

Barriers to employment for young adult carers

Summary report

Nicola Aylward, Hazel Klenk, Charlotte Robey
and Rebekah Wolkind

November 2018

Published by Learning and Work Institute

4th Floor, Arnhem House, 31 Waterloo Way, Leicester, LE1 6LP

Company registration no. 2603322 | Charity registration no. 1002775

Learning and Work Institute is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

We research what works, develop new ways of thinking and implement new approaches. Working with partners, we transform people's experiences of learning and employment. What we do benefits individuals, families, communities and the wider economy.

We bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the 'National Institute of Adult Continuing Education' and the 'Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion'.

www.learningandwork.org.uk

@LearnWorkUK

@LearnWorkCymru (Wales)

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without the written permission of the publishers, save in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Methodology.....	4
3. Findings.....	5
4. Conclusions.....	10
5. Recommendations.....	16

1. Introduction

Young adult carers are young people aged 16-24 who provide unpaid care to someone, usually a family member, on a regular basis. There are more than 314,000 young adult carers in England and Wales.

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. Since 2008, L&W has worked with policy makers, learning providers, employers and young adult carers themselves to improve access to education and employment for this group of young people. L&W convenes the National Policy Forum for Young Adult Carers, bringing together representatives from government departments along with young adult carers, a range of national third sector organisations and learning providers to identify how national government policy can enable young adult carers' engagement in learning and work.

The project

This report presents the findings from research conducted by Learning and Work Institute on behalf of the Department for Education, which aimed to gather robust evidence on young adult carers' barriers to employment. The research explored:

- The factors that affect young adult carers' aspirations and decisions about employment.
- The barriers that young adult carers face in making successful transitions to employment.
- The support that young adult carers need to overcome these barriers.
- Policy/structural factors that impact upon young adult carers' access to employment.

2. Methodology

This research adopted a mixed methods approach, combining the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The research was conducted in three stages:

- **A literature review** to establish the existing evidence base on young adult carers' barriers to employment.
- **A quantitative survey** of current and recent young adult carers, to explore common trends in their experiences.
- **Qualitative interviews and focus groups** to provide in depth explanatory data about young adult carers' experience of employment.

3. Findings

3.1 Education

Only 23% of young adult carers reported having a good experience at school, compared to 34% who reported having a bad experience. Some young adult carers felt that the latter years of pre-16 education presented significant challenges as workloads increased, and the pressure of making decisions about future pathways mounted.

Around three-quarters (76%) of young adult carers reported that their caring impacted on their concentration and 57% said it affected their attendance at school. In turn, these had affected their academic attainment. In addition, over half (57%) reported experiencing social isolation, bullying and attendance at school. All of these are likely to impact on young people's friendships, communication and social skills, and access to social activities which can support transitions to employment or further learning opportunities later in life.

Two-thirds of young adult carers said that their school knew about their caring responsibilities. The remaining third gave a number of reasons for not declaring, including normalising their role, feeling concerned about the stigma attached to declaration, or not feeling they needed or wanted to declare. Those that did declare were often identified by the school at crisis points.

However, only half of the young people who were known as carers by their schools were offered support. Often, access to support depended on one supportive tutor or pastoral staff member and the support offered tended to be inadequate or inconsistent. Nevertheless, where support was received, this had a positive impact on young people's school experience. Young adult carers felt that support improved their performance at school, reduced stress, and raised confidence.

Overall, young adult carers had a more positive experience of post-16 education than pre-16 education. This was often due to increased flexibility which enabled them to better balance their caring role with their studies.

However, young adult carers continued to face challenges in post-16 education. Similar to the findings from pre-16 education, respondents said their caring role affected their attendance and performance. This often affected their progression through their course, and in some cases young adult carers dropped out of their programme, either voluntarily or because their learning provider said they could no longer continue.

Findings suggest that a 'trusted other' or supportive 'role model' can be a significant influencing factor to motivate young adult carers into post-16 education, especially for those who lack confidence in their capabilities. Many young adult carers are also motivated to pursue a subject area that relates to their caring role, and respondents tended to be studying courses in a care-related subject. Practical considerations such as distance from home are also important influencing factors for some young adult carers, which tended to limit their post-16 options and outweigh their interests. For example, one respondent chose not to study their desired course as it was too far away from home and another reported applying to a 'less prestigious' university closer to home so they were near to the person they cared for. A respondent who had decided to move away to study dropped out of the course when their cared for family member's health deteriorated.

