



“No Wrong Doors for Young Carers” – Working together to support young carers and their families

**A template for a local memorandum of understanding for a
whole-system approach to identifying and supporting young
carers, young adult carers and their families**

4th Edition

February 2024

ADCS
Leading Children's Services

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adult social services

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“No Wrong Doors for Young Carers”

A template memorandum of understanding (MOU) for a whole-system approach to identifying and supporting young carers, young adult carers and their families.

Executive summary

This MoU is designed to promote whole-system approaches to ensure that young carers are identified and can receive the support they and their family need. The MOU will improve early identification and access to support in the community for young carers and their families. It will also help ensure that local authorities and the NHS comply with their legislative duties towards young carers, young adult carers and their families.

To reflect their legal duties within the Care Act 2014, Children Act 1989 and Health and Care Act 2022, the signatories to the MOU will be Adult Social Care Services, Children’s Social Care Services and Integrated Care Boards, but local systems can add additional signatories to reflect their local context and priorities. Local systems can also build on this MOU to include other groups of carers such as parent carers or adult carers as long as young carers and young adult carers are not lost from it.

This version of the MoU has been streamlined to focus on the commitments of system partners. The MoU should therefore be read alongside the accompanying implementation guidance where the legal/policy context can be found alongside practice examples and resources to aid successful implementation of the MoU.

Nothing in this paper seeks to amend or replace statutory or other forms of guidance. Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy and promote best practice, this document does not represent a formal statement of the law or Government policy. Statutory Directors and responsible officers should obtain further information or legal advice, as necessary. The Associations (ADCS/ADASS) cannot accept any responsibility for loss or liability occasioned as a result of people acting or not acting on any information contained in this paper.

All references to “**children**” in this paper include **young people under the age of 18**.

Acknowledgements

This version of the MoU was produced by Carers Trust with the support of a working group comprising stakeholders with experience across social care, health and local carer services. Any questions surrounding this MoU should be directed to Carers Trust via policy@carers.org. The development of this MOU was made possible through funding from ADASS and the LGA as Partners in Care and Health. We are also grateful to invaluable contributions from the ADASS Carers Policy Network, members of the Young Carers Alliance and the support and advice of ADCS, the Department for Education, and the Department of Health and Social Care, and NHS England.

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Joint foreword

Young carers tell us of the importance of joint working and the real difference that timely and effective support services make.

This fourth edition of the MoU has been produced to support children's and adult social care to prepare for Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted assurance processes. It comes at a time where the needs of young carers have been increasingly identified by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in their [Local Authority Assurance framework](#), by Ofsted in their [Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services \(ILACS\)](#) framework and by the Department for Education in the latest iteration of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#). It also follows a [2023 review by Carers Trust](#) which found that fewer than 1 in 10 local authorities appear to have "No Wrong Doors" embedded locally, despite it having been first introduced 15 years ago. This version also reflects the need to reinforce the duties placed on local authorities by the Care Act 2014 and the Children Act 1989. This is timely because a recent All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers inquiry highlighted significant variation in regard to the extent to which local authorities are currently fulfilling these duties.

This edition also acknowledges the increased focus on integration between health and social care, and the specific legal duties on Integrated Care Boards in relation to young carers in the [Health and Care Act 2022](#). It is for this reason, and because of the increasing evidence of the health impact that caring can have on young people's health and wellbeing, that this latest edition recommends that Integrated Care Boards should also be signatories, alongside Children's and Adult Social Care.

Young carers are children first and foremost; they have the same rights as all children and young people. Young carers should be able to learn, achieve and enjoy positive, healthy childhoods, just like other children. Practitioners across Adult Social Care, Children's Services and health settings working with individuals with care and support needs should ensure the needs of the children in the family, including those who may be assisting with caring, are recognised. This means taking account of their hopes, aspirations, strengths and achievements, and the need for advice and support for the whole family.

Young carers and families are experts on their own lives – they know what is working well and where they may need more support. It falls to professionals across all sectors to actively involve them in shaping the personalised and integrated responses that best meet their needs. This principle applies regardless of whether care needs arise as a result of mental or physical illness, disability, or substance misuse and whether a parent, a sibling or a family member is the focus of support. In all cases, health and social care practitioners have a duty to consider if the caring being provided raises safeguarding or other concerns, even if the young carer or family say they are happy with things as they are.

