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**Parents’ handbook**

**York Carers Centre**

 **Young Carers**

York Carers Centre helps unpaid carers in York find the support they need. The Centre has a Young Carers’ service that supports young carers from 8 to 18. We currently work with over 70 young carers and their families. Each young carer we work with is in a different situation and we treat all young carers as individuals.

The Centre used to be part of the North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust (PCT) but it became a registered charity in 2009. Our main funding comes from the PCT and City of York Council and, although we are entirely independent from them, we continue to work closely with them to support carers in York.

York Carers Centre also has a service for young adult carers between the ages of 18 and 25.

**What is a young carer?**

Young carers are children and young people who look after someone in their family who has an illness, a disability, a mental health problem or a substance misuse problem. Young carers take on practical and/or emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult.

**What does the York Young Carers’ service offer?**

* one to one support for your child
* regular youth club style groups
* trips and residential breaks
* support in schools
* Young Carers Revolution – chance for young carers to speak out about things that matter to them

These are all dependant on funding.

**The Young Carer staff team**

There are 3 main people in the Young Carer Team. You will be in regular contact with these staff and you will have their work phone numbers. Please note that they only have their work phones on when they are working and they are not available 24/7! You can also call York Carers Centre and speak to someone there.

We also have volunteers who help out at groups and with trips. All of them have regular supervision and have been interviewed, CRB checked, and are fully trained in child protection. Occasionally a volunteer may collect your child from home to take them to a group or on a trip. In most of cases the worker will have met you and/or your child prior to this. You can also ask to see their I.D badge (all workers and volunteers carry one of these).

**Liz Roberts is our Senior Young Carer Worker**

(work mobile: 07740 731628)

I have worked at York Carers Centre since Sept 2008 and I support a number of young carers one to one. My job also involves overseeing the running of the service, supervising the other members of staff and making sure everything runs smoothly! I have a degree in Journalism and Marketing. I have worked with young people and travelled all over the USA, where I qualified as a lifeguard and swimming teacher.

**Sarah Illing is our Young Carer Activity Co-ordinator**

(work mobile: 07852 907344)

I started working at YCC in April 2014 and I run all the activities and LAFFS. I’ve always enjoyed working with young people – I spent 2 summers in France organising activities for Holidaybreak and I’ve taught English to children in Italy. In 2013 I lived in Tanzania for 3 months volunteering for the charity VSO. I studied Art at University and my favourite sports are badminton and netball!

**Jess Tomori our Young Carer Worker**(work mobile: 07957334997)
I started working at York Carers Centre in August 2011, my role is to support young carers on a one to one basis. Before this, I worked with children and young people in a variety of settings including schools and voluntary organisations. I came to York to go to university where I studied Applied Social Science (with a focus on Children and Young People). In my spare time I love playing netball and doing voluntary work.

**One to one support**

One to one’s are a chance for your child to chat to a young carer worker about anything they like. It is a chance for them to tell us if there is any support they want or anything we can help your family with. It’s also chance for a chat, moan, laugh and usually a cup of tea. We use two tools for identifying the needs of young carers, they are called My life now and MACA. All information gathered is confidential we only use the numbers from these tools (not the names) to show our funders what we are doing.

**My life now assessment tool**

This tool is the assessment tool we use with all the young people we work with. It was developed by the Princess Royal Trust for Carers and if you’d like to see a copy of the full guidance please let us know.

Ideally this is completed on the first one to one session your son or daughter has with their worker. If you’d like to be present when it is filled out (and that is ok with the young carer) that can be easily arranged. We use the tool to identify any areas a young carer may be struggling with (and to highlight the things they are doing great at!), these include discussion on subjects related to inside the home and caring issues, to things outside the home such as school and emotional health.

Young carers will be put into either the high, medium or low need category and this will be reviewed after the first 6 months and then every year. We can of course review it more often if needed. This is confidential and no-one who doesn’t need to know will find out what level of need you are.

* **High level need** would mean your child receives regular 1:1’s with your worker, and opportunity to attend all groups, events and activities for your age group.
* **Medium need** would mean support for your child with any current issues as well as groups, events and activities.
* **Low need** would mean your child can go to groups, events and activities.

