

THE EDUCATION NETWORK
NEWS RELEASE
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Britain's hidden army of school-age carers

Britain has a hidden army of at least 175,000 school-age children who work caring for family members according to 'Young carers', a new pamphlet from The Education Network (TEN).

These children act as carers for other members of their family - providing emotional support, sometimes intimate personal care and performing domestic tasks. Many young carers are of primary school age and many bear an excessive responsibility for their age.

'Young carers' reveals that:

- Some of these children are as young as five.
- For 20 per cent of these children, caring duties takes over 20 hours a week - often over many years.
- One in five of them miss school or have educational difficulties as a result of their caring work.

However, despite their numbers, the experiences of these children remain largely unknown outside the circle of professionals and agencies working to support them. Some schools do not believe that they have young carers among their pupils. This is unlikely to be the case, with 175,000 school-age carers and only some 30,000 schools.

As a result, some young carers encounter problems with teachers for being late or not completing homework, when they should receive support, praise and encouragement. Many also experience bullying.

Young carers describes the extent of the issue, the experiences and views of young carers, gives some examples of leading-edge support provision, the outlines the legal position and the responsibilities of local authorities, school governors and school staff.

The publication was produced with contributions from the Children's Society and the Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

Martin Rogers, Co-ordinator of TEN, said: "'Young carers' highlights a neglected issue that should be at the heart of the children's agenda across the social care and education sectors.

"The cause of raising the educational attainment and improving the life chances of a significant proportion of Britain's children requires this issue to emerge from the shadows."