This updated MoU offers a framework which authorities can use to ensure joined up approaches to identification and support for young carers and their families. The MoU will also support partnership working with colleagues in health and the third sectors, including where local authorities delegate Care Act 2014 assessment processes for adults. This might, for example, include mental health services hosted within NHS Trusts or local carer services commissioned to undertake different forms of carers' assessments.

Finally, this revised MoU, jointly agreed both within and between our partner organisations, reflects our shared commitment to identifying and properly supporting young carers and we anticipate that widespread adoption and use of the MoU can help us all to build on recent national policy developments, support local progress and achieve better outcomes for young carers and their families.

Issued jointly by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, Association of Directors of Children's Services and Carers Trust - February 2024

Stakeholder perspective

Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)

“It is vital that young carers are identified at the earliest opportunity so that they can get the support that they and their families need. Adult social care have got a really important role to play in ensuring that we are identifying children who are taking on caring responsibilities for adults and to make sure there is a whole-family approach to supporting them.

It is also really important that we are making sure that young carers are supported as they transition into adult life so that they can have the same life opportunities as their peers, and so their health and wellbeing are not negatively impacted by caring.

ADASS supports “No Wrong Doors for Young Carers” because it helps ensure a whole-system approach to making sure that all young carers are properly supported.”

Beverley Tarka, ADASS President

Association of Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS)

“Children and young people with caring responsibilities can face unique challenges. We want to support them to live a happy, fulfilling life and to be able to access the same opportunities as their peers, they deserve nothing less. The aims and approaches set out in the MoU apply to all young carers, whether they are caring for a significant adult, or a sibling. The aim here is to help children’s and adult services to work more closely together, and with health and education services as well, to take a whole family approach in meeting needs. Children and young people themselves tell us what a difference joined up approaches can make when there is a clear and shared focus on their experiences and their outcomes and the latest version should make that easier than ever.”

Helen Lincoln, Chair of the ADCS Families, Communities and Young People Policy Committee

Carers Trust

“It takes on average three years for a young carer to be identified for support, and there are some caring for more than ten years without any help – this is why it is so crucial that adult social care and health professionals are working with children’s services to make sure young carers are identified as early as possible.

But ‘No Wrong Doors for Young Carers’ makes it really clear that we have to go beyond identification – we have to get to the point where whole-family approaches to assessments and support are the norm. If we don’t, then we will continue to have a situation where thousands of children are spending the majority of their childhoods providing care, often at the expense of their health, wellbeing, education and life chances.”

Kirsty McHugh, Carers Trust CEO

Department for Education

“Adult social care services should liaise with children’s social care services to ensure that there is a joined-up approach when both carrying out such assessments and in the provision of support to families where there are young carers or parent carers.”

“Local authority services to adults must consider whether any children are providing care to the adult and whether the young carers are in need of support”

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Department of Health and Social Care

“The Department of Health and Social Care is committed to ensuring that young adult carers have a smooth transition into adult life so that they can have the same opportunities as their peers. Young carers should also be identified at the earliest opportunity and supported using a whole-family approach. This is why it is so important for adult social care to be working really closely with children’s services, integrated care boards and other key partners to ensure a whole-system approach to supporting young carers and young adult carers.”

Care Quality Commission

“When assessing local authorities, we expect to see support for people with care and support needs, including unpaid carers, being coordinated across different agencies and services so that they have the best wellbeing outcomes. When people move between services, settings or areas, there should be a plan for what happens next and who will do what, and all the practical arrangements should be in place.”

James Bullion, Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care and Integrated Care, CQC

No Wrong Doors for Young Carers has been listed as best practice/guidance in relation to the Assessing Needs quality statement under the ‘working with people’ theme, in CQC’s assessment framework for local authorities.

NHS England

“Early identification, recognition and support of unpaid carers requires strong collaborative working between health, social care and voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, and is essential for contingency planning. Co-ordinated collaborative working for unpaid carers can be seen as an example, and even a barometer, of integrated cross-sector working within an integrated care system (ICS).”

