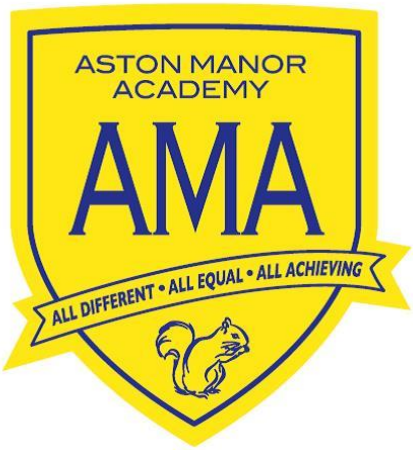
EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST



YOUNG CARERS POLICY

Review Date: July 2019
To be Reviewed: July 2020
Agreed: Policy Lead
Policy Lead: Sandra Coleman

YOUNG CARERS POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Equitas Academies Trust is committed to enabling young carers to access education and support. This policy aims to ensure young carers at the Trust are identified and offered appropriate support to access the education and other services to which they are entitled.

2. DEFINITION

Young carers are children and young people who provide care to another family member. The level of care they provide would usually be undertaken by an adult and as a result of this they take on a level of responsibility that is inappropriate to their age and development. This is likely to have a significant impact on their childhood experiences.

The person they look after will have one or more of the following:

- Physical disability
- Sensory disability
- Learning disability
- Mental health problem
- Chronic illness
- Substance misuse problem

They may also be taking on a caring role if they are:

- Growing up with disabled siblings
- In a family where there has been recent serious or terminal illness diagnosed
- Coping with illness in wider family

3. CARING TASKS

A young carer will take on additional responsibilities to those appropriate to their age and development. They might be providing the main care or sharing responsibilities with another family member.

The caring tasks that a young carer has to deal with can range from:

Nursing care: giving medication, injections, changing dressings, assisting with mobility etc.

Personal intimate care: washing, dressing, feeding and helping with toilet requirements.

Emotional care: being compliant, monitoring the emotional state of the person cared for, listening, being a shoulder to cry on, supporting a parent through depression and trying to cheer them up. In cases where a young carer is supporting an adult with drug/alcohol misuse problem, they will often take a leading role in trying to keep that person safe.

Domestic care: doing a substantial amount of housework, cooking, shopping, cleaning, laundry etc.

Financial care: running the household, bill paying, benefit collection etc.

Child care: taking responsibility for younger siblings in addition to their other caring responsibilities.

Communication & interpreting: communicating on behalf of the adult or family with agencies/services and interpreting for a language or sensory impairment.

4. POSSIBLE EFFECT ON EDUCATION

Equitas Academies Trust acknowledges that there are likely to be young carers among its pupils, and that being a young carer can have an adverse effect on a young person's access to education and attainment.

Because of their responsibilities at home, a young carer might:

- Have erratic or poor school attendance
- Arrive late at school
- Decline in academic achievement
- Not complete homework
- Not attend out of school activities or school trips
- Lack motivation
- Have back problems, aches and pains, patterns of being generally unwell
- Appear withdrawn, isolated from peers, have difficulties socialising
- Show, anxiety, depression, anger, self-harming behaviour
- Have poor concentration (due to worrying about the person who is cared for)
- Have poor home/ school relationship
- Have parents who do not attend parents evening or lack overall contact with school
- Have false signs of maturity, assuming an adult role in social situations or have difficulty enjoying childhood activities
- Show physical signs such as poor school uniform or loss of weight

It also might be difficult to engage their parents (due to fears about child being taken into care, fears about their condition being misunderstood or their parenting skills being called into question). The Academy which the pupil attends may need to make alternative arrangements for communication about attainment.

5. SUPPORT OFFERED

The Trust acknowledges that young carers may need extra support to ensure they have equal access to education and opportunities offered throughout the period they spend at any Academy within the Trust. Through this policy, the Trust is giving the message that young carers' education and school experience is important.

The designated leads for young carers within the Trust are those responsible for Special Educational Needs of pupils and Family Support Workers within each Academy. Appropriate staff will ensure that information is shared with Academy staff in order that there is an awareness of the young carer's situation.

Staff will:

- Provide young carers with opportunities to speak to someone in private, and will not discuss their situation in front of their peers.
- Appreciate that young carers will not discuss their family situation unless they feel comfortable. The young person's caring role will be acknowledged and respected.

