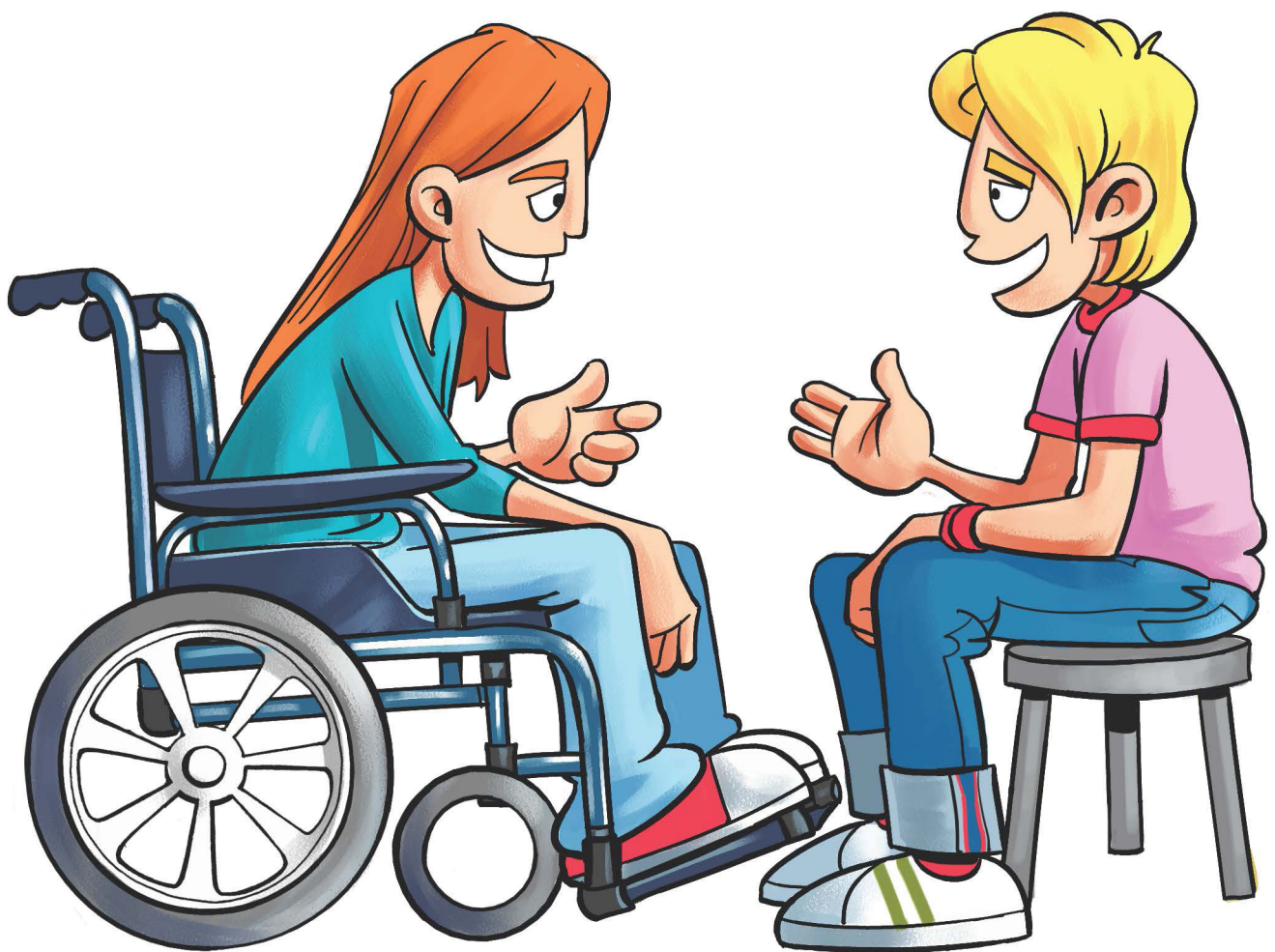


Together: A Whole Family Approach for Young Carers



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This resource has been produced by Carers Trust Scotland as an output of the European project, Together: A Whole Family Approach for Young Carers. Carers Trust Scotland is grateful to the European Commission through the Erasmus+ Programme for its generous support, which has made this resource possible.

