



The Carers Centre for Brighton and Hove

18 Bedford Place

Brighton BN1 2PT

Tel: 01273 746222

Fax: 01273 933688

Text: 07704 409155

Email: info@thecarerscentre.org

www.thecarerscentre.org

Bullying of Young Carers

The big picture

- Nearly a quarter of a million young people in England & Wales have been identified as caring for a family member
- It is accepted that this figure significantly under represents the true picture
- Brighton and Hove is estimated to have 2000 Young Carers
- 71% of Young Carers have been bullied

Young Carers [YCs] are disadvantaged in various ways. The Children's Society has identified that YCs:

- have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers
- are more likely to have a special educational need or a long standing illness or disability
- can miss school due to their caring responsibilities
- suffer financial disadvantage in that families with a YC have a lower financial income than comparable families
- are more likely than the national average to be 'not in education, employment or training' [NEET]

Bullying of YCs

YCs are far more likely to have been bullied than children without caring responsibilities. Research has indicated that there are various reasons for this:

- The family and YC being perceived as 'different' – the appearance and disabilities of parents or siblings is a common focus for bullies
- Social isolation of YCs – many YCs are unable to join in activities with their peers due to their caring responsibilities. As a result, they may find it harder to make or sustain friendships and so become less confident in social situations. Consequently, they can become marginalized and picked on.
- Financial hardship – YCs and their families suffer disproportionate financial disadvantage. The average annual income for families with a YC is £5000 less than families who do not have a YC. Unemployment levels for this group are higher than average and there is also a high level of dependency on benefits. Take up of means tested benefits can be low due to issues of stigmacy.



Patrons: *Caroline Lucas MP, Simon Kirby MP, Mike Weatherley MP*

Registered Charity No. 1015728 • Registered Company No. 2758481



- YCs general appearance can be affected by their role and the lack of someone caring for them. They may have untidy or unclean clothing or appearance.
- The impact of their role and circumstances can lead to YCs becoming withdrawn, depressed and over sensitive.

Types of bullying suffered by YCs

As with the broader population, bullying of YCs can take various forms. These include:

- Physical Abuse
- Name calling
- Cyber bullying
- Threats
- Taking or damaging belongings
- Exclusion
- Spreading rumours or lies

Impact of bullying on YCs

Common feelings reported by YCs who have been bullied include:

- Sadness
- Scared
- Loneliness
- Stress
- Anger
- Embarrassment

Whilst these feelings are not restricted to YCs, the impact can have a greater effect on them because of the other disadvantages identified above.

Case Studies

In addition to the formal research findings, there is also much anecdotal evidence of the bullying of YCs as illustrated by the following case studies:

Chelsea – is 10 years old and is the sole carer for her mother, Maria, who lost her sight two years ago. Chelsea helps with shopping, cooking, washing and clearing up, as well as making sure her mother is safe when they go out together. Chelsea is often shunned by her peers. She advised:

‘Other children give me a hard time. The way people treat me makes me feel quite sad. I feel like I’m not going to have a good future because I haven’t got that many friends and I don’t really get to play that much.’

Lorraine – suffers from ME, fibromyalgia and a neurological condition that can sometimes leave her temporarily paralysed. Her 12 year old son, who helps to care for her, has been bullied by children who laugh at Lorraine’s appearance. She commented:

I've put quite a lot of weight on and I use a walking stick. Sometimes I'm in a wheel chair. It's enough to deal with that but it's another thing to know that your kids are having to deal with the fallout. It's heartwrenching. When you're a parent you just want to protect your children.'

Tom – is 12 years old and cares for his mother, Sophie, who has severely restricted mobility due to chronic arthritis. Tom reported constant ongoing bullying at school with a number of other students making derogatory comments about his mother. Both Tom and Sophie reported the situation but no action was taken and the bullying continued until Tom *'snapped'* with students and staff. Tom received a fixed term exclusion but on completion of this, was unable to return to school for several weeks due to extreme anxiety at the prospect of further bullying.

Summary

There are a significant number of YCs living in Brighton and Hove. They have caring roles in respect of parents, siblings or other family members. These YCs experience much disadvantage in their lives and this impacts on their school, home and social situations. In addition, they experience higher levels of bullying than young people who are not carers. Bullying can take many forms and has a significant negative impact on those in this already disadvantaged group.

Kevin Hutchins
Senior Support Worker
Young Carers Project

June 2013

Sources

Office of National Statistics – 2011 Census
Young Carers in Focus Partnership [2012]
Young Carers Project at Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove
The Princess Royal Trust for Carers & The Children's Society [2010]

The Young Carers Project [YCP] is part of the Carers Centre for Brighton and Hove. The YCP are a specialized team of trained and experienced Support and Outreach workers who provide a range of support options to young carers and their families.