We understand that situations can change so if something happens and you feel your child needs more support please let us know.

**MACA assessment tool**

This is another assessment tool we use, usually at the very first home visit. It helps us understand how much caring your child does, how it affects their life and how it makes them feel. If you would like more information on this, then please let us know.

**Our newsletter**

The newsletter is the main way we communicate with you and we usually email it out at the end of each month. It includes information and photos about things we’ve done during the last month, plus dates and times of events coming up the following month. Please make note of anything that’s coming up you that you have put your child’s name down for. If there is anything you’d like us to include in the newsletter, then please let us know and we’ll do our best to put it in.

**Trips, regular groups
and transport arrangements**

We separate young carers into 3 different age groups for LAFFS groups (see below), and for most trips and events. Young carers are placed in the group that staff feel will best meet their needs and where they will be most comfortable. We will let you know which group your child is in (younger, middle or older) when we send you your first consent form and when the change group. Each summer we review the groups and we may move people around. When you get information about trips and events, it will be clear which age group each trip is aimed at and your child will only be able to attend trips and events for their own group. We review the age groups once a year over the summer.

**LAFFS groups**

LAFFS stands for **L**aughs, **A**dvice, **F**un, **F**riendship and **S**upport. LAFFS groups are like youth clubs but only for the young carers in our service.

Each age group (younger, middle, older and senior) has one LAFFS group each month. The dates for the groups are in the newsletters but they usually take place on these days and at these venues:

* **Younger group**: First Tuesday of every month, 6 to 8pm at Moor Lane Youth Centre
* **Middle group**: Second Tuesday of every month, 6 to 8pm at Moor Lane Youth Centre
* **Older group**: Third Tuesday of every month, 6 to 8pm at Moor Lane Youth Centre

**What happens at a LAFFS group?**

* At a LAFFS group young people will have a chance to relax, chat, play games and spend time with other young carers.
* There are always some planned activities, led by members of staff. In the past these have included: baking biscuits, making smoothies, learning how to juggle, playing badminton/table tennis, making tie-dye t-shirts and doing arts and crafts activities.
* Snacks and drinks are always provided. Please note that these are not meals. We always provide some healthy snacks (carrot sticks, grapes, apples etc), hot and cold drinks and sometimes a small amount of biscuits or crisps.
* We try to encourage healthy eating and exercise.
* Smoking at LAFFS groups is strictly forbidden and discouraged across the whole service.

 **How do I get to a LAFFS group?**

* We ask that young people make their own way to a LAFFS group by public transport or are dropped off by a parent/guardian.
* If this isn’t possible we can try to arrange a taxi to transport your child both ways. Please only ask for one if absolutely necessary and be aware that we may not always be able to offer this as it is subject to us having available funds.

**How do I book?**

* A member of staff will send you/your child a reminder text about the group a few days before.
* If your child wants to come to the group you/they must let us know by the morning of the day of the group at the latest.
* If they drop out on the day you must let us know ASAP.

**Trips and events**

We run day trips for young carers throughout the year, but usually in school holidays. Recently we have been:

* **In York**: Rock climbing, York Maze, go karting, pantomime, bowling, cinema, York Dungeons, trampolining.
* **In Yorkshire**: Archery in Dalby Forest, National Media Museum in Bradford, shopping at Meadowhall, horse riding in the North York Moors, Paintballing in Harrogate.

At the start of each month you and your child will receive our newsletter and link to the online consent system. You can log in using your name and date of birth. The consent page will show all the trips for the following month (including the date of the trip, location, times, which age group it’s for, details of the trip and a summary of the risk assessment). All you need to do is put in tick next to the trip you would like to go on, making sure it’s for your age group! We will then get this information at our end and pop you on the list for the trip. We will then contact you a bit closer to the time with the details (where, when, what to bring, etc).

There is usually a limit to how many young carers can go on each trip. Spaces are filled up on a first come first served basis. If your consent form is received after the spaces are filled we will put your child’s name on a reserve list and let you know if someone else drops out.

