

Young carers joint protocol between Adult Social Care and Children's Services

1 July 2025

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1. Key principles – No Wrong Door

Camden is committed to the principle that there should be “no wrong door” for young carers and their families. We believe young carers should be recognised, their needs 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. We believe that young carers are children first.

Adult Social Care and Children’s Services commit to work together to ensure we are identifying and providing support for young carers, young adult carers and their families, and ensure that the following principles underpin practice across our system:

- The primary responsibility for responding to the needs of young carers 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 and Children’s Services 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 person who needs care and support and then see what remaining needs for support the young carer has.
- The presence of a young carer in the family will always constitute an appearance of need and should trigger an assessment, the offer of an assessment, or a review, for the person needing care.
- Where there are children in the family providing care, a ‘whole family’ approach is key. The adult’s assessment and eligibility for support should take into account their parenting or caring responsibilities and the impact of the care and support needs on the family.
- 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 development.

The purpose of this protocol is to set out how Adult Social Care and Children’s Services will work together to support young carers we identify, in line with No Wrong Door key principles. The protocol provides the framework for:

- The identification and assessment of young carers
- Responsibilities of adult social care and children’s services
- Joint working between adult social care and children’s services
- Pathways for referring young carers to services and sources of support

For the purpose of this protocol, Children’s services are taken to mean any practitioner working in the Family Help and Safeguarding Division, or Relational Practice division.

2. Definition of young carer and legal duties

This definition of a young carer is taken from section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014; “...a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work)”.

For the purposes of this protocol, 'care' relates to care for any family member who is physically or mentally ill, frail, elderly, disabled, misuses alcohol or substances, or a person who has a lifelong or life-limiting condition that requires care or support.

There are several pieces of legislation and guidance that set out the duties owed to young carers:

2a. Legislation and guidance relating to children

Under the [Children and Families Act 2014](#) (part 5, section 96) and [The Young Carers \(Needs Assessments\) Regulations 2015](#), young carers are entitled to an assessment, whatever level of care they provide. The right to an assessment is based on the appearance of need, not assessed need.

[Working Together statutory guidance](#) reinforces the need for agencies to work in partnership to support families with young carers, using a whole family approach.

2b. Legislation and guidance relating to adults

The [Care Act 2014](#), sets out a duty for local authorities to consider the needs of children living in households where there is an adult who has a disability or impairment that requires help or care. Practitioners assessing an adult's needs must consider whether there are children in the household and any care roles they may undertake in the home.

The [Care Act 2014 \(section 63-65\)](#) also gives rights for young carers who are moving towards adulthood to have their specific needs assessed as to how their caring role, and role within their family, might change. This is called a Transition Assessment (see section 5).

3. Identifying and recognising young carers

Camden is committed to promoting a whole-system approach for identifying young carers and promoting their wellbeing, including within education, health and the wider community.

Working with our partners and commissioned young carers service, we have a regular programme of young carer awareness-raising activity, with a particular focus on health, social care and education. All practitioners working with adults are required to consider whether there are any children in the family/household. If a child is identified, those services will consider whether the child is providing care to the adult and is in need of support.

We provide information, advice and support for young carers, particularly through our commissioned services from the [Islington and Camden Young Carers service](#). We promote these services to a wide range of partner organisations including schools, health settings, and within local authority services to ensure awareness of the support available. Information about young carers services is also available at each of our Family Hubs and on the [Camden Families website](#). Young adult carer support is available and promoted through Camden Carers [Young Adult Carers | Camden Carers](#)

Practitioners in adult social care and children's services should familiarise themselves with these support services for young carers and ensure young carers and their families are provided with accessible information about them (see section 11).

All practitioners should be mindful that caring responsibilities may be hidden and consider potential signs that a child may be carrying out inappropriate or excessive caring. Signs might include, but not limited to:

- Social isolation
- A low level of school attendance or lateness
- Falling behind on school or college work
- Inability to take part in after school activities
- Tiredness and/or anxiety
- Behavioural challenges
- Emotional or physical health challenges

Young carers may be caring for:

- A parent
- A sibling
- A relative within their immediate family network
- A combination of the above.

For many young carers, supporting the person they care for may have become part of usual routine life and they may not recognise the responsible and important role they are playing. They may not see themselves as being young carers or feel too worried or embarrassed to ask for help. Practitioners should work sensitively and thoughtfully to explore caring responsibilities.

