

Crossroads

Getting It Right For Young Carers



A Report on the Crossroads Young Carers Roadshows

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YOUNG CARERS RESEARCH GROUP

Department of Social Sciences
Loughborough University
Leicestershire LE11 3TU

on behalf of Crossroads
10 Regent Place
Rugby
Warwickshire CV21 2PN
01788-573653

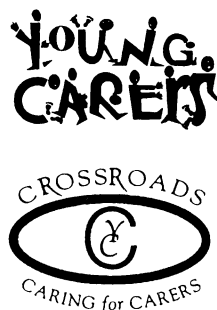
Written by Chris Dearden and Saul Becker

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*Further copies of this report can be obtained from Crossroads at the above
address.*



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BT Foreword

BT is one of the leading corporate givers in the United Kingdom. Because we trade in almost every community in the country, we feel we have an obligation to become involved in the wider health of the communities we serve.

Through our Community Programme, we have made support for caring one of our major objectives as it is one of those activities that is especially relevant to almost every community in the land.

Caring is often carried out in isolation from the rest of the community. We need to forge the links to overcome that isolation, and the roadshows have been highly effective in reaching out to the world of young carers and highlighting their needs.

We have enjoyed a happy and mutually beneficial relationship with Crossroads through our sponsorship of the roadshows and the Crossroads Nottingham Young Carers Project.

This sponsorship is part of a wide ranging programme of support by BT for the work of carers of all ages, including the creation, through pioneer funding, of the Carers Centre concept.

Stephen Serpell, Head of Community Affairs, BT



Foreword

The Young Carers roadshows were an attempt to increase awareness amongst Crossroads schemes of the needs of young people with caring responsibilities.

Crossroads has a commitment to providing support to all carers, but in my Statement of Intent in February 1994, I committed Crossroads to develop further services.

As an Association with over 240 schemes, the starting point was, quite rightly, focused on those schemes. With the scheme and branch network, Crossroads has developed a specific young carers project, namely the St. Helens project. This project has pioneered work with young carers, and experiences have been drawn upon by the wider organisation and disseminated across the network.

Focusing upon our scheme network involved first of all recognising that many of our schemes were in fact already helping young carers. The programme of work we identified recognised this fact and aimed to draw upon experiences at local level.

The production of the training pack, *Getting it Right for Young Carers*, was an essential tool in raising the level of knowledge of young carers' needs. The publication built upon the close working relationship we had developed with Loughborough University in producing documents such as *Partners in Caring*, a briefing paper for professionals.

To draw together experiences from within our scheme network and to launch the training pack, we set about the task of organising the series of roadshows. The content and findings of these roadshows are reported in this publication.

It is left to me to thank key individuals who put so much time and commitment into making the roadshows such a success.

To Linda Dowell and Richard Redden from BT; Denise Fagg from the Crossroads Council of Management; Ann Godfrey and Norma Hartshorn, Crossroads Divisional Managers North East and North West respectively; all the Crossroads schemes who participated; and the young carers who came to tell us about how it really is!

Pat Wallace
Chief Executive

Introduction

In November 1994 Crossroads launched its series of young carers conferences. The first conference was held in London and a further eight took place in various parts of the United Kingdom. Because the conference organisers travelled the length and breadth of the UK, initially planning the events and later organising and taking part in them, the series of conferences quickly became known as the 'roadshows'.

Unlike most conference organisers, Crossroads was presented with the enviable opportunity to receive feedback from conferences and improve and fine-tune them during the course of the roadshows. This meant that any criticisms could be attended to and any problems ironed out following each conference and prior to the next one. Thus the organisation was able to provide high quality conferences, building on the feedback of delegates.

This series of roadshows was part of Crossroads' on-going work in relation to young carers. Crossroads first became involved in young carers' work when the organisation managed the St. Helens Young Carers Project. This project has now been integrated into the Crossroads organisation. BT Community Programme funding has enabled Crossroads to continue and develop its work with young carers, funding the roadshows, the production of a training pack for professionals working with young carers, and a two year pilot project in Nottingham.

