

Types and aspects of support that young carers need and value, and barriers and enablers to access: the REBIAS-YC qualitative study

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Plain language summary

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Many children and young people in England provide support to family members who are disabled, have mental or physical ill health, or misuse drugs or alcohol. They are sometimes called young or young adult carers. Providing care often brings satisfaction and a sense of pride but can also have negative effects on young people's lives. The study aimed to find out their views about what would best support them and the people they care for.

The study asked two important questions: (1) What are the difficulties faced by young carers and the people they support in seeking, accessing and receiving the right type of support at the right times? (2) What services and support do they find helpful, what support would they like, and what needs would it meet?

To answer these questions, we held group discussions (focus groups) and in-depth interviews with 133 young carers with a range of caring and life circumstances and 17 parents receiving help from a young carer. We also held workshops with 19 practitioners who are involved in identifying, supporting and funding services for young carers and their families.

They told us that the types of support that they and their families need, and value when received, include:

- support for the people they care for, so they are providing less practical and emotional care
- support to help with any negative impacts of providing care and with other life issues
- information and advice about services, wider resources and support
- someone trusted to talk to
- greater awareness, recognition and understanding
- choice, flexibility and working together to develop plans and solutions

We found a great deal of unmet need for support, and variation in the type and quality of support received, including across geographical areas.

Action is now needed to consistently and sustainably implement the types of support that young carers and their families say they need and value.

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