

3rd August 2020

Dear Wellbeing Leader

As you are well aware, there are many children in our community that are doing it tough they are not safe from harm, they don't do as well as their peers at school and they often live in challenging and complex families.

Furthermore, they don't have the capacity to change their situation, or the wherewithal to access the support they need to live in ways that enable them to have access to the 'good things' that most children take for granted.

One group of children for whom this is their reality are children with significant caring responsibilities for family members, often referred to as young carers. This group of children are significant in number, with support agencies estimating there are young carers in every classroom in South Australia.

In my recently released report *Take Care – What can be done at school to support children and young people with caring responsibilities at home*, I have documented the lived experience of young carers at school and the perspectives of teachers on how well they believe they can identify and support young carers, at an individual and whole school level.

We know that the educational outcomes for children with caring responsibilities are poorer than those of their peers, and that they face unique issues and barriers at school. They therefore require a specialised response within the school environment to support them to fulfil their educational potential.

However, too often agencies and teachers have described situations where the support for children and young people with caring responsibilities is ad hoc and too vested in individual teachers.

In this report educators have called for a whole of school approach that includes, at a minimum, a general understanding of students with caring responsibilities, a review of system policies and practices through the lens of a young carer, and identifying young carer school champions. Ideally there would also be a lead key contact to raise awareness in the school, as well as a go-to contact for teachers and students who is able to liaise with vulnerable families.

Educators, support agencies and young carers and their families, are calling for a fundamental shift in culture and practice to meet our collective obligations to children and young people who are doing it tough.

In particular they are calling on schools to support young carers to be confident, resourced, resilient citizens who feel they belong, and who are able to participate in their family, school and broader communities.

If I can be of any help with respect to this report, or other areas of my work that you might be interested, in please let me know.

The direct link is <https://www.ccyp.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Screen-Take-Care-Report-4.pdf>

Yours sincerely,



Helen Connolly
Commissioner for Children and Young People