

Case studies

F is 10 years old and looks after her sister (19) who is deaf, suffers with psychosis and borderline personality disorder and has challenging behaviour. F said that she has not told her friends that her sister is unwell, as she feels they will not understand and may make fun about her and her sister. F said she does not want this to happen so she pretends that everything is okay. F said that she would like someone else she can talk to about her caring role. A referral was made to the Young Carers Service as F said it would be nice to talk to someone about how she feels, and would like to meet other boys and girls who also look after a family member. F said that she spends as much time with her sister as she can, as she does enjoy having sister time together, but when her sister is not feeling well, F finds this very upsetting.

A Young Carer Worker from the community mental health team completed an assessment with F. Her score on the negative impact that caring is having (PANOC negative score) was 16, very high and a potential cause for concern. The caring role has made F feel lonely and isolated, and she doesn't feel like talking to her parents about how she feels at times, which makes her feel frustrated.

F used her personal budget (£800) to contribute towards the cost of social and leisure activities, such as having quality time with her parents away from the caring role and responsibilities of looking after her older sister. F used the remainder of the personal budget to cover the cost of new protective gear and clothing which is required for the Taekwondo Club she is a member of.

The Young Carer Worker visited the young carer four months later and asked her to complete the questionnaires again. There was very little change to her caring role but the impact that the support and personal budget made reduced her negative PANOC score to 6.

E is a young girl, aged 11 who looks after her brother, 17 who has a congenital condition that causes a visual impairment. He is supported by the Children's Disability Service and has been allocated a transition worker.

E helps her Mother a lot, so that her Mum has more time to look after her brother. She cleans the house, makes the main meals, snacks and drinks, does the washing up, supermarket shopping and always helps with decorating. It is important to keep the floor clear to avoid her brother tripping.

She also helps her brother to choose clothes and get him dressed. Sometimes she helps him to have a bath or shower. At meal times she cuts up his food so that he can eat it independently and whenever he needs a snack or drink in the evenings or at the weekend she will make it.

When her brother goes out to undertake his hobbies she goes with him to support and guide him. This involves weekly trips to play Goalball, a sport for athletes with visual impairment and weight lifting where she helps him use the equipment. She helps her brother to communicate with others. She sometimes has to read her brother's mail and the contents might be upsetting for him especially if it is a personal letter and this also upsets E.

In the evenings E stays in a lot to keep her brother company and play games with him and keep an eye on him to make sure that he is alright and most nights she chooses to sleep on a camp bed in his bedroom to make sure that he is alright.

When the Young Carer Worker completed a young carers' assessment with E, she had a very high score

for the amount of caring (23) and her negative PANOC score was 14 (which is also cause for concern). She was referred for counselling and was also referred to the Young Carers' Service where she sees a support worker every month. E said that 18 months ago she ran away because it all got too much for her. Sometimes she feels so sad she can hardly stand it and sometimes life doesn't seem worth living. The Young Carer worker asked E what she would like to support her in the caring role. She was given a one off direct payment to pay for a den bed, storage boxes and a guest bed so that a friend can stay and also for a day out.

Four months later, the Young Carer Worker reviewed E's caring situation. Her brother is a lot more independent with his personal care tasks, therefore E no longer has to support him. Her brother will also ensure that he has his own bag packed for college and no longer asks E to read his mail, which was at times upsetting for her. One of E's outcomes was to spend time with her mum and after a weekend away with mum and dad where her brother stayed home alone, it made them realise how much B could do for himself and how much he enjoyed his independence. E therefore no longer feels that she has to sleep in her brother's bedroom and he doesn't request it of her. As E's mum has more time now, she doesn't rely on E to carry out so many of the household chores. E's mum reported an improvement in E's confidence and how lovely it has been to see her really smiling.

Having completed the young carer's questionnaires again, E now scores 15 on the MACA (amount of caring) and 9 on the negative impact that caring is having (PANOC). This is a significant reduction in the amount of caring and the negative impact that this is having.

A What About Me (WAM) Worker referred T for a young carers' assessment via the Customer Service Centre. WAM provide support for children and young people affected by their parent's substance misuse issue. T is 17 years old and the only person at home looking after his mum who is alcohol dependent. T undertakes many chores around the house which includes washing the dishes, cleaning, shopping for essential food items and help with financial matters. When mum is 'in drink' T gets his mum ready for bed. He stays with mum at home when she has been drinking to ensure she remains safe. He encourages mum to eat, change her clothes and wash. T provides lots of emotional support to his mum when she is drinking as she becomes in a depressive mood.

T's mums' sporadic alcohol use has a huge effect on his ability to concentrate at school and keep up with his coursework as he is very anxious about her wellbeing. Mum also suffers with depressive moods and is very emotional when she is drinking. When T stays at home to look after his mum to ensure she is safe and does not harm herself he does not see his friends. School have been supportive and provided uniform and shoes when needed so that he does not get grief from teachers and other students. School have also provided breakfast and a hot meal for T when there is no money to buy items.

T likes to keep himself fit and has used his personal budget for gym equipment and gym membership. He has also purchased train tickets, football tickets and stadium tour to see Newcastle United football team. As he wants to be able to keep in touch with his mother, part of his budget was used to purchase a mobile phone.

At the first assessment, T's MACA score was 20, his positive score was 15 and negative 10 (cause for concern). Following the support from WAM and the personal budget, after a 4 month period, his MACA score was reduced to 11, the positive score increased to 16 and his negative score reduced to 2. T is now at College and enjoying this. He is able to concentrate more and is becoming more confident with his work.