

SEN

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

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Young carers are not being supported at school

Schools are failing a generation of children who are sacrificing their futures to care for sick or disabled family members, according to UK children's charity Barnardo's.

New research by the organisation suggests that teachers are not identifying and supporting children who are shouldering an extra burden as young carers by looking after their loved-ones. As part of the research, a YouGov poll found that 40 per cent of teachers were not confident they would be able to identify a young carer in their class.

More than a third (34 per cent) of teachers surveyed thought there were young carers at their school who were not sufficiently supported and 29 per cent said they didn't think their school had any particular ways of supporting young carers. This is despite some children and young people carrying out more than 30 hours a week of caring responsibilities, the charity says, which is almost the equivalent of a full-time job.

The research with practitioners working to support young carers has shown that caring can take a huge toll on children's mental health, as well as their achievement at school. More than three-quarters of the practitioners Barnardo's surveyed said that most or all of the young carers they had supported had suffered from anxiety, depression, isolation and feelings of anger. All the practitioners had worked with children who had self-harmed.

"It is simply not acceptable that children are having to sacrifice their futures to care for the ones they love", says Barnardo's Chief Executive Javed Khan. "Austerity has meant local authorities have had to cut back on adult social care and the result is children are picking up the pieces."

Under the Care Act and the Children and Families Act, teachers – and other professionals working with children – have a statutory duty to identify young carers and refer them to the local authority to be assessed for support.

Young carers carry out tasks including cooking, cleaning and shopping, as well as providing intimate personal care, administering drugs and taking care of household finances.

The poll of 800 teachers found that nine out of ten teachers thought caring responsibilities could impact negatively on young carers' school lives as it could mean they were late or absent from school or have trouble keeping up with work.



Nominations sought for SLCN Awards

Applications are open for the Shine a Light Awards, which seek to recognise outstanding contributions of teams, schools, settings, young people and individuals across England who champion innovative work and excellent practice in supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication.

The Awards are organised by Pearson and The Communication Trust and nominations are invited across a wide range of award categories including: early years settings, primary schools, secondary schools or colleges, SEN schools or groups, youth justice, SLCN innovation, and augmentative and alternative communication. Awards will also be issued for Communication Champion of the Year and Child or Young Person of the Year, as well as Pearson's Award for Outstanding Achievement.

In addition, there will be a new category this year: the Katie Rough Memorial Award for innovative or excellent practice when working with children and young people affected by selective mutism; this new category has been named to honour Katie Rough who had selective mutism and died in 2017 at the age of seven.

"The efforts of individuals and settings across the country are so crucial to children and young people's learning, social and emotional development and future prospects", says Chris Hall, Director of Clinical Assessment at Pearson.

Octavia Holland, Director of The Communication Trust, says the Awards show how lives can be enriched with dedication and commitment, particularly for the one million children and young people with long-term speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). "We encourage settings and individuals across the country to put themselves in the spotlight and celebrate the work they have achieved", she said.

The Shine a Light Awards Ceremony will take place on 22 March 2018 in London. The picture above shows staff from Ashmount School, 2017 SEN School of the Year, with Awards host Gareth Gates.

Applications close at 11.59 pm on 12 January 2018. Details on how to apply can be found at: www.shinealightawards.co.uk

News deadline for next issue: **7/2/18**
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