

# Young Carers and Higher Education

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# Welcome to today's session

- Who are young carers?
- Impacts of unsupported caring and barriers to HE
- Pre-entry support for young carers in Sheffield
- Practical steps to support young carers to access HE
- Supporting young carers with HE applications



## Take care

Caring can be a really emotive topic. Look after yourself today, and get in touch with Shuna if you would like to.



**Who are young carers?**

## Who are young carers?

A young carer is a child or young person caring for one or more family members who have:

- long term physical illnesses
- mental health difficulties
- learning or physical disability
- Alcohol or substance misuse issues



## What do young carers do?

Caring responsibilities can include:

- **Practical:** Cooking, cleaning, shopping, care for self/siblings, paying bills, managing appointments/letters etc
- **Personal / Physical:** Washing, moving, dressing, giving medication
- **Emotional:** Listening to problems, calming down/reassuring, keeping company, accompanying to leave the house
- **Emergencies:** First aid, phoning ambulance, accompanying to hospital, making arrangements



## Facts and figures

There are at least **2000** school age young carers in Sheffield  
*(based on 2011 census data)*

Based on the more likely 1 in 12 figure *(BBC, 2010)* , there  
could be over **7000 young carers** aged 18 and under

**That's up to 3 young carers in a school class**

## Identifying young carers

Young Carers are a very **hidden** group due to stigma, fear or not seeing themselves as a carers.



The earlier they are identified, the more support can be put in place to minimise the impacts of caring.



## Young carers and education: our film

<https://www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk/watch-our-films>



# **Impacts of unsupported caring and barriers to HE**

# Impacts of unsupported caring: challenges and barriers

- Young carers are more than one-and-a-half times as likely to be from ethnic minority communities, and are twice as likely to not speak English as their first language
- The average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer
- Young carers are one and half times more likely to have a special educational need or a long-standing illness or disability themselves
- 23% of young carers said their caring role had stopped them making friends (*Action for Children, Jan 2020*)
- Despite improved awareness of the needs of young carers, there is no strong evidence that young carers are any more likely than their peers to come into contact with support agencies (*Hidden from view, 2013*)
- More than one third of young carers experienced problems with their mental wellbeing
- 37% of young carers felt “stressed” (*YouGov and Carers Trust, 2019*)

## Impacts on education

- Being a young carer has a knock-on effect on school attainment and attendance, with **young carers missing 27 school days per year on average.**
- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level - the equivalent to **nine grades lower** overall than their peers
- **A quarter of young carers** were bullied at school because of their caring role (*Carers Trust, 2013*)
- Young adult carers appear to be **four times more likely** to have to drop out of their college or university course than other students
- Young carers are on average **38 per cent less likely** to obtain university degrees than others with no caring responsibilities. (UCL, 2023)
- Young adult carers aged between 16 and 18 years are **twice as likely** to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET)



## Positive impacts of caring

Important to remember that it is not inevitable that young people are at risk of significant harm because they provide care for somebody.

### Positive impacts:

- Can help cement bonds– lots of time with the person they love
- High academic achievement
- Feelings of self worth / feeling valued, included and proud
- Feeling reassured - know they are doing a good job
- Development of life skills
- Resilience / coping strategies
- Awareness of others
- Understanding of health and how to stay healthy



## Young carer experience: Steven, young adult trustee at Sheffield Young Carers

- I have been caring for my mum since I was 7 years old. She has fibromyalgia and arthritis. I also care for my younger brother who has autism and ADHD.
- I help my mum get dressed and undressed, with the cooking and cleaning, with emotional support, and generally just being there for my brother and supporting my parents to support him.
- I am also autistic, and have dyslexia as well, but I'm happy to care.
- Since going to Sheffield Hallam University to study primary education, I have moved away from home. This gives me more separation and independence and means I don't feel as distracted. But I have the safety blanket of being able to travel back home.
- Socially, I have matured very quickly and my conversations are a lot more adult compared to my peers, sometimes making it difficult to make friendships. People also don't understand, which can make you feel isolated.
- In school, I struggled with homework as I couldn't focus and was constantly worried about my family. I can still struggle with coursework for this reason.
- Financially, it's been quite hard to pay for transport, making it very difficult to get back home if I need to.
- But there are positive to being a young adult carer. It helps me have compassion for others and gain a lot of skills and experience that have helped in a person-centred career like teaching.

