

Identifying and Supporting Shetland's Young Carers



Guidance for Practitioners Children's Services & Shetland Carers September 2026

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Who is a Young Carer?

A young carer is anyone who provides, or intends to provide care who is aged 18 and under or 18 whether or not they are still in school.

A young carer provides unpaid support to a family member or friend who could not manage without this help due to illness, disability, mental ill-health or a substance misuse problem.

Some young carers look after more than one person and may have health issues of their own. Some young carers start giving care at a very young age and some are not aware they are carers. Other young people become carers overnight due to sudden illness or injury.

Young carers can have many different roles and responsibilities that can include but are not restricted to:

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping.
- Physical care, such as helping someone out of bed.
- Emotional support, such as talking to someone who is distressed.
- Personal care, such as helping someone dress.
- Managing the family budget and collecting prescriptions.
- Helping to give medicine.
- Helping someone communicate.
- Looking after brothers and sisters.

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 came in to force on the 1st of April 2018. The act places duties on local authorities in respect of young carers. For an easy read guide see: <https://young.scot/get-informed/national/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-carers-scotland-act-2016>

Identifying a Young Carer

Many children and young people who are undertaking caring roles do not identify themselves as a young carer. For some it's because of concerns about being stigmatised whilst for others it maybe because it's what they have always done and it is normal for them. A young carer role may also be masked by other challenging or difficult family situations.

A young carer might show all, some, or none of these signs:

- Often late or missing days or weeks off school for no reason.
- Often tired, anxious or withdrawn.

- Often checking their phone or asking to call home.
- Finding it difficult to concentrate on their work.
- Having difficulty joining in extra-curricular activities or unable to attend school trips.
- Not handing in homework/coursework on time, or completing it late and to a low standard.
- Anxious or concerned about an ill or disabled relative.
- Secretive about home life.

If there are signs that a child or young person might be a young carer it will be necessary to:

- Follow GIRFEC processes as detailed in Shetland's Practice Framework: <https://www.shetland.gov.uk/girfec/girfec-resources>
- Refer to the **Young Carers Identification Pathway** (Appendix 1) for a quick guide
- Find a private space to talk to the young person
- Start a conversation with the young person about their caring role and use the **Young Carer Initial Conversation Record Sheet** (Appendix 2) to record outcomes and actions.
- Refer to the **MACA 18 - Jobs I do Checklist** (Appendix 3). This is a questionnaire which will help with providing a framework for a conversation about their caring role.
- Record the outcome of the conversation on personal notes within SEEMiS.

How to support a Young Carer

When a Young Carer is identified the Named Person should be informed. Please refer to the Shetland Practice Framework in relation to consent and information sharing.

The Named Person should make arrangements for this to be recorded. In schools this should be done on SEEMiS. Young Carer is now a category in the student list in the personal tab of SEEMiS. This should only be ticked if the learner's additional support needs arise from the fact that they are a young carer. If the learner is a Young Carer but does not have additional support needs arising from this, their Young Carer status should be recorded only on the Authority Tab.

When a young carer has been identified, the **Eligibility Criteria** (appendix 4) should be referred to help identify the impact of the caring role and the level of support and resources required. This is also within the **Young Carers Workbook** (appendix 5).

Where the eligibility criteria indicates a substantial or critical impact a referral to Social Work should be considered and if at any point the level of impact is detrimental to their wellbeing or is deemed unsafe, child protection procedures should be followed immediately.

Every young carer is unique and the kind of support they require will depend on their individual circumstances and needs. A young carer might benefit from opportunities to get a break from their caring role, to have practical and emotional support in their caring role and to have support in school with things like homework, keeping in touch with home, someone to talk to and attending extra-curricular activities. Young Carers can access short break grants and respite breaks through Shetland Carers website: <https://www.shetlandcarers.org>

Young Carers (aged 11-18) can access the **Young Carers Package** through the Young Scot website. Please see: [The Young Carers Package - Young Scot | Young Scot](#) This free package includes digital vouchers and access to subscriptions to support young carers make the most of their free time and feel supported in their caring role. Young Carers (age 16 – 18) may be eligible for the **Young Carer Grant** – a yearly payment of approx. £400. Please see: [Young Carer Grant - mygov.scot](#)

It is important to remember that often young carers feel positive about their caring role. Some young carers manage well and do not require any additional support.

Young Carers Statement

The Carer's Act (Scotland) 2016 states Local Authorities have a duty to offer a young carer statement to all identified young carers and prepare a young carer statement for those that take up this offer, as well as for any young carer who requests one.

Where a young carer is identified as providing care to a terminally ill person, then the Local Authority must offer a young carer statement within a period of two working days. For more information please see:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-statutory-guidance-updated-july-2021/pages/4/>

A young carer statement is a record of the key points of a conversation between a young carer and their support workers or other professionals about their caring role. The young carer's statement is used to identify needs and support required in order to achieve the young carer's outcomes.

All young carers should be offered a young carer statement but they do not have to accept the offer; it is up to the child or young person if a young carer's statement is completed or not. Support is NOT dependent on a young carer's statement being completed.

In Shetland the Child's Plan will be used to form a young carer statement for those identified young carers who wish to have one.

In section 1 of the Child's Plan it should be noted that the plan is a young carer statement by selecting YES to Young Carer Statement.

Shetland's Practice Model should be used to guide completion of the plan along with information gathered from both the **Initial Conversation Record Sheet** (Appendix 2) and the **MACA Jobs I do Checklist** (Appendix 3) where it has been used. The **Young Carers Workbook** (Appendix 5) will gather the key information which must be included within a young carer statement.

The key information required includes:

- the nature and extent of the care provided and the impact on wellbeing and day-to-day life;
- the extent to which the young person is able and willing to provide care;
- whether the responsible authority thinks that it is appropriate for the child or young person, to be a carer;
- emergency and future care planning, including any arrangements that are in place;
- what 'personal outcomes' matter to the child or young person in order continue to provide care, where that is appropriate, to have a life alongside caring, and to improve their health and wellbeing;
- support available if the child or young person lives in a different local authority are from the person being cared for;
- whether support should be provided as a break from caring;
- support available locally;
- any support which the responsible authority intends to provide; and
- the circumstances in which your young carer statement is to be reviewed.

The **Eligibility Criteria** (Appendix 4) is used to help identify the impact of caring and the support required.

When the young carer leaves school, they will transition from a young carer to an adult carer. The Carer's Act gives adult carers the right to an adult carer support

plan. Shetland Carers can provide further information and advice relating to adult carer support plans.

Links:

YOUNG CARER SUPPORT <https://www.mygov.scot/young-carer-support>

YOUNG SCOT – YOUNG CARERS <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/young-carers>

SHETLAND YOUNG CARERS <https://www.shetlandcarers.org/carers/info>

STATUTORY GUIDANCE updated July 2021 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/carers-scotland-act-2016-statutory-guidance-updated-july-2021/>

CARERS TRUST EDUCATION TOOLKIT <https://carers.org/resources/all-resources/120-young-carers-in-education-a-resource-on-identifying-and-supporting-young-carers-in-education>

CARERS TRUST FAMILY APPROACH <https://carers.org/resources/all-resources/119-together-a-whole-family-approach-for-young-carers>

NHS HELP FOR YOUNG CARERS <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/help-for-young-carers/>