As a national organisation providing respite care for carers, Crossroads is ideally placed to extend its services to young carers and to develop additional services to meet their particular needs. The organisation is committed to delivering real, practical help to young people, whilst respecting their desire to show love and give support to their relatives.

The organisation's Statement of Intent includes the aim of raising awareness of the needs of young carers throughout the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors and the general public; the aim of enabling all Crossroads schemes to develop their own services to support young carers; and the aim of offering young carers and their families a high quality and individually tailored and sensitive service. The roadshows were part of the strategy of achieving these aims.

The roadshows were primarily for Crossroads' employees, but were also open to other professionals with an interest in young carers' issues. They offered the opportunity for interested individuals to get together and exchange ideas and information, and to learn about some of the issues which affect young carers. They also provided the platform to launch the training pack, *Getting It Right For Young Carers*.

This report evaluates and reports on the series of roadshows, their organisation, their attendance and the major findings of the various workshops which were undertaken.



The Roadshows

Venues

22 November 1994	London
17 January 1995	Cheadle
24 January 1995	Hillsborough (N. Ireland)
25 January 1995	Coventry
31 January 1995	Leeds
1 February 1995	Bristol
14 February 1995	Cambridge
15 February 1995	London
21 March 1995	Powys

Format and Content

All of the roadshows adopted a similar format consisting of various presentations in the morning, lunch and then three 'syndicate' groups in the afternoon. The syndicate groups consisted of small group workshops, each with its own facilitators. At the first conference in London, the syndicate groups were used to introduce delegates to the training pack, *Getting it Right for Young Carers*. Three short presentations of different parts of the pack were made to each group by 'roving' speakers. However, feedback from this conference suggested that this was not an ideal way to continue with the afternoon sessions, therefore the format was amended and at the remaining roadshows the training pack was introduced by a brief presentation prior to the workshops. The workshops then concentrated on three main areas: what groups perceived the needs of young carers to be; how these needs might be met; and what their organisations could do to assist young carers.

The general format adopted was an opening address either by the chair of the conference or someone with particular local knowledge and expertise, followed by an address from BT as sponsors of the roadshows. Pat Wallace, Crossroads Chief Executive, then outlined Crossroads' work with young carers.

The remainder of the morning consisted of various presentations. Project workers from designated young carers projects spoke at all of the roadshows. They shared their experiences, describing their work, the needs and experiences of some of the young people they support and offered an insight into the workings of a project, some of the initial pitfalls and drawbacks, and how they had overcome problems. The project workers remained throughout the roadshow, available to offer advice to delegates, and helped to facilitate the workshops in the afternoon.

All of the roadshows included a presentation by a young carer or ex-young carer apart from the first, where the words of a young carer

were read by an actress. These very powerful presentations offered delegates the opportunity to listen to a first hand account of what it is like to be a young carer, what the particular problems are, the good and bad times, how professionals can and should help and the type of support which is, or would be appreciated.

Other speakers included Sylvia Heal, the National Young Carers Officer for Carers National Association, who spoke about working with young carers; Jim Currie of the NSPCC; Roger Page of Sandwell Caring for Carers, who was involved in some early pioneering research on the incidence of young carers in schools in Sandwell; Lesley Wood, a Carers Development Worker with Leeds Social Services who has a special interest in young carers; Mike Hatch, the Chair and Development Officer from Gloucester Social Services, who has a particular interest in young carers and was part of the steering group which initiated the Gloucester young carers project; Jackie Martin, the Development Manager of Suffolk carers project; Saul Becker, the Director of the Young Carers Research Group at Loughborough University, who has been involved in several pieces of research into the experiences and needs of young carers and their families and who is co-author of the training pack, *Getting it Right for Young Carers*; and Eleri Thomas, the Young Carers Officer for Carers National Association in Wales.

The various presentations were followed by question time, when delegates could direct questions at the speakers they had heard throughout the morning.

Following lunch a brief introduction to the training pack was made by either a member of Crossroads or one of the pack's authors. This presentation included brief segments of the audio cassette which accompanies the pack, containing quotes from young carers, and a description of the pack, its organisation and how it was designed to be used.

The syndicate groups followed the introduction to the pack. These groups offered delegates the opportunity to discuss in more detail the information contained within the presentations, and to suggest ways forward in their own work and how they could best help young carers. The findings from the syndicate groups are reported on page 10.

