



MacIntyre Academies Discovery Academy

Young Carers' Policy

Version:	Changes/Updates	Responsibility:	Date:
3	Terminology changed throughout from Children/young people/pupil/student to 'Learners'; they/their used in place of s/he; Academy in place of school where appropriate Introduction: number of Young Carers in the UK updated Section 2: roles updated to reflect role changes Section 3: 'MALPS' replaced with 'Positive Behaviour Support', updated to KCSIE 2025	Principal	Jan 2026

Person Responsible:	Principal
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Introduction

At Discovery Academy we believe that all learners have the right to an education, regardless of what is happening at home. When a child looks after someone in their family who has a long-term illness, mental health issues, a disability, or misuses substances then they may need extra support to help them get the most out of school. This Young Carers' Policy says how we will help any learner who helps to look after someone at home.

An increasing number (approx. 800,000) of learners are now classed as young carers in the UK. Whilst this can be a vital role to support a family we must remain mindful that if young carers are not properly identified and supported, they can become more socially isolated than their peers, exposed to adult behaviours or experiences they might otherwise be shielded from, develop signs of stress and ultimately fail to meet their potential. We are committed to supporting young carers in our school and their families to the best of our ability.

1. Defining a Young Carer

A Young Carer is someone under the age of 18 (we include all members of the Discovery learner cohort) whose life is in some way affected because of a supporting/caring role for a family member who has a long-term illness, mental health issue, a disability, or who misuses substances. The Young Carer may be impacted by what is going on at home and may help in many different ways such as: doing household chores, providing personal care, administering medication, giving emotional or communication support, looking after siblings and themselves. The level of responsibility assumed by a Young Carer can be inappropriate to their age and at a level beyond simply helping out with jobs at home which is a normal part of growing up.

2. Identifying a Young Carer

Unless Discovery staff are advised about a learner's home circumstances, Young Carers risk first being identified by negative aspects of their behaviour or work. Some Young Carers worry about bullying or interference in their family life and may seek to conceal their role from their peers and from teachers. Being a young carer does not automatically mean that a learner is at risk, but it may mean they need a little extra time, support and understanding.

Some of the warning signs that might indicate that a learner has unrecognised responsibilities are:

- Regular lateness or unauthorised absence, possibly increasing;
- Tiredness in school;
- Unable to engage with activities;
- Sudden change in any home learning e.g. not being handed in/completed;
- Lack of concentration, anxiety or worry;
- Under-achievement for potential capability;
- Behaviour that challenges, possibly resulting from anger or frustration;
- Few or no peer friendships but possibly with a good relationship with adults and presenting as very mature for their age;
- Victim of bullying, perhaps linked to a family member's disability or state of health, e.g. substance misuse or due to Young Carer not being perceived by peers as dressing in the latest fashion;
- Apparent parental disinterest due to non-attendance at parent's meetings.

All the signs mentioned above may be indicators of a range of issues, some not associated with caring, however in dealing with any learner exhibiting any of the signs, staff should consider asking the learner if they are helping to look after someone at home if they feel they have a relationship with the learner where this will be received appropriately – if they do not, they should refer to the pastoral support team. Staff should enquire from colleagues with pastoral responsibilities for the learner in any circumstance where the above issues are noticed. Our DSL Team and Social or support Workers attached to the families, together with pastoral support staff, investigating learners causing concern should also consider the possibility of caring roles, especially when working directly with family members. Any concerns about a learner who may be considered an as yet unidentified Young Carer should be reported to a member of the DSL Team as should new information about already identified Young

Carers. The DSL Team are jointly responsible for co-coordinating Young Carer support and will triage cases to agree the best way to respond and/or support a learner.

Staff in our Academy who may offer specific support to young carers include:

- Class Teachers/HLTAs who know the learner well and see them daily;
- Compassionate Schools Coaches – who might support through regular check ins and/or structured sessions such as THRIVE;
- Family Footings Facilitators who may be best placed to support the whole family through processes such as 'Early Support';
- Our Deputy Principal for Pastoral Support;
- Any named DSL trained colleague;
- In some circumstances it might be any adult the learner identifies as a trusted adult, with support from the others named above.

It is much better to start from a positive base so our enrolment process will seek to establish if:

- The learner lives with a family member who has a disability or long-term illness or mental health issue;
- The learner has a responsibility for looking after that person over and beyond normal interpersonal relationships within a caring family setting;
- The family is in contact with a support service that could help reduce their reliance on the learner.

Some families will choose not to disclose this information. Any information gained as a result of this process will be held on the learner's personal file, kept securely and made available in the first instance to the DSL Team and with your permission class team.

We will respect the right to privacy and will only share information about Young Carers and their families with people who need to know in order to be able to help. Before sharing information with anyone else, we will seek consent from the Young Carer and from a parent, unless there is an exceptional circumstance e.g. parent is too unwell to consent, unreachable due to hospitalisation, or presents a risk of harm to themselves or others if informed of the concern without the right support being in place.

3. Discovery support for identified Young Carers

- Awareness raising sessions will take place including assemblies, PSHE lessons and staff / LAB training.
- Wherever possible staff will talk to Young Carers in private and not in front of their peers.
- Information about the Young Carer and their family will only be shared with people who need to know in order to help.
- Consideration of adjustments to attendance patterns/times will include any external allocated workers supporting the learner or their family.
- Young Carers have the option to be put in touch with the local Young Carers' Service if they meet the criteria.
- Additional support needs for Young Carers struggling to achieve their potential will be identified and provided where appropriate and in consultation with Young Carers' Service.
- Alternatives for Young Carers unable to attend out of school activities due to their caring role will be considered.
- We will liaise with support services to ensure that we can refer and signpost families to additional help.
- If a parent is unable to travel to parent's sessions due to family circumstances, we will make alternative arrangements. The Young Carer or parent may request this.
- We will provide advice about how learners can get into school where transport is a problem.
- The school is accessible to parents who have mobility and communication problems.
- We seek feedback and ideas from Young Carers and their families.
- We will include in their Positive Behaviour Support Plan strategies for those Young Carers with specific needs where appropriate. This will not divulge confidentialities.

- We allow Young Carers to call home during breaks and lunch times so as to reduce any worry they may have about a family member.
- The Young Carers Lead keeps up to date with national and local developments and with legislation and guidance affecting Young Carers and their families.
- We welcome any child, parent or family member who wishes to discuss their family circumstances so that we can help the learner in achieving their potential.

Children Act 2004

Most Young Carers will meet the definition of a 'child in need' under the Children Act 2004 and may be entitled to an assessment from Children's Services. In the event of any Young Carers being considered to be at risk of significant harm the Academy's child protection procedures should be followed.

Equality Act 2010

Young Carers have protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act because they are associated with a family member who has a disability or illness and cannot be discriminated against because of this.

Children and Families Act 2014

The Act has a section on Young Carers and, in conjunction with the adults-focused Care Act, seeks to make sure Young Carers get the support they need. Local authorities are expected to try and identify Young Carers so they can be offered support.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025

This statutory guidance makes clear the duty on a school to protect children from either the risk of or from actual harm. As young carers may fail to thrive if they are not properly supported, we give due regard to this duty.