

# Young Adult Carers

## Information for Professionals



ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI  
LOTTERY FUNDED



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

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Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council  
Young Adult Carer Service

## Vision Statement

*Carers in Rhondda Cynon Taff will be empowered so that they and the person they care for receive the information, services, support & recognition needed to live as full a life as possible within the community*



## Young Adult Carer's

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A young adult carer is someone aged 18-25 years old who looks after a family member, a relative, friend or neighbour, who without help would not manage because of illness, age or disability.

Carers come from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and age groups. Being a carer is sometimes not something people plan to do, nor do they recognise they are carers making them invisible to services and the help they are entitled to, to improve their quality of life and life chances.

Many young people give up on education, training and employment to support and care for someone which can lead to financial hardship because they have no chance to build up savings or pensions for later life or even having the finances to socialise with peers.

The help a carer provides can range from shopping, cleaning etc. However, for many carers it is a 24 hour job that can be emotionally, physically and financially stressful. Feeding, bathing, dressing, toileting, medicating, supervising and giving emotional support which can lead to very little personal time for the carer and when the carer does take personal time they feel guilty and worry about leaving the cared for person alone. These demands of caring can also lead to health problems for the carer themselves.

There are 229,318 young adult carers aged between 18-24 years of age in the UK who provide care for more than 20 hours per week with a further 27,000 providing care for 50 hours. In the 2001 census there were 1,500 young adult carers alone in Rhondda Cynon Taff amounting to 5-7% of the age group. This is now anticipated to be much higher.

In the census in 2011 there were 29,640 carers of all ages within Rhondda Cynon Taff alone.

### **The term used to describe a 'carer' does not include anyone who;**

- receives payment for caring for someone
- works as a volunteer on behalf of a voluntary organisation

Young Adult Carers within Rhondda Cynon Taff make an invaluable contribution to the lives of the people they care for, their local communities and the national economy. However, their efforts and the contribution that they make often go unrecognised.

Rhondda Cynon Taff Young Adult Carers Service recognise the valuable role that these young adults play in supporting those they care for.

Young Adult Carers are a largely hidden group. Fear of judgement, intervention from social services, stigma, discrimination and bullying often result in young adult carers and their families choosing not to disclose the difficult situations that they find themselves in.

Young adult carers are passionate about the care they provide. They also recognise that caring can have a positive impact on their lives in a number of ways. While the positive outcomes of caring are important and should be recognised and valued, many young adult carers also experience a range of difficulties as a result of their responsibilities, including:

- **lack of or no time for personal activities and friendships;**
- **feeling tired, lonely, depressed and isolated;**
- **feelings of being angry and frustrated, which can sometimes be manifested through aggressive or challenging behaviour;**
- **feeling 'different', being bullied by peers and misunderstood or disbelieved by adults, teachers, tutors and other professionals;**
- **lack of confidence, self esteem; perceived lack of opportunity and hopelessness, often resulting in low aspirations.**

In addition, when engaging in learning, young adult carers, due to their caring roles/responsibilities experience particular difficulties including:

- **absence and lateness;**
- **lack of time to join extracurricular activities;**
- **bullying and restricted peer networks;**
- **tiredness resulting in lack of concentration;**
- **underachievement and poor attainment and difficulty**

Transition into adult hood is an exciting time, though not always easy. 18 -25 year olds have a range of opportunities, new experiences and the freedom to define their own futures. However, for young adult carers this is not often the case , their transition into adulthood can be very different to their peers because of their caring roles and can become more isolated as a result.

## Young Adult Carers Service

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The Young Adult Carers Service is a new service funded by the big lottery. Rhondda Cynon Taff Young Carers Service noticed that Carers when they reached the age of 18 were not engaging with Adult Services even though the support was still required. It was identified that this particular age group needed a service tailored to their specific needs.

