Contents

Citation:

Introduction

Student carers

Young adult carers or a student carers often face enormous challenges (e.g. Becker & Becker, 2008; Sempik & Becker, 2014; National Union of Students (NUS), 2013). Even if they have left home to study at university, many student carers maintain caring responsibilities at a distance, at weekends and during holidays.

Student carers will often have conflicting demands of caring and studying. Indeed, research by the NUS 'raises serious concerns about retention for student carers' (NUS, 2013:19). Their research found that 'More than half of student carers (56 per cent) had seriously considered leaving their course, compared to 39 per cent of students without caring responsibilities' (NUS, 2013:3). Attainment is also likely to be affected. Again, the NUS found that 'Just under half of interviewees felt that their academic performance or attainment had been negatively affected by their caring responsibilities.'

The NUS report 'Learning with Care', (NUS, 2013:3) concluded that 'there was a lack of coordinated, systematic support' for student carers. Other research for Carers Trust, found that '75% of respondents informed college or university staff of their caring role. Despite this, 45% said there was no one who recognised them as a carer and helped them' (Sempik & Becker, 2014).

The University of Winchester

The University of Winchester has shown itself to be a sector leader for student carers. It was a key contributor to the Toolkit 'Supporting Students with Caring Responsibilities (Carers Trust, 2015) and recently won the Times Higher Education Award 2016 for widening participation in this area.

The University Learning and Teaching Strategy states that 'All students are inspired to achieve and contribute'. Young carers are a highlighted group within the University Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy 2015-2020 and are also a highlighted group within the University of Winchester Access Agreement 2018-2019.

The aims of this research project

Aim 1

This research project aimed to increase understanding of the experiences of student carers in relation to learning and teaching at the University of Winchester, including the barriers and enablers to their academic performance, attainment and engagement.

Aim 2

It also aimed to understand the perspectives of relevant staff about:

1. Who student carers are, their specific needs and what are the challenges and enablers all in relation to learning and teaching.
2. Improving the learning and teaching experience of student carers at the University of Winchester.

1. The proposed research project

This research was carried out between January 2017 and May 2017 and was originally intended to consist of three elements:

1. A short survey to capture existing principal support and interventions that were in place for student carers at the University of Winchester to provide background context for the project and help inform the interview used in the subsequent qualitative research.

2. Primary qualitative research with student carers from the University of Winchester to understand barriers student carers face with respect to Learning and Teaching at the University of Winchester and Their experiences of support from the University with respect to Learning and Teaching.

3. Use of a questionnaire with staff in two different faculties - The Faculty of Education, Health and Social Care and Faculty of Business, Law and Sport to find out about their awareness and knowledge of student carers and their knowledge and ideas about support for this group at the University.

The decision was taken not to pursue this third element (Aim 2) due to capacity and instead to focus primarily on the qualitative research element (Aim1).

Methodology

Element 1

In place of a survey to capture existing support and interventions for student carers at the University, a request for information was posted to staff on the Intranet. The same request was emailed to staff known to be leading on initiatives for student carers. The request posted on the University intranet read as follows:

> **'Student Carers (Students with caring responsibilities)**
>
> 'I am collating information about how the University is supporting student carers (students with caring responsibilities). If you are leading on, or aware of any intervention or initiative (small or large) that support student carers in any way, I would be grateful if you would email me very brief details about this. Thank you.'

Element 2: The qualitative research

Ethics approval was sought and was granted through the University light touch review.

The qualitative research consisted of semi-structured interviews with student carers exploring their experiences of learning and teaching at the University of Winchester. The number of interviews was limited by the time and resource available to conduct

them. In total five face to face interviews lasting between 22 and 28 minutes were conducted to explore:

1. **The barriers student carers face with respect to Learning and Teaching at the University of Winchester**

2. **Their experiences of support from the University with respect to Learning and Teaching**

Five student carers were recruited for interview and a number of approaches were used to recruit student carers with as diverse a participant profile as possible. Two were recruited through Student Services, one through a member of staff who had responded to the initial phase of the project, one was recruited as a result of a message posted on the student intranet and one came through the Widening Participation Team. Students initially completed a pre-interview questionnaire to inform participant selection **(See Appendix 1).**

Three further student carers were identified through the Widening Participation Department. Each of these completed a pre-interview questionnaire but were not interviewed due to limited capacity.

Of the 5 student carers recruited:

- Four students were female and only one male student carer was successfully recruited.
- All of the students had been caring for a significant length of time. One Student had been caring for 9 years, three for 12 years and one for 16 years.
- Two students were mature students (one PHD student)
- Four students were on full-time courses
- Three students were caring for a mother, one cared for their father and husband and one cared for their daughter.

See also Appendix 2

2. The findings

Introduction to themes from the interviews

Interview transcripts were analysed thematically to three levels of coding. An Excel spreadsheet was used to assign Level 1 code descriptors and Level 2 categories. Level 2 coded categories were then assigned into Level 3 themes away from the computer, using 'cut-out' Level 1 and 2 codes. Once themes were established, these were again added to the Excel spreadsheet in order for raw data (transcript material) and Level 1 and 2 codes to be viewed together within specific themes.

The themes identified from the student carer interviews are shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

A. **Impacts of caring on student carers (at The University of Winchester)**
B. **Barriers for student carers (at The University of Winchester)**
C. **Student carers as learners**
D. **Existing support at The University of Winchester**
E. **Staff Awareness and understanding**
F. **Communication of the support for student carers (at The University of Winchester)**
G. **What would support student carers (at The University of Winchester)**

A. Impacts of caring on student carers at The University of Winchester

Reflecting previous research such as (Becker & Becker, 2008) and (Sempik & Becker 2014), student carers at the University of Winchester experienced a range of impacts as a consequence of being busy with both their studies and caring responsibilities, including feeling vulnerable; being worried and distracted by the person they care for; finding it hard to concentrate on their studies and facing financial and time pressures.

Limitations on time have led some of the students to miss out on wider activities such as enrichment activities, sports and social activities