**Transport**

We know that getting to and from groups and events can be a major problem for young carers and their families. We try and offer support where we can. Please:

* Bring and pick up your child if at all possible (taxis are very expensive and our funds are limited)
* Use public transport if you can
* Let us know (as soon as possible) if you need to change or cancel transport arrangements. The taxi company can get confused with lots of changes.
* Be ready to leave when the taxi or lift is expected
* Be patient as sometimes we/taxis get lost or stuck in traffic. If the lift is over 15 minutes late then please text us (not ring because we’re probably driving).

When a member of staff or a volunteer drops your son or daughter off we expect that you will make arrangements for their safety. **We will not be held responsible for a child left alone**. We will ensure that we will **always** wait until they are through the door, but from the age of 12 upwards, will not always check that someone is home to greet them. If for any reason we are concerned about leaving a young person, and cannot contact you on any of the numbers provided, we will then contact emergency services as necessary.

If you agree to your child making their own way to and from events, you must let us know. We will always contact parents if an event ends early or later than originally planned. If your child has chosen to make their own transport arrangements our responsibility ends when activity ends

**Taxi’s**

We always use CRB checked drivers. We have an account with a local company, this means we can check which drivers have transported who, if there is a problem. We ask that parents inform us of any concerns or issues ASAP so they can be followed up with the taxi company.

If a young carer is going home by taxi please allow time for them to get home. Staff will leave phones on for 1 hour after end of an event. Phone numbers for staff can always be found on the event information sheet, please don’t contact other staff who’s phones will not be switched on.

**Behaviour**

We expect your child:

* not to swear
* to behave sensibly
* to stay safe and remain with a member of staff unless told otherwise
* not to smoke, use drugs or alcohol.
* to follow any instructions given by a member of staff

These rules are all on display in the youth centres where we hold our LAFFS groups. All young carers are asked to sign up to this code of conduct. If a young carer breaks the code of conduct they will be given 3 chances. If they still don’t follow the rules after 3 warnings, they will be sent home and will not be able to attend the following group. On returning to the next group, they will be given another chance, but if they require 3 warnings again they will then miss 2 groups and so on.

When on trips and events, good behavior is essential to ensure safety of the group. We ask for your help in reinforcing this message to your child.

**Smoking**

We now operate a strict **No Smoking** policy at all activities, trips, events and groups we run. If you or your child feel this is unfair or unrealistic please discuss with a worker.

When our staff visit your home, we ask that;

Before the visit:

* Do not smoke inside the house for at least 1 hour before the visit
* Open windows & doors to ventilate the room
* If possible try to keep one room smoke free at all times

During the visit:

* Do not smoke or let anyone else in the house smoke in the room whilst the visit is taking place

**Consent forms, medication and taking photos**

We need your permission to work with your child, and to take them on trips or to groups. When we send you consent forms you must complete them and return them to us if you want your child to receive support from us and take part in groups, trips, events and residential breaks.

**Annual consent form**

At the start of each year, or when your child joins the service, you will be sent the annual consent form. When you sign this consent form you give permission for your child to be supported by us. This form covers all LAFFS groups, individual work and any small group work with York Carers Centre and its staff. Any other trips or residential breaks will need additional consent.

**It is essential for us to have as much information as possible to ensure your child’s safety. Information will be treated in confidence and used only as necessary.**

Please complete the consent forms in full and include **all** illnesses/conditions/medication (**including asthma)**, and sign the form where necessary.

**Medication**

Staff will not give out or carry any medication unless parents have arranged this beforehand. If your child is due to go on a trip or residential break, please ensure you have discussed any medication needs with staff in advance. Should a young carer need pain relief, we will always contact you to get permission for them to be given this. Young carers can carry and administer their own medication if you feel they are able to do so safely. This will be your responsibility. Please also ensure that any asthma inhalers are bought to every group, trip, or one to one sessions.

**Photos**

We like to take lots of photos! We ask that young carers don’t bring their own cameras because they can get lost or stolen and because we don’t have permission to take photos of all the young carersand sometimes this is due to sensitive child protection issues.

**Important:** If your child has a camera phone, they must not take photos or videos of other young people.

A selection of photos from trips will be available to view on our website.

On the annual consent form, and all activity consent forms, we ask for permission to take pictures of young carers taking part in activities, and to use these for publicity on our website and in our leaflets. We respect your decision if you do not wish to give permission for this.

