



# Initiating Conversation

A professionals guide to discussing young  
carer support with parents/guardians

# Introduction



Pronounced: ih-mah-goh

**Noun: A butterfly or moth's final stage of metamorphosis. The state it attains through its process of growth and development.**

Imago is a social action charity providing services and support to individuals and communities in Kent, East Sussex, and London since 1964.

We have delivered young carer projects across the South-East for over a decade and are very passionate about empowering their lives and providing additional support to their families.

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# Identifying a young carer



Depending on your role, you may identify a potential young carer in a classroom, youth group, one-to-one support, home visit or even a waiting room ahead of discussing their need for support with a parent/guardian.

When speaking to a child with possible caring responsibilities, it's important to ask open-ended questions that explore their lived experiences while being mindful to their emotional vulnerability.

Focus on understanding the types of care they may provide, the impact this could have on their wellbeing and education, and how they feel about their role. Inquire about their support systems and what help they might need or want.

Below are some questions you could ask that may lead to further discussions with a parent/guardian about our service:

"Can you describe the kinds of things you do to help your (family member)?"

"Are there any tasks that you find quite difficult or challenging?"

"How does doing this affect your schoolwork or studies?"

"How much time do you think you spend each day or week caring for (family member)?"

"Do you feel that you have enough time for yourself and your own hobbies?"

# Discussing support



It's important that conversations we have with parents about the their child(ren) possibly being a young carer, are not to make them feel in any way inadequate, judged, guilty or unable to cope with circumstances and should therefore be dealt with sensitively.

Be mindful that there may be a history of trauma or illness within the family that may result in them feeling understandably protective of their child(ren) and parenting. This could be because they want to give them a happier or more stable homelife than they themselves may have experienced, or want to prevent their child from 'doing' the things they may have had to do as a child for their family and therefore may not see the emotional impact.

Some parents/guardians may not want their child to be 'labelled' a young carer and worry this could mean their child(ren) being removed from the home or adding to the 'problem'. Giving reassurances where appropriate and explaining expectations and the benefits of referring their child(ren) as a young carer is key.

The language used is very important. If you have identified that a child may be a young carer but feel the parent/guardian may not be receptive, perhaps avoid the direct approach.



**"I think your child needs help from the young carer service, I'll make a referral for an assessment"**

**"I can see how that must be quite difficult at times. Here's a service I feel may benefit your child"**



Please refer them to our parent/guardian resource should they wish to either self-refer or find out more about our service.

# Benefits of referring



When discussing a referral with a parent/guardian it's important to set expectations. While regular clubs and activities may not be guaranteed due to funding, the benefits of being referred could be more around the positive impact on their; education, wellbeing and social interactions in addition to further referrals to perhaps relieve some of their caring tasks.

## **Education**

We provide free Young Carers Awareness Training to all professionals as well as assemblies in schools ensuring that young carers are normalised, identified and supported. One way is for the young carers to attend an in-school support group. These regular groups have shown to improve attendance and attainment. We may be able to support or signpost families to receive help with transport, grants and crisis support to ensure their child isn't missing in education.

## **Wellbeing**

Depending on the outcome of their carers assessment, we could offer short-term 1:1 support (this is not counselling) to set some goals as well as offer our monthly online 'Time out Tuesday' sessions open to all registered young carers aged 5+. These give them a chance to connect with others, play games, get creative and have fun.

## **Social interaction**

Through 1:1 support, if needed, we can identify and find any hobbies, clubs or interests the young carer wishes to access. We often hear that young carers would like more quality one-on-one time with their parent, particularly if their cared for is a sibling, this can help with any anger or resentment.

# What to expect



The majority of our referrals come from schools and other professionals which is preferable however, we do also accept referrals from parents and guardians. When you are completing a referral, you need to have gained verbal consent from the parent/guardian for each child identified and ideally have had a conversation with the young person(s) so they're aware.

If not completed at the referral stage, we also require a separate consent form completed by the consenting adult to gather additional information about their child. This includes; their child's health needs, any allergies or dietary requirements, whether they're happy for us to inform their school/college as well as how they're happy for us to contact them e.g. calls only, emails only etc. If further information is needed in order to progress the referral, our team will be in touch either with the family or yourselves.

Every referred child is offered a carers assessment (see overleaf) Once the young person has completed their assessment, we will be in touch with the parent/guardian to advise of the outcome and support to be offered. This could be different for each child referred e.g. youngest child might be providing a lower level of care and less of a negative impact whereas their eldest child could be providing a higher level of care if has more responsibilities and experiences a greater emotional impact.

We will also be in touch with you the referrer should we have difficulty making contact with the family to avoid closure.



# Young carers assessment



It is the right of every young carer to be offered a carers assessment, this is essentially a questionnaire to cover all scenarios so some questions may not feel relevant to them or reflect their family circumstances.

This along with the information stated on the referral form as well as conversations with the Support Coordinator, will help us identify the level of support needed for each referred child. The assessment ensures young carers are heard in decisions affecting them and assists in planning the necessary support. The assessment considers the whole family's needs, particularly the person being cared for, and aims to prevent young carers from taking on excessive responsibilities.

## **Key points of the assessment include:**

- Level of caring responsibilities considering age
- The care provided and the impact on carer's wellbeing
- Support to balance caring with own health and wellbeing
- Access to local support and provision
- Possible breaks from caring responsibilities

Young carers can refuse an assessment, but support may be limited without one. Assessments are offered yearly until the carer turns 18, transitioning to an adult carer support plan if desired and where possible.

Assessments can be conducted by a member of staff either at home, school or college, over the phone, virtual call or out in the community. They could also be completed with another trusted professional or can be completed alone, depending on age.

# Contact us



If you would like to know more about our young carer services or discuss a family before submitting a referral:

**Website:** [www.imago.community/young-carers-services](http://www.imago.community/young-carers-services)

**Call :** 0300 111 111 0

**Email:** [youngcarers@imago.community](mailto:youngcarers@imago.community)

Our team will only be able to discuss a particular young person if we have parental consent to share information.

Please note that our support would depend on the outcome of the child's carers assessment therefore we would not be able to advise what support could be offered ahead of a referral made.

You can follow us on our social media platforms for news and updates in your area:

