

# Building Capacity and Supporting a Young Carer Aged 8-12

## For Families

Young carers aged 8-12 years require adult support and supervision to participate in respite activities provided by Carers WA. Therefore, accessing these activities (e.g. sporting club events, camps etc.) may be limited when guardians unable to accompany the child.

Where support is also required for the adults and/or family, a referral to the Family Support Network may be appropriate as they provide family case management support above what Carers WA provide. Carers WA is not a crisis service.

Carers WA may be able to provide financial support for 'respite activities' where transport and supervision are already in place, for example a school camp, activity or resources that the family may struggle to pay for due to financial pressures as a result of the caring situation.

## Other effective ways that a young carer can be supported at home:

- 1. Acknowledge the role the young carer takes on - positive and negative.** Although the young carer may acquire the qualities of being mature, responsible, and empathetic, it can be tiring and stressful as well. Simply acknowledging that there is a reason things may feel difficult for them at times can be a huge relief.
- 2. With the young person's permission, let 'key staff' at their school know about the situation and the particular needs of your family and how this impacts on your child.** As much as possible, update the school as needed. This can make the young person feel more supported and save them having to repeat conversations. See if a key staff member can do regular check-ins and offer support to the young carer, even if they seem fine. Raise awareness with your child's school about young carers. Direct them to the Young Carer page on Carers WA website.
- 3. Set aside down time.** Value the importance of each person who does some caring also having some time to themselves.
- 4. Ask family for support.** See if there are extended family members or family friends that can also support by helping the care recipient or taking the young person out for some respite time.
- 5. Ask if the young person's school is able to run a Peer Support Group.** This reduces the isolation and increases the support and engagement for the young person. Carers WA has a free program available for request by schools or community organisations. Schools can request the starter kit at: [www.carerswa.asn.au/peer-support-toolkit](http://www.carerswa.asn.au/peer-support-toolkit)
- 6. Make the most of your NDIS package.** Double check the care recipient's NDIS package. Is everything that is available being



accessed so that the family as a whole is being supported?

- 7. Apply for sport and recreation funding.** For concession card holders, Kidsport now offers up to \$300 per calendar year toward sports club fees and essential uniform and equipment. Apply or find a club near you here: [www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/kidsport](http://www.dlgsc.wa.gov.au/kidsport)
- 8. Attend a local program or event.** Libraries and local government sometimes have free programs and events of interest to you or your young person. Check out their website or for up-to-date programs follow them on Facebook.
- 9. Keep young people informed about what is happening, in a way they can understand.** If they are left out of important information, they may 'fill in the blanks' themselves with inaccurate information. Visit [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au) for tips on having healthy and difficult conversations with young people.
- 10. Ensure adults are connected to support.** Make sure that the adults in the family are appropriately connected to all available service provider supports that they are eligible for. By strengthening and connecting supports for the adults, whether that be the person being cared for, or the adult who is the primary adult carer, this reduces the burden of responsibility on the young carer.
- 11. Link the adults in the family to other local service providers.** This could include NDIS, GP, mental health, or even Carers WA.

### **If mental health support is the main area of need identified by the young person:**

We recognise the shortage of free counselling support for 8-12 year olds across WA; Carers WA does not currently employ counsellors for 8-12 year olds. However, by visiting a GP and requesting a Mental Health Care Plan, this provides access to up to 10 free or subsidised sessions with a mental health professional each calendar year.

### **Protective and challenging factors for young carers in school and the community:**

#### **Challenging Factors**

- Stigma and discrimination around disabilities and health conditions creates barriers.
- Bullying from peers.
- Social isolation delays or prevents seeking support.
- Low self-esteem.
- More likely to withdraw from the education system, than young people not in a caring role.
- More likely to struggle with learning because of their caring role.

#### **Protective Factors**

- Sense of belonging, purpose and connection to land/community.
- Peer connection and friendships.
- Information and access to service providers that can offer support to both carer and care recipient.
- Respite through community or school facilities, programs and activities.
- Provide opportunity for the young carer to take a break from the caring role.
- Opportunity to make peer connections and friendships with others who have shared experiences.
- Development of school policy around young carer needs to increase education outcomes. Encourage your school to access resources for young carers at [www.carerswa.asn.au/young-carers-org-info](http://www.carerswa.asn.au/young-carers-org-info)