Practitioners should not ask children to stop caring. But they should ask whether the caring they do is having an impact on their health, development and wellbeing and if it is, what could be done to help (see section 4, ‘conducting a young carers assessment’).

Practitioners should make sure carers are aware of their rights. [This leaflet](#) from the Carers Trust or [this link](#) to the NHS webpage about young carers rights should be provided to young carers at any time.

4. Assessment and support

4a. General assessment principles for young carers (for all practitioners)

Whenever a young carer is identified, they should be offered a carers assessment. If the young carer is aged 16-18, they should be offered a young carers transition assessment (see section 5).

Adult social care or children’s services practitioners can and should undertake the young carers assessment. This assessment should be part of a whole family assessment, regardless of whether Adult Social Care or Children’s Services identified the young carer.

Referrals to the Camden Young Carers Service for an assessment can be made if it is in the best interests of the child to have a separate assessment (see section 11 for contact details). Practitioners should speak with their line manager if they are unsure.

When working with families, practitioners should be aware that parents or carers may be fearful or worried about disclosing the full extent of the child’s caring responsibilities. Practitioners should reassure parents or carers that Camden’s focus is on supporting families so that they can stay together wherever possible and that the assessment is to help make sure they are getting the right support. When an assessment offer is made, it should be made clear that it will be focused on the needs of the young person themselves and not any assessment or judgement of how they are carrying out their caring responsibilities.

If practitioners are unsure whether the child or young person is carrying out a caring role, they may explore the possibility of a joint home visit with the Camden and Islington Young Carers Service, to help them explore the child’s caring role and its impact on them.

4b. Conducting a young carers assessment (for all practitioners)

The practitioner should work with the child and their family to determine:

- what caring responsibilities they have
- why they are caring
- what impact those responsibilities are having for the child

It is key not to just identify that responsibilities exist, but the impact of those responsibilities. It is important to consider that the young carer may be intending to undertake these caring responsibilities or be undertaking them already.

Practitioners should refer to the [Carers Trust 'My Life Now' young carers assessment and planning tool](#) if they need additional support to undertake young carers assessments.

Caring responsibilities may include, but not limited to:

- practical caring tasks
 - preparing, cooking or cleaning at mealtimes
 - household cleaning
 - redecorating or gardening
 - food shopping by myself
 - help with household paperwork
 - working part time to bring in additional income
 - looking after brothers or sisters alone
 - lifting heavy items or people
- personal care tasks
 - help with bathing/showering/shaving etc
 - help with dressing
 - help during the night
 - help with eating
 - communicating/interpreting for someone
 - medicate (preparing, administering etc)
- emotional care tasks
 - keeping the child or adult company
 - comforting when they are upset
 - keeping an eye on them/worrying about them
 - take the person you care for out on your own

The assessment should explore:

- the amount, nature and type of care which the young carer provides (or intends to provide)
- the impact of the caring role on the young carer's health, wellbeing and development, including but not limited to:
 - their education, attendance and attainment, their wishes for their future, and the extent to which they can take up education, training and employment opportunities
 - their physical and emotional health

- their social development and opportunities for play, out-of-home activities and socialising with peers
- their relationship with their family, including the adult or sibling they care for
- their views on being a young carer, including any differences of opinion between the young carer and their family regarding levels of caring
- the extent to which this care is (or will be) relied upon by the family, including the wider family, to maintain the wellbeing of the person being cared for
- whether any of the caring tasks the young carer is performing are excessive or inappropriate (having regard to all the circumstances including their age, gender, developmental stages, and wishes and feelings).
- whether a needs assessment of the cared for person (child or adult) has been carried out, and if it has, what impact that may have for the young carer.
- whether any of the young carer's needs could be met by providing support or services to the person cared for or another member of the young carer's family.
- what the young carer's needs would be/likely to be if he or she were relieved of part or all his or her caring role and whether the young carer would have any remaining unmet needs.
- Where the young carer is a child in need under s17 of the [Children Act 1989](#)
- Any actions to be taken as a result of the assessment
- The arrangements for a future review.

The assessment should also have regard for:

- The young carers age, understanding, developmental stage, family circumstances and culture.
- The wishes, feelings and preferences of the young carer, including whether they wish to continue caring.
- Any differences in opinion between the young carer, their parents and/or the cared for with respect to the care the young carer provides.
- The outcomes the young carer is looking for from the assessment

The views of adults and children within the family should be sought separately where appropriate, to ensure individual family members have the opportunity to speak openly about their situation and need for support.

