

Giving Young Carers a Voice

Quarterly Insight Report

What we're hearing

April - June 2026



Giving Young Carers a Voice

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About Luminus

Luminus is a Surrey based independent community interest company which exists to empower people to have their voices heard. We are an enterprise driven by social value, that invests in the local community. We help organisations provide equity of access, and the best services possible, through the inclusive involvement of local people. We achieve this through bespoke projects, co-design, contracts, mentoring, research, and training. Our vision is to create a society where everyone's voice is heard so we all receive the support we need for our wellbeing.

About Giving Carers a Voice

If people look after anyone who couldn't manage without their help they are a carer.

Giving Carers a Voice listen to the experiences of carers (of all ages) to ensure their views are heard in the design and delivery of the services they use. These experiences form the basis of this report.

The lived experiences quoted in this report are in people's own words and therefore reflect their personal perspective and perception, not the views or opinions of Luminus as an organisation. When we are engaging with people and the individual has incorrect information about a provider or service, we endeavour to provide them with up-to-date correct information. We also offer signposting for other local support services and organisations where relevant and appropriate.

We check in with the group leader if someone has said something we are unsure of or concerned about to ensure that the person is being supported and not alone. We also ensure that support services are aware of appropriate treatment pathways and local support available. If we hear a case of concern regarding a person's safety, we immediately signpost the sharer to the appropriate body and escalate the case with the provider/commissioner.

We have signposted young carers to the following places:

- Surrey Young Carers
- Mindworks
- Eikon
- YoungMinds
- Home School Link Workers
- MyTime For Young Carers
- Surrey Youth Voice
- Leatherhead Youth Project
- Guildford Shakespeare Company
- Jigsaw.



Engagement April – June 2026

This quarter, we have visited the following places to speak to young carers and hidden carers to hear their experiences and to signpost to the relevant services where needed/appropriate:

- Esher Rugby
- Boxgrove School
- Trekkers parent carer group
- Furzefield School
- Surrey Young Carers (SYC) Juniors Gatwick STEM Centre
- SYC Seniors Gatwick STEM Centre
- St Peters School
- East Surrey College
- Memory Café
- Howard of Effingham School
- Additional Needs Showcase
- Barnsbury School
- Little Stars.

This quarter, we have attended the following meetings:

- North East Assessment Team meeting
- Carers Trust, Building Carer Friendly Communities
- Our Shoes Young Carer Training
- Surrey County Council, Carers Corner Training
- Surrey Youth Voice
- Carers Trust, Better Supporting Young Carers in School.

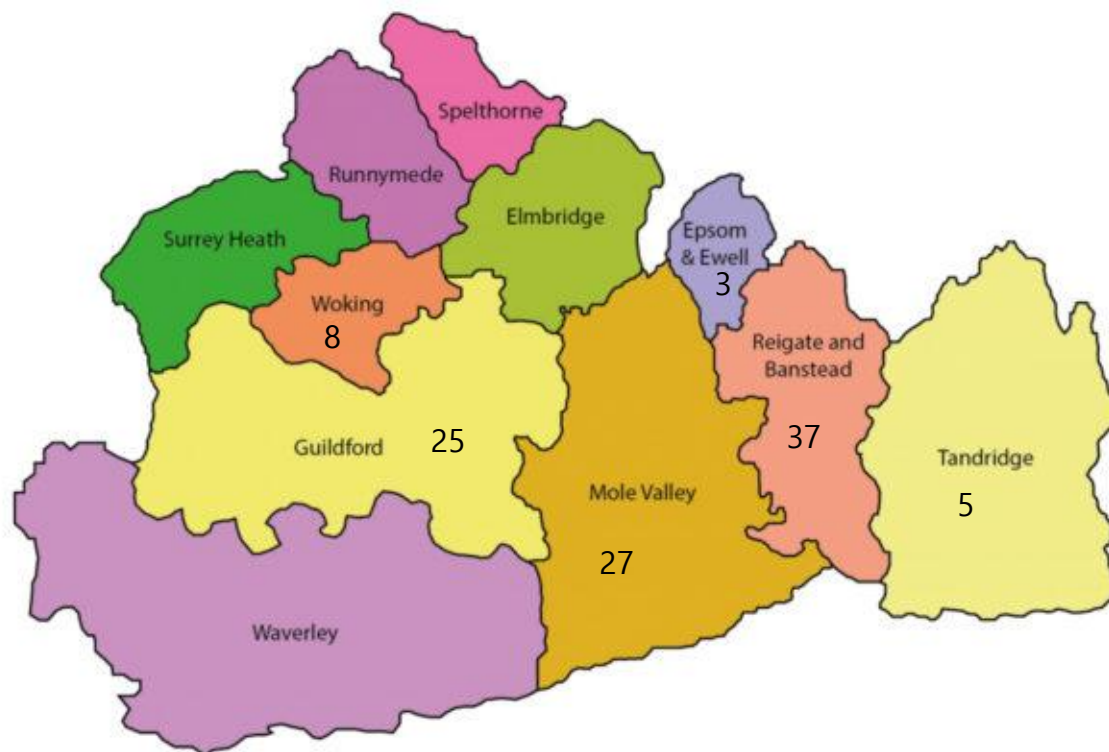
Main themes we have heard from April – June 2026