- Treat young carers in a sensitive and child-centred way, upholding confidentiality.
- Ensure young carers can access all available support services within the Academy and through other appropriate services/agencies.
- Follow safeguarding procedures regarding any young carer at risk of significant harm due to inappropriate levels of caring.
- Promote discussion and learning in all areas of the curriculum when appropriate to facilitate fuller understanding, acceptance of and respect for the issues surrounding illness, disability and caring.
- Recognise that flexibility may be needed when responding to the needs of young carers. Available provision includes (but is not limited to):
    - Access to a telephone during breaks and lunchtime, to phone home
    - Negotiable deadlines for homework/coursework (when needed and if possible)
    - Access to homework club
    - Lunchtime detentions rather than after school detentions (where possible)
    - Arrangements for schoolwork to be sent home (where there is a genuine crisis).
    - Any approved absence for a young carer will be time limited (DfES 2006)
    - Access for parents with impaired mobility
    - Alternative communication options for parents who are sensory impaired or housebound
    - Advice to parents if there are difficulties in transporting a young carer to school

Many young carers may be late to school and unable to complete their homework on time. When at school young carers may have difficulty concentrating due to anxiety about the person they care for. In addition to academic problems, many young carers have difficulty integrating socially within the school environment, with some being teased or bullied by their peers.

In spite of these problems the majority of young carers will not be identified as such by staff, partly because young carers and their families often remain silent about their caring responsibilities due to fears of the reactions of statutory agencies and peers and the stigma surrounding some health conditions, addictions and disabilities. They may also be unaware that help is likely to be available.

Principle 4 from the *Key Principles of Practice* (The Children's Society 2008) recommends that: *"Schools and colleges take responsibility to identify young carers at an early stage and have a named staff member with lead responsibility for young carers to ensure that they have the same access to a full education and career choices as their peers; and to be responsible for promoting and co-ordinating the support they need in school and liaising with other agencies as appropriate."*

6. LEAD FOR YOUNG CARERS

This senior role is an integral part of the responsibilities shared by the leadership teams within the Trust. The role of the Lead for Young Carers is to oversee the policy and provision for young carers in the Trust. The person undertaking the role should have sufficient influence in the Trust to advocate for young carers and their families.

This description is presented as a role rather than a job description as a leadership team could share these tasks to manage identification, provision and support for young carers and their families.

However, whether the role is shared or not, one person should hold the title, take the lead and network with other agencies so that each Academy within the Trust benefits fully from local and national support and guidance available. The Designated Senior Person across the Trust who holds this responsibility is Sandra Coleman however the family support workers within each Academy will also take responsibility for this role.

Key tasks and responsibilities

- As a member of the Trust leadership team, ensure appropriate strategies, policies and procedures are in place to proactively identify young carers, ensuring that their needs are recognised and met.
- To ensure that those young people who have caring responsibilities are supported effectively and enabled to meet Every Child Matters outcomes and that they have the same access to educational and career choices as their peers.
- To lead on establishing staff induction, training and information to enable staff to:
    - recognise the signs that a child or young person has caring responsibilities,
    - increase their understanding of the impact of such responsibilities,
    - ensuring that they are aware of the identified school lead with responsibility for young carers, and
    - help young carers and their families understand how this support can be accessed.

- To ensure that the curriculum promotes a full understanding and acceptance of, and respect for, the issues and needs of young carers and their families, promoting positive images and challenging stereotypes around disability and impairment.
- Monitor relevance of existing Trust policies e.g. attendance, anti-bullying, procedures and practice on the well-being and specific needs of young carers. Report strengths, weaknesses and recommendations to leadership teams and Trustees for inclusion in each Academy development plan.
- Use and evaluate existing data effectively to monitor the welfare and progress made by young carers. Highlight barriers to achievement such as poor attendance and punctuality, failure to complete homework, non-engagement with extended or extra-curricular activities and work with appropriate colleagues to remove / reduce these barriers enabling young carers to achieve their full potential.
- Establish a first point of contact for young carers and their families within each Academy, encouraging young carers and their families to self-identify and to discuss any barriers they face and additional help they may need.
- Ensure that young carers and their families receive coordinated support by communicating effectively and working in partnership with internal and external support agencies.

REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy is reviewed and amended annually by the Trust.

Date of next review: July 2020