If for any reason the practitioner and manager feel that an external assessment of the young carers needs would be in the best interests of the child, they should refer to the Camden and Islington Young Carers Service (see section 11 for contact details). All practitioners may also seek advice from the Camden and Islington Young Carers Service.

4c. What Adult Services will do

Where Adult Services are supporting a family (including parents, grandparents or other household or close family members), they will work with them to identify if any child in the household is undertaking caring responsibilities, or are intending to provide care, for an adult.

The practitioner's assessment and consideration of eligibility for support should take into account:

- The adult's parenting or caring responsibilities
- the impact of the care and support needs on the family, including on each child in the family whether any of them are, or could be, providing care or not
- whether there is a child in the family who is providing excessive or inappropriate amounts of care

The starting point should be to assess the needs of the adult who needs care and support and then see what remaining needs for support a young carer in the family has.

The young carers assessment may be combined with another assessment process in Adult Social Care. Where this occurs, the practitioner must:

- Be explicit in the assessment and subsequent plans that the assessment process specifically explored the child's caring responsibilities and the impact of those responsibilities for the young carer.
- Gain consent to the assessments being combined, otherwise they should be carried out separately.

The adult's practitioner should refer to the [Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership Thresholds document](#) to determine whether the child's needs require a referral to the Children and Families Contact Service, including for statutory intervention (see section 9). If the practitioner is unsure, they should liaise with their line manager and/or seek a consultation with the Children and Families Contact Service (ext. 3317 or email LBCMASHAdmin@camden.gov.uk).

Parents have a right to refuse assessment, but Adult Social Care has a duty to carry out an assessment where the practitioner believes:

- the adult lacks mental capacity to make a decision on assessment and carrying out an assessment would be in their best interests **or**
- the adult is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect.

In either of these circumstances, the practitioner should also make a referral to the Camden Children and Families Contact Service on behalf of the young carer (ext. 3317 or email LBCMASHAdmin@camden.gov.uk)

Where the adult is assessed by Adult Social Care as ineligible for services but children are still expected to carry out excessive or inappropriate caring tasks, or the family's situation is such that the adult relies on help from children in order to parent effectively, the practitioner should make a referral to the Camden Children and Families Contact Service on the child's behalf to seek support for the child and family.

Adult social care responsibilities following assessment

Adult social care is responsible for commissioning care and support services for adults to reduce or prevent inappropriate caring responsibilities for young carers. Adult social care is also responsible for commissioning or providing services or support that would support or sustain adults in their parenting role.

Action in the care plan should be driven by the assessed needs and should include, but not limited to:

- Services needed to ensure care needs are met and to prevent a child taking on, or continuing to undertake, inappropriate or excessive caring responsibilities
- Support the adult's needs in his or her parenting role or in developing parenting capacity

4d. What Children's Services will do

Children's services may receive referrals where:

- a child is caring for a parent or family member
- there is a parent or carer with a disability, illness or dependency
- there is a sibling with a disability, illness or dependency

The children's practitioner will work with the whole family to identify if any of the children in the household are undertaking caring responsibilities. In doing so, the practitioner will also be expected to consider the impact of the disability or illness upon each child within the family, including whether any of them are or could be providing some form of care or not.

The starting point should be to assess the needs of the person who needs care and support and then see what remaining needs for support a young carer in the family has.

If the person being cared for is an adult, the practitioner should ask whether they are currently receiving support from Adult Social Care. If they are not, the practitioner should discuss this with the adult, and make a referral to Adult Social Care for assessment via [this webpage](#) where needed.

The practitioner should also ask adult social care whether the family is receiving all their entitlements under the provisions of the [Carers \(Recognition and Services\) Act 1995](#).

If the person being cared for is a child with disabilities or long-term illness, the practitioner should liaise with Camden's Children and Young People Disabilities Service (CYPDS) for advice, including if the child being cared for is already known to them. The practitioner should also work with the parent to understand what support the cared-for child is receiving and what additional support the parent may need for the cared-for child to reduce inappropriate or excessive caring responsibilities for the young carer.

The practitioner may also liaise with other professionals in the network for the child being cared for (for example education/nursery provision, health services etc) to get a sense of the support being provided and the impact for the young carer.

