

Young carer case studies

This appendix includes seven young carer case studies which can be used by both primary and secondary pupils as a basis for the following activities:

- B2 Case study response
- B3 A day in the life of a young carer
- B4 Challenges map
- B5 Best friend letter of support
- B6 Young carer letter
- B7 Role play for an assembly or drama lesson

Aim

To help pupils:

- Explore in detail what a young carer does.
- Understand better the problems and concerns that a young carer may be experiencing.
- Identify ways in which they may be able to help someone who is a young carer.

These activities will enable both primary and secondary pupils to identify the roles and responsibilities some young carers take on and to reflect on how these might impact on the young carers lifestyle, health and well being.

NB: The case studies are a guide and the language used should be adapted to suit the age groups of the pupils participating.

Case Study 1

Jimmy (age to be similar to group)

Jimmy lives with his mother and younger sister. Jimmy's mother has MS which means that some days she cannot walk. Jimmy carries out some caring responsibilities for his mother but he gets fed up and wants his younger sister to do more. Jimmy's caring duties include some household jobs like cleaning but also personal tasks such as helping his mum to get up, get dressed and use the toilet. His mum says she feels very guilty about the help that Jimmy has to give her but Social Services will only give her 2 hours of help a day. Jimmy takes out some of his frustration with the situation on his teachers and he has been warned he might get excluded.

Case Study 2

Gary (age to be similar to group)

Gary cares for his younger brother who has a disability called Cerebral Palsy. It makes it hard for him to understand some things and it affects his speaking and walking. Gary's parents both go out to work so he has to do some household jobs on a regular daily basis, such as cleaning and washing up, sorting out the dustbins and recycling bottles and cans etc. Mainly he spends his time playing with his brother and sometimes dressing and bathing him or helping him use the toilet. Gary attends school full-time although not always as regularly as he should. He doesn't feel able to stay behind for any clubs/activities.

Case Study 3

Joanne (age to be similar to group)

Joanne has cared alone for her father who has had mental health problems for several years. Her father's condition is controlled by medication; however he is often reluctant to take it. When he takes his medication, he is a great dad, but when he does not take it he can become irrational and unpredictable. It is difficult for Joanne to always check that her father takes all of his medication at the correct times. She finds it hard to cope with the effects of his depression and unpredictable behaviour. Sometimes Joanne has missed school in an effort to ensure her father is safe.

Case Study 4

Ahmed (age to be similar to group)

Ahmed looks after his mother who has a physical disability following an attack in their home country of Afghanistan. He has to look after the house and take care of his mum because her disability stops her from being able to do it. He does all of the cooking and prepares breakfast, lunch and dinner for both of them. Often he goes home from school at lunchtime to help his mum with lunch and to check she is ok. After school Ahmed has to do all of the food shopping and clean the house. He also helps his mum with her personal care, including helping her to get dressed, bathing her, helping her go to the toilet and giving her medication. He doesn't like doing these tasks very much. Ahmed's mum doesn't speak much English and so she relies on support from Ahmed to translate information when she sees the doctor or when the social worker visits. Ahmed misses a lot of school to go to appointments with her. Ahmed is happy at school and has a lot of friends, but he finds it difficult to concentrate and keep up with his school work, as he worries about his mum when he's at school and struggles to finish his homework in the evenings because of everything he has to do when he gets home.

Case Study 5

Eric (age to be similar to group)

Eric lives with his mum, dad and sister. His sister is autistic. Eric finds school very difficult, because the other pupils don't talk to him. He doesn't have many friends and his classmates think he is strange because he behaves "too grown up". They also make fun of his sister and laugh at her which upsets him even more because he is protective of her. Eric gets into trouble at school, because he can't always finish his homework if he has to look after his sister in the evenings. Sometimes his sister scribbles on his homework and the teachers tell him off or ask him why he has done it. He doesn't tell them it's his sister; because he worries his classmates will hear him and laugh at his family. Sometimes Eric goes to a local young carers' group after school. He has friends here who also look after someone with a disability. At the group he can relax and he likes to play football. He feels the other young carers understand him there.

Case Study 6

Louise (age to be similar to group)

Louise lives alone with her mum. She also has two older brothers, but they have both moved out. Her mum is an alcoholic and sometimes she has to go to hospital if she has been drinking too much. Louise is worried that if her mum carries on drinking then she will die, but she doesn't feel that she can talk to her mum about it. Louise does all the housework and washes and irons her own uniform. She does all the shopping and makes sure all the bills are paid. She often finds bottles of drink around the house which she empties, but then her mum gets cross and they end up arguing. When Louise is at school she is very quiet because she is worried that her mum is out buying more alcohol. She doesn't invite friends home after school in case her mum is drunk. She has also started to get bullied. When Louise isn't at school she makes sure she goes everywhere with her mum because she worries when she is away from her.

Case Study 7

Verity (age to be similar to group)

Verity lives with her mum and her younger brother David who is five years old. Verity's mum uses a wheelchair which she controls with her chin. Everyday, Verity gets up very early, makes breakfast for everyone and helps her brother get dressed. She then takes him to primary school before she goes to school. A carer, organised by the social worker, visits Verity's mum everyday to help her get up and dressed. Verity doesn't really like this because it is someone different everyday and feels it's like having strangers in the house. Verity picks David up from school everyday and cooks tea for everyone. She often helps her mum to eat. Verity then does the housework before starting her homework. Verity doesn't go to friends' houses much because she worries her mum will be lonely and so she stays at home and talks to her to make sure she's happy. Verity gets very worried during the night as she would be unable to get her mum out of the house in an emergency.