# **Common barriers/worries around HE for young carers**

## **Common barriers/worries around HE for young carers: experiences from SYC**

- Feeling they can't afford to go to university
- Feeling overwhelmed about searching for information about HE on their own
- Needing to complete forms on their own
- Worries about not having good enough grades because caring has impacted on school/college
- Fears around leaving Sheffield/cared for person affecting their decision about where to study
- Fears around moving out from home /not moving out due to caring
- Guilt around passing on caring role to younger sibling
- Worries about being late or missing classes due to caring role
- Worries about how providing care from a distance will impact on studies (some still provide daily/hourly emotional support by phone and return home frequently).
- Worries about mixing and forming friendships once at university (especially if needing to return home)
- Money worries around getting home in an emergency





## Sempik and Becker (2013): facts and figures

Report giving findings after doing work with young adult carers around their aspirations found:

- 24% of the young adult carers surveyed thought they could not afford to go to college or university, and 41% were not sure whether they could afford it.
- Only 27% of young adult carers knew that they could get financial support through a scholarship, while 31% thought that they could not and 43% were unsure.
- Less than half thought they had received good career advice and only 19% thought that it took their caring role into account.

# **Pre-entry support for young carers in Sheffield**

# Hepp: Higher Education Progression Partnership

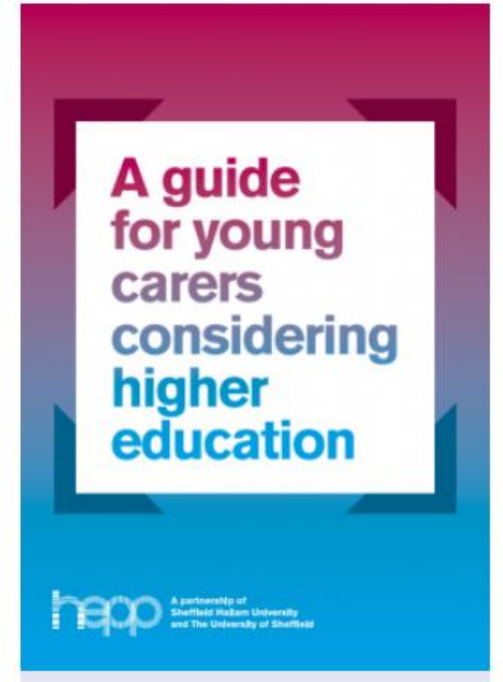
- Partnership between Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield, working across South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire to encourage more children, young people and adults to consider higher education opportunities
- Hepp provide impartial advice and guidance about higher education to all schools in South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire
- **'Outreach hub'** provides free online resources for teachers and advisers as well as appropriate signposting to higher education related outreach activity within South Yorkshire and North East Derbyshire
- Targeted activities for schools help prepare young people to make informed decisions about higher level study



A partnership of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
and The University of Sheffield

## Hepp and young carers

- booklet: [A guide for young carers considering higher education](#)
- resources – [Video clips of current students who are young carers](#)
- activities – new sustained programme launching 23 November 2023. To register email [hepp@shu.ac.uk](mailto:hepp@shu.ac.uk)
- parent and carer sessions
- contact Kelly Self: [k.self@shu.ac.uk](mailto:k.self@shu.ac.uk) or [www.hepp@ac.uk](http://www.hepp@ac.uk)





University of  
Sheffield

# Support for Carers

Lucy Scheinkonig  
Access Officer  
University of Sheffield

November 2023



# Support to help carers access and participate at University of Sheffield

## Thinking about university

- ✓ Widening Access Sustained Programmes - Year 9 & Year 12 (recruitment Sept-Nov)



## Applying to University

- ✓ Open Day Travel Bursary
- ✓ Access+ Contextual Offer
- ✓ Disrupted Studies Form
- ✓ Access+ Designated contacts (Sarah, Lucy and Amy)



# Support to help carers access and participate at University of Sheffield

## Transitioning to and studying at university

- Designated contact in Student Experience, Diversity and Inclusion (SEDI) Team (Kathryn)
- Welcome to Young Carers - meet other students from similar backgrounds
- Financial support – enhanced carers bursary **£4,500** (we'll ask for some supporting evidence)
- Student Mental Health, Counselling and Therapies Service and Wellbeing Advisors
- Disability Transition Officer
- Become a student ambassador – earn money and support other students



