

Steep decline in mental health of young carers and young adult carers following Coronavirus outbreak

New Carers Trust survey also shows pandemic's dramatic impact on wider wellbeing:

- 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers say their mental health is worse since Coronavirus.
- 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are more worried about the future since Coronavirus.
- 66% of young carers and 74% of young adult carers are feeling more stressed since Coronavirus.
- 69% of both young carers and young adult carers are feeling less connected to others since Coronavirus.
- 11% of young carers and 19.7% of young adult carers report an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week.

(Young carers aged 12 to 17 and young adult carers aged 18 to 25 took part in the survey).

“I am unable to do my school work properly. I am finding it hard to concentrate because I am worried about the person I care for. And my mental health is going downhill which is making this situation a lot harder.”

15 year-old young carer from England who responded to the survey

The results of a new Carers Trust survey (1 – see notes to Editor for sample size), published today, point to a steep decline in the mental health and wellbeing of the hundreds of thousands of young people across the UK who provide unpaid care at home for family members or friends.

The Carers Trust survey is the first of its kind to provide a base of evidence for how worries relating to Coronavirus and increased isolation caused by the lockdown has affected the mental health and wellbeing of the UK's young people with caring responsibilities.

Coronavirus increases caring hours and pressures on young carers

Even before the outbreak of Coronavirus, young carers and young adult carers were all too often spending significant amounts of time caring for a relative in addition to the time they needed to spend on education, work and time for themselves. Coronavirus has significantly increased those pressures. The Carers Trust survey has found that 58% of young carers who are caring for longer since Coronavirus are spending on average ten hours a week more on their caring responsibilities. Among young adult carers the proportion is even higher at 63.6%.

Most shockingly of all, **7.74% of young carers and 14.94% of young adult carers** who responded to the survey, said that they are now **spending over 90 hours a week caring** for a family member or friend.

When asked what difference Coronavirus had made to them, **56% of young carers said their education was suffering and 40% said their mental health had worsened**. Asked the same question, 59% of young adult carers said their mental health had become worse and 42% said they had been unable to take a break from caring.

Responding to findings published today, Carers Trust CEO and former young carer, Gareth Howells, said:

“This is the first snapshot of how Coronavirus is affecting hundreds of thousands of young people with caring responsibilities across the UK. And the results are truly shocking. They cannot, and must not, be ignored.

Even before the pandemic struck, the failure of successive UK governments to properly fund social care meant that an intolerable strain was being placed on young people who had to step in to provide the care that a cash-starved social care system increasingly could not.

That over-dependence on young carers and young adult carers has created a ticking timebomb with their mental health and wellbeing being placed at serious risk.

Coronavirus, and our findings of its impact, have brought into sharper focus still the unacceptable pressures young carers are under and the effect this is having on their wellbeing and life chances. There are estimated to be around one million young carers alone across the UK and today's findings are the wake-up call that can no longer be ignored.

We're long past the time when sympathy and kind words for young carers is enough. Hundreds of thousands of young carers across the UK need real support and we are calling on the government to urgently invest in support services for young carers to ensure they get the support they need."

Other key findings from the survey:

- 56% of young carers say their education is suffering since Coronavirus.
- 52% of young adult carers feel overwhelmed by the pressures they are facing now.
- 49% of young adult carers are struggling to look after themselves.
- 50% of young adult carers are having to spend more money due to Coronavirus.
- 66% of young carers and 71% of young adult carers are less able to stay in touch with friends since Coronavirus.

Based on the survey findings, Carers Trust is calling for:

- Greater prioritisation of mental health support for young carers. Carers Trust has previously identified mental health as a priority area for support. However, there is still low awareness amongst service providers and commissioners. It is **vital that mental health services and schools supporting a child or young person with their mental health ask about caring responsibilities** and support that child or young person to get support with caring. Young carers services frequently report a lack of mental health support for this group, beyond what they can provide as a service. This support gap is strongly indicated by the survey finding that **30% of young carers and half of young adult carers want mental health support.**
- **Greater support from education providers** and employers to help young carers and young adult carers to juggle their caring roles alongside school, college, university or work. Like other children and young people, they have goals and

aspirations. Without the right support, young carers and young adult carers are at risk of lower exam results, and spending less time in education. This has consequences for their higher and further education, and employment. This call is supported by the survey findings that 56% of young carers and 39% of young adult carers report that their education is suffering as a result of Coronavirus; and that 44% of young carers and 39% of young adult carers would like more support with their education.