As in pre-16 education, the findings suggest that young adult carers' experiences of support in post-16 education are inconsistent. Two-thirds of respondents indicated that their provider was aware of their caring role, but only three-fifths of these received support. For some, this was because they felt it was not needed, but others reported a lack of awareness amongst staff and a resulting lack of support on offer. Experiences of good support were often dependent on the understanding of support staff and tutors. Therefore, while there are cases of individual teaching staff providing beneficial support, this research found little evidence of formalised or uniform support within post-16 education providers.

Despite this, the overwhelming majority of young adult carers appear to be keen to learn in the future in order to achieve their career goals and make up for lost opportunities resulting from their caring. However, many anticipated that they would experience continuing barriers to engaging in learning because of their caring responsibilities.

3.2 Careers advice

Only 43% of young adult carers had had a session with a qualified careers adviser, and only half of these respondents found the sessions useful. Around half of respondents who had had a careers advice session discussed their caring role with their adviser. Data on whether discussing their caring role during the session had an impact on the usefulness of the session is inconclusive. However, the survey results show that very few young people who discussed their caring role were offered additional support as a result.

Around three-fifths (61%) of young adult carers did not feel that careers advice was tailored to their needs as a carer. Qualitative data suggests that often careers guidance takes a one-size-fits-all approach that does not tend to take young people's caring roles into account, and that careers advisers lacked the skills and knowledge to provide advice on managing care and employment. Therefore, advice given can be prescriptive or generic, rather than based on individual needs.

When a young person had received advice tailored to their career aspirations and caring role – often from their support worker at the local carers service – this had inspired and motivated them to pursue education and training.

Access to other career-related activities, such as careers fairs, may enable young adult carers to learn about different options and consider a broader range of career routes.

3.3 Carer-specific support

Carers services offer a range of broad and holistic support to young adult carers which can support their transition into further education and employment. This includes peer support and social activities, emotional support, practical support around education and employment, and financial support. Many also empower young adult carers through opportunities to engage in advocacy activities.

This holistic and individualised support results in a range of positive outcomes for young adult carers, which in turn increases their chances of making successful transitions into education, training and employment. For example, this support enables young adult carers to better understand their rights in work and increase their confidence to hold employers to account. Support to access grants and advice on benefit entitlements can remove financial barriers that young adult carers can face when thinking about pursuing further education.

Emotional and social support can also reduce the emotional impact of caring on education and employment, provide opportunities to explore interests outside of caring, and provide role models to increase young adult carers' motivation to engage in education, training and employment.

However, there are barriers to accessing support specific to young adult carers. Often, these relate to gaps in local support for young adult carers, or for young adult carers of a certain age. Other barriers included a lack of awareness of the support available. This suggests that support services could be more prevalent and more promotional activity may need to take place in order to reach the young adult carers in need of support. However, recent cuts to health and social care have impacted on carers services' budgets, restricting their ability to both identify young adult carers and provide the level of support they need.

Where young adult carers accessed support from other specialised services, findings indicate that they were not necessarily appropriate for their needs. This points to a need for a more joined up approach between statutory and carers services, in order to improve identification of young adult carers and provide them with holistic support.

Only 38% of young adult carers said that they had had a Carer's Assessment. While the reasons for this are not certain, it is likely there are communication issues between social service professionals and young adult carers. Overall, those that did have an assessment found it beneficial in terms of accessing financial support and respite from caring, which could support transitions into education and employment. However, none of the young adult carers involved in our research appear to have been provided with specific career-related support as a result of their Carer's Assessment.

3.4 Searching and applying for work

Young adult carers experience a range of challenges when looking for work, many of which are the direct result of having caring responsibilities. For example, almost half of respondents had struggled to find work which was close to home or that they could fit around their caring role. Other challenges could be the result of outcomes of caring, for example, a lack of qualifications or relevant experience.

When looking for jobs, young adult carers tend to consider practical factors such as location and public transport links, and will often choose to apply for roles with working hours which accommodate their caring responsibilities. Another key consideration is the level of pay compared to the income their families receive through benefits. These considerations often take precedence over other factors such as interests, aspirations and skillsets.