This new service will ensure young adult carers;

- have access to a wide range of relevant information and advice;
- are able to form their own networks of support and take ownership of the service
- are supported to enter further education, employment and training.
- are able to access leisure and social opportunities
- have robust, holistic support packages based on their individual needs that may include training and development around confidence building and self esteem, learning through the outdoors, work prep and work placements
- experience seamless transition using a one stop shop approach from 'Young Carers' to 'Young Adult Carers' through to 'Adult Carers' plus also seamless transition via multi agency working such as Services for Young People ensuring no one is lost in this important developmental stage of their lives
- have a carers assessment.
- receive one to one and group support

we will work holistically with other family members and other services ensuring their voices are heard.

## Voices of Rhondda Cynon Taff Young Adult Carers

Stories told by young adult carers of their experience of caring & learning.

### Callie's Story

I started caring for my dad when I was 10 years old. My mam needed my help more and more around the house because my dad couldn't do as much as he used to when I was younger.

I was only a second pair of hands to my dad because my mam was the main carer in the house. At the age of fifteen I was introduced into young carers and I enjoyed my time out of the house even if it was for a couple of hours to have to myself and talk to people if I had enquiries about anything or just get things off my chest.

At the age of sixteen I was introduced into young adult carers, I enjoyed this even more than young carers because I was surrounded by people my age and older who were going through the same things as I was.

When I was in school I couldn't go out like my other friends because I was very shy and couldn't make friends because I felt different.

When I started college I had more time to myself and I had more leeway to do what I wanted outside and in the house as well, but sometimes I feel selfish for not helping my dad that much now because of college work and studying most of the time.

I welcomed the time out of the house that young adult carers provided and

sometimes we would go on weekend breaks and I relish these times because of the scarcity of them.

I am so grateful to young carers and adult carers for everything they have done for me. Without this support I wouldn't have the friends I have now that I can talk to freely if I need to and get advice on how to go about things.



## Leanne's Story

I started caring for my mother when I was seven years old. I did not understand that helping my mother around the house was actually caring, but when I was eight I was introduced to a young carers' project. That's when I started to understand.

Gradually I started doing more things around the house like cleaning, cooking and making sure my mother took her medication. Doing these duties stopped me from going out and socialising with friends. When I got home from school I couldn't just have food and go out, I had to make sure my mother took her medication and had eaten before thinking about myself.

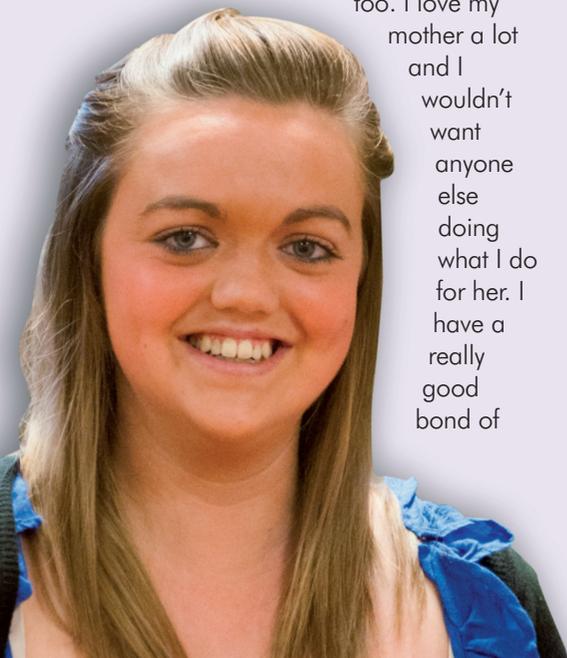
There are negatives and positives to being a carer. The negatives are that I often miss going out with my friends. As her sole carer, whatever I wish to do I have to include my mam in all my plans. But there are positives too. I love my

mother a lot and I wouldn't want anyone else doing what I do for her. I have a really good bond of

friendship and trust with my mother because I have been with her every day, caring for her.

In terms of education, some tutors at college know I am a carer and give me extensions for assignments, whereas other tutors see it as an excuse not to hand things in on time. This upsets me because I want to do well; I just don't have a lot of time to do work at home. College this year has been a nightmare. I have had to drop down from a national diploma to a certificate because it's been impossible balancing college work and caring.