We would also like to thank the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance and the Young Adult Carer Advisory Group for their support in shaping this resource.

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About Carers Trust Scotland

Carers Trust Scotland is part of Carers Trust, a major charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.



With locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.



TOGETHER PROJECT BACKGROUND

Carers Trust Scotland is part of an Erasmus+ funded Together: A Whole Family Approach for Young Carers project, with partners based in Belgium, Germany, Greece and Italy. The project aims to raise awareness of young carers and to support them and their families.

The project's ultimate goal is to have a positive impact on families in order to support young carers; reducing any negative impacts caring responsibilities can bring and improving young people's wellbeing, social inclusion and community engagement.

This will be done by helping young carers, their families and practitioners to adopt a whole family approach, where family members (including the person being cared for) are encouraged to communicate openly about the caring relationship.

Aim of the resource

The aim of this resource is to support practitioners in adopting a whole family approach. It provides practical steps and guidance to refer to and possibly adopt into your own practice. It is designed to support and complement the work practitioners already do across Scotland, with flexibility to help you use the steps and guidance in your own work. Ultimately, lasting positive change and support is more sustainable when working with the whole family.

Although the terminology and legislation referred to in this document applies to Scotland the experiences, challenges and recommendations are applicable across the whole of the UK.



WHY IS WORKING WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY SO IMPORTANT?

“No other way to work than a whole family approach.”

Young carer worker



About young carers and young adult carers

A young carer is someone under 18 who helps look after someone in their family, or a friend, who is ill, disabled, has a mental health condition or misuses drugs or alcohol.

Young people who are aged 16–25 and care, unpaid, for a family member or friend are known as young adult carers.

A whole family approach

Adopting a whole family approach involves practitioners supporting young carers in the context of their families. Identifying young carers' needs and considering the impact of caring responsibilities on the whole family, and what personalised support is required ensures that inappropriate caring does not take place. This holistic approach ensures that appropriate support is provided and promotes open dialogue within families about the caring relationship.

Inappropriate caring has a huge impact on young carers' health and wellbeing. A substantial factor that can contribute to this is a lack of communication within the family. Where families do not openly talk about the caring relationship, caring responsibilities may be taken on without a discussion about free choice. Where parents don't regularly talk to their children about their needs and give them the chance to signal feelings of stress and overload, young people will suffer under the caring role.

Lack of communication in the family home may also be due to a lack of awareness and identification of young carers; resulting in many remaining hidden and unsupported. Many families may not recognise their children as 'carers', some children and young people do not recognise or identify with the label, and there can be a degree of reluctance, even anxiety, among families in disclosing caring responsibilities.

Adopting a whole family approach is therefore vital to ensure that young carers and their families are identified, fully supported and empowered.

