



Student Carers

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This Union notes: There are around seven million carers in the UK, three out of five of us will become carers at some stage during our lives. This number is expected to increase by 60% in the next decade (Carers UK, 2001).

Carers are those who provide unpaid care for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or addiction. While there are no exact figures for the UK the 2011 census shows there are more than 375,000 young adult carers in the UK aged 14-25.

The range and scale of caring will vary greatly but may include:

- Practical tasks, such as cooking, housework and shopping
- Physical care, such as helping someone out of bed
- Personal care, such as helping someone dress
- Helping to give someone medication, collecting prescription
- Managing the family budget
- Helping someone communicate
- Looking after brothers and sisters
- Providing emotional support

Providing emotional support, particularly where the person in need of care has mental health or substance misuse issues, can be very challenging and often involves sporadic

increased and unplanned peaks of caring responsibilities which are very difficult to balance with everyday commitments.

In September 2013 NUS launched the Learning with Care report, which was the first ever national piece of research into the experiences of Student Carers, they highlighted a lack of support for Student Carers. Student Carers are a majorly under-represented group on campuses and although more than three quarters of those surveyed had explained their

caring role to their college or university, nearly half (45%) of them reported that despite this, there was still no one there to give them support.

- A significant number of students have unpaid caring responsibilities for a family member or friend, many of which are unaware of their status as a Carer and do not know about the support available
- Carers face the increased likelihood of lower educational attainment, prior and during Higher Education without support, this can be attributed to Student Carers finding it harder to balance their studies and caring responsibilities
- Carers often struggle with aspects of university included but not limited to meeting deadlines and undertaking placements during university, due to their caring responsibilities
- Some Carers continue to care at a distance or return home regularly in order to meet caring responsibilities
- Student Carers overall experience of university can be very different from that of their peers
- Currently there is no standalone policy at the university governing support for Student Carers which mean Student Carers are unaware of support available
- Student Carers are unaware of the responsibilities of the university and their own responsibility's for achieving status as a Carer and the support that entails
- There is currently no representation for Student Carers or Parents within the Students' Union

The University have made huge improvements for the support of Student Carers on campus. This has included:

- Confirmation of a question regarding caring responsibilities on enrolment forms
- Exploration of an emergency fund to assist students in crisis to get home
- Carers First to hold monthly clinics in the wellbeing centre starting academic year 2018-19
- Inclusion in personal tutor training regarding Student Carers with signposting on services available on campus
- Creation of an open day guide for Student Carers
- Exploration of creation of a Learning support plan to specifically to support Student Carers

This Union Believes:

- Student Carers face significant challenges whilst studying at university. This can greatly impact on their studies and their student experience. In order to support student carers a dedicated representative position should be created within the Students' Union so that the views and concerns of this group of students can be represented. This representative is needed to help address current and future needs and concerns of students with caring responsibilities.
- Current Student Carers are unaware of where to access support, in addition potential Student Carers are unaware of their possible designation as a Student Carers. This can be addressed by having a standalone policy at the university to ensure Student Carers understand their own responsibilities and those of the institution and where to access support and any prerequisites such as a clear definition of a Student Carer.
- Students Carers should be recognised as a vulnerable group alongside other underrepresented groups which face significant barriers to Higher Education and full participation in the student experience. By sharing information between the Students' Union and the university of who student carers are the Students' Union can identify which of its members are Student Carers and monitor participation in Students' Union activities and events.

This Union Resolves to:

1. Vice President Welfare and Community to create an elected voluntary representative position for Student Carers/Parents within the Mature Students Group at the Student's Union at the start of the next academic year.
2. Student Leader team to review this position at the end of the next academic year with the aim to create a dedicated volunteer officer position in the Campaigns Network or where deemed appropriate.
3. Student's Union President to Identify an appropriate Student Leader (Initially the Vice President Welfare and Community) at the start of each academic term as the point of contact and who is to be responsible for representing the views of Student Carers
4. Create an information portal on the Student's Union website on current support available and where to access this support by September 2018

5. Vice President Welfare and Community to monitor participation of Carers in Students' Union activities on an annual basis
6. Represent the views of Student Carers to the university and external organisations.
7. Support the university in the creation of a standalone Student Carers policy by January 2019 with inclusion of Student Carers in relevant policy's such as but not limited to access agreements, extenuating circumstances and student engagement and participation policy by the end of that academic year.
8. Work in close partnership with the university to ensure students can access support across the intuition

References:

Carers UK (2001), It could be you – a report on the chances on becoming a carer (Carers UK)

Census 2011, Office for National Statistics