## More information

- Find out more about our work with schools and colleges  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/schools](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/schools)  
Contact: [accesstosheffield@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:accesstosheffield@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Find out more about Access+  
[www.sheffield.ac.uk/access-sheffield/plus](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/access-sheffield/plus)  
[Access plus video](#)
- Contact:  
Sarah Adams - [s.adams@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:s.adams@sheffield.ac.uk)  
Lucy Scheinkonig [l.c.scheinkonig@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.c.scheinkonig@sheffield.ac.uk)







- We provide support for applicants whose personal circumstances might mean that there are barriers to going to university, including young carers.
- We provide additional support in the year of application, including an applicant's transition to becoming a university student. More information can be found [here](#).
- A professional (such as a teacher, social worker, support worker etc.) who knows the applicant and their background fills out a quick nomination form found [here](#).
- If you have any questions about the scheme, email: [SHU-Progress@shu.ac.uk](mailto:SHU-Progress@shu.ac.uk) or call on 0114 225 4777

## **Young people on the SHU Progress scheme:**

- have a named contact to provide advice and answer questions
- are invited to exclusive events at the university (financial support is available to cover the cost of travel)
- receive email updates about relevant opportunities and support
- receive support with making the best application, including workshops on preparing for interviews
- may be eligible to receive a contextual offer during the admissions process
- are referred to specialist teams within the university, for example the Student Wellbeing Service, Career Guidance and Funding.
- are handed over to the [on-course support team](#) for Carers once enrolled – they can set up a Carers support plan to manage caring responsibilities and studies.

## Financial support for young carers at UOS and SHU.

Both universities provide financial support for young carers once they are studying:

Sheffield Hallam University has a [Student Success Scholarship](#), giving carers a payment of typically between £600 to £2,100 per year of undergraduate study

The University of Sheffield currently gives carers £4,500 per year of study through their [university bursary for carers](#).



# Support at other universities

- Most universities should offer financial support and adjusted offers, as well as other pre-entry support. Bursaries will vary!
- <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/students-caring-responsibilities>
- Google is your friend! Try “support for young carers at .....”.
- Get in touch with teams/contacts and find out how young people need to disclose their caring to the University.



We appreciate that some students have a responsibility to care for parents, siblings or other relatives who are unwell, disabled or in need of support or supervision.

Caring for a loved one can take a considerable amount of time, effort and commitment. We have put together a package of support to ensure you don't have to worry that your domestic circumstances will hold you back from getting into and thriving at university.

### Is it for you?

This support is designed for:

- young people who provide care for a friend or family member who could not cope without their support
- carers who will be aged between 18 and 25 at the start of their undergraduate degree

Pre-entry support >

Support once enrolled >

Support at university >

## Young Adult Carers

The University of Liverpool is committed to working with and supporting Young Adult Carers, both prior to entry and throughout their studies at the University.

### Tailored support to meet individual needs

The Widening Participation and Outreach team provides a range of opportunities for Young Adult Carers to engage with the University that are designed with the aim of raising educational aspiration and supporting attainment. The programme offers a range of engaging activities which aims to support young people to build their confidence, skills and increase knowledge and awareness of higher education.

The activities are led by the Student Advocates and include:

- Tailored visits to the University campus
- Attainment support mentoring
- Information and Advice - bespoke information and advice from a dedicated member of staff in the Widening Participation and Outreach team.

For Young Adult Carers who attend the University of Liverpool as a student, the WPO Team offer opportunities for paid work as a Student Advocate or Mentor, working with pupils in local schools and colleges. Through working as a Student Advocate, students develop transferable skills and gain valuable experience to support them within the graduate job market.

For further information on what Widening Participation and Outreach can offer, please contact Ben Toleman:

[btoleman@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:btoleman@liverpool.ac.uk)

## What has helped our young people?

- Being identified as a young carer at school/college and having a contact to talk to
- Learning about the financial support available for young carers at university.
- Learning that young carers may be eligible for adjusted offers.
- Support from SHU Progress and Access Sheffield: having a contact to talk to about their worries
- Attending Hepp events and getting to meet students who are or were young carers
- Help to explore the support available at other universities
- Help with forms and personal statements



## Young adult carer experience: Steven, SYC young adult trustee

- Before University, I had quite a lot of support from SHU Progress Widening Participation, and Heppsy, a Higher Education Progression Partnership
- They helped me explore the different courses you can do and helped me apply to Uni.
- I really struggled with the time to work on my personal statement. I don't do a lot of the social things that people with less of a caring role have. But SHU Progress helped me to pull in things from my caring role and voluntary work at Sheffield Young Carers where I was part of the action group, and add these to my personal statement.
- I also attended activity days, a summer camp, a food tech week and ambassadors were always there for students who were young carers, and I got to be in a group with other young carers which gave me the opportunity to make friends before going to uni.
- At Uni, there is a student success scholarship. It's a minimum of £200. Being a young carer is one of things that qualifies you for this, but so are things like dyslexia and autism so I ended up receiving a £2,000 scholarship.