Carer contingency planning: recommendations for integrated care systems

Ofsted

“A local authority is likely to be judged ‘good’ if professionals identify children and young people in need of help and protection, including young carers... and if assessments results in direct help for families, including young carers if needed and are focused on achieving sustainable progress for children.”

Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) Framework

All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

“We welcome this refreshed version of “No Wrong Doors for Young Carers”. Our inquiry into life opportunities for young carers highlighted the urgent need to improve identification of young carers within adult social care services, education and health settings. It also recognised a real need for better joint working between services to ensure that young carers and their families receive the support they need.”

Paul Blomfield MP, APPG for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers Chair

The MoU:

No wrong doors for young carers” - Working together to support young carers and their families

A template Memorandum of Understanding

1. Key principles

We are committed to the principle that there should be “no wrong doors” for young carers and their families; young carers should be identified, assessed and their families supported, in ways that prevent excessive or inappropriate caring regardless of which service or agency has contact with them in the first instance.

As Children’s and Adult’s Social Services and the Integrated Care Board, we therefore commit through this memorandum of understanding to work together, adopting a whole system, whole family approach to ensure we are identifying and providing support for all young carers, young adult carers and their families.

We will achieve this through working across our local health and care system, in partnership with our wider health partners, local carers’ organisations and education providers, promoting a proactive approach, where support is offered at the earliest opportunity. We will work together to fulfil our legal duties to young carers and young adult carers¹, and ensure that the following key principles² underpin practice across our system:

- The primary responsibility for responding to the needs of young carers and young adult carers, and ensuring an appropriate assessment is completed, rests with the service responsible for assessing the person they support, rather than depending on the age of the carer.
- Practitioners across Adult Social Care, Children’s Services and health settings working with individuals with care and support needs and their families have an equally important role in identifying potential young carers at the earliest opportunity.
- The starting point should be to assess the needs of the adult or child who needs care and support and then see what remaining needs for support a young carer in the family has.
- The presence of a young carer in the family will always constitute an appearance of need and should trigger either an assessment, or the offer of an assessment, to the person needing care.
- Where there are children in the family providing care to an adult or undertaking wider caring responsibilities, a ‘whole-family’ approach is key when assessing the adult needing care. The adult’s assessment and eligibility for support should take into account their parenting responsibilities and the impact of the care and support needs on the family.

¹ See Appendix One of the “No Wrong Doors for Young Carers Implementation Guidance” for a detailed breakdown of the legal duties towards young carers, young adult carers and their families.

- Assessments should ascertain why a child is caring and what needs to change in order to prevent them from undertaking excessive or inappropriate caring responsibilities which could impact adversely on their welfare, education, or social development. The views of both adults and children within the family should be sought separately where appropriate, so as to ensure individual family members have the opportunity to speak openly about their situation and need for support.
- Consideration must be given to whether a young carer is a 'child in need' under the Children Act 1989, and whether their welfare or development may suffer if support is not provided to them and/or their family.

The commitments in this MoU apply equally to young carers up to the age of 18, and to young adult carers aged up to 24 as we recognise that young carers may require more focused support during the period they are making the transition to adulthood.

We will ensure that commitments in this MoU are reflected in all relevant local strategies, commissioning and operationally. We will put a clear plan in place to ensure that these commitments are reflected in practice. The MoU will be routinely reviewed to ensure it reflects any changes in systems, legislation and policy, or needs of young carers.

2. Our local context

This space should be used to provide an overview of the local context in relation to young carers and young adult carers. Suggested areas to cover include:

- Estimated number of young carers and young adult carers.
- An overview of local arrangements for identifying, assessing and supporting young carers, young adult carers and their families.
- Key strategic priorities in relation to young carers and young adult carers and key issues raised by young carers and young adult carers (including insights from local and national data sources).
- Links to relevant strategies and plans (e.g. Carers' Strategy, Integrated Care Strategy).

3. Identifying young carers and promoting well being

We will actively promote a whole-system approach for identifying young carers across our population and promoting their wellbeing, including within education and the wider community.

We will ensure a regular programme of young carer awareness-raising activity, with a particular focus on health, social care and education.