The syndicate groups were followed by a plenary session with feedback from groups and a discussion of ways forward.

Attendance

Although the roadshows were a way of Crossroads raising awareness within its own organisation, launching the training pack and sharing information and examples of good practice, the roadshows were also open to others interested in young carers' issues.

A limited number of free places were offered to all Crossroads local schemes, with the option of additional places at the reduced cost of £10. The cost to staff from voluntary organisations was £15 and £25 for those from statutory organisations. The aim was not to make the exercise a 'money raising' venture, but was rather concerned to raise awareness in as accessible a manner as possible.

The overall breakdown of conference attendance is 63 per cent Crossroads' employees, 20 per cent staff from voluntary organisations and 17 per cent staff from statutory organisations. However, there are some marked differences between venues. For example, at the roadshow in Northern Ireland, 30 per cent of delegates were from statutory organisations whilst in Coventry they accounted for only six per cent of the total. At the majority of roadshows around a fifth of delegates were from voluntary organisations with the exception of Cheadle, Coventry and Northern Ireland, where the numbers were much lower. One can only speculate as to the reasons for these disparities, but Crossroads was undoubtedly successful in achieving its own objectives in securing attendance from its own employees, whilst also attracting many delegates from both the statutory and voluntary sectors. The average number of people attending each of the roadshows was 68. In all, 610 people went to a Crossroads' conference.

Delegates Feedback

Delegates were given evaluation and feedback forms at all conferences. One of the questions asked was what *their* objectives were in attending the roadshow and whether these objectives had been met. By far the most common objective was to raise their own awareness of young carers' issues and to learn more about the needs and experiences of young carers. Many delegates were also interested in learning about current schemes and projects, how these operated and what was available generally around the country. Crossroads' employees were also interested in knowing about specific Crossroads schemes and how Crossroads could help young carers. For some delegates the roadshows were viewed as an opportunity to meet others with an interest in young carers' issues and to widen their network of contacts.

Of those delegates who completed evaluation forms, the overwhelming majority felt that their own objectives had been met. A small minority felt that their objectives had been partially met and only three per cent of respondents felt that their objectives had not been met.

Delegates were also asked what had been the most and least helpful aspects of the roadshows and what had been the most and least enjoyable aspects. The most helpful and most enjoyable aspects were the presentations by young carers and ex-young carers, closely followed by the presentations by project workers. A typical comment includes:

Listening to a young carer brings home the reality of caring situations.

Indeed, the speakers were considered to be both helpful and enjoyable although some delegates felt that the morning session was a little on the long side with too many speakers and too little audience participation.

Listening to the speakers was very interesting and enjoyable.

It was all necessary, if not all as enjoyable and stimulating.

The group sessions which took place in the afternoons received a mixed response. Some delegates found them the most helpful and enjoyable, whilst others found the opposite! For those who expressed dissatisfaction with the groups, the most common criticism was the size of the workshops, which were considered to be too large to enable useful discussion and individual participation. Group discussions, workshops and similar strategies for encouraging the exchange of ideas and information are always loved by some and hated by others, and the only real criticism, relating to the size of the groups, whilst valid, is also a reflection of the success of the roadshows and the high number of delegates who attended.

The most common comment given on feedback forms was the wish to have heard from more young carers, summed up by the following comment:

Given the time allocation for the day it would have been difficult to put more in, but I do feel personal experience carries a poignant message and hits home, so, again, more young carers.

Overall, the response to the roadshows was very positive and the following comments sum up the views of many of the satisfied delegates:

A very informative day and well worth the trip.

The usual Crossroads positive and enthusiastic approach to what they are doing and getting things done.

One of the aims of the roadshows was to instil caution in well meaning people who, in their haste to provide a much needed service, may rush into things too quickly without ensuring that services are adequately planned and thought through. This message, it seems, was received:

Most helpful was the emphasis that was placed on having policies and procedures in place before full development of any scheme/project.

Reinforced my feeling that work should be progressed sensitively and slowly.

