: info@foroige.ie
Web: www.foroige.ie

**Jigsaw**
Support young people with their mental health through local Jigsaw Services.
Phone: 01 472 7010
Email: info@jigsaw.ie

**Macra na Feirme**
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Network of clubs for young adults between the ages of 17 and 35.
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Email: macra@macra.ie
Web: www.macra.ie

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**Youth Work Ireland (YWI)**
Visit youthworkireland.ie
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EDUCATION

AHEAD
Promotes access to and participation in further and higher education for students with disabilities.
Web: www.ahead.ie

Citizens Information Centre (CIC)
Provides lots of useful information on third level and further education.
Web: www.citizensinformation.ie

DARE & HEAR Schemes
Two schemes that are designed to assist young people to access courses.
Web: accesscollege.ie

National Adult Literacy Agency
Helps people to improve their spelling, reading, writing or maths skills.
Web: www.nala.ie

National Learning Network
Provides a range of flexible training programmes and support services for people who need specialist support.
Web: www.nln.ie

Scoilnet
A useful site if you are doing research for projects, homework or studying for exams.
Web: www.scoilnet.ie

Student Finance
Information on financial support for further and higher education.
Web: www.studentfinance.ie

Union of Students in Ireland
If you are a student or thinking about it go here to find answers covering all aspects of student life.
Web: www.usi.ie

EMPLOYMENT

Citizens Information Centre (CIC)
The CIC provides lots of useful information on various supports and schemes that are available for people looking for employment.
Web: www.citizensinformation.ie

National Employment Rights Authority
NERA provides information to employers and employees on employment rights.
Web: www.employmentrights.ie

Solas
Promotes job opportunities and training courses for school leavers, post graduates and professionals.
Web: www.solas.ie

FINANCE

Call Costs
Helps you compare the costs of price plans for mobile phones, home phones and broadband. It could give you information on how to get a better deal.
Web: www.callcosts.ie

Consumer Connect
Information about consumer rights.
Web: www.consumerconnect.ie

It’s Your Money
Information on financial products and services to help you make financial decisions.
Web: www.itsyourmoney.ie

MABS
Support people experiencing financial difficulties or have problems paying bills.
Phone: 1890 283 438
Web: www.mabs.ie
Who Can Help?

Doctors
Social Workers
Community & Voluntary Organisations
Mental Health Services
Primary Care Teams
Public Health Nurse

Teachers/ Lecturers
Employers
School Care Team
Youth Workers
Family Carers Ireland

Family
Friends
Classmates
Work Colleagues

You
National Freephone Careline:
1800 24 07 24
Website: www.youngcarers.ie
Charity Number: CHY 10962
Funded by:

EMAIL: youngcarers@familycarers.ie  @CarersIreland  Family Carers Ireland

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