

Subject:

Circular Number: 2026/08

Guidance on the recording of information in relation to the young carer field in the School Management System.

Date of Issue: 22 June 2026

Target Audience:

- All EOTAS centres
- Principals and Boards of Governors of all grant-aided schools (excluding nursery schools);
- Education Authority;
- Governing Bodies Association
- Teacher Unions.
- Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
- Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education
- Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta

Summary of Contents:

This Circular provides guidance on the recording of the Young Carer field.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

Statistical Analysis Team
Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road, Rathgill
BANGOR, BT19 7PR

Governor Awareness:
Essential

Status of Contents:
Information for schools

Related Documents:
Not applicable

Superseded Documents:
Not applicable

Expiry Date:
Not applicable

DE Website:
www.education-ni.gov.uk

Email:
census@education-ni.gov.uk

Introduction:

1. The objective of this circular is to inform schools of the requirement to populate the **Young Carer** field in the School Management System (SMS).

Note: The current School Management System is SIMS. A new SMS system, Bromcom, is being introduced. School data will be migrated from SIMS to Bromcom.

Young Carer

1. A new **Young Carer** field will be introduced in the SMS enabling schools to indicate if a pupil is a young carer. When this functionality is available schools will be asked to populate the **Young Carer** field for all relevant pupils. Schools may record if the young carer has been identified by the school or by the parent/guardian.
2. For the purposes of data collection, a young carer is defined as a child or young person aged 18 or under who provides, or helps to provide, care for a family member, relative, or friend. This person receiving care may have frailty or an illness, disability, mental health condition, or issues related to addiction.

The type and level of care that young carers provide can vary widely. This depends on the nature of the condition, how often care is needed, the level of support required, and the structure of the family as a whole. As a result, young carers may take on a range of responsibilities, which can differ in intensity and frequency.

Young carers may engage in a variety of tasks, including but not limited to:

Practical Tasks: Cooking meals, cleaning the house, doing laundry, and shopping for groceries

Physical Care: Assisting someone out of bed, helping with mobility, or providing personal care such as dressing

Emotional Support: Offering companionship, listening to someone who is distressed, and providing comfort during difficult times

Managing Finances: Helping to manage the family budget, collecting prescriptions, and ensuring that medications are taken

Looking After Siblings: Taking care of brothers or sisters, which can include supervising them and helping with their needs.

3. Signs that a young person may have a caring responsibility include:

- Regular lateness
- Low attendance/Absent from lesson
- Not completing homework
- Tired or distracted
- Low attention span
- Lack motivation
- Low mood/mental ill-health
- Anxious
- Concerned about keeping their phone on, or staying in touch with a family member during school hours
- Parent/guardian uses disabled parking space
- Lack of parent/guardian attending parents evening/other school events
- Change in hygiene/appearance
- Change in behaviour – becoming aggressive or angry, withdrawn or quieter.
- Struggle to take part in after school activities or trips

4. The information is required to assist the Department in identifying young carers within the education system. Many of these young carers are not visible in school and it can therefore be difficult for the school community to offer them appropriate support. As a result, young carers may experience educational difficulties, as they may struggle to concentrate on their schoolwork due to the additional external responsibilities resulting from their caring role. Identifying young carers will enable educational settings and the Education Authority to offer tailored support to these pupils as well as signposting to external services and supports such as those provided by Action for Children and Barnardo's NI.

5. The data gathered will provide the Department with valuable insights on key indicators for young carers in educational settings. This data will provide the Department and the Education Authority with an evidence base to better understand the challenges and barriers faced by young carers and to help inform the development of policy and practice for this cohort of children and young people.
6. C2k EdIS will inform schools when Young Carer functionality is available in the SMS and guidance for schools will be published on C2k Exchange in due course. Any queries with regards to recording Young Carer information in the SMS should be directed to the C2k Service Desk: 0800 0931 541 or via the Online Service Desk Portal (available through MySchool)
7. Young Carer information will be collected as part of the annual school census data collection starting in October 2026.

Additional information relating to support for/identification of Young Carers

1. Support for young carers can be accessed through *The Northern Ireland Regional Young Carers Service (NIRYCS)*. This service supports carers aged 8-18 and is delivered in partnership by agencies including Action for Children and Barnardo's NI. This regional service offers young carers a break from caring, a listening ear, individual support, information about illnesses, peer support groups, personal development, group work programmes, fun social activities, a voice, a safe environment to express concerns and worries, advocacy, advice and signposting.
2. Both organisations employ project workers who will meet with young carers who are referred, complete an assessment of their needs and then agree and deliver a package of support appropriate to their needs. Young people are eligible if they are aged between 8 and 18, have a substantial caring role for a member of their family or whose health or development is affected due to their caring role. Each agency covers a different geographical area.
3. Enquiries about the service should be directed to the relevant agency as follows:

Belfast, South Eastern & Southern Health and Social Care Trust Areas

Action for Children

Loughshore House 10 Heron Road, Belfast BT3 9LE
028 9046 0500

NIYoungCarers@actionforchildren.org.uk

Northern & Western Health and Social Care Trust Areas

Barnardo's NI

26 Church Street, Magherafelt, BT45 6AW
07512448192

youngcarersservices@barnardos.org.uk

Referrals may be made using the link below:

[Northern Ireland Regional Young Carers Service referral form | Barnardo's](#)

4. Further information on supporting Young Carers in School can be found at:

[Supporting Young Carers in Schools – An Introduction for Primary and Post-Primary Schools](#)

or via EA's Education Welfare Service at <https://www.eani.org.uk/services/education-welfare-service/supporting-young-carers>

5. Within DE the Additional Educational Needs Team has responsibility for Young Carers. The team can be contacted via:

additionaleducationalneedsteam@education-ni.gov.uk