A caring role also influences young people's decisions about which jobs to apply for. Many participants were inspired to work in the care sector because of their lived experience of providing care. Some participants felt that they could directly apply their skills and experience in this sector, while others felt that the restrictions that their caring had placed on them meant that they were 'locked out' of certain sectors.

Very few participants had thought about the transferable skills they had gained through caring. However, the majority of survey respondents (86%) agreed that these would be useful to employers and a small number of interviewees had received support to include these on their CVs or application forms. Despite this, many young adult carers were concerned that their caring experience and skills would not be valued by employers.

3.5 Experiences of employment

Research participants had a range of experiences of employment. Around two-thirds of survey respondents were in employment. Over a third of respondents were unemployed (although this includes those who were in full-time education) and over half had never had a job or had mostly been unemployed. Only around a third had constantly or mostly been employed throughout their working life.

In order to secure work that would enable them to balance their caring responsibilities with employment, young adult carers tend to work part-time, flexible hours or in roles with zero-hour contracts. Participants were most likely to be working in retail, likely due to the high proportion of part-time and flexible job roles in this sector. Other common sectors included the charity and voluntary sector and hospitality.

In general, young adult carers were relatively open to declaring their caring responsibilities to employers. Over half of survey respondents had told their employer about their caring role, and participants were most likely to say that they would do this at application or interview stage. However, this tended to depend on a number of factors, including whether their caring was relevant to the job they were applying for, the sector they were applying to, and whether they felt 'invited' to do so by the employer.

Some research participants stated that they would always declare at application or interview, in order to ensure that they could get the support needed in work and that they could balance the job with their caring responsibilities. However, other participants had experienced, and often feared, employer discrimination. As a result, they were reluctant to disclose their caring responsibilities at application stage, and in some instances participants never explained their caring to employers. Often this meant missed opportunities for in-work support from their employer. In many instances, participants only disclosed their caring responsibilities once they started to cause significant in-work disruptions, or once they became overwhelmed with balancing work and caring. This meant that support was reactionary rather than preventative.

Two-thirds of young adult carers who had declared their caring role at work were offered support. As in education, access to good support in work seems to depend on the understanding of managers or other individual staff. Young adult carers who experienced good in-work support had commonly worked in the third or voluntary sector, often in caring or mental health organisations.

Participants appreciated employer understanding and flexibility, and some had stories of particularly understanding individual managers and employers. However, there were many examples of when employers had been inflexible and lacked understanding about the impact of caring on work. This suggests that, at present, employer support is patchy and there is a clear need to ensure that the approach to supporting young adult carers is consistent across sectors and types of employer.

Overall, participants felt more could be done to inform employers about what it means to be a carer and how this may affect young people's work. They suggested that both employers and young adult carers should have greater awareness of carers' rights and entitlements in the workplace. Young adult carers also felt that more could be done to provide tailored careers advice which enables young people to identify transferable skills from caring.

3.6 Career aspirations

Young adult carers' current employment often circumstances do not match their career aspirations. Instead, their current roles tend to be viewed as 'stop gaps' in their career progression or a way of financing their learning.

Caring responsibilities have a significant influence on young people's career aspirations. Many participants felt that their caring role had given them skills, experience and expertise in certain areas that made them ideally suited to caring roles. Others felt that they would find a caring career rewarding and were keen to 'give back' or help people through their work. There was also a perception that employers in the care or charity sectors would be more understanding of participants' home situations and therefore provide the in-work support they required. In contrast, some participants were keen to avoid caring roles, so as not to replicate their home situation in the workplace.

'Role models' or 'trusted others' were also cited as influencing factors in young adult carers' decisions about their future career aspirations. This included family members and support workers. Where participants had received good careers support, this was viewed as having a positive influence on their aspirations and subsequent progression pathways.

The majority (82%) of young adult carers had a very clear or some idea of what they needed to do to achieve their career goals. However, they also identified numerous barriers to achieving these. These include practical limitations resulting from caring which restrict the number and range of careers available to them.

A perceived lack of employer support also acts as a barrier to career progression for young adult carers. Some reported that they would avoid certain sectors where they felt that employers would be less supportive, or where the work was viewed as incompatible with a caring role due to working patterns or perceptions of inflexibility.

