



YOUNG HEROES

Across the UK, as many as one in five young people and children are thought to be caring for someone else.



Unpaid carers can be any age.

Josie and Jamie's story



Jamie and Josie with their sisters.

Josie and Jamie, aged 11 and nine, help their parents care for their two disabled sisters, Phoebe and Amelia. Jamie, Phoebe and Amelia are triplets. Josie and Jamie help by feeding their sisters through tubes, getting them dressed to go out and changing their nappies. They also entertain their siblings if their parents are busy. They find the work tiring and it makes going to school harder. "I don't always feel like helping. I'd rather play," Jamie said. "Mum and Dad need our help."

Carers Week marked in the UK

Between 8 and 14 June, Carers Week was marked across the UK. Carers Week is an annual campaign to highlight the role of unpaid carers around the country. A carer is anyone who looks after someone else because of an illness or other condition and isn't paid for the work they do. The theme this year was "making caring visible" so that everyone is aware of the huge contribution carers make to society.

As a result of coronavirus, an extra 4.5 million people have become unpaid carers for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives or friends. Vulnerable people and those with serious illnesses are encouraged by officials to stay at home in isolation and not go out to shops. They therefore need extra help at home.

New research for Carers Week has found that

there are now an estimated 13.6 million unpaid carers in the UK, which is about a fifth of the population. Many of these unpaid carers are young people who have to care for a loved one as well as doing their school work.

Speaking to a BBC radio programme, 14-year-old Natasha Bradley talked about caring for her father, who suffers from leukaemia, epilepsy and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Every day she gives him his medication, feeds and washes him. "From when I wake up to when he wakes up, I do my schoolwork. When he wakes up, I'm caring for him," she said. "It hasn't been a struggle because my best friend is in the same situation, so I don't feel left out."

Many carers, however, do feel isolated or left out.

According to the charity Carers UK, carers are seven times more likely than the rest of the population to say that they feel lonely.

Carers Week, established by Carers UK more than 25 years ago, aims to raise awareness around caring in society so that carers are "seen, heard and understood". This year, there were lots of virtual activities, including online discussion groups for carers to share their experiences and build new friendships. Special online sessions gave carers and their loved ones emotional support. The campaign called on employers, politicians, schools and members of the public to highlight the work of carers in several ways via the Carers Week website, where people can also pledge their support.



WORD OF THE WEEK

OCEAN

World Oceans Day marks the effort to protect our oceans. The word "ocean" comes from the classical world. The ancient Greeks believed that the earth was a single land mass and was surrounded by a great river, which they called Okeanos. In early times, when much of the world had yet to be discovered, ocean described this "great outer sea".



THE WEEK IN HISTORY

16 June 1963

The first woman to travel to space

On 16 June 1963, cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to travel to space. A cosmonaut is a Russian astronaut. She took off in the spacecraft Vostok 6 from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, spending two days in space and orbiting the Earth 49 times. The spacecraft was accidentally programmed to drift into space for ever, instead of returning to Earth, but scientists managed to update the directions and Tereshkova made it safely back to Earth.



Valentina Tereshkova

Carers week marked in the UK

Once you have read the article, try any of the following activities...



Hold a debate

Caring for family members just comes naturally to most people. The trouble is that it can take up a lot of time and effort. Some people can claim an allowance from the Government but, at less than £2 per hour (assuming the length of a normal working week), it is a tiny fraction of what they would probably be earning if they did not have their caring responsibilities. Should carers be paid a fair wage for their caring duties? After all, you can be sure that people in power would not expect anyone else to work for £2 per hour. Or is that simply not affordable for our country? Anyway, isn't caring an act of love and you can't put a price on that? What do you think?

Writing challenge!

Choose one of the following writing warm-ups.

1 Even if you do not have any additional needs, there is bound to be someone who cares for you. It doesn't have to be a member of your family; it could be a friend or a teacher. Write that person a thank you letter to show them that you appreciate all they do for you. Remember to use all the conventions of an informal letter. Most importantly, show that you know precisely what they do for you – that has much more effect than a general, non-specific thank you.

or

2 Imagine that you are your own parent or carer. Write a diary entry for a typical day of looking after you, remembering to use conjunctions to sequence your ideas chronologically. See if you can identify all the ways in which that person looks after you.

Investigate

Some people, especially the elderly, need to be looked after in special care homes. Research what skills, experience and qualifications you need to get a job as a care assistant in a care home and what you would be expected to do.