Finally, for those people who feel that feedback and evaluation of such events has little real value, comes a comment from a delegate who attended both the first London conference and then a later one:

I attended the London roadshow and the change made to the afternoon session [at this conference] was very positive. This gave a good chance to talk through the issues.

Getting It Right For Young Carers

Getting it right for young carers is Crossroads' objective and the title of the training pack produced by the Young Carers Research Group at Loughborough University on behalf of the organisation. This pack was launched at the roadshows and all Crossroads schemes received a free copy. The remaining packs are available to buy and are aimed at anyone with an interest in young carers' issues and who may be involved in, or is interested in becoming involved in working with young carers. The pack remains, to date, the only one available concerned with young carers' issues.

The objective in producing this pack was that all Crossroads schemes would benefit from having a document which could be used in the training of their staff and in promoting discussion and debate around the whole issue of young caring, potential problems in providing services to young carers, and the specific needs of young carers and how these may differ from those of adult carers. In addition the pack is available to others as a means of awareness raising and training. This is the first pack of its kind and, as such, invaluable to any group or organisation concerned with the needs of young carers.

Getting It Right For Young Carers is an audio training pack designed to be used by a trainer and a group of learners, but also useful for individual work. The pack comprises three parts, divided into nine sections, there are also handouts for copying, an evaluation sheet for participants, and an audio cassette which includes statements from young carers, parents and professionals. Each section of the pack comes complete with a statement of objectives, information for trainers, and discussion points and exercises. The pack can be used by anyone and no prior knowledge of young carers' issues is necessary.

Part one discusses **the context of young caring** and is sub-divided into four sections. These sections consist of an introduction including definitions of young caring; the effects of caring; relationships with family and friends; and the needs and rights of young carers. This part of the pack makes use of the audio cassette and includes a variety of discussion points and exercises.

Part two discusses **the legal framework** surrounding young caring, and is divided into two sections. The first concerns legislation and includes information about the Children Act (1989), The National Health Service and Community Care Act (1990) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the UK in 1991). The second concerns equal opportunities, covering issues such as stereotyping, and discrimination and its effects.

Part three is concerned with **meeting young carers' needs** and is divided into three sections. The first discusses issues of vulnerability and confidentiality, offering participants the opportunity to draw up their own confidentiality policy for working with young carers. The

second looks at professional responses to young caring, including an audio presentation from professionals in the field, and the opportunity for participants to exchange and collate information about local services which may be helpful for young carers. The final section is specifically designed for Crossroads' employees, although it may be useful for others, and concerns respite care for young carers. This section includes information on potential procedural problems in the provision of respite to young carers, a guide to good practice, and exercises based on various scenarios, aimed at discussing and ironing out any problems.

The fourth part of the pack contains all the necessary **handouts for copying** to group participants, and finally, the pack contains an annotated list of references and suggested further reading.

In producing this pack, Crossroads has identified and met a need for training in what is becoming an area of particular importance. This is especially true following the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act, 1995, which offers young carers the right to an independent assessment.

The pack offers a reasonably priced and positive additional resource for trainers by incorporating the views of service users into a well produced and usable resource. (Community Care, 23 February 1995)

Syndicate Group Findings

During the afternoon, delegates were divided into three syndicate groups which each had two facilitators. The facilitators were members of the Crossroads' team responsible for the organisation of the roadshows, and others who had taken part in the roadshow that day, often project workers or other speakers.

The syndicate groups looked at three specific areas:

- what the group perceived to be the needs of young carers;
- how these needs might be met;
- what their organisations could do to help young carers.

The perceived needs of young carers

There was broad consensus across all of the syndicate groups and all of the roadshows regarding the needs of young carers. These needs could be broken down into four broad areas.

The need for information

This included medical information, information about practical help and what services are available, and information about welfare rights, financial advice, benefits etc. Many of the groups mentioned that

accurate, understandable information would enable young carers to make informed decisions.

The need for recognition

This involves young carers being listened to, believed, acknowledged, respected, praised and encouraged.

The need for services

Delegates suggested that services should be adequate, sensitive and flexible. The most common services suggested were befriending, advocacy, respite, counselling and a telephone helpline. Many delegates emphasised the need for consultation with young carers to ensure that any service provided was acceptable to them and met their own perceived needs.

The need for young carers to be children

This need was expressed by all syndicate groups and was defined as the right to experience a childhood free from worries, enabling young carers to have fun and leisure activities; to be outrageous, naughty or rebellious at times; and to be irresponsible rather than continually feeling responsible for the care of another person. One other area mentioned frequently was the fact that children, too, are sometimes ill and that young carers may be 'denied' the opportunity to be unwell and recover gradually because of their caring responsibilities.

How Needs Might be Met

Again there was consensus regarding the best ways to meet need.

Raising awareness was considered crucial by all groups. Some mentioned raising the awareness of various professionals (particularly those involved in education), others discussed raising awareness amongst children so that young carers could identify themselves, and their peers would have a better understanding and would therefore be less likely to bully or tease children who are carers. Many delegates discussed the need to raise awareness within their own organisations and to 'spread the word' to their colleagues. The roadshows had given them the necessary information to do this.

Along with awareness raising, **many delegates discussed the identification and recognition of young carers.** This was thought to be more likely where people were aware of some of young carers' problems following awareness raising. Interestingly, several delegates commented that following the roadshow they would go and reassess their own case load for young carers!

Inter-agency work, collaboration, networking and the exchange of ideas and information were all areas to come under discussion.

Throughout the roadshows Crossroads emphasised that one

organisation could not hope to deal with the problems of young caring alone, and the fruitful discussions on joint work, the contacts people from different organisations made, and the exchange of information and ideas were all very positive aspects of the syndicate groups.

A change in the attitudes of many professionals was seen as a way forward in relation to meeting the needs of young carers. This was thought to include looking at the needs of the whole family rather than simply the 'client', 'patient' or 'user'. This would involve consultation with children, assessing their needs, listening to what they feel they need and acknowledging children's rights. This, many delegates felt, was possible with judicious use of existing legislation, but would require not only a change in attitudes, but also training within organisations. Several delegates intended using the training pack within their own organisations for this purpose. It was also strongly emphasised that legislation alone was not sufficient, but that there must be formal recognition of the needs of young carers by their inclusion in the planning process, and by including them in all community care and children's plans.

Finally, the lack of funding was discussed and the possibility of more flexible use of existing funding. Discussions centred around the best ways of making use of existing budgets and adapting existing services to meet the needs of young carers rather than trying to provide new, under-resourced services

What You/Your Organisation can do to Help Young Carers

Again, there was broad consensus on what could be done to help young carers. Awareness raising was considered critical within organisations in order to raise the profile of young carers and to ensure that their needs were acknowledged - a first step towards meeting them. Training was considered important and those who had access to the training pack were intent on using it within their own organisations. Networking and joint working were again considered as the way forward for meeting needs.

Many delegates felt that they and other members of their organisations could support young carers if they were prepared to widen their own knowledge and expertise. For example, some delegates felt that now they were aware of some of the issues they would find out what services were available in their area and share this knowledge with young carers and colleagues. They felt they could act as advocates and befriend young carers, listening sympathetically and offering support without requiring any additional funds!

The problems of funding were discussed, and several delegates mentioned lobbying local and national government, writing to local

MPs, contacting statutory organisations and getting young carers' issues discussed in the planning procedures. It was generally felt that to include young carers' issues in formalised plans would enable organisations to meet their needs using existing channels, as inclusion in plans would give legitimacy to young carers work and add a legal requirement to identify them and to meet their needs.

Delegates were prepared to go back to their own organisations and check out their policies regarding young carers. Some with no such policies felt they were in a position to educate others and lobby for written policies. Those involved in the assessment of needs under community care legislation felt that the roadshow had given them the necessary information to ensure that the needs of the whole family were assessed and that no assumptions were made regarding who was providing care - they felt better able to identify young carers. One delegate, typical of many, commented:

I will go back and check what our policy is on taking parents or children into care.

One of the themes to emerge was the realisation that it was unwise to raise unrealistic expectations and that any specific, targeted work with young carers would need adequate planning and resourcing. Added to this was the acknowledgment that if they or their organisations were to offer support to young carers then this had to be long-term support which would require the commitment of staff at all levels.