# **Supporting young carers with HE applications**

## 'Registering' as a young carer

- When you are looking up support at universities (e.g. financial support), some may say things like 'applicants will need to be registered as young carers.'
- Ambiguous term, but means that they require some kind of verification of the young person's caring status.
- It's really important to **contact** the institution and find out what kind of evidence they need.
- They may have an online form to be completed (like UOS).
- Participating in a widening participation programme often counts as evidence in itself (like SHU Progress)
- At SYC, we can provide letters for young people who have been through our service confirming they are carers.
- Many young people won't have had a referral to us, and you should be able to provide a similar letter as a professional who has worked with them.

## Example letter

**Date**

**Re: (student name)**

**DOB;**

**Course:**

Dear

I am writing to provide evidence for **(name of student)** application for university support for student carers.

I work at [Sheffield Young Carers](#) and can confirm that **(name)** accessed our service because they have significant caring responsibilities for **(cared for person)**.

If you need any further information, please get in touch.

Yours faithfully,

Laura Selby

Deputy Manager



# UCAS application advice and support

UCAS has a [new advisors toolkit](#) full of information, resources and advice on how to prepare for the 2024 application cycle all in one place.

The toolkit includes:

- Access to the UCAS Hub (students will need to create an account) where you and they can:
  - Search subjects and discover courses
  - Search for the latest apprenticeship vacancies locally and nationally
  - Use the personal statement builder to structure their writing and introduce themselves to university
  - Use a tariff calculator for tallying up your UCAS points to see if you meet entry requirements.
- Free lesson plans to explore how to use the Hub
- A free downloadable Advisor Guide for staff at schools, colleges, and other centres who advise potential undergraduate applicants to higher education (HE) courses in the UK
- Support for teachers and advisors
- Resources to introduce UCAS
- Presentations about the process
- Supporting tools
- Information for parents and carers

UCAS also have a really helpful webpage dedicated to [supporting students with caring responsibilities](#)



# References

After an extensive review, from 2024 references will have three distinct sections:

1. General statement about your school/college /centre
2. Extenuating circumstances which may have impacted on the applicant's education and achievement
3. Other supportive information specific to the applicant

**Section 2:** With permission, referees can give information about the student's caring. They can also make sure the university knows if their caring role has had any impact on their studies or exam results (e.g. through absence).

UCAS offers further guidance for references [here](#). There is a link to some example reference statements, at least one of which is about a young carer.

## Personal statement

- Young carers often may not have had the same access to out of school/college opportunities as their peers, and can feel like this limits the kinds of skills and experience they can add to a personal statement.
- However, UCAS say ["If you are a carer, you will have probably gained many additional skills and strengths that are highly valued in higher education."](#)
- Work with young people to identify the strengths and skills they have gained from caring and to put these into their personal statements
- UCAS has advice specifically for carers, estranged students, asylum seekers, or those with limited leave to remain [here](#).

Activity: What strengths and skills might someone gain from a caring role that would be valued in higher education?



**Discussion: What skills and strengths did you come up with?**



Responsibilities (I do)	Skills (I can)	Personal characteristics (I am)
<p>Practical: e.g. cooking, cleaning, washing, looking after siblings/other family members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocacy (speaking or acting on behalf of another)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commitment and dedication</li> </ul>
<p>Financial: e.g. shopping, paying bills, managing the household budget</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attention to detail</li> <li>● Calm under pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Compassion/caring for others</li> <li>● Courage</li> </ul>
<p>Emotional: e.g. listening and talking to someone who is distressed, helping someone communicate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communication skills</li> <li>● Decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determination</li> <li>● Emotional intelligence</li> </ul>
<p>Medical and professional: e.g. dealing with professionals, administering or overseeing medication, organising and attending appointments, arranging services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Empathy</li> <li>● Encouraging others</li> <li>● Financial management and budgeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flexible and responsive to changing situations</li> <li>● Hard working</li> <li>● Independence</li> </ul>
<p>Personal and physical: e.g. providing personal care, helping someone get dressed, washed, go to the toilet, or get out of bed,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Forward planning</li> <li>● Independent worker</li> <li>● Interpersonal skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Moral and ethical awareness, social justice</li> <li>● Patient and supportive when working with others</li> </ul>

See the UCAS/Carers Trust resource on writing a personal statement as a carer [here](#).

