

Information for the Community Well Being Policy Development Group from Ms Cathy Kingham of Devon Carers.

In 2001 there were an estimated 175,000 (195,000 in 2011 census in the UK – need to bear in mind that young carers may move on and not be young carers after a time (if the cared for passes away for instance), or more importantly, have not been identified as young carers and receive no services) young carers in the UK, with around a third caring for a person with a mental illness. It is likely the actual number is higher and research has suggested that around a third of young carers are involved in inappropriate and excessive caring with consequent knock-on effects on schooling and other key areas of their lives.

Devon Carers has a specialist team who work with young carers, addressing the needs of young people providing care and support to other family members, primarily a parent or a sibling. Young carers are put in a position of great responsibility at a very young age; dealing with situations that many adults would find a challenge. These children and young people have to cope in difficult circumstances, often not only looking after their relative but also helping to bring up siblings and run a household. Young carers also are less likely to achieve exam grades at school, have poor attendance at school, may self-harm and are more stressed than children generally. They are generally a very vulnerable group.

Devon Carers provides a consistent approach to the way in which young carers are supported across Devon. The types of services young carers currently benefit from include:

- Respite activities, including residential weekends
- Drop-ins/ Clubs
- School clubs
- Family support
- Advocacy
- Information and signposting
- Counselling
- Transport to and from activities