I have received a lot of help and support from the carers' project since I was eight years old. Now I get support from the young adult carers group as I am 19 years old. My plans for the future are to hopefully qualify at college and get a job, so I can save for a house of my own, and get ready for my own future. I feel that some professionals need to understand that when we leave college or school at the end of the day, we don't go home and go out with friends; we go home and take care of someone until they are in bed. It's a hard job, but it's the best job ever.



## Shannon's story

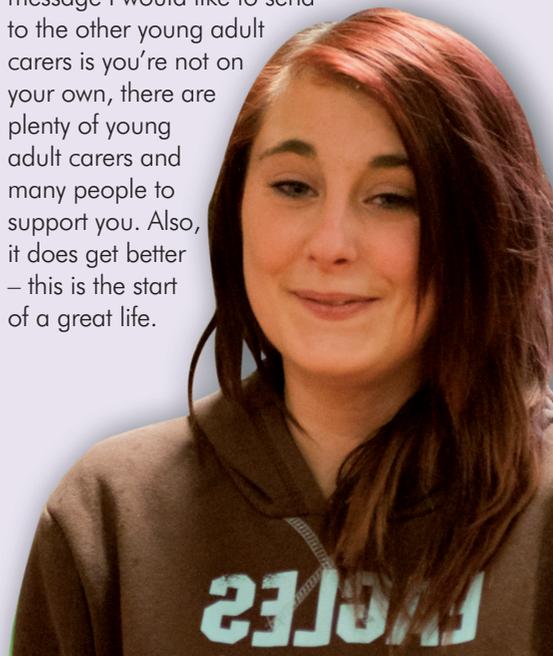
I am 16 now. I was between the ages of seven and nine when I started caring for my mother. My mother suffers from type 1 diabetes. I started to realise my mother was ill when I was nine as she stopped working and couldn't pick me up from school as much. I realised I was a carer when I came home from school one day and my mother was lying on the living room floor in a hypo. I was around nine years old then.

The impact caring had on my childhood wasn't as bad as many people think, even though my mother was a single parent, we had my nanny and bampy to help us. I did lose a little of my childhood as I had to mature quickly and had to do certain things my friends didn't know had to be done, but as I hit my teens my mother developed cancer as well. She had more hypos and she was a lot weaker physically. Sometimes I had to go to the hospital with her and she started to lose her hair with the chemo and radiotherapy, but now the cancer has gone and sometimes it gets better, but some days it goes bad again.

Sometimes it's great being a carer – I feel helpful and I feel content. The good thing is that I never ever feel lonely because me and my brother go through it together; we hold each other up when we fall. I understand that some carers don't have siblings or any support and I realise how lucky I am to have a brother.

The negative for me is when I see my brother upset, it makes me feel I haven't been there enough. It also upsets me whenever my mother gets frustrated about her illness and upset; she says, 'It's supposed to be my job to look after you, not the other way round.' That upsets me

because I know how much it upsets her. Being a carer has definitely affected my learning and attendance at school because I worry too much and some days my mother is too ill for me to go to school, but my school has been extremely helpful with the circumstances and given me a lot of support and counselling, etc. I had a lot of help and support from Cynon Valley carers, Action for Children and the young carers support team – they have helped me tremendously. My plan for the future is to be a well-known worldwide hairdresser. The message I would like to send to the other young adult carers is you're not on your own, there are plenty of young adult carers and many people to support you. Also, it does get better – this is the start of a great life.



## Further Information

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Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council recognise the very valuable role carers provide and are aware that without support carers may have difficulty coping with the emotional and physical demands of their role. This can lead them to feel isolated, unsupported and alone.

### Where can I find help, support and advice?

#### Young Adult Carer Development Worker

The Young Adult Carer Development Worker can provide a range of information and advice for young adult carers and those who work with you. This can include visiting a family to carry out a Young Adult Carer's initial assessment.

All referrals for the young adult carer's service should be sent to the Young Adult Carer Development Worker.

#### Contact us:

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Carers Support Project  
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