



**Are you a young carer?**

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# About Southwark Carers

We are an independant charity with over 5,000 carers currently registered with us. We provide information, advice and support to carers across Southwark.

We are the voice for carers in the Borough speaking on their behalf about the issues that are important to them.

We aim to raise awareness of the rights and needs of carers in Southwark - working in partnership with other local organisations to make sure that carers receive the support they require. Our services include:

- Advice and advocacy to support carers on issues such as benefits and dealing with social services.
- An information pack and regular newsletter to keep carers fully informed on what is happening.
- Financial assistance to help carers take a break.
- Carers support groups.
- Social activity groups.
- Massage and relaxation.



A Helping Hand for people supporting their disabled, frail or ill relatives and friends in Southwark.



- Fuel Poverty Grants.
- Emergency Planning.
- Respite cover for carers to have a life of their own.
- Transport grants.
- Liason with local health and social care to develop new ways of working.
- Forums.

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## What is a young carer?

A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who helps to look after a relative who has a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem.

The majority of young carers look after one of their parents or a brother or sister. A young carer might also care for a grandparent or someone else from their extended family. They do jobs in and around the home, such as cooking, cleaning, or helping someone to get dressed and move around.

Young carers may need to help a relative to deal with their feelings by talking to them, listening and trying to understand their problems.

The difference between young carers and other young people who help in the home is that young carers are often responsible for someone else in their family in a way that most other young people aren't.

Some children give a lot of physical help to a brother or sister who is disabled or ill. If you do, you are described as a "sibling carer". Along with physical help for your sibling, you may also be providing emotional support to both your sibling and your parents.



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## Who can help?

If caring is affecting your health, your feelings or your school work, you should ask your doctor or your local authority for more help in your home.

If you need to talk or get support for yourself while caring, there are projects around the country that offer help and information to young carers. The projects are a place for young carers to have fun and relax.

### Friends and family

Talking to a friend or a relative about any problems can be helpful. People who find it hard to talk to others often write their thoughts in a diary, poem or letter first. You can also chat with one another on the YCNet website - [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net) and get lots of advice and support from other young people.

### Teachers and other school staff

Teachers are there to help pupils get the most out of school. They can be a good person for you to speak to about any problems you have.



If you're getting angry in school, missing lessons to help look after someone at home, or struggling to get your homework in on time, you might benefit from talking to a teacher.

Some schools run clubs for young carers and provide information for them. There's sometimes a lead teacher who's responsible for young carers in school.

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If you're having trouble attending school, you may be contacted by education welfare officers (EWOs). The EWO's job is to find out what's stopping you from getting to school, and what would help you go more often.

If you're having trouble with school or homework, your teachers may offer:

extra time for school work when the person you care for is ill, help for your parents to travel to parents' evenings if they have trouble leaving the house, to talk to you privately about your home life, and homework clubs.

### Social workers

A social worker's job is to support and help a family that might be having difficulties. Social workers may be asked to help a young carer's family if there are problems that the family members are finding hard to sort out on their own.

A social worker only finds a new home for a child if the child is in

danger at home and there's no other way of keeping them safe.

If you feel you need help staying healthy and taking part in school and social activities, you might be able to get help. In some cases, support workers can help you with your education and health.

### Healthcare Professionals

If you have concerns about your own health, or the health of the person you care for, you can speak to a doctor or GP in a safe and confidential environment.



School nurses visit schools and are normally happy to speak to young people about any concerns they might have.

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Counsellors work in a variety of places, including schools, hospitals and youth centres. A counsellor's job is to listen carefully and give advice in a private setting.

Community psychiatric nurses work in the community and offer emotional support and advice about mental health conditions. If your parent has a community psychiatric nurse, you can talk to the nurse about your parent's illness and how you can help your parent cope with the illness.

If you're worried about your own mental health, you can speak to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. There are services all over the country, giving support to young people with mental health conditions.

Macmillan nurses from the national charity Macmillan Cancer Support can help people who are affected by cancer. They provide a range of medical and emotional support for people who have cancer, and their families.

### Carers Assessments

If you're a young carer and are under 16, you can ask social services for a carer's assessment whenever the person you're looking after is having an assessment of their own.



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If you're a young carer aged 16 or over, you can ask social services for a carer's assessment whenever you like.

### Youth workers and youth advice services

Often, adults who work with young people are employed by a local youth service or independent charity. They offer a range of services, from one-on-one support to clubs and activities. To find a young person's advice service in your area, type 'youth advice' and your nearest town into a search engine such as Google.

There is a range of organisations that provide advice and information on issues such as benefits, money, education, relationships, drugs, health and housing.

The Citizens Advice Bureau provides comprehensive information on money, benefits and your rights. You can read their information online and use the website to find your nearest centre. Connexions has

information about education and careers. It also runs drop-in centres in towns across the UK that young carers can visit in person.

Talk to someone in confidence  
You may find it useful to talk to someone confidentially. Helplines are a good way of doing this. ChildLine has a confidential listening service for children and young people.

NHS Direct is a 24-hour telephone health advice and information service. It has a nurse advice service and a health information section.

### Useful Contacts

#### **Southwark Young Carers Project**

020 7703 6400

#### **Young Carers Association**

(0844) 800 4361

#### **Childline**

0800 1111

#### **Citizens Advice Bureau**

0844 499 4134

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## Caring and School

As a young carer, you might find school a place where you can forget about caring responsibilities and feel 'normal' for a while.

But it can also be a place where you're under extra pressure or where people don't understand what your life outside school is like. It can sometimes be hard to juggle all your responsibilities as a young carer with the demands of teachers, friends and homework.