Other key barriers include being 'present-orientated'; a lack of qualifications, skills and experience; a lack of time to develop interests and aspirations; emotional barriers; and policy and structural barriers, most notably the restrictive nature of the rules around Carer's Allowance.

4. Conclusions

This research has considered young adult carers' experiences in education and employment, their career aspirations, and their suggestions for improved policy and practice. Through exploring these themes in combination with previous research, several conclusions can be drawn.

This chapter considers the four initial research questions:

- What barriers do young adult carers face in making successful transitions to employment?
- What factors affect young adult carers' aspirations and decisions about employment?
- What policy and structural factors impact upon young adult carers' access to employment?
- What support do young adult carers need to overcome these barriers?

Barriers young adult carers face when making transitions to employment

Young adult carers face a range of practical, emotional and psychological barriers when transitioning to employment.

For many young adult carers, the pool of available jobs is limited by practical factors such as location and number of hours. Young adult carers may also limit themselves to sectors which they anticipate will be more understanding and accommodating of caring responsibilities. They often also feel limited to applying for roles which are part-time rather than full-time, so they can fit these around their caring responsibilities. This not only excludes them from employment but also vocational training opportunities such as apprenticeships, which are typically delivered on a full-time basis. Some young adult carers experience rejection or lack of understanding from employers who are unwilling to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their caring responsibilities. Others may not apply for jobs for fear of rejection; and yet others may secure employment but not disclose their caring responsibilities for the same reason.

Lack of employer awareness and understanding means that in many cases young adult carers are not offered the support needed to balance caring with work. This can lead to a 'crisis', where young adult carers become overwhelmed with the responsibilities of both caring and working. Often this adversely affects their ability to work. This can be heightened given that young adult carers are more likely to experience mental and physical ill-health.

Young adult carers may decide not to enter employment because it financially disadvantages them or their family members by changing their benefit entitlements. This challenge also applies to education and training, particularly apprenticeships, where the national minimum wage for an apprentice is significantly lower than the national minimum and living wage that other employees are entitled to. In addition, apprenticeships are classified as employment by benefit decision makers. This can result in young adult carers sacrificing the pursuit of their interests and aspirations to ensure that their family has enough income on which to live.

Young adult carers may lack qualifications and work experience in comparison to their peers. A lack of employer awareness and inadequate careers advice means that young adult carers are rarely told that their caring responsibilities could qualify as extenuating circumstances when applying for jobs or post-16 education courses that usually require a higher level of qualification. Inadequate careers advice also means that in many cases young adult carers miss opportunities to present their caring responsibilities as valuable and transferable skills. In all, this means that young adult carers' CVs may appear less attractive than their peers, preventing them from accessing the jobs they want.

Young adult carers can experience conflicting emotions when considering further education and employment options. Young adulthood is a time when individuals move towards greater independence. For young adult carers, a desire to forge an independent path may create feelings of guilt associated with 'leaving behind' the person they care for. In other instances, young people may feel frustrated or 'held back' by their caring responsibilities. Young adult carers may also fear leaving the cared-for person to engage in work, even when there is an opportunity to access paid care.

Factors affecting young adult carers' aspirations and decisions around employment

A caring role can impact young people's decisions about employment in two ways.

Firstly, caring means that there are a host of practical considerations that take precedence over young adult carers' interests and aspirations when looking for work. Caring responsibilities place practical limitations on the ways in which young adult carers can work. As such, young adult carers consider the location of jobs and the hours worked as highly important. In some cases, this may mean rejecting or not applying for jobs that are better paid or more in line with the individual's interests and aspirations. These limitations are replicated in education, with some young adult carers choosing courses and providers which are close to home over those which are more relevant to their career interests or better ranked in league tables. Young adult carers also make decisions about work based on which sectors or levels they anticipate will be more accommodating to and understanding of their caring responsibilities. Again, this is sometimes prioritised over interests and career goals. In some cases, this prevents in-work progression to a role with greater responsibility. Some respondents felt 'locked into' zero-hour contracts or voluntary roles and unable to progress.