The young carers assessment may be combined with another assessment process (for example the Child and Family Assessment or Early Help Assessment). Where this occurs, the practitioner must:

- Be explicit in the assessment and subsequent plans that the assessment process specifically explored the child's caring responsibilities and the impact of those responsibilities for the young carer.
- Gain consent to the assessments being combined, otherwise they should be carried out separately.

The children's services practitioner should refer to the [Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership Thresholds document](#) to determine whether the child's level of needs meet criteria

for statutory intervention (see section 9) . If the practitioner is unsure, they should liaise with their line manager and/or seek a consultation with the Children and Families Contact Service (ext. 3317 or email LBCMASHAdmin@camden.gov.uk).

Where a young carer is identified in the family of a disabled child open to CYPDS, it is CYPDS responsibility to consider the needs of any young carer or young adult carer who is carrying out caring responsibilities for their sibling, and to undertake a young carers assessment.

Children's services responsibilities following assessment

Children's Services is responsible for commissioning or providing services to respond to the needs of the child, including those relating to the impact of their caring role. Action in the plan should be driven by the assessed needs and should include, but are not limited to:

- Support or services need to manage the impact of caring responsibilities on the child until such time as the adult or sibling's care needs are more appropriately met, and the young carer's caring role is reduced to appropriate levels
- Support and interventions to reduce/mitigate the impact of caring, or to support the young person's health, wellbeing or life opportunities

4e. Joint working between Adult and Children's Services

Where a child is providing care which is felt to be inappropriate or excessive (considering age, gender, ability, developmental stage, and the nature of the care being provided), and the care being provided is for an adult in the household or immediate family network, a joint plan must be made by Adult Social Care and Children's Services.

Within that plan:

- Adults social care should address the care needs of the parent/family member
- Children's Services should address the needs of the child/ren.

The plan should be clear on the shared aim of reducing the care the child is providing so it is not having a detrimental effect on their health, wellbeing or development, and that the child is not undertaking inappropriate or excessive care.

Adult social care and Children's Services are expected to practice good communication and coordination in the best interests of the young carer and their family. The family should be provided with clear and written information about who will take the coordinating role between the family and the various agencies involved in the provision of services. This information must be provided to families in an appropriate format. Information provided to the child must be provided in a format and language that is developmentally appropriate.

Meetings held in relation to either the adult's needs or the child's needs should be attended by both adults and children's services to ensure sufficient focus on the young carer. It is expected that joint plans are reviewed at least every 3 months and recorded on the relevant electronic casefile.

Where the child/ren in the family are being supported under section 17 child in need or child protection processes, social work representation for children should always be provided by Children's Services.

5. Transition to adulthood – Young Carers Transitions Assessment

The Care Act 2014 includes a duty for local authorities to carry out a transition assessment for a young person or carer if they are likely to have needs once they turn 18. This includes young carers under 18 who are preparing for adulthood. A Carers Conversation can be used for a transition assessment.

A transitions assessment should be offered to young carers aged 16+ to ensure the transition assessment happens in advance of the young carer turning 18. A transitions assessment can be undertaken by practitioners from adult social care or children's services. It should include:

- A range of questions to explore the young person's current needs and how they impact upon their own well-being, what needs the young person may have post-18 – including their current and future aspirations regarding employment or further education.
- An indication of how any care and support needs for the person(s) they care for would change as a result of the young carer's change in circumstance. This includes an explicit requirement which states that children's and adults' services must cooperate for the purposes of transition to adult care and support.

Topics to cover in a transitions assessment should include (but not limited to)

- school, further or higher education
- Vocational training opportunities
- Employment
- Appropriate housing
- Financial support
- Positive health and wellbeing including social activities

The transitions assessment should lead to:

- Setting short and long-term goals with the young adult carer.
- Providing clear follow up action planning with support plans in place to enable the young adult carer to reach their goals.

If needed, practitioners in adult social care or children's services may use this [good practice toolkit](#) from the Children's Society to support their completion of transitions assessments.

Where the young carers transition assessment relates to caring responsibilities they are undertaking for a child (e.g. a sibling), practitioners should refer to the Children and Families Contact Service for advice (ext. 3317 or email LBCMASHadmin@camden.gov.uk).