Whilst the discussions within syndicate groups involved delegates from a variety of organisations, specific comments were made by Crossroads' staff. These included acknowledging that as providers of respite care they could relieve any carer. Indeed, many pointed out that their equal opportunities policy could be used effectively to ensure that young carers were not discriminated against because of their age. They also felt that increased awareness amongst Crossroads' employees would lead to more young carers being identified and supporting during the initial assessment procedure. They also felt that Crossroads, as a voluntary organisation, could be flexible and offer a 'tailored' service to meet the specific needs of any carer, old or young. Finally, they could draw on the experience and expertise of staff in existing Crossroads young carers projects, making good use of a resource which was already available to them; and use the training pack which was provided to all schemes and could be used immediately to educate staff.

The consistency of the discussions in each of the syndicate groups suggests that the messages from speakers at each of the roadshows was clearly understood. Delegates did not leave the roadshows with unrealistic expectations, but with clear ideas about what they could do and how they would respond to young carers in the future.

The recurring use of terms such as honesty, consistency, flexibility, age-appropriateness, empowerment, child-centredness and continuity of service and approach, were just the messages that Crossroads wanted delegates to take home with them

Recent Events - An Update

Since the series of roadshows, Crossroads has made further commitments to young carers. In addition to the Young Carer Projects in St. Helens, Halton and Nottingham, Crossroads is now managing a project in Macclesfield and has jointly funded a small research project in Greenwich.

In September 1995 an Assistant Director (Young Carers) was appointed to supervise and co-ordinate all of Crossroads' work with young carers. The Assistant Director is Alan Johnstone, who joined Crossroads from The Children's Society and brings with him a wealth of experience and knowledge. Alan can be contacted at the following address:

Crossroads North West Division
Partnership House
Rooms 4-7
704 New Chester Road
Bromborough
Merseyside
L62 2BB
Telephone: 0151-343 9845

The Training Pack, *Getting It Right For Young Carers* is priced £20 for statutory organisations and £15 for voluntary organisations and individuals, and can be obtained from:

Betty Newton
Young Carers Research Group
Department of Social Sciences
Loughborough University
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 3TU
Telephone: 01509-228299/223379

Some Comments About Crossroads

I am delighted to have this opportunity to say how privileged I am to be associated with Crossroads and to acknowledge the very valuable contribution they make in supporting those involved in caring for elderly or disabled friends or relatives...My warmest congratulations to Crossroads on achieving 21 years of remarkable growth and my very best wishes for the future.

(Norma Major, patron)

Without Crossroads many people would not have the choice to remain in their own homes. Crossroads offers invaluable support to carers whatever their age and the Crossroads schemes really demonstrate how to supply a service which is related to the needs of people. Many people's lives would have much less quality without the contribution that Crossroads makes.

(Denise Platt, Under Secretary, Association of Metropolitan Authorities)

For 21 years Crossroads has been at the heart of developments in community care policy. The Association of County Councils is more than happy to wish Crossroads well for the future and to pledge willingly a partnership in the business of caring for carers.

(Stephen Campbell, Association of County Councils)

One of the key objectives of our community care reforms is to ensure that people who look after a relative or a friend get practical help with their caring tasks. Among the most valuable forms of support carers can have is the opportunity to take a break from caring duties from time to time. It is in providing this opportunity that Crossroads Schemes play such a valuable part in helping carers.

(John Bowis, Junior Health Minister)

Crossroads Annual Review, 1994-1995

careless of the
children who care

to real courage in
are often shamed
dren. Whether it's
daily battles against
hip or through one-off
bravery, the youngsters
e pages
lserve
e called...

18 LIVING

LIVING
It's hard w

Adult concerns
and responsibilities
come early to
children who take
care of invalid
parents, writes
Jo Neustatter

...all by herself," she told a friend.

The country's bravest

BRITISH ASSOCIATION • The deserved campaign

Authorities betray generation

**Girl of 3
cares for
sick gran**

A 61-year-old woman has to
work and drive but not
grandmother and help her
in the winter. It was re-
ported yesterday.
The cat is named only
"Stirling" - is also ex-
tremely the house

[illegible]