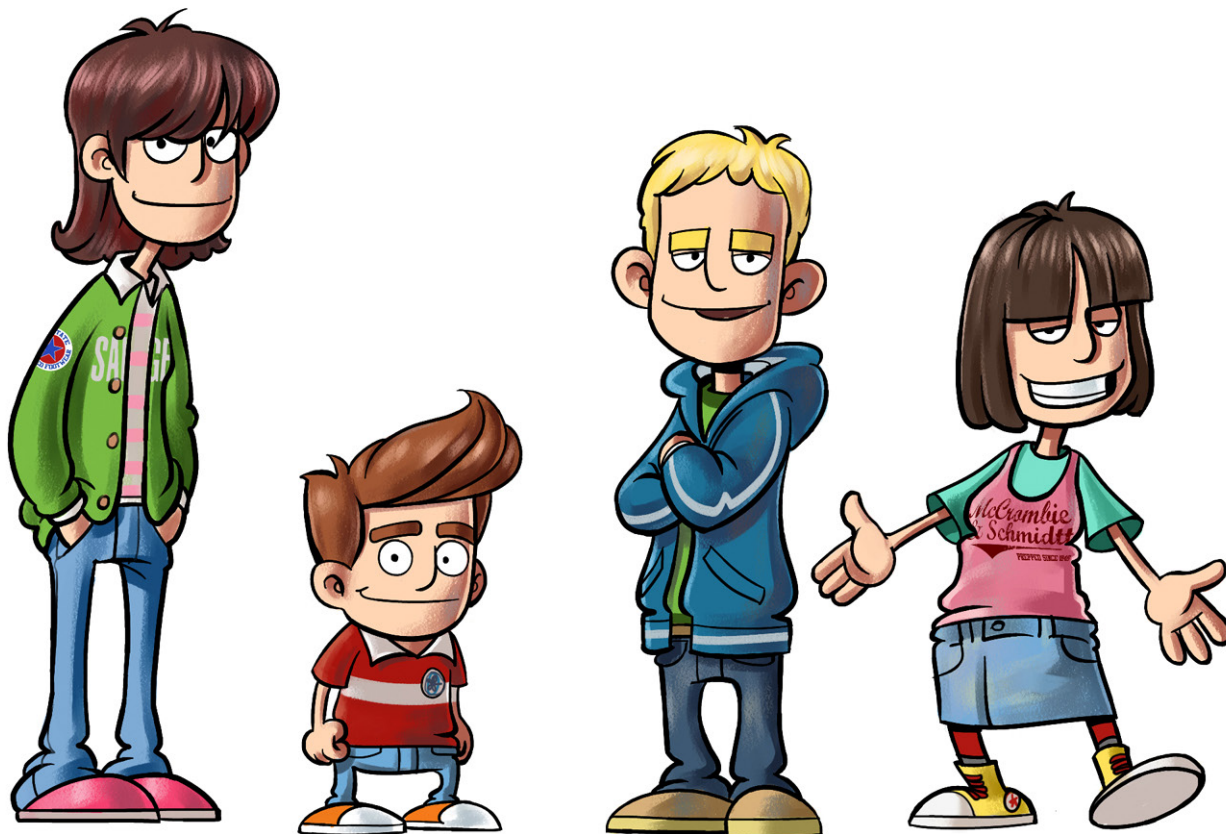
The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 was launched in April 2018 with the key aim of identifying carers and providing appropriate support. The key duty in the Act is that carers who meet eligibility criteria must be provided with support to meet their identified needs. When carers do not meet eligibility criteria for support, local authorities must set out how they will meet those needs.



Under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, young carers in Scotland have the right to a Young Carer Statement. The Act specifies there must be certain things included in support planning for carers, such as emergency and future planning, the carer's personal outcomes, how much care the carer is willing and able to provide, and whether any support could include a break from caring. This reflects a preventative approach to identify the personal outcomes of each carer and provide appropriate support, information and advice.

As a practitioner, adopting a whole family approach supports you in achieving your duty under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 further. Encouraging open dialogue raises awareness with family members about the impact caring roles can have on young people's lives. It contributes to tackling stigma that some families still feel towards caring and the involvement of services in their lives. This approach also provides the information and advice families may need, empowering them to seek out the support that can help them. Ultimately, adopting this approach ensures that young carers are not taking on inappropriate caring responsibilities, allowing them to be able to live their own life alongside their caring role.



PRACTICAL STEPS

Guide to having difficult conversations for practitioners

A lack of communication in the family home may be due to a lack of awareness and identification of young carers. As a practitioner, you can initiate these conversations and raise awareness with members of the family, to ensure that inappropriate caring does not take place.

Speaking with family members to help them understand what young caring looks like and the impact it could be having, may be a difficult conversation to have. Some families feel embarrassment or stigma attached to the involvement of services in their lives. It can also be difficult for young carers, who may want to have a more open conversation with their families but find this uncomfortable or awkward.

“ Equipped to have that conversation is a difficult ask of practitioners, often you are commenting on how people are living their family lives. ”

Young carer worker



When having that initial conversation with families, consider:

- Using services' involvement in a positive light, and reinforcing to families that further information and support is available to help them.