6. Information sharing

Information sharing between adult social care and children's services is critical to timely and effective support for young carers and their families. Practitioners are expected to use [DFE non statutory advice](#) to inform their decision making about information sharing, and to consider that:

- Data protection legislation is not intended as a barrier to sharing information - it should help us share the right information, in the right way, for the right reason
- Be open and honest – be clear with the young carer and their family about what information we hold, why we might share it, who might need to know

- Seek advice – if you are unsure ask your line manager or contact information governance
- Share with consent wherever possible
- Always consider safety and wellbeing, and the risk of not sharing information
- Information shared should be necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure
- Keep a record of the information shared
- Keep all Mosaic records for the adult and child up to date

7. Training

It is expected that adult social care practitioners and children's services practitioners are sufficiently skilled to assess the needs of young carers themselves and to integrate those needs into a whole family assessment.

Training on young carers and assessing their needs is provided through the Camden L and D Hub at regular intervals and practitioners will receive support from their line manager to access these. Practitioners may seek advice from the Islington and Camden Young Carers Service at any time.

Tools to assist practitioners in their work with young carers can be found here [Carers Trust 'My Life Now' young carers assessment and planning tool](#) and here (for young adult carers) [good practice toolkit](#).

8. Resolving Professional Disputes

All services involved in support for young carers need to be aware of areas for potential disagreement and be prepared to challenge where it is thought that the young carer's best interests are not being met and this protocol is not being fully implemented.

In the event of a dispute or disagreement arising between adult social care and children's services, in the first instance the matter should be discussed between the respective line managers. If the differences cannot be resolved at this level within a reasonable timescale, then the matter should be escalated to the relevant senior officers in each service for resolution.

If this is not possible, the matter should be referred to the Executive Director of Children and Learning and the Executive Director of Adults and Health for a decision. Any disagreements or differences should be recorded on the case file, including the views of the other party.

9. Equality, Inclusion and Diversity

This protocol applies in all situations irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, cultural or religious beliefs and sexual orientation. Camden expects all practitioners to demonstrate anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice standards when applying this protocol.

This should include, but is not limited to:

- Providing young carers and families with translation and interpretation services where needed (the young carer should not be expected to interpret for their family members)
- Providing documents that are jargon-free, developmentally appropriate, and translated into the family's first language when needed

- Offering opportunity to meet at a community venue or setting as an alternative option to meeting in Council buildings
- Having consideration of a family's religious observations (for example meeting times during Eid)
- Having due regard, and consideration of, the young carers and their family's identity, culture, heritage and history in all assessments, plans and support offered.
- Making sure young carers and their families are aware of their rights.

10. Safeguarding

All practitioners must be aware of Camden safeguarding policy for children and adults and accept joint responsibility to work in partnership to identify and respond to any member of the family who may be at risk of harm or neglect.

If a practitioner has concern about a child's or adult's welfare and believes they are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm they should share information with the local authority and the police if they believe or suspect a crime has been committed.

A referral should be made to the Children and Families Contact Service, where a young carer is:

- Unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development because of their caring responsibilities
- Is likely to be suffering significant harm through abuse or neglect
- Providing intimate body care.

Unless there is reason to believe that it would put the child at risk of harm, young carers should be told if there is a need to make a referral. Wherever possible, the young carer's consent and the consent of their parent should be sought, through a discussion of why the referral must be made and the possible outcomes.

Where a young carer or parent does not give consent, but it is still considered necessary to initiate a child protection enquiry, both the child and parent should be kept informed of all decisions made and offered support throughout.

11. Further resources

- Camden Young Carers Service - [Islington and Camden Young Carers service | The Children's Society](#)
- Camden Carers (for young adult carers) [Young Adult Carers | Camden Carers](#)
- Young carers assessment tool [My Life Now: Individual Assessment and Planning Tool for Young Carers - Resources - Carers Trust](#)
- Young carers transition assessment tool [young-carers-transition-to-adulthood-pathway-tool.pdf](#)
- Carers Trust (for young carers and young adult carers) [Young Carers - Help & Support | Carers Trust](#)
- SIBS (support for siblings of disabled children) [Home - Sibs](#)

- Advice on a range of issues affecting young carers [Advice and support for young carers | The Children's Society](#)
- Kooth (free, safe and anonymous online mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people aged 11-25) [Kooth | Mental Health Camden](#)
- Young carers Rights [Being a young carer: your rights - Social care and support guide - NHS](#)