Supporting the health and wellbeing of carers across the life course

The nursing contribution

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Carers across the life course

• A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.
• Anyone can become a carer; carers come from all walks of life, all cultures and can be of any age.
• Many feel they are doing what anyone else would in the same situation; looking after their mother, son, or best friend and just getting on with it.
• Carers don’t choose to become carers: it just happens and they have to get on with it; if they did not do it, who would and what would happen to the person they care for?
Why a focus on carers

Young carers

- 2011 census shows nearly a \( \frac{1}{4} \) of a million people aged 19 & under were caring for parents, siblings & others
- Young carers may be hidden for fear of being identified, or not realizing they are a carer or professionals not acknowledging their role and not providing support.
- 9% of young carers care for 50 hrs per week or more
- 80% care for 1-19 hrs per wk; 11% for 20 – 49hrs
- 22% of young people under 16 in the UK (2.6million) live with a hazardous drinker (BMC Public Health 2009).
- 335,000 children live with a drug dependent parent
- Young carers have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level, the equivalent of nine grades lower overall than their peers

Adult carers

- 5.8 million carers in England and Wales.
- Over a third of carers were providing 20 hours or more of care a week in 2011.
- Since 2001, the number of people caring for 50 hours or more a week has increased by 270,000, which represents a 25% increase.
- The results of the census demonstrated that the general health of carers deteriorates incrementally with increasing hours of care provided.
- People caring for 50 hours or more a week were more than twice as likely as those not providing care to report their general health as “not good”.

DH – Leading the nation’s health and care
The impact of caring on health and wellbeing

• Taking on a caring role can mean facing a life of poverty, isolation, frustration, ill health and depression.
• Many carers give up an income, future employment prospects and pension rights to become a carer.
• Many carers also work outside the home and are trying to juggle jobs with their responsibilities as carers.
• The majority of carers struggle alone and do not know that help is available to them.
• Carers say that access to information, financial support and breaks in caring are vital in helping them manage the impact of caring on their lives.
• Carers experience many different caring situations.
• Despite these differing caring roles, all carers share some basic needs. All carers also need services to be able to recognise the individual and changing needs throughout their caring journey.
• Carers often suffer ill-health due to their caring role. To care safely and maintain their own physical and mental health and well-being, carers need information, support, respect and recognition from the professionals with whom they are in contact. Improved support for the person being cared for can make the carer’s role more manageable.
• Carers need support to be able to juggle their work and caring roles or to return to work if they have lost employment due to caring.
• Post-caring, carers may need support to rebuild a life of their own and reconnect with education, work or a social life.
Who are young carers?

There is no single definition of a young carer, however the following may be used:

The term Young Carer should be taken to include children and young people under 18 who provide regular and on-going care and emotional support to a family member who is physically or mentally ill, disabled, or misuses substances. A young carer becomes vulnerable when the level of care giving and responsibility to the person in need of care becomes excessive or inappropriate for that child, risking impacting on his or her emotional or physical wellbeing or educational achievement and life chances (MOU, 2012).

Although this definition relates to under 18s, this support should include young adult carers aged 16-24 years of age. Young carers may be providing support for a parent, sibling or other family member.
What is caring?

A young carer may undertake some or all of the following:

• Providing emotional support
• Physical and personal care such as lifting, washing, dressing, giving medication
• Practical tasks and responsibilities such as cooking, housework and shopping
• Managing the family budget, paying bills
• Responsibilities such as looking after younger children, interpreting etc.

There may be some positive outcomes for caring for young carers such as feeling valued within the family and developing personal and life skills. However, caring can have an adverse effect of a child or young person’s health and wellbeing, development and opportunities. For some this can lead to children and young people being at risk of, or experiencing significant harm through abuse and/or neglect and for some it can lead to safeguarding issues.
Messages from young people to professionals supporting them

‘Time for me to be me’

Young carers need:

• To know who the school nurse is, what support they can provide and how to contact them
• Recognition that their caring responsibilities can affect their health and wellbeing – including emotional, physical and social health and educational attainment.
• Access to services that are non-judgemental, who listen to them, understand and support their needs
• Reassurance that school nurses have the skill, knowledge, training and confidence to support them
• To know that school nurses work in partnership with schools, teachers and other health services to support young carers
• To only have to tell their story once and not to feel pressured into sharing information
• To be able to contact their parent and for time out when things are difficult
• Access to support and respite when they need it most to avoid crisis
• Confidence that they have ‘time to be me’ but know that their caring responsibilities are being met
• To be recognised as an ‘expert’ in care and their contribution valued
• For support to be non-intrusive support and tailored to their needs
• To be treated like other children and young people but remember they have additional needs and need support
Key messages for School Nurses and Children’s Community Nurses

In response to young carers messages, school nursing teams need to:

• Become champions for young carers
• Provide a visible, accessible and confidential service and ensure young carers are aware of the service
• Promote partnership working with schools, young carers services and other partners (e.g. Linking in to schools support framework for young carers / making referrals to young carers services)
• Promote the need for schools to implement a School Lead and a policy for young carers and families and use resources, for example Supporting Young Carers: A Resource for Schools and the Healthy Schools e-learning
• Understand young carers’ issues and how best to support them ensuring a range of support is available and easily accessible through both adult and children’s services
• Promote positive physical and emotional wellbeing of young carer
• Ensure young carers are registered with and engaging with GPs / Dentists / opticians
• Understand the hidden emotional impact on young carers and promote the safety of young carers within their caring role
• Support with a crisis and emergency plan
What matters to adult carers

• Promote and monitor a normal home routine
• Identify & discuss carers’ needs with family and/or significant others
• Promote ‘wellbeing’ and positive mental health
• Support care at home
• Identify need for carer breaks and respite
• Identify & prevent avoidable crises points with anticipatory targeted planning
• Consider how they can be supported to manage caring
• alongside paid employment/childcare responsibilities
• Discuss the needs of ageing carers
• Recognising increasing frailty of older carers/likelihood of spouses undertaking mutual caring roles
• Support transition phases from young carers to adult caring role
Champions for carers health & wellbeing

• We have developed a training programme to raise the awareness of the health and wellbeing needs of carers
• Carers are involved in the training on the day and encourage nurses to pledge to make a difference locally (can you add the link to make waves interviews)
• Initially School nurses – supporting and championing the health and wellbeing of young carers
• We have trained 2 cohorts of champions
• The 3rd cohort focussing on ALL nurses will take place in march
• We have funded our partners QNI and RCN to roll out the programme over the next 2 yrs
Contact and useful resources

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School Nursing Vision:
http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/13952/1/dh_133012.pdf

School Nursing Pathways and Fact Sheets:
http://vivbennett.dh.gov.uk/public-health/

District Nursing Vision: