

# Manchester Young Carers Group

## Be Bothered Campaign (version II)

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Official Campaign Booklet and Strategy

**BE BOTHERED.**

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# What a Young Carer Is:

A young carer is a child or young person aged 18 or under who provides care to a family member with a disability. This can be anyone in the family such as grandparents, parents and siblings. Disability is defined by someone with a physical disability, mental health illness, substance misuse, learning difficulty, terminal or long-term illness. This can include practical or emotional care that would normally be expected of an adult and as a result, it has a significant impact on the young carer's childhood and adolescence.

## Roles A Young Carer May Perform:

- Cleaning their own bedroom or clean other rooms;
- Washing the dishes or put dishes in a dishwasher;
- Taking responsibility for shopping for food and other essentials;
- Help with lifting or carrying heavy things;
- Help with financial matters such as dealing with bills, banking money, collecting benefits;
- Working part time to bring money in;
- Interpret, sign or use another interpretation system for the person they care for;
- Helping the person they care for dress or undress;
- Helping the person they care for have a wash, bath or shower;
- Keeping the person, they care for company e.g. sitting with them and talking to them;
- Keeping an eye on the person they care for to make sure they are alright;
- Taking the person they care for outside e.g. for a walk or to see friends or relatives;
- Looking after brothers and sisters whilst an adult is nearby or on their own.

## What Rights a Young Carer Has:

A young carer, because they are under 18, have many entitlements according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). A young carer has the right to:

- A childhood;
- Have an education;
- Be healthy;
- Be heard, listened to and believed;
- Be protected from physical and psychological harm;
- Be consulted and fully involved in discussions which affect their lives;
- Have privacy and respect.

## A Young Carer Particularly Has The Right To:

- Request an assessment to see what help and support they and their family need (it is their statutory right);
- Choose the amount of care they receive;
- Be protected from excessive or inappropriate caring that impacts on their health and wellbeing;
- Information and advice.

## What Our Main Issue Is:

Overall, our main issue for young carers is stress. In a young carer's day-to-day life, there are many situations that can be quite stressful. That is why we have broken down the main issue into factors. These include: finance, support in education, time and space, entertainment and understanding our role.

### **Finance:**

A lot of young carers can experience stress from lack of finance. It is unlikely the person they care for can go to work, so they tend to rely heavily on government finances. This means they don't have money for luxuries and sometimes won't have enough money for the necessities. This means they struggle to live like many of their peers and do things that other people their age may and can get to do. On top of this, it can mean they struggle in education as they may not have money to buy things like bus passes or revision guides.

### **Support in Education:**

As young carers, we have big responsibilities and sometimes our schools and colleges don't know about our caring role at home. This means that we may be sanctioned for things such as being late or not doing homework, even when it is because of our caring role. Furthermore, because of low attendance and punctuality, we don't have the opportunities to perform well in exams compared to our peers. Moreover, we can struggle to stay focused during lesson time because of our home circumstances. Depending on whether other young people know about our caring roles, we can also be bullied because of it.

### **Time and Space:**

As young carers, we often don't get much alone time. We have no time to ourselves to relax, meet friends or do the things we enjoy. This often means we don't get to develop our talents or skills. Furthermore, as young carers, we often don't have any space to escape to in order to get work done or relax.

### **Entertainment:**

As young carers, we often don't get to do fun things. This can mean we miss out on many childhood experiences. Our peers get to have experiences with their friends and family, that as young carers we could only dream of. We miss out on opportunities that other young people would consider normal.

### **Understanding our Role:**

One of the biggest things that we as young carers face is that we feel nobody understands what we do in our caring roles or why we have to do it at all. This can put young carers into many uncomfortable situations. Other young people have not been educated on what a young carer is. This could mean not only that we face the ignorance of people that don't understand us, but that other young people with caring responsibilities might not even realise they are young carers and that they have entitlements.

# Consequences of Stress for a Young Carer:

There are many consequences of stress for a Young Carer relating to the sub categories of: Finance, Support in Education, Time and Space, Entertainment and Understanding our Role. These can be problems for us or the person we care for; we have outlined a few main consequences of stress for young carers.