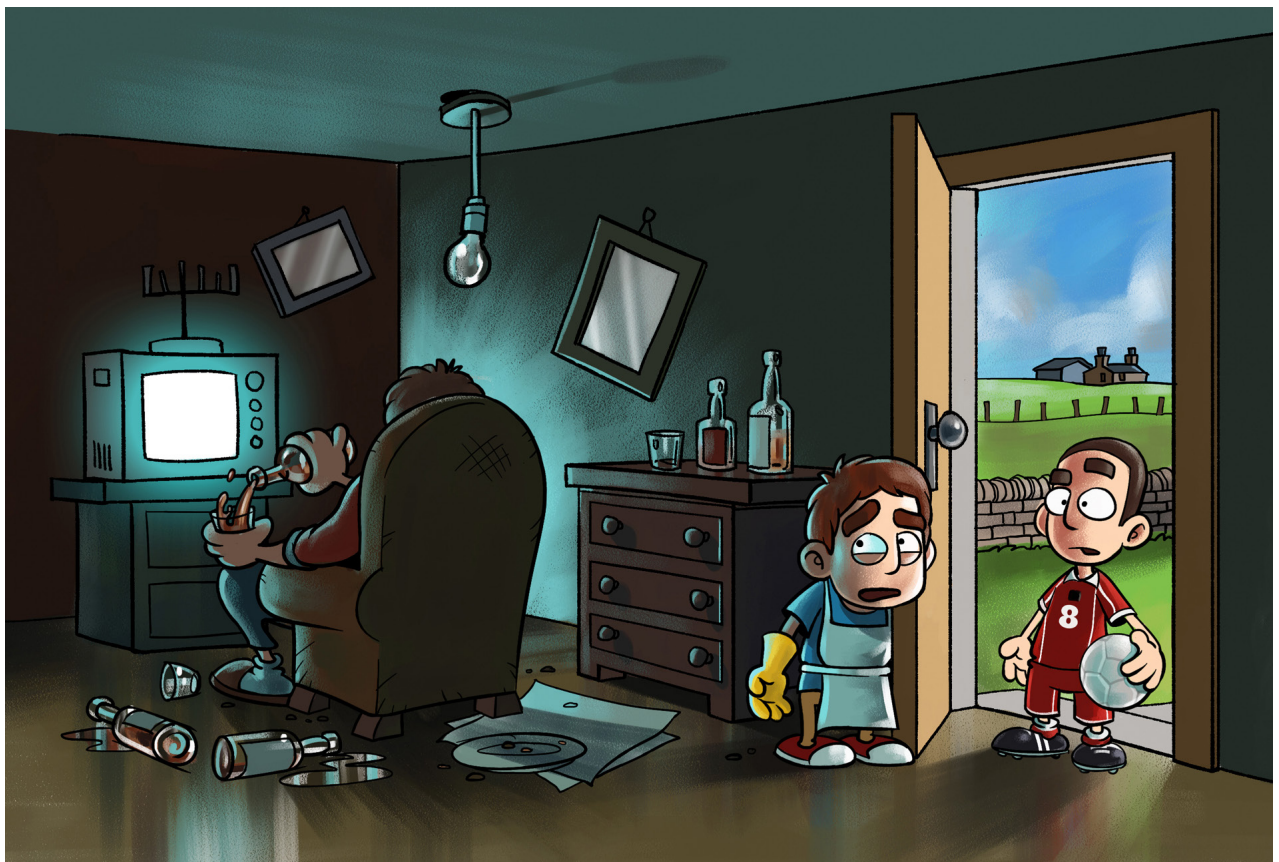
“ Yes caring has an impact on the young person's life, but we as a service are here to support them with this. As a family, you can support one another too. ”

Family worker

- Having information and advice on hand for families – it is important to remember that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Families are all varied, and it is important to have an awareness of this when supporting young carers.
- Recognition of caring roles and the need for greater support can make a huge difference to families. Whether your role is to primarily support young carers, giving family members the chance to discuss their experiences can establish good working relationships and break down stigma they may feel towards services' involvement.



- Family members may be upset. Discussing caring roles in a family can be difficult and it is important to stress that it is OK to be emotional.
- Conflict within families. The resource Equal Partners in Care refers to conflict and tensions arising in families. This resource is a great tool to reflect on your own communication as a practitioner and offers tips to help facilitate these conversations when there is conflict involved. Please note that not all situations will be safe to involve family members and child protection and safeguarding must take precedence.
- Different family relationships and the impact of services' involvement on these in the long term. How are young carers feeling about their family members? How can these conversations ensure that all family members are comfortable?



