

Using photography to understand the needs and priorities of Young Adult Carers

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Introduction

Young Adult Carers (YACs; aged 16-25) provide **unpaid care**, usually to family or friends. This can include practical household help, personal or intimate care, emotional support and health-related tasks¹.

YACs can experience **poorer mental and physical health, and worse social and occupational outcomes**^{2, 3}, compared to peers without caring responsibilities. Yet little is known about their experiences of support and what **they think** could improve services.



What did we do?

We ran **two in-person photo workshops** with 10 YACs (8 females; 1 trans male, and 1 did not say). YACs shared photos that related to their experiences of being a carer, and used these to talk about **suggestions for improvement** in support and **priorities for future research**. This method is called photo elicitation.

We chose this method because we wanted to encourage YACs to **have control when talking about what's important to them**, and to allow them to identify and prioritise their own support needs.

The sessions were audio recorded, typed up, and analysed to establish research priorities which were then **ranked in an online session** with five other YACs (3 female, 2 male).

What did we find?



We established **5 research priorities**, ranked in order of importance:

1. Health and wellbeing
2. Financial support
3. Identity beyond caring role
4. Transition/moving on
5. School experience

The transcripts from the photo workshops were also analysed using thematic analysis. Findings showed how caring responsibilities can **affect opportunities relating to emerging adulthood**; including autonomy and independence, identity development, and transition into adult roles.

What was the impact?

YACs reported **enjoying the activity**, and liked using their own photos to talk about their experiences. **Findings were also shared** with YACs and the supporting carer organisations.

This project informed further **successfully funded work** on the research priorities identified: finance needs of YACs (led by EF), and experiences of identity (led by AM).

We have also **submitted a grant** to co-design moving and handling resources for YACs to promote safer practices.



Focus on partnership and inclusion

The lead researchers and co-researcher have **lived experience** of young caring. The co-researcher was involved in study design, data analysis, facilitation of the online session, and write up.

When designing the project, we also **worked with local carer organisations** to make sure it reflected their priorities.

We also ensured that our methods **reduced power imbalances** between YACs and researchers, and **enabled accessible and inclusive participation** of YACs.

What's next?

We are **writing a paper** for a developmental psychology journal (abstract accepted) and are developing grants to co-design an intervention to better support **YAC identity and wellbeing**, and to develop a measure of **social care quality of life** for YACs.

References

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