

Engaging with young carers: An overview

This overview identifies key principles and considerations embedded in the Carers NSW young carer engagement toolkit. It is intended to be used by Carers NSW staff and other stakeholders working with young carers as a desktop reference to support inclusive engagement.

Engaging with young carers: An overview refers to two other components of the Carers NSW young carer engagement toolkit:

- [*Engaging with young carers: A guide*](#)
- [*Engaging with young carers: A checklist*](#)

Key principles

Ethical and effective young carer engagement is underpinned by the following principles:

- Build trust and rapport
- Be carer-aware
- Be inclusive
- Be flexible
- Be ethical

→ See [*Engaging with young carers: A guide*](#), pages 8-10

Understanding young carers

Young carers are children and young people aged 25 years and under who provide unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug and/or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail. Young carers can be, but are not always, the main provider of support (the primary carer). Young carers provide a range of practical, specialist and emotional assistance which often exceeds community expectations of what a child or young person can and should be responsible for.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC), there are approximately 83,700 carers up to the age of 25 years in New South Wales (NSW), which is 3.2% of this age cohort. 11,600 (13.9%) of these young carers are primary carers. Young carers are just as likely to be male as female, and just over 1 in 5 young carers live in a rural area.

Approximately 5% speak a language other than English at home, and around 3% were born in a non-English speaking country. Data indicates that up to 1 in 4 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in NSW have caring responsibilities, which could amount to more than 35,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Young carers vary considerably in terms of age, from young children, to teenagers, to young adults. They are often 'hidden', meaning that they are less likely than older carers to realise they are a carer, to tell others that they are a carer, or seek support, or be identified as one. For this reason, data on young carers can be limited.

→ See [*Engaging with young carers: A guide*](#), pages 4-5

Know your audience

Before setting out to engage with young carers, a key step is to find out about the group(s) you plan to focus on. This can be achieved with some initial desktop research and informal conversations with service providers and community contacts. A useful starting point may be population statistics relating to young carers.

→ See *Engaging with young carers: A guide*, pages 5-6

Young carers are diverse

Children and young people who are caring for a family member or friend can vary greatly in age and stage of life, as well as a number of other personal characteristics, such as cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability and type of caring responsibilities. Recognising these differences will ensure you approach the right group(s) of young carers in the right ways, and will ensure you capture the diversity of young carers in your project.

→ See *Engaging with young carers: A guide*, page 6

Young carer engagement: Practical tips

When engaging with young carers, don't forget to:

- Fulfil legal requirements in NSW for working with children
- Go through formal processes to engage with schools, where necessary
- Keep activities and communications age-appropriate, without resorting to stereotypes
- Give young carers a voice in all stages of the project
- Remunerate participants wherever possible
- Use plain language to reach hidden carers
- Leverage existing carer-specific, youth-specific and other community services and networks
- Involve experts and champions in all stages of the project

→ See *Engaging with young carers: A guide*, pages 12-15