Useful resources



NHS Education for Scotland and Scottish Social Services Council: Equal Partners in Care

<https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/22660/person-centred-care-zone/carers/equal-partners-in-care>

Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service (PKAVS): Guidance Notes for Professionals

<https://carers.org/downloads/resources-pdfs/perthandkinrossyoungcarersstatementguidancenotes.pdf>

Skills for Care: Working with Families

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/ongoing-learning-and-development/Working-with-families/Working-with-families.aspx>

Different family structures

Families Outside: Supporting Families Affected by Imprisonment

<https://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/>

NSPCC: Children and Families at Risk

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/children-and-families-at-risk>

One Parent Families Scotland

<https://opfs.org.uk/>

Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs

<https://www.sfad.org.uk/>

The Children's Society

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/professionals/young-carers/resources-for-people-working-with-young-carers>

Working Families

<https://workingfamilies.org.uk/>

Facilitating open dialogue within families

Some family members may find it difficult to accept that a young person in their family is a young carer. In addition to having those initial conversations, resources can also be shared to help contribute to a greater understanding of what young caring looks like and the impact it could be having on their young family member.

“ I struggle to speak to my family as I see them on a daily basis so it’s awkward. ”
Young carer



Resources can also help practitioners who may have limited capacity to work directly with families. Signposting families to useful resources can help raise awareness of who young carers are and the impact this role could be having.

Let’s Stay Together project resources

Carers Trust Scotland: Caring within the Family: Starting that Conversation, Together

We have created conversation cards, with the help of members of our Young Adult Carer Advisory Group. Our conversation cards are easy to use for starting meaningful conversations about the impact caring roles are having in the family. They can be used together as a family or used individually to reflect on key questions. Each card has one discussion point on one side, and information on the other! Visit [Carers.org/resources/all-resources](https://carers.org/resources/all-resources).



Partner Resources

Partners in the project have also created key resources to help raise awareness of young carers and the impact of caring roles in the family. You can find these resources at <https://togethereuproject.eu/>.

Useful resources

Connecting Young Carers: Is your Child a Young Carer?

<https://www.connectingyoungcarers.org/what-we-do/our-publications.aspx>

Sibs: Helping Parents Support Young Siblings

www.sibs.org.uk/supporting-young-siblings/professionals/helping-parents-support-young-siblings/

Young Carers Edinburgh: We Care, Do You?

www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUDpvR7lrIY&feature=youtu.be

Young Scot: What Does a Young Carer Look Like?

<https://young.scot/get-informed/national/what-does-a-young-carer-look-like>

“ Fallin Primary in Stirling hosted a ‘Bounce Back Breakfast’ to welcome children and families back to school after the new year. This was an opportunity for the school, families and local partners to get to know each other and for families to know more about what support is available in their local community. Stirling Young Carers service were invited along to this event to raise awareness of young carers and their service. This was a great opportunity for whole families to gain more insight into the needs of young carers and support available both locally and nationally. ”

Young carer service



Learning about specific conditions

Resources written for young people can also help support young carers in learning more about the illness or condition of the person they care for. We've given some examples below but contact any charity which supports people with a particular condition to see what they have produced for young carers.

MS Society: MS in Your Life - a Guide for Young Carers

<https://www.mssociety.org.uk/care-and-support/resources-and-publications/publications-search/ms-in-your-life-a-guide-for-young-carers-booklet>

MND Buddies

www.mndbuddies.org/

Living with Huntington's Disease: A Guide for Young People Aged 13+

<https://hdscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Living-with-Huntingtons-disease-13.pdf>

Guide to Parkinson's for Teenagers

www.parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support/guide-parkinsons-teenagers

“ As a service, we always ask young people what they need and use these organisations and resources to provide personalised support and information. Young carers often want clear communication and a strong understanding of the condition or illness of their cared-for person. We support young carers to initiate that conversation with their families. These resources can help prepare everyone for that. ”

Young carer service



Young Carer Statement

Young Carer Statement

A Young Carer Statement consists of an outcomes based conversation about the young carer's personal circumstances. It must include information on the impact of caring on their wellbeing and whether the care provided is appropriate.

Local authorities have a duty under the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 to provide a Young Carer Statement to young carers. This ensures that young carers are identified, their needs are assessed and ultimately, inappropriate caring is prevented.