**Media**Local and national media sometimes ask us if they can speak to a young carer for their newspaper, radio show or television programme. Usually this is at short notice so we keep a list of who might be interested. There is a tick box on the annual consent form. We will make sure that your child and family’s details are kept vague and full names or personal details are not used.

**Facebook and social networking**

Staff cannot accept young carers, or their families, as friends on Facebook or other similar websites. Young carers can contact us by phone, text or email and any contact will be recorded.

We are hoping to start using Facebook to communicate with our young carers. We will let you know about this via the newsletter.

**Getting additional help for young carers**

As part of the Princess Royal Trust for Carers (PRTC), we can apply for a number of funds for individuals, particularly around taking part in activities. Please speak to a member of staff if you would like further information about this.

**The advice we give**

As young carer workers we are asked a lot of questions about a lot of subjects! Of course we can’t be experts in every area or know the answer to every question. What we can do is refer to other specialist agencies and find someone who can answer your questions. We will make sure advice given on sensitive subjects, such as sexual health, drugs or alcohol, is always age appropriate and that any specific concerns are dealt with appropriately.

**YorOK child index**

We would like to register all young carers with the YorOK index. The YorOK Child Index is a managed database run by City of York Council that helps staff to:

* find out if there is any other service / organisation working with a child / young person
* share information effectively
* get advice about what to do if they have a concern about a child / young person
* find out if CAF (Common Assessment Framework) has been completed

Any child and young person could require additional support at any time in their childhood. The YorOK Child Index allows information to be shared quickly.

On your annual consent form there is a box to tick to give us permission to register your child as a young carer on the YorkOK index. If you have any questions about this please ask a member of staff.

**Talking to other people about your child**

If your child has been referred to us by another organisation we will always feed back to that agency about the progress of their referral.

Your child may discuss a variety of things with their worker. We will not tell you what they talk to us about unless they give us permission to do so. This is so that we can build up a trusting relationship with them and that they can talk openly. We do, however, encourage young people to talk to their parents.The only time we would share what had been discussed in a one to one would be if we were concerned that the young person or another young person could be hurt or harmed in some way and we would need to make sure they were safe. We would always talk to the young carer about this and tell them what was going to happen next. This may include talking to parents, and /or children’s services or health professionals.

Occasionally we need to obtain advice from other workers, and may do this without giving the name or details of the young person. However, if we feel the young person needs further support, we will speak to them about who we would like to contact and why, before doing so. We usually do this with parent’s consent but on occasions, and only if your child is able to make their own informed decisions, we may do this without the explicit consent of parents.

It is important to remember not everyone is comfortable telling others they are a young carer. Your child may see someone they already know at one of our groups or events – this is great, but please ask them to check with them before they mention this to anyone else or speak to them about young carers somewhere public.

**Supervision of cases**

In order to make sure we are working in the best possible way for your child, all staff are given supervision sessions by their line manager. This gives staff chance to discuss:

* any young people they might be worried about
* the advice they have given and explore areas they could improve
* their own feelings about any issues that have been talked about

We also regularly discuss individuals as a team in order to make sure we are all working towards the same goal. The Senior Worker also gets regular supervision from an outside agency. An agreement is signed by both organisations to ensure data protection and confidentiality guidelines are followed.

**Case files and data protection**

We keep a database of all people we work with and keep records of all our contacts with each person. All information is stored in accordance with our data protection policy. Young Carers can ask to see what records we hold about them, please contact us for further information about this if needed.

**Complaints and comments**

If you are worried, upset or concerned about anything that may arise as a result of your involvement with us, or if you want to complain about something that has happened, please speak to the Senior Worker (Liz Roberts). You can also contact the York Carers Centre manager (Carole Zagrovic) by telephone or in writing. Staff will then arrange to talk to you about your concerns. Similarly we would always like to hear about any compliments or positive comments you have.

**Contact York Carers Centre**

You can contact any of the young carer workers on their mobile phones or ring the Centre directly on **01904 715490**. You can also email **enquiries@yorkcarerscentre.co.uk** or visit our website [**www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk**](http://www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk)**.**

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