## **Breakdowns:**

As a result of stress a young carer may have a breakdown; a breakdown is a sudden cease to function. This can affect both us as young carers and the people we care for. We may lose the ability to care for our loved ones, and if we don't care for them it is unlikely anyone else will. Furthermore, this may affect our studies and cause a dip in our grades. As young carers we have many responsibilities and if we lose the motivation to complete our duties then it affects more than just the young carer. As a result of a breakdown, our caring role could be affected or even diminished.

## **Loss of Relationship with the People We Care For:**

As young carers, we are often caring for people in our families who are meant to care for us. This role reversal could mean a loss of relationship that other young people our age may get to have with their relatives. Moreover, as we must care for them, it is possible for young carers to feel like their caring role is more of an obligation than simply helping a relative.

## **Mental Health Problems:**

As a result of having so much stress, a young carer is likely to experience mental health problems. Mental health problems are disorders that affect your mood, thinking and behaviour.

This can affect a young carer's lifestyle, caring role or academic achievements. As young carers, we can struggle with anxiety regularly as the people we care for struggle with their condition or if they are hospitalised.

## **Drink and Drug Problems:**

As young carers, sometimes it can feel like life is not worth living or that we are not fulfilling our potential, this means that some young carers may turn to substance abuse to try and 'numb' their feelings. This could also make it harder to fulfil their caring role or reduce their chances of success. Furthermore, if their drink and drug problems persist they may end up needing care themselves, defeating the idea of being a young carer. This would double the amount of carers needed within the household.

**Loss of Confidence and Self-Esteem:**

As young carers, we can sometimes lose confidence in ourselves as we are isolated from our peers and often don't want people to know about your caring role. Furthermore, if we don't have sufficient time or a place to improve our skills such as communication, then it is unlikely that we will feel confident in speaking to our peers, especially about our caring role. On top of this young carers can sometimes feel worthless or left out so begin to lose self-esteem.

**Worries of Intervention:**

One of the biggest causes of stress for identified young carers, and young carers who don't identify as a young carer is the worry of intervention. Intervention can come from anywhere, but the most likely sources are social services and schools. If someone finds out about a young carer, they worry that they will be taken away from their families or that their caring role will be affected. This leads to many young people with caring roles not accessing the support they are entitled to as they would rather struggle than have their caring role disturbed.

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## Who We Want To Help Us:

There are many people who we would like to help us, we have outlined a few groups who could help young carers to reduce stress and lead better lives.

### **Educational Establishments:**

We would like schools and colleges to help us because they have access to all young people as they have to go to school. Schools see young people five days a week and have the resources to both identify young carers and help ones they already know.

### **Manchester City Council:**

We want the Manchester City Council to help us because they have the funds and resources to do so. Furthermore, the Manchester City Council holds the power to influence change for young carers within Manchester.

### **Local MP's:**

We want MP's to help us as they can influence change within their constituencies and can raise the issues that young carers face on a much larger scale in Parliament. As there will be young carers in every constituency, as MP's, they are obligated to listen to us and try to implement change.

### **Young Carer's Workers:**

We want young carers workers to help us as they are youth workers created to specifically help us, but often some young carers are missed out.

### **Youth Centres:**

We want youth centres to help us because they have access to many young people who could have caring responsibilities and have the resources and connections to give them the support they are entitled to.

### **Families:**

We want all families both with young carers in and without to teach their children what young carers are so that more young carers are identified and so that young carers can feel more comfortable around other people.

# What Changes We Want:

## **Educational Establishments:**

We want schools and colleges to have separate late registers for young carers. It is unfair to sanction young carers for being late or absent when they are caring, on top of this, young carers cannot attend the detentions as they have to go home to the person they care for.

We want all schools and colleges to have a young carers lead and support network. If a young carer is struggling at home they should have someone to speak to. Furthermore, if they need to put an emergency plan in action, such as if the person they care for is hospitalised, they need someone to support them.

We want schools and colleges to offer education on what a young carer is so that people better understand our role and can be more understanding; this could also help identify new young carers. This could be fit into the upcoming Curriculum for Life initiative or into form times. There should be assemblies given on what a young carer is and every young person entering year 7 should answer a questionnaire to identify if they are a young carer or not.

We want every school nurse to have knowledge of young carers in their schools and to be able to offer them support and advice.

Where possible, we want schools to offer young carers assistance with finances, such as with school trips. Moreover, where possible, young carers should be allowed, and offered if applicable, to be in a separate room for exams. They already have enough stress at home and this helps to make them feel more relaxed before exams.