All health and social care services working with adults are required to consider whether there are any children in the family/household. If a child is identified, services will consider whether the child is providing care to the adult and is in need of support. We will ensure that practitioners working with adults have access to training to help them identify young carers and know what support is available locally.

4. Assessment, information and support

We commit to the principle that the aim of assessments and support for young carers is to ensure that no young carer is taking on inappropriate or excessive levels of caring responsibilities, and to ensure that their education/employment, health, wellbeing or wider life opportunities are not negatively impacted by caring.

We will ensure that information, advice, support and services are available to all young carers and their families in our local area; This includes, where appropriate, support through local young carers' services, young adult carers projects, or universal services. Through a combination of commissioning and social work practice, we will ensure that support for young carers is not provided in isolation, but using a whole-family approach.

We will co-produce a clear referral pathway so that young carers, their families and professionals know what support is available for them, and how to access information and advice, assessments and support. We will work with partners in the community, such as faith organisations and community groups to ensure that information for young carers is easily accessible.

Young Carers Needs Assessments will be available for any young carer who requests one or who appears to require one. Transition assessments will be offered to any young carer approaching adulthood who appears that they may have need for support when they turn 18. We will ensure all system partners have a shared understanding about what constitutes 'inappropriate' or 'excessive' caring responsibilities and what the local response will be when this is identified. We will also ensure there is a shared understanding around the position regarding the need for parental consent in order for young carers to access support.

We will make clear the arrangements for reviews of assessments in case the circumstances of the young carer or the person they are caring for has changed (e.g. amount of care being provided has increased or decreased).

Where there are any concerns about a young carer's, or other children's and/or vulnerable adults' safety, these will be addressed swiftly in line with our local safeguarding arrangements.

5. Transition to adulthood

We recognise that young adult carers may have different support needs to those of young carers and adult carers.

We will ensure that local activity to increase identification of young carers also includes stakeholders relevant to young adult carers, such as further and higher education providers, and training providers/employers.

We will ensure that Transitions Assessments are available for young carers as they approach adulthood where it appears they may need support when they turn 18. Where a transitions assessment deems a young carer eligible for services, it will be followed up with good information and advice about support in the community.

We will ensure that in addition to the statutory assessment, there is a range of support available which meets the specific needs of young adult carers. We will also ensure that any staff providing support to young adult carers have the knowledge and training to properly understand the needs of this group of carers.

6. Information sharing

We believe that effective and timely information sharing between local partners including health and education is critical to enable effective identification and support for young carers and their families.

We will actively pursue opportunities to improve the recording of young carers and young adult carers within systems across different settings (e.g. primary care, mental health trusts, education, social care and voluntary sector providers) and the information-sharing between system partners.

Children's and adult social care services will identify ways to improve data-sharing in relation to young adult carers transitioning into adult services to reduce the need for young carers to tell their stories multiple times.

7. Safeguarding and partnership working

We will ensure that all practitioners are aware of local safeguarding policy and practice and accept a joint responsibility to work in partnership to identify and respond to any young carers who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Our Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board will be made aware of issues surrounding young carers and of this Memorandum of Understanding.

8. Putting these intentions into action and accountability

This space should be used to set out how these intentions will be put into practice and accountability arrangements to any actions arising from this MoU are actioned and review. Potential things to include are:

- Where the ownership of the actions arising from this MoU will sit.
- Reflecting actions arising from this agreement in our Carers' Strategy and Integrated Care Strategy and in relevant commissioning of services.
- Highlighting commitments and actions arising from this agreement in evidence for our Ofsted and CQC assurance processes.
- Arrangements for regular audit and the provision of reasonable assurance to the Integrated Care Board, Council, partners, young carers, their families and the wider community.
- Plans to promote the MoU and actions arising from it across the system and with young carers, their families and the wider public.

Signed	Date
Director of Adult Social Services	
Director of Children's Services	
Chief Exec/Chair of Integrated Care Board	
Other signatories	

Commencement Date:

Review Date:

(Review Date: normally 3 years from the date of commencement)

Publication: This document will be placed on the Council's and Integrated Care Board's websites as part of our commitment to work together on these issues.

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