## **So how can you let universities know that someone is a young carer so they can get the right support?**

- 1) Contact the university directly: look up the support they have available for young carers and get in touch with the listed contacts.
- 2) Send a letter confirming caring status if needed/complete online forms that verify caring status
- 3) Mention caring (and the skills and strengths gained) in the personal statement.
- 4) Referees can disclose caring circumstances in the supporting reference (with consent)
- 5) UCAS Tickbox...

# New UCAS tickbox (from 2023)

Would you consider yourself estranged from your parents (i.e. you're not in contact with and supported by your parents)?

Yes  No

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

Yes  No

Are you a parent or do you have parenting responsibilities?

Yes  No

Do you have official refugee status or limited leave to remain, or are you seeking asylum?

No  The UK government has granted me refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK

I have limited or discretionary leave to remain in the UK  I'm currently seeking asylum in the UK

Do you have a parent or carer who currently serves in the UK Armed Forces, or who has done so in the past?

Yes  No

Have you ever served in the UK Armed Forces?

Yes  No

Are you currently receiving free school meals, or have you been in receipt of free school meals during your secondary education?

Yes  No  Don't know

## To say to your students:

You might feel uncertain about sharing personal circumstances, please feel reassured this information is confidential and will not negatively impact your application.

This information means the university or college will be able to connect you to the right support for your needs quickly and easily and ensure you have all the information you need.

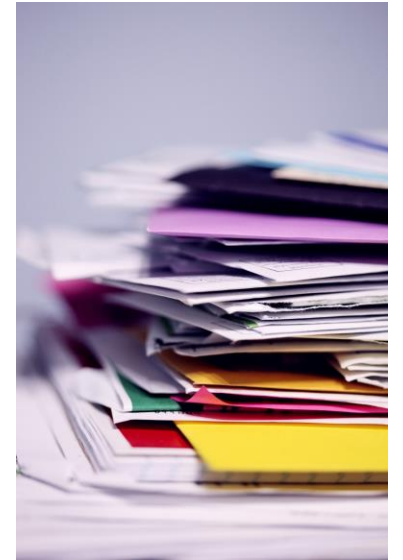
If you provide unpaid care for another person, just select 'yes' from the drop-down box in the question that asks if you have any caring responsibilities in the 'More about you' section of the application.

You will only see these questions if you have a UK home address.



## Further resources

- For HE providers: [Good practice for supporting student carers \(colleges and universities\)](#)
- Hepp [guide for young carers considering higher education](#)
- Carers Trust: [Supporting further education students with caring responsibilities](#)
- Carers Trust: [Supporting higher education students with caring responsibilities](#)
- [Guardian article](#) about young carers at university (featuring Sheffield)
- Information on [Carers Allowance](#)
- Young carers [identification tool](#) for professionals working with young people
- [SYC resources webpage](#): Extensive resource bank organised by topic (e.g. cancer, HIV, mental health)
- [www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk/make-a-referral](http://www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk/make-a-referral)
- <https://www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk/young-carers-activity-fund>
- [The Really Useful Book of Learning and Earning for Young Adult Carers \(RUBLE\)](#): Full of up-to-date useful information about looking after health and wellbeing, job hunting, housing, health services, learning, working and volunteering, and money management.
- [Carers Trust Know Your Rights pack for young carers in England](#): This pack aims to make young carers aware of their rights – human rights, legal rights, and rights to access things like benefits, support and advice



# What can you do now?

- **Ask and discuss! The more its talked about, the less stigma there will be**
- **Ask questions about family health / caring responsibilities in conversations with all pupils (see SYC identification tool for guidance on this)**
- **Consider nominating students on to university WP schemes**
- **Make sure your careers advisors are comfortable supporting young carers**
- **Sign up to the [SYC e-newsletter](#) for updates on events, opportunities and free resources**
- **Follow us on social media and help us spread the word about young carers**



@SheffYoungC



@sheffyoungc



Sheffield Young Carers

**Thanks for listening! Any questions?**

**Please complete the evaluation (link in chat)**

**For more information see our website:**

**[www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldyoungcarers.org.uk)**

**Or contact Shuna at [shuna.beckett@sycp.org.uk](mailto:shuna.beckett@sycp.org.uk)**

