

Young Carers Case Study

Being a young carer can have a profound impact on the lives of young people. They are often faced with too many responsibilities too young. As a result, many aspects of their lives are negatively impacted which may include the young carer developing emotional difficulties. An area that often suffers is their education. Young carers can be absent, late, tired, and not fully focused in lessons. Such issues cause them to fall behind, feel stressed, worried, and add to the emotional strain in which they already have.

As well as school being affected, young carers social lives are also hindered upon. Young carers don't have as many opportunities to engage in activities, and have limited time to spend with friends. They therefore miss out on their childhood, which as a result, causes them further isolation.

It is therefore essential that support is given to young carers to ensure that they are treated equally, and have the same opportunities to succeed in life.

Background

Pseudonym used.

John was referred to young carers when he was 15yrs by a social worker from the physical disability team. John's mother, Ann, had chronic physical disabilities, as well as mental health issues due to a history of domestic violence.

During an initial assessment with John it was evident that he had a high caring role. On a daily basis John would complete personal care tasks, meal preparation, housework, laundry and organising finances. John also provided sibling care and emotional support for his mother.

John felt obligated to stay at home to care for his mother. Therefore John's caring role was having a negative effect on his education and causing social isolation. John viewed caring as a 'norm' and he reported positive aspects to his caring role. Due to John's caring role and family break down he would often feel sad, stressed and lonely.

Approach

John was accepted onto the young Carers service that developed a plan with John to support him with his caring role. The following were objectives for working with John;

1. Increase resilience and build confidence

John had regular one to one support to give him the opportunity to talk about his mother's health and family history. It also gave John the opportunity to discuss his feelings to enable him to feel supported and gain confidence.

2. Increased choice of activities/opportunities and more positive social networks

In order to give John further opportunity to socialise and meet new people he was invited to group nights, trips, and activities. He was also signposted to Family Information Service so that he was able to see the range of activities taking place in his local area.

3. Reduce stress at school

John's school was contacted to notify them of his role as a young carer so that support could be provided when needed.

4. Reduced impact of caring

One to one support so that John was able to discuss his caring role and worries regarding his mother's health. Also John was invited to groups, trips, and activities so that he could discuss his caring role with peers.

5. Access to information on benefits

John's mother was worried about finances because she was unable to return to work and her sick pay was ending. Therefore she was signposted to other services to look at whether she was entitled to DLA as well as other benefits.

6. Signpost to CAMHS

John was referred by the young carers service to CAMHS to gain specialist mental health support including for relationship issues, poor sleeping habits and concerns regarding his food intake.

Outcomes

John received support from the young Carers service for two years before training to be a Peer Mentor. John is now a volunteer with the service and is a positive role model to other young carers.

1. Increase resilience and build confidence

John has befriended other Young Carers and his confidence has increased. He is now spending time with friends in his local community.

2. Increased choice of activities/opportunities and more positive social networks

John has attended Young Carers groups, activities and trips regularly, including a music workshop and dynamix training on gaining self-esteem. John has been supported by project workers to socialise with other Young Carers and to encourage him to participate and thus gain confidence.

3. Reduce stress at school

As the school were aware of John's caring role they became more understanding and gave him the extra support he needed. John was able to complete his work and felt less stressed when in school.

4. Reduced impact of caring

John's caring role has reduced and negative responses to caring decreased due to a change in family circumstances. This has had a positive impact on his family relationships.

5. Access to information on benefits

John's mother received support from Carers Money Matters project that offered financial advice. She now receives ongoing financial support from outreach.

6. Signpost to CAMHS

John attends CAMHS appointments regularly and has reported having a more positive frame of mind.

John's view

Upon contacting John for his view on having support from the Young Carers Service he said.....

'I'm grateful for the help it gave me when I was going through the most demanding time and had the biggest strain on my life'

'The caring was at it's peak just before I joined, so Young Carers intervened at the most straining time'

'I'm grateful for the referral to CAMHS as it's helping me a lot and the one to one was good. I think its nice knowing there is other Young carers and there is help. It was isolating thinking you're the only one'.

'I'm pleased to be a peer mentor. I wouldn't have known I could be a volunteer without training. I wanted to help other young people but I didn't know how'.