

Hannah's story

Hannah, from Trowbridge is an 18 year old young adult carer. She helps to look after her 17 year old brother who suffers from non-verbal autism and severe epileptic seizures. He needs 24hr care and his condition means that sometimes he has to be hospitalized. As well as her caring role and studying for exams, Hannah has been holding down a job she attends after school to help her earn the money she needs to go to University.

Hannah has big dreams. She would like to work in water resource management and later specialise in seismology. Like most young people, she's found it tough studying for the grades she needs for a University place, and like most young carers even harder to fit it in around her caring role. But it's not all bad.

"Being a carer has made me push harder to achieve. It's given me the drive to succeed. I use the strength I need for caring to motivate me in other areas. Saying that, I always have half a brain on what's happening at home. "

Many young people looking after a loved one do not identify themselves as a carer and schools are not aware that they may need additional support. New data from Carers Trust reveals 82% of young adult carers report feelings of stress and 73% saying they have to take precious time off school.

"There is a pressure to keep up with subjects and exams, and whilst I don't want a fuss or any special treatment, caring can be quite isolating. My friends know and have been a constant support structure as have my parents and school."

Following a recommendation from a social worker, Hannah has been supported by Spurgeon's as a young carer, and is now under the wing of CSW Young Adult Carer Support Worker, Andrea James. Andrea works to ensure young adult carers are not so engulfed by the present that they lose sight of their future.

"We work on what we can do to help them achieve their potential. It might be help with application forms, getting their CV ready, mental health workshops, funding driving lessons, or just providing a listening ear."

Hannah says: "The support of Spurgeons and CSW has been like a cushion. They listen and understand, and having someone look out for both my parents and me, especially at exam times has been a real help."

Andrea adds: "Because carers get on with it and appear to be coping, they often get missed when they need help. Here at CSW we work to support carers before they hit crisis point."

Hannah has a place at Imperial College London to study geo-physics, but she is worried that her parents will not get any respite from caring for her brother when she goes, Andrea and the team at CSW are working to ensure they are supported, leaving Hannah to enjoy her studying and one day, help to save the world.