### Keeping up to date with work

You might not want your school to know you're caring for someone. But if they don't know, it will be difficult for teachers to understand if you struggle to keep up in class or don't do your homework. It's a good idea to let at least one teacher know you're a carer.





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You might find it difficult to talk about your home life with a teacher, so you could ask a parent to write a letter to the school, perhaps to the head of year. Some young carers find it easier to talk about the situation if they keep a diary or a list of all the jobs and tasks they have to do. If you still find it difficult to talk to someone at your school, you could talk to someone at a young carers project.



They may be able to talk to the school on your behalf or come with you to meetings. A list of young carers projects can be found on the Children's Society website.

[www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

If you miss a lot of school, an education welfare officer may contact you. They will try to find out what is causing you to miss school and how to get you back to school. It's really worth talking openly and honestly to them. Their role is to help you.

### Support at school

There are lots of ways your school can help. You could be allowed to use a phone during breaks and lunchtime so you can check on the person you're looking after.

The school could also put you in touch with your local young carers service or get a young carers worker to talk to you or to deliver a lesson at your school.



Some schools run lunchtime groups or homework support groups for young carers. If your school doesn't do this, you could suggest it to your teachers.

detention, you could ask to have it during lunchtime rather than after school because of your caring responsibility.

Nobody wants to get into trouble at school. If teachers know you're a carer, they may be more sympathetic to your problems (such as lateness), but it won't necessarily stop you being disciplined if you break the rules. If you are given

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## Looking after a parent



Some young people look after one or both of their parents. You might have helped to look after a parent for as long as you can remember. Or your parent might have suddenly become ill or disabled. Whatever the situation, caring for someone often brings up lots of feelings. Many young carers enjoy looking after their parent and find it rewarding. But it can also cause a lot of worry and stress.

Your parent might have a physical illness, disability or a drug or alcohol problem. You might have to help around the home with cooking, cleaning and paying bills. Some young carers might also have to help their parents with washing, dressing or going to the toilet.

If your parent has a mental health problem, you might not have to do as many jobs around the house, but you might have to stay in a



lot to keep your parent company, listen when they're feeling worried or anxious, cope with their mood swings or unusual behaviour, and be a shoulder to cry on for them.

If you're caring for a parent you should be able to get extra help if you need it, or more information and advice.

Family doctors and nurses are often good people to talk to about being a young carer. If you or your parent has a social worker, the social worker

might be able to make sure that there are other people and services that can help the whole family.

Social services might need to do an assessment of you and your family. This isn't anything scary, it's just a way of finding out what would help you and your family. It can make sure that you're not missing out on help that you need or steps you should be taking.

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## Caring for someone with a condition

As a young carer, you'll probably want as much information as possible about the condition of the person you care for.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Not knowing about a condition and what might happen can be much more worrying than having the information to hand and knowing what to do in an emergency.

It's worth talking to the person who has the illness or disability to find out how it affects them. You could also talk to any doctors, nurses, social workers or other people who help that person.

You'll find reliable information on the illness or disability on the Carers Direct website.

[www.nhs.uk/carersdirect](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect)

Online support workers at websites for young carers could also provide answers to your questions about caring. You can post messages to other young carers and share your experience with people in similar situations. These websites can help you find out about a young carers service near you.



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# Other support services

## Message In A Bottle

For those who may care for someone who may not live with them a Message In A Bottle Kit is a unique way of storing essential information about who you care for, that persons details and needs on a prepared form that is kept in a bottle and stored in the fridge.

You can get a free Message In A Bottle Kit from Southwark Carers.

## Emergency Card

This card fits easily into a purse or wallet and provides key contact information to others should you be involved in an accident. You can get a free Emergency Card from Southwark Carers.

## Carers Assessment

Although a Carers Assessment from Social Services is unlikely to get you immediate access to lots of services or support, as most carers are not regarded as having sufficient need, it is certainly worth going through

the process of assessment so that you are then registered with Social Services as a carer.

This means that in an emergency you can bypass this first step and that social services have many of the key details that they need. An Emergency Plan should also be considered and discussed as part of the Carers Assessment – contact your local social services team to organise an assessment.

**Health and Social Care Call Centre**  
- 020 7525 3838

## Emergency Respite

As a carer you may be eligible for emergency respite. This provides up to 48 hours respite cover for planned emergencies, where Southwark Carers have drawn up an emergency plan with you and emergency respite cover is listed within the plan.

There is also limited respite cover for unplanned emergencies

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# The Young Carers Charter

The Young Carer's Charter was drawn up by the Princess Royal Trust for Carers and sets out the rights young carers feel they're entitled to.

As a young carer, think about what might help you to ensure you enjoy these rights. Read the charter below and ask yourself: how can I make this a reality?

## The Charter

- 'We are children and young people who are also carers. We want people to recognise this. We believe we should have the same rights as other children and young people, including the rights:
- to be children and young people as well as carers,
- to schools and colleges that give us the help we need to get an education,
- to fun, friends and time off from caring,
- to a well-supported family life,
- to practical help and support,
- to a safe environment and protection from harm, including any harm that our caring roles could cause us,
- to services that value our different backgrounds, culture, religion, race and sexuality,
- to be listened to,
- to an assessment of what we need as individuals,
- to be involved when people make decisions which affect our lives,
- to a wide range of information that would help us,
- to someone who will help us have a voice (advocacy),
- to understand how things work and how to complain if we want to,
- to choose how much caring we do, and
- to become independent adults

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The Princess Royal Trust  
*for Carers*