The word cloud below highlights the main themes we have been hearing about this quarter. The most prominent words are understanding, caring, challenges and child.



Where we have heard from young carers

This quarter, we have engaged with 105 young carers. The map of Surrey below shows the number of carers we have heard from in each area of Surrey. This quarter, we have heard the most from Reigate and Banstead (37), Mole Valley (27) and Guildford (25).



Key themes we have heard from young carers from April to June 2026

- Impact on education
- Why school support matters
- Skills and strengths
- Supporting family members every day
- Hidden impact of caring
- Feeling misunderstood.

Introduction

Young carers are children and teenagers who take on responsibilities that can be tough even for adults. They help family members with things like personal care, emotional support, chores, safety, medication, routines, and daily encouragement. Many say they are just getting on with things, but this often hides how tired, worried, or left out they feel, and how much caring shapes their childhood.



Young carers care a lot about the people they help, but they often feel tired, alone, and stressed. Sometimes, people do not notice them because their sibling gets most of the attention. Others feel like a second parent or hardly ever have free time because the person they care for needs so much help. The idea of just 'getting on with things' comes up often in their stories.

Many young carers say that looking after family at home affects their education. They might get to school late, feel tired, have trouble paying attention, and fall behind on homework because their caring duties continue after school. Some want to go to university or keep studying, but this can feel out of reach because of everything they have to do. Balancing homework or studying with big responsibilities at home can be especially hard.

People often overlook the emotional side of caring. Young carers worry about sick parents, upset siblings, and family members who need help. Some try not to seem weak, dramatic, or lazy, so they keep going. Others talk about feeling lonely, missing their friends, or wishing they had some time for themselves.

The impact on education

Many young carers talked about trying to balance caring with school. Some said they are late for school because of caring for family at home, while others find it hard to focus because they worry about their family.

"My brother has cerebral palsy, and I have to help a lot at home. As I've got older, I have to do more to help him and with chores around the house. I'm sometimes late for school or getting to places. Being a young carer, I feel different to other people my age. I get a lot of support at school and from my friends and family."

Carer, 13, 300470, June 2026

"Being a young carer, I become very tired, especially if my brother has kept me awake, and I find it hard to concentrate at school. Depending on how he's been in the morning when getting ready, I can get distracted thinking about the events and become stressed and anxious. I struggle to keep up with homework and coursework because I can't concentrate at home, and my brother is very destructive and demanding of everyone's attention."

Carer, 15, 300465, June 2026

Some young carers are very worried about their future education.

"My older brother is autistic; he went to a special school but is now looking for a job, which he's finding difficult due to his autism. People, especially employers, don't realise he thinks differently from them, and they don't have the patience to work with him. He has a lot to offer, but they just turn him down without giving him a chance. I get upset and disappointed. We put a lot into his applications, and



I won't give up on trying to help him. I want him to be happy so I can start looking at my future too."

Carer, 16, 300443, May 2026

"I care for my dad, who needs help with getting up, washing and dressing. He's much younger than mum, and I have an older half-brother who doesn't live with us. My dad isn't his dad, so he doesn't help us with caring for him at all. I have to work harder at school to keep up with my studies compared to my friends and other students. I do have extra time to complete homework and other things, but it's often not enough if dad needs more support during that time, and I get behind, which stresses me out."

Carer, 14, 300463, June 2026

"I'd like to go to college, but we'll see, it's not as easy as it looks when you have responsibilities."

Carer, 16, 300428, June 2026

Even with these challenges, many schools have made things easier by offering flexible deadlines, less coursework, and support groups for young carers.

"I care for my mum, who has a mental illness. I help with housework, provide emotional support and some personal care on her bad days. I help more now that I'm older and more mature. School limits the amount of coursework I get so I can manage. I just get on with things and try not to let it affect me. I attend the young carers group at school, and we get a lot of support and guidance. Family and friends support me a lot, and I listen to music to keep calm."

Carer, 12, 300472, June 2026

"School gives me extra time, but I still feel under pressure. The weekly group in school helps me to talk about my worries, and we get a lot of support here. It's the holidays, which can become lonely and isolating. An outside support group where we could also get help with homework and socialise would be good."

Carer, 12, 300462, June 2026

Why school support matters

School groups help many young carers by giving them a place to talk openly with others who understand what they are going through and to take some time for themselves. Young carers value being listened to and not having to explain their situation over and over. They also appreciate having trusted adults nearby, quick check-ins, quiet spaces, food, activities, and being heard without judgement.

Young carers often praise the support they get from schools and young carer groups. They especially value safe spaces and understanding from people who know what they are going



through. Young carers say they benefit from teachers who understand them, flexible deadlines, less homework, and special groups just for them.

"My baby sister has cancer. My brother, my sisters, and I worry a lot about her. She was getting better and then became unwell again; the cancer came back. Mum spends a lot of time at the hospital and is not well. I sometimes get upset at school and come to find [Mrs X] or speak to my teacher."

Carer, 9, 300380, May 2026

"My brother had cancer and lost all his hair. He's much better now, and his hair has grown back. I worried a lot when he was really poorly, and mum stayed at the hospital. No one told me very much. [Mrs X] gave me lots of cuddles, and I came to see her when I was upset at school."

Carer, 10, 300377, May 2026

"When my brother gets insecure, he gets angry and sad. That's when I help him. He has autism, so he can't help it. He has tantrums and doesn't understand that I'm trying to help him. I like this group in school because we get to talk about our feelings and what's worrying us."

Carer, 11, 300414, May 2026

"My sister can't speak and gets overwhelmed. I help her express herself and calm her down. She sometimes hurts herself, and my parents have to get help for her. Sometimes she's happy; most of the time she's sad or angry. She says sorry a lot. I understand and love her; I just want her to be ok. I like this group in school because I can speak about my troubles."

Carer, 11, 300416, May 2026

"My sister is mute, she's homeschooled, and mum doesn't get a break. I'd prefer to be at school because I can see my friends and play. I can't go out with my friends; I have to look after my sister and play with her."

Carer, 11, 300440, June 2026

"I get to meet friends in this group, and we talk about our worries."

Carer, 7, 300439, June 2026

"My dad had a motorbike accident and is in a wheelchair, so I help him a lot. My mum also has cancer, so I help her too. I like this group because I get to meet people like me."

Carer, 9, 300438, June 2026

Young carers often struggle to find support outside of school. Challenges such as transport, distance, family duties, anxiety, and caring responsibilities can prevent them from joining groups elsewhere. Holidays can feel especially lonely, as school support ends just when



caring needs grow. Many young carers say they need more help after school and during holidays.

"My mum has mental health. It's hard looking after my mum and little brother. I have to do everything at home. I like this group at school and at MyTime for young carers because it's time just for me. What I'd like at home is to do less. I can't go to many other things because I have no one to take me. I get picked up for MyTime."

Carer, 9, 300431, June 2026

"I help mum with my little sister and around the house. I have more responsibility since my little brother was born and have to do more to help. I get very tired because I have to share a room with my siblings, and they keep me awake. I can't just go out with my friends because I have to help mum before I do anything else. I only get support from school and the young carers group there. It would be better for me if mum had more help at home with my sister so I could do things, but she doesn't have anyone to help her. I couldn't go to groups in the holidays because that's when my mum needs my help the most."

Carer, 12, 300466, June 2026

"I help my younger brother with emotional support and generally being there for him when he needs me. It's become harder as he's got older and more stubborn, and he wants to be independent, even when he's in danger. I can't see my friends as often as I would like, I have to keep my brother occupied. His moods affect me the most. I don't know what to expect from his behaviour; it's unpredictable. I get a lot of support in the young carer group in school, it's the holidays that are a problem, I have to stay with my brother, we don't have anyone local to help my mum with him."

Carer, 14, 300467, June 2026

Skills and strengths developed through caring

Young carers help family members with disabilities, long-term health problems, mental ill health, or other needs. Many see it as simply helping their family and getting on with daily life. Still, their stories show the important roles they play, the challenges they face, and the strengths they bring to our communities. Even with these challenges, young carers notice the strengths they have developed.

Many young carers say that caring for someone has made them more independent, confident, and capable. These qualities often grow as they take on more responsibility. Others say they have become more empathetic, patient, and compassionate, and that they can stay calm when things are tough. Some young carers also feel more confident speaking up for themselves and others. They learn practical skills like cooking, managing a home,



staying organised, and solving problems, skills that are often beyond what is expected for their age.

"I've become more independent now. Apart from at school, I don't get any support."

Carer, 13, 300469, June 2026

"I cope with my stress and anxiety by compartmentalising things. I've learned skills as a young carer that others my age don't have, such as listening, empathy, compassion, doing chores, juggling many things, and managing stress. What would help young carers is access to more help and resources, for others to be more empathetic and compassionate and not quick to judge."

Carer, 15, 300465, June 2026

"I've learned to be self-sufficient and not rely on others by being a young carer. I can also do most household chores, which my friends would struggle with."

Carer, 12, 300466, June 2026

"I've become more confident, especially in managing difficult situations from dealing with my sister."

Carer, 14, 300471, June 2026

Supporting family members every day

Many young carers help their siblings and parents in practical, emotional, and personal ways. Some look after siblings with autism, ADHD, or physical disabilities by helping with personal care, emotional support, homework, daily routines, and safety. Others support parents who are dealing with mental ill health, substance misuse, physical disabilities, seizures, or loss. As young carers get older, their responsibilities often grow. They might start by helping with chores, but over time, this may increase to giving emotional support, supervision, personal care, and help with school runs. Many take on adult tasks early because they have to.

"I let my brother in my room when he has a tantrum. So, he comes in quite a lot, as I have to help him a lot. My brother has a lot of tantrums as he has a hard time at school. He is autistic, but he's a different sort of autistic from the others, and he has a hard time. My brother is older than me, and I help him with his homework. I Google stuff to help him with his homework so that I can explain it to him if he doesn't understand. I'm like a second parent to him. I never get any free time to myself as he's either having a tantrum or wanting to play with me."

Carer, 10, 300402, May 2026

"My grandad lives with us, and I help him with explaining what he's trying to say. I also help him when he can't find things. I make him drinks, and sometimes I have to remind him to eat and drink. He can't move around very well, and he falls a lot."



His left side is paralysed. I like the group in school because we can all talk about what we do, and we are friends now. I'll miss it when I leave, and I hope there's one at high school. I'd like to spend more time with my friends. I enjoy learning to cook."

Carer, 11, 300410, May 2026

"My older sister has a disability, and I help her with a lot of things she can't do. She can't control herself and needs help from mum and dad too. A social worker comes to see her too. I like this group because I see my friends. I would like to have more time to talk to someone about things. I'd like to have more alone time with my parents."

Carer, 11, 300413, May 2026

"I help my parents to care for my younger sister. I help her get ready and take her to school with me. Now she's learning to regulate her own emotions; it's become much easier for me. Having to take her home after school limits me on what I can do after school, and I'm unable to join any groups. It's difficult to balance caring for myself and looking after my sister. What would help is a group for young carers where we can discuss our situations and coping strategies."

Carer, 14, 300468, June 2026

"I help my mum with all my siblings. I'm the eldest of six, so she needs lots of help, especially with my little brother, who has ADHD and is nonverbal. I help by doing the shopping, housework, some cooking and laundry. I make sure my siblings are safe, doing their studies and behaving."

Carer, 16, 300428, June 2026

"My little brother is autistic, and I'm the only one who can calm him down and who knows what he is saying. I sometimes help him to sit on the toilet and get in the bath. My mum and dad say I don't have to do these things, but I love my brother and want to help him. There used to be loads of young carer things I went to, but now there aren't very many. I would also like some more sessions at school where I can meet other young carers. I enjoy meeting other young carers and chatting. I would really like more support groups like this that make me feel special, and it gives mummy time with my brother."

Carer, 10, 300424, May 2026

The hidden impact of caring

Caring for others can really affect how someone feels emotionally. Many young carers deal with anxiety, stress, tiredness, and loneliness. One young person talked about struggling with their mental health after losing a sibling and helping a grieving parent. Others said they often feel frustrated, worried, or ignored because most of the attention goes to the person being cared for.



The young carers we talked to help family members with many different needs, like autism, ADHD, mental ill health, physical disabilities, or grief. Many of these young carers provide emotional support, help with personal care, do household chores, and care for younger siblings. Young carers are strong and rarely complain, but caring still affects many parts of their lives.

Some young carers are late to school because they have to help at home. Others struggle to finish homework, especially when their caring duties continue after school. Some find it hard to focus in class because they worry about their family member or feel tired from not sleeping well. Young carers often have fewer chances to spend time with others. Many miss after school clubs, activities, and time with friends because they need to go home to help their families, especially during school holidays, when it is harder to get support.

"I help my big sister stay calm. She's loud, and she can't control it or her moods. There's only me, my mum and my sister at home, so sometimes it's a lot for me to deal with. This is my calm space [school group]. We get to play with fidgets, have food, do fun stuff and talk. I would like more peace and quiet at home and to have more help with my sister. She wakes me up a lot, and I get tired."

Carer, 10, 300412, May 2026

"I have to help mum with the cleaning; she has cancer. I'd like to have more sleep. There's only me and mum."

Carer, 8, 300419, May 2026

"I don't get to socialise much because I'm so drained and need to relax. I have social anxiety and find it hard to make new friends and get remarks from other kids. My dad suffers from seizures following an accident, so I have to help mum a lot too."

Carer, 15, 300465, June 2026

"I don't get much time to myself, to spend time with friends, or to pursue a hobby. Being a young carer has affected my mental health drastically. I play the guitar to relax when I can. I wouldn't go to outside groups; I struggle to talk to new people, but coming to the school group every week helps. We all know each other's circumstances, and we get a lot of support. I'd like to go to university, but it's looking more unlikely."

Carer, 14, 300463, June 2026

"It's getting harder as he gets older, and he distracts me when I'm doing my homework or studying. All my parents' attention goes to my brother, and although I understand he's difficult and needs more help, I feel unnoticed most of the time. It's hard to talk to them about it because they get upset or angry that I feel that way, and I was told I was being selfish."

Carer, 13, 300469, June 2026



"My mum needs emotional support whilst grieving my sister. I've gone from being a young carer for my sister to being one for my mum. I do a lot of the housework and chores. I'm sometimes late for school, and I find it hard to concentrate because I worry about my mum. I struggle to keep up with my studies and lack the motivation to do anything. I find the mental health issues I now face hard to manage. I don't want to seem weak or dramatic or lazy, so I try really hard to get on with things. My friends are supportive, and schools are amazing, and I do art therapy. I get a lot of emotional support from family, friends and school. I've become more confident at speaking out, and this is part of being a young carer. There should be more support for young carers, not just in school."

Carer, 14, 300471, June 2026

"It's difficult to balance caring for myself and looking after my sister. I used to get anxious about it, especially as it's expected of me and I don't really have a choice."

Carer, 14, 300468, June 2026

Feeling misunderstood

Young carers feel that people in the wider community do not notice or understand their role or their experiences. Some young carers said their friends do not understand why they cannot join social events or activities. Others felt that professionals did not take their knowledge and experience seriously because they are young.

"More people should be aware of who young carers are and how they can help support us. I would like professionals to take me more seriously. I may be a child, but I'm doing adult things too."

Carer, 13, 300470, June 2026

"I'd like more time to myself to go out with friends. They don't understand my situation, and I do get left out of things, which upsets me. Young carers are misunderstood; we care for people and know them better than most and in a way others may overlook."

Carer, 14, 300468, June 2026

"Friends don't understand and have stopped asking me to go places. If friends and others understood young carers and our challenges, we wouldn't feel so alone."

Carer, 12, 300462, June 2026

What young carers say would help

Young carers pointed out several ways things could be improved:

- More awareness and understanding of young carers.
- Greater emotional and practical support for families.
- More support groups outside school and during holidays.



- Better access to information and resources.
- Educational support and homework assistance.
- Professionals listening to, and valuing, young carers' voices.

Conclusion

Young carers show great strength, compassion, empathy, and resilience every day. They often say caring is just part of family life, but their stories reveal the hidden pressures of balancing caring with school, friends, and their own wellbeing.

Their stories show how important it is to recognise, understand, and support young carers. Most of all, they remind us that young carers are not just helping their families; they are building skills and maturity that deserve recognition and support. Skills that can be used within the workplace and in our communities if we give them the right support and encouragement now.

Their voices show that being seen, heard, and understood can make a real difference.

Impact and influence

"This session has been really useful. We have learned more about the young carers, what they are doing, and who else is involved in the care of those they support. We do refer to SYC, but the parents don't always follow up on the referral, and we don't hear if they have or haven't. We just hear if someone has been or is going on an activity, as we have heard today. It would be useful to know if the young carer is receiving additional support, but we are told they cannot say due to GDPR. We're looking for some funds to do an end of year celebration for the young carers. There's a lot more put on us as a school to support young carers with no additional funding."

Home School Link Worker, June 2026

"I've just seen the final cut of the promotional video for Our Shoes, and I wanted to say a heartfelt thank you for being part of it. The video looks amazing, and I honestly think your contribution has made such a difference. Hearing your perspective as someone who has experienced not just the immediate benefits but also the longer-term impact of the training on your professional practice brings a real authenticity to it. It makes the message so much more relatable and meaningful for other professionals watching. Thank you again for your support; it means a lot."

Surrey County Council employee, May 2026

"Thank you for all that you do. Thank you for your kind words and for all the info!"

School Pastoral Lead June 2026



"It would be lovely if you could come and visit us again in September to meet the new intake, if you are able to. The children really enjoy meeting you, hearing your stories and telling you theirs. It is very therapeutic for them."

Home School Link Worker, June 2026

"Thank you so much for coming in. It is always a pleasure to see you. Our students are still talking about their goody bags. Thank you for sending through the funding links. These are much appreciated. I will start to apply."

Pastoral Lead, June 2026

"Lovely to see you too, always a pleasure to have you here to meet our young carers, they love it too!"

Home School Link Worker, June 2026

Thank you

A big thank you to everyone we have met and who has taken the time to share their experiences of being a carer with us. If you have a group you would like us to come along to and visit then please email us at info@luminus-cic.uk. We are very keen to hear from as many carers as possible from all over Surrey so we'd love to hear from you!

This report focuses on young carers. Our Giving Carers a Voice reports focussing on carers aged 18 and over can be found on our website page [Giving Carers a Voice: Reports - LUMINUS](#).



Contact us

Contact us through any of the channels below.

We'd love to hear from you:

-  Web: luminus-cic.uk
-  Telephone: 01483 301448
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This [certification](#) independently validates our commitment to strong cyber security, data protection, and trusted IT services.



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