This duty provides the opportunity for practitioners to engage with young carers about their family relationships and facilitate open dialogue in the home. Small steps to adopt a whole family approach include the types of questions being asked at initial referral stage, and practical ways to speak with families about caring roles.

When carrying out a Young Carer Statement, consider:

- Providing a safe space for young people to share their experiences and opinions privately, particularly if there are differences of opinion in the household.
- Asking young carers if they would like to involve family members at this initial stage. Remember that young carers have ownership of their Young Carer Statement, so it is important to ask young people what they would like. Offering the opportunity for members of the family to have their say and share their experiences can help practitioners work with the whole family to decide on meaningful, personalised actions to support all.
- What information will support the wellbeing of the whole family as well as the young carer? A consideration of the needs of the carer and the person they care for, and what appropriate support is required, ensures practitioners adopt a holistic view.

Good practice examples

Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership: Young Carer Strategy 2019/2022. Delivering Better Outcomes for Young Carers and their Families

https://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/sites/default/files/publications/Young%20Carer%20Strategy%202019%20-%202022_1_0_0.pdf

Perth and Kinross Council and Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Services (PKAVS): Young Carer Statement

[Carers.org/resources/all-resources/40-perth-and-kinross-young-carers](https://carers.org/resources/all-resources/40-perth-and-kinross-young-carers)

Recording outcomes for the whole family

Personal outcomes approach

Through the Young Carer Statement, practitioners ensure that personal outcomes that matter to young people are identified and recorded, and that appropriate support is put in place. Practitioners can build on this personal outcomes approach when supporting the whole family.

Recording personalised outcomes ensures that initial conversations with a family are not only recorded, but actions are taken that provide personalised and effective support.

The starting point is the initial conversation with family members, with open discussions to identify what is important and planning activities and/or support from there. Responding to the needs of the family should never overshadow the needs of the young carer. This approach can instead complement the personal outcomes approach that practitioners already adopt when carrying out a Young Carer Statement.

Actions taken are of course dependent on staff capacity but should always adopt a holistic view. It may include referral to adult support services, or young carer services for siblings. It could be empowering young carers to learn more about the specific illness or condition and supporting the family to have those conversations. Running whole family workshops may provide families with the space they need to be supported by practitioners in having difficult and, at times, uncomfortable conversations. Find out more about running workshops at <https://togethereuproject.eu/>.



It is crucial that any action taken is later reviewed and evaluated. When evaluating the impact of services' involvement in family life, consider:

- Reviewing support plans within agreed timeframes with all family members. Honesty and trust are essential to this process in that families must be empowered to speak openly about their progress and give honest feedback (see Cook, A and Miller, E (2012), Talking Points: Personal Outcomes Approach: A Practical Guide for Organisations (Joint Improvement Team)).
- Your role as a reflective practitioner including writing up case studies of working with families and reviewing the learning that has occurred. Could you share these case studies with colleagues? What role could networking opportunities play here, for example with the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance?
- A range of evidence – an important factor in the process. Using stories and quotes alongside data reinforces the impact of this work.



Family action plan

This action plan can be developed alongside a Young Carer Statement or during whole family workshops.

Practitioners can use this action plan to take note of issues, perspectives and experiences of all individuals, and develop key actions to support the whole family.

The wording used in this action plan is strength-based; focussing on what matters to individuals within a family and what support would help strengthen this. It is important that this plan includes jargon free language to support a shared understanding.

Remember that reviewing this action plan within agreed timescales is crucial.



What matters to our family?	What planned activities/ support do we need?	Have our agreed actions been achieved?



Useful resources

Scottish Social Services Council: Understanding Personal Outcomes

https://learn.sssc.uk.com/personal_outcomes/Personal_Outcomes_booklet_p2_FV_GM.pdf

Talking Points: Personal Outcomes Approach, A Practical Guide for Organisations

www.academia.edu/1854811/Talking_Points_Personal_Outcomes_Approach_A_Practical_Guide_for_Organisations

The Learning Exchange: Welcome to the Outcomes Toolbox

<https://lx.iriss.org.uk/outcomestoolbox>

Whole Family Pathway: A Resource for Practitioners

www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/whole_family_pathway_2016_1st_1_.pdf



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[Youtube.com/user/CarersTrust](https://www.youtube.com/user/CarersTrust)

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