Secondly, the experience of caring often has a formative impact on young adult carers' thoughts about future career aspirations. In some cases, participants were keen to avoid caring roles, so as not to replicate their home situation in the workplace. More commonly, and in line with previous research¹, young adult carers wanted to study or work in a caring profession. This should not necessarily be regarded negatively. In many cases, despite its challenges, caring is a meaningful and rewarding part of young adult carers' lives. Many feel it has had a positive impact on their identity and want to carry this into their paid work. Some feel passionate about aspiring to transform the care sector or young carers services. However, young adult carers may also lack the time and space to explore career options outside of care. Echoing previous research², our findings suggest that young adult carers have limited opportunities to socialise and participate in extra-curricular activities throughout

¹ Sempik and Becker (2014)

² Action for Young Carers (2005)

school and college. As a result, they may not have had the opportunity to develop interests and aspirations outside of caring and thus follow a caring career, as they feel they have few alternative options. These young people may also lack confidence in social situations which can also affect the roles and sectors in which they apply for work. Moreover, caring jobs are often low paid and based on zero-hour contracts, again trapping young adult carers in jobs with little space for upward progression.

The tendency to go into care work is compounded by a lack of careers advice, or careers advice that is insufficiently tailored to young adult carers' needs. Less than half of young adult carers had accessed a formal careers advice session, and only a quarter had discussed their caring role with a careers adviser. Very few of these young people were offered additional support as a result of their careers advice session. However, the qualitative data suggests that, when young adult carers did receive specialist careers advice, they were better able to see how their caring skills could be transferable and valuable to employers across different sectors. In turn, this was viewed as having a positive influence on their aspirations and subsequent progression pathways. Other influences on young adult carers' career aspirations included 'role models' or 'trusted others', including family members, tutors and support workers.

Policy and structural factors impacting on young adult carers' progression to employment

Young adult carers face a range of policy and structural barriers which impact on their progression opportunities.

Despite being legally entitled to a Carer's Assessment by their local authority, findings suggest that young adult carers experience challenges in accessing this, evidenced by a significant majority of survey respondents reporting that they had never had a Carer's Assessment. Building on recent research³, it is clear that lack of communication and clear information hampers young adult carers' access to a Carer's Assessment. Many are not aware of its existence, while others lack clarity around what the assessment entails and its potential outcomes (i.e. follow up support), so much so that it is possible that some participants in this research had had an assessment but did not realise it. There are also instances of requests for assessments not being responded to in a timely manner or at all.

Where Carer's Assessments did occur, there is evidence that they can lead to financial support and respite which could help young adult carers to progress into education, training and employment. However, none of the research participants had been offered careers advice as a result of a Carer's Assessment.

Our findings also support previous research⁴ that suggests regulations around the Carer's Allowance can act to deter young adult carers from seeking out paid employment or accessing education, thus restricting their progression opportunities. For some young adult carers, the impact of employment and/or learning on their welfare entitlement was a key consideration in their decisions about education, employment and training. This was particularly significant for those whose families relied on them financially. Financial pressures mean that young adult carers often feel torn between continuing their caring role

³ Aylward, N., Lees, C., Wolkind, R., and Klenk, H. (Forthcoming) 'Young adult carers in Wales'.

⁴ Aylward, N (2014)

or moving into paid employment or education. Those that chose to move into further education or low paid employment such as apprenticeships and retail were often pushed into financially precarious circumstances. For others, this barrier prevented them from progressing into their desired career or sector, as the need to earn money was more pressing than achieving their long-term career aspirations.

Despite being protected from discrimination in employment under the Equality Act (2010), our research found multiple examples of young adult carers experiencing both direct and indirect discrimination based on their caring role. Some had been rejected for jobs after declaring their caring role on their application form, CV or at interview stage. Others had been dismissed from a position due to lateness or missing work – circumstances that arose because of fulfilling their caring role. Fear of discrimination in employment appears to be prevalent among this cohort and often prevented young adult carers from declaring their caring responsibilities to employers, resulting in a lack of in-work support. Findings suggest that issues of discrimination may be perpetuated by a lack of consistent employer approaches. In addition, a lack of awareness about carers' rights and entitlements in employment on behalf of both carers and employers may exacerbate this barrier.

What support do young adult carers need to overcome these barriers?

It is clear that young adult carers require additional support to guide their decision-making process around education, training and employment, to ensure their transition is successful, and to help them sustain and progress in meaningful careers.

Specialist support

Our findings suggest that support specific to young adult carers can effectively meet the transition needs of this cohort. Their needs are distinct from young carers or adult carers, suggesting the need for more widespread support of this nature. Carers services offer a broad range of support that can help to overcome the barriers that young adult carers commonly face in accessing and progressing in learning and work. However, recent cuts to health and social care budgets have impacted on the support that some carers services are able to provide, and many young adult carers struggle to access local support which is suitable for their age group, either due to a lack of awareness or availability. Our findings indicate that proactive outreach works well in raising awareness of services and engaging young adult carers in support.

Improved partnership working between different services, learning providers and employers would also provide more holistic support to young adult carers. For example, our findings suggest that mental health support that takes into account both the pressures faced in education, and their circumstances as a carer, and the relationship between them, is most effective. However, our findings show that this is seldom done in practice. A more joined up approach between colleges, training providers, universities, employers, carers services and other support agencies would not only improve support but could also aid identification of young adult carers and referral through to specialist support.

Support in education

Support in both pre-16 and post-16 education should be consistent to increase accessibility and understanding around entitlement. This can be facilitated by a whole-organisation

approach to supporting young adult carers, including a formal recording process upon declaration and teacher/staff training. Currently, our data shows that these practices are not in place across the board, resulting in few young adult carers accessing adequate support in these stages of their lives and creating issues around declaration. Schools and further and higher education can play a key role in signposting young adult carers to specialist services such as carers services or mental health support. They can also provide in-house support. Findings suggest that adjustments such as deadline extensions, allowing them to have a mobile phone to hand and flexible hours can have a positive impact on young adult carers' experience at school, which could improve their chances of making successful transitions into further learning and employment. Other effective practice highlighted included introducing a carer's ID card to enable discrete declaration and identification, and one-to-one coaching or mentoring from a 'trusted other'. Additionally, it is argued that effective support should be long-term and consistent.

Tailored and holistic careers advice

Our findings suggest that careers advice which is tailored to young adult carers' needs, and takes their caring roles into account, can support successful transitions and progression in education, training and employment. Less than half of the young adult carers involved in the research had had a session with a qualified careers adviser, and only two-fifths felt that advice was tailored to their needs as a carer. However, when a young person had received advice related to their career aspirations and home situation – often from their support worker at the local carers service – this had inspired and motivated them to pursue education and training. Increased awareness of young adult carers' support needs for careers advisers may help to broaden young people's access to tailored careers support and enable them to consider the transferable skills they have gained from caring and how these could be applied in the world of work. Access to other career-related activities, such as careers fairs, may also enable more young adult carers to gain information on a range of transition options and consider a broader range of career routes.

Carer friendly employment policies and support

Currently, employer support is patchy both in availability and quality. While pockets of effective support exist, there is a clear need to ensure that employer approaches and behaviour are consistent across sectors and types of employer.

The research found that flexibility and employer understanding are key to providing effective in-work support for young adult carers. Allowing flexible working practices enables young adult carers to better balance their caring role with their work. Job shares, working from home, advanced rotas, access to mobile phones and flexible working hours are all good examples of this. Genuine understanding of their caring role was greatly appreciated by young adult carers. When an employer was understanding, it was more likely that practical adjustments and support were provided, increasing the likelihood that young adult carers sustain employment.

Employers should also encourage declaration of caring responsibilities at application and induction so that support and adjustments can be put in place as soon as possible, to avoid crisis situations occurring. An official space where young adult carers can declare their caring responsibility during the recruitment process is an effective way of achieving this. There is also evidence that an understanding atmosphere at interview can encourage

declaration, particularly amongst those who are concerned about discrimination at application stage.

Raising both employer and young adult carers' awareness of carers rights and entitlements in the workplace is key to fostering effective practice. Supporting young adult carers to increase their understanding of their entitlements and rights in work can also empower them to hold employers to account and reduce discrimination.

5. Recommendations

The following recommendations are drawn from the findings of this research and build on L&W's existing work to suggest changes that would result in improved support for young adult carers to engage and succeed in learning and work. They include recommendations for policy and decision makers, education providers, careers advisers, employers and carers services.

For policy and decision makers:

- **Department for Education should formally identify young adult carers as a 'vulnerable group' giving them full access to the 16-19 Bursary.** Currently young adult carers are not identified as one of the three 'vulnerable groups' who are automatically entitled to the 16-19 Bursary. While they may be able to access the Bursary on a discretionary basis, a lack of awareness amongst both learning providers and young adult carers means they often do not have access to this support. Automatic entitlement would remove some financial barriers to young adult carers' engagement in post-16 education.
- **Department for Education should promote flexible and part-time apprenticeships for young adult carers.** These young people often find it difficult to commit to full-time work, alongside their caring responsibilities. Whilst Education and Skills Funding Agency guidance states that apprenticeships should be at least 30 hours work per week, except in exceptional circumstances (which are not defined), part time and flexible apprenticeships are not promoted by government or employers.
- **Department for Education should introduce a new requirement for FE providers to report on the numbers of young adult carers they have enrolled and the outcomes they achieve.** This will encourage all FE providers to formally identify and monitor the progress of young adult carers. Introducing a standard tick box on FE application forms (similar to the tick box which has recently been added to the UCAS form) at a national level would also support this.
- **Department for Education should introduce a bursary payment for young adult carers starting an apprenticeship. This should be the equivalent of the difference between the National Minimum Wage and the National Living Wage, to ensure that apprenticeships are a viable financial option for all young adult carers.** Many young adult carers live in low-income families and have dependents who rely on their income or on benefits, both of which are affected if they start an apprenticeship.
- **Department for Education should ensure that young adult carers receive access to independent careers information, advice and guidance which takes account of their caring responsibilities and the impact that these responsibilities can have upon their decision and the opportunities available to them.** Any national reforms or initiatives aimed at improving the quality of information, advice and guidance for young people should take account of the specific needs of young adult carers in relation to careers advice.
- **Department for Work and Pensions should exempt young adult carers from the 21-hour study rule in Carer's Allowance.** This can create barriers to young adult carers engaging in education, training and employment, and prevent them from pursuing their

career aspirations. Exemption from the 21 hour rule will prevent young adult carers having to make the choice between caring and education or employment, which can result them dropping out of learning.

- **Department of Health and Social Care should commission work to identify effective approaches to conducting Carer's Assessments with young adult carers, particularly the new Transition Assessments.** Professionals conducting assessments should also be provided with examples and models of good practice, to ensure that they cover young adult carers' aspirations in terms education, employment and training, and have strong referral routes to independent careers advice in place.
- **Local authorities should provide clear and visible information about young adult carers' right to a Carer's Assessment and how to access it,** as well as the potential benefits of receiving an assessment. Young adult carers also need to be made aware when they are having a Carer's Assessment, so they can fully engage with the process and request the support they need.
- **All local authorities should develop and publish local carers action plans, which should set out the support they will provide for young adult carers. They should also prioritise funding for carers services to provide targeted support to young adult carers.** Carers services are often the main source of support for young adult carers, but budget cuts and reduced contract values mean that support workers' time and resources are increasingly limited. In addition, inconsistencies in contracts between local authorities mean that young adult carers can experience a 'postcode lottery' in terms of the level and type of support they can receive and up to what age they can access this.

For education providers:

- **Education providers should adopt 'whole organisation' approaches to identifying and supporting young adult carers,** to reduce their reliance on one or a small number of supportive and understanding members of staff. Introducing a carers policy, staff training and securing senior management and governor buy-in can all contribute to young adult carers receiving consistent support throughout their time in education. Information and guidance about this is included in [this guide for colleges](#), produced by Carers Trust and NIACE (now L&W).
- **Education providers should work in partnership with carers services, local authorities, other education providers (including schools) and employers to support young adult carers' transitions** into and out of their provision. These partnerships can enable providers to identify young adult carers before they enrol, offer appropriate and holistic support at every stage of the learning journey.
- **Education staff (in schools, FE providers and HE providers) require further support and training to improve their understanding and awareness of young adult carers and their support needs in education.** Providers should engage with their local carers services and explore opportunities for awareness raising and training sessions to be run with their staff on a regular basis, possibly as part of inset or training days. In turn, this should improve the identification of and support for young and young adult carers, reducing the impact of caring on their experiences of education.

- **Education providers should introduce and promote practical support and adjustments for young adult carers.** Our findings show that practical support such as deadline extensions, allowance for mobile phones and flexibility with absence quotas can have a positive impact on young adult carers' experience in learning and allow them to continue engaging in further education or work. Establishing this support and ensuring that young adult carers are aware of it can enable these young people to better balance caring with studying or work, and to pursue their career aspirations.
- **Further and Higher Education providers should consider working towards the Carers Federation's [Quality Standard in Carers Support](#).** This Standard provides a comprehensive good practice framework and assessment and accreditation process for providers to review and improve the support they offer to young adult carers. L&W recently worked with six FE colleges to achieve the QSCS award and found that this resulted in considerable improvements in their identification and holistic support for young adult carers. By working towards this, providers would ensure that young adult carers receive consistent support across FE and HE, thereby improving their engagement and progression in post-16 education.

For careers advisers and career development staff:

- **Careers advisers should receive training to increase their understanding of young adult carers and their support needs in relation to education, employment and training.** This should include training in how to help young adult carers recognise the skills they have developed through caring and how these can be transferred to the world of work; young adult carers' rights and entitlements at work and to wider support such as bursaries; and local organisations and services which can provide specialist support. Again, this could be delivered by local carers services or on a national level by an appropriate advocacy organisation.
- **Careers advisers should use existing tailored resources and materials to provide holistic and individualised careers support to young adult carers.** An example of this includes L&W's [Learning, Work and Wellbeing Toolkit](#), which includes a range of resources for advisers to use with young adult carers and enable them to consider the education, training and employment options in the context of their caring roles.
- **Careers advisers should run activities which introduce young adult carers to the wide range of career pathways available to them.** This might include careers fairs, 'speed dating' with professionals or industry talks. These activities can enable young adult carers to make more informed decisions about their career pathways, instead of defaulting to a career in caring, based on their personal experiences.

For employers:

- **Employers need training and awareness raising sessions to increase their understanding of young adult carers, their transferable skills and their support needs in relation to employment.** This should include HR, line management and senior staff, and cover information about young adult carers, the types of challenges they may face and the transferable skills they may develop through caring; their rights and entitlements at work; and the support or adjustments that can enable young people to balance caring and employment. This could be delivered by local carers services or on a national level by an appropriate advocacy organisation.

- **Employers should adopt ‘whole organisation’ approaches to identifying and supporting young adult carers at work.** Introducing a carers policy, staff training and providing formal and ongoing opportunities to declare a caring role can all contribute to young adult carers receiving comprehensive and consistent support in work. Including a positive statement about recruiting young adult carers (or carers of any age) on job descriptions and adverts can encourage these young people to apply for roles that they may not otherwise consider and identify their caring responsibilities on application.
- **Employers should introduce practical support and adjustments for young adult carers.** Examples and advice on this can be found in L&W’s [guide for employers](#) on supporting young adult carers in the workplace. This support can enable young adult carers to better balance caring with work, become effective and valuable employees, and pursue their career aspirations.
- **Employers should also consider working towards the Carers Federation’s [Quality Standard in Carers Support](#).** This Standard provides a comprehensive good practice framework and assessment and accreditation process for employers to review and improve the support they offer to carers. By working towards this, employers would ensure that young adult carers – and carers of all ages – receive consistent and tailored in-work support, thereby improving their access to and progression in employment.

For carers services:

- **Carers services need support and resources to provide young adult carers with tailored and holistic advice in relation to education, training and employment,** in order to support successful transitions into these opportunities. While carer support workers are often the first people that young adult carers turn to for help, these staff may not have the information or resources to provide comprehensive or detailed advice on the range of options available to young people. Carers services could use L&W’s [Learning, Work and Wellbeing Toolkit](#) to support young adult carers in making informed decisions about education, training and employment options, and to refer them to specialist careers support when this is required.
- **Carers services should provide advice and awareness raising sessions to improve young adult carers’ understanding of their rights and entitlements at work.** This would allow young adult carers to hold employers to account and request in-work support. Carers services are ideally placed to carry out this awareness raising, as they have the specialist information and knowledge required and are trusted by the young people they support.
- **Carers services should identify and work with other local organisations that can support young adult carers to access and progress in education and work.** These may include education providers, careers advice services, employers and employer representative organisations, health services and Jobcentre Plus. These partnerships would support effective referrals and enable young adult carers to access specialist advice. Activities to support this can be found in the [Learning, Work and Wellbeing Toolkit](#).