We want schools and colleges to have communication on the issue of young carers. It is important that when a young carer moves from high school to college, or other FE options, that where possible and within the law, communicate the need of support for the young carer.

## **Manchester City Council:**

We want Manchester City Council to provide financial support for the Manchester Young Carers Group. By working together, the city council can provide a budget for our group to continue the work we do and have respite opportunities.

We want Manchester City Council to assist the Manchester Young Carers Group with finding their own space to have meetings on the weekends. Young carers can only manage to fit so much in one day and with school and college on weekdays, it can be impossible to come to a meeting as well, therefore we hold our meetings on weekends.

We want Manchester City Council to promote young carers and offer knowledge on a young carer's role to everyone. We also want Manchester City Council to offer support with finances for young carers whenever they can.



**Local MP's:**

We want Local MP's to raise the issue of young carers in Parliament. There are many young carers both in Manchester and nationwide.

We also want local MP's to show their support for young carers by coming to events or hosting events of their own surrounding the issue of young carers.

**Young Carers Workers:**

We want young carers workers to be a point of access for young carers and help them get all the support they can. This could include helping young carers to access grants or helping them find time to do something they enjoy.

We want all young carers workers to liaise with other young carers workers to ensure that they are giving young carers the best support they can.

We want young carers workers to support young carers in school as best they can. This could include making sure that the school understands the young carers role or making sure they have a contact in school to support them.

We want young carers workers to be able to sit down and talk with young carers, sometimes a young carer won't need support with school or home life but they just need someone to talk to about it as there are few people that understand their circumstances. We also want young carers workers to offer support so that they know basic life skills, for example, applying for a bank card, filling out benefits applications etc.

**Youth Centres:**

We want youth centres to keep an eye out for young carers and make their activities more accessible to young carers e.g. making sure they are not bullied because of their role.

Where possible youth centres should try and reimburse bus passes for young carers.

**Families:**

We want families with young carers to, if needed, try and access counselling services, to ensure that the family does not become distant because of the young carers' caring role. We want families with young carers in to try and communicate with other family members to help each other and give advice.

We want families without young carers in to try and educate their children on what a young carer is to try and make this a well-known issue and to reduce the amount of bullying for young carers.

## The Benefits:

Putting these things into action would make lives better for young carers, and create the following benefits:

- Young carers would have information on how to deal with stress making their caring role easier;
- Young carers attendance and punctuality would improve;
- Young carers exam results would improve;
- By having a trained member of staff in educational institutions, young carers would be happier to come into school and will have someone to talk to and help them;
- People will begin to take young carers more seriously;
- There will be co-ordination between young carer services and young adult carers services, meaning young carers will not just be forgotten when they turn 18;
- Young carers will be able to make friends as they will have other young carers to speak to and other young people will be more educated to they can make friends with their peers;
- Young carers will have a place to develop their skills;
- Young carers will have the utmost support;
- Young carers will be able to do more in their caring role;
- Young carers will stop being penalised for their home situation;
- Young carers' health will improve;
- Other young people will be more educated;
- New young carers will be identified;
- Young carers will be able to do fun things for themselves;
- Young carers will become an issue that people better understand;
- Young carers will feel closer to the person they care for;
- Young carers will not have to suffer with mental health problems alone;
- Young carers will have the financial help to do things other young people do.

*This is an official booklet by Manchester Young Carers Group.*

*This booklet refers to Manchester Young Carers Group's official campaign, Be Bothered, and the strategy we wish to pursue to help improve the lives of all young carers in Manchester.*

*Manchester Young Carers Group is an organisation set up by young carers, for young carers. We aim to get young carers' voices heard in Manchester, and we aim to improve the lives for all young carers in Manchester. Manchester Young Carers Group is entirely young-carer led, as we believe this is the best possible way to ensure the youth have a voice and a direct say in how the group is ran, its plans and its organisational structure.*

Email [youngcarersgroup@gmail.com](mailto:youngcarersgroup@gmail.com) for more information and enquiries.

Visit our website [bit.ly/youngcarersgroup](http://bit.ly/youngcarersgroup) for more information.

Twitter @mcryoungcarers and Facebook /Manchester Young Carers Group

*Please note that this is version II of the Be Bothered Campaign Booklet, and the original booklet was authored by Yasmina Lee, with some of the author's original words used in this version.  
Version II is authored by Reko Smith.*