

Supporting the Social and Emotional Learning of Young Carers

For many young carers, exposure to stress due to their caring role, coupled with other risk factors, can impact their ability to develop adequate coping strategies and build resilience. Social and Emotional Learning Programmes such as Partnership for Children's *Skills for Life* programmes ([Zippy's Friends](#), [Apple's Friends](#), [Passport and SPARK Resilience](#)) are a proven way to promote good mental health and help children and young people develop skills which will enhance their present and future emotional wellbeing.

Since 2019, thanks to generous funding from [The Rayne Foundation](#) and [Investec](#), Partnership for Children have been working to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of young carers through our *Skills for Life* programmes. The activities in this resource are based on the programmes and have been developed in consultation with trained *Skills for Life* staff from young carers services and young carers themselves.

The activities are designed to help those working with young carers to promote their social and emotional development by helping them to process feelings, communicate effectively, cope with their anxieties and difficulties, practice selfcare, build strengths and resilience and deal with change and loss.

The activities are designed to be used with children aged ten and upwards but can be adapted to be suitable for older or younger children (please see guidance below).

With thanks to the following Carers Services for their involvement in the creation of these resources:

- Carers Northumberland
- Sefton Carers Centre
- Sutton Carers Centre
- WCD Young Carers



Using this resource

This resource is divided into the following themes:



These are themes we would encourage you to explore to support young carers' social and emotional learning. In this guide, you will find more information about each of the themes, links to ideas for activities and links to additional support resources. There is no fixed way to use this guide or the activities, they have been designed so that you can pick and choose the themes you wish to cover and the activities which you think will be most useful for you to support the young carers you are working with. The activities can be used with groups or in 1:1 sessions.

Adapting our wellbeing activities to use with your young carers

Differentiating for different age groups/abilities

It is important that these activities are fun and engaging for all young carers, so you may need to adapt them for different ages/abilities. There are many factors that affect how a young carer engages so consider how these activities are best adapted to the young carer or group.

When you are planning activities to use with young carers try to keep in mind:

- Your overall aim for each young carer
- Ability/engagement levels of the young carer
- The overall aim of the activity (e.g. recognising feelings)

How to use the independent activities

These activities have been designed to be used independently by young carers. Depending on your work with young carers, you might ask them to complete the activities within a session or at home.



Being able to recognise how they are feeling is important for young carers to be able to cope with everyday difficulties. If they can recognise how they feel they will be able to communicate their feelings to others and find suitable ways to cope. If they have trouble expressing their feelings to others, they are at greater risk of not being able to ask for and receive help. They may also be less able to give help to others.

Young Carer Activity Ideas

• [Recognising Feelings](#)

Additional Activities

- [Finding a Good Solution When You're Angry](#)
- [A-Z of Feelings](#)
- [Finding a Good Solution for Difficult Feelings](#)
- [Positive Feelings](#)
- [Recognising Feelings](#)
- [Understanding Anger](#)
- [Where We Feel Our Feelings](#)
- [Our Feelings Diary](#)
- [Feelings Chart](#)
- [Feelings Toolbox](#)

• [Coping with Difficult Feelings](#)

Links to the Skills for Life programmes

- *Zippy's Friends* - Module 1 – Feelings
- *Apple's Friends* - Module 1 – Feelings
- *Passport* – Module 1 – Emotions
- *SPARK Resilience* – Session 2 – Managing our emotions



Young carers' wellbeing and quality of life will be greatly influenced by the relationships they have with other people. Having relationships with friends and family helps them to create a support network that can protect them when they face challenges and tough times.

Many young carers can feel lonely and isolated in their caring role. It can be difficult for them to talk about life at home because they worry about what others may think of them. It can also be hard to find the time to do things other children their age do, like spending time with their friends after school.

Young Carer Activity Ideas

• [Building Good Friendships](#)

Additional Activities

- [My Circle of Help](#)
- [Right Time to Talk](#)
- [Circles of Help - Transition](#)
- [Talking Games](#)
- [My Friend](#)
- [Renewing Relationships](#)
- [What Makes a Good Friend](#)

• [Coping with Loneliness and Isolation](#)

Links to the Skills for Life programmes

- *Zippy's Friends* - Module 3 - Making and breaking relationships
- *Apple's Friends* - Module 3 - Friendship
- *Passport* – Module 2 - Relationships and Helping Each Other
- *SPARK Resilience* – Session 1 - Our resilience muscles



While most young people finish school and go home to a place of relaxation and calm, young carers may have a long list of duties that are waiting for them when they get home. Being constantly mentally and physically active can impact their mental wellbeing, leaving them exhausted, made worse by emotional demands from the person they are caring for. To help them stay mentally and physically strong, young carers should be encouraged to take breaks and prioritise their own wellbeing.

Young carers are exceptional young people. They are incredibly resilient, but their overall sense of wellbeing can still be affected by the worry and responsibility that comes from looking after someone else. Recognising their strengths, seeing how they have grown and setting goals for the future will help them to improve their resilience.

Young Carer Activity Ideas

• [Self-Care](#)

Additional Activities

- [Relaxation Activities 1](#)
- [Distraction Activities](#)
- [Ways to Feel Better](#)
- [Mindful Walk](#)
- [Relaxation Activities 2](#)
- [Growing Together](#)

• [Strengths](#)

Links to the Skills for Life programmes

- *Zippy's Friends* – Module 4, Session 3 - Solving problems
- *Apple's Friends* - Module 1 – Feelings
- *Passport* – Module 3 - Difficult Situations
- *SPARK Resilience* – Session 7 - A dose of distraction



Young carers, like all young people will go through many changes in their lives. We can cope better with change if we understand that changes are an essential part of life and can have positive and negative effects. If the person they are caring for becomes ill or dies, young carers can feel very lost. If they were the main carer for that person, they may struggle with the loss of that person, but also the loss of their role and identity as a carer. They may feel guilt that there was more they could have done.

If young carers learn to see changes and losses, including death as events that are a normal part of life, it is more likely that they will develop ways to feel better in these situations. The same is true if they learn to see change, loss and death as events which they are capable of handling.

Young Carer Activity Ideas

• [Dealing with Change](#)

Additional Activities

- [Dealing with Change](#)
- [My Senior Friend](#)
- [Remembering Someone](#)
- [Helping a Friend with a Loss](#)
- [Going Back to School](#)
- [Transition - This is Me](#)
- [Sympathy Card](#)
- [Everything Changes](#)
- [Coping with the Death of a Loved One](#)

• [Coping with Bereavement](#)

Links to the Skills for Life programmes

- *Zippy's Friends* – Module 5 - Dealing with change and loss
- *Apple's Friends* - Module 5 - Changes
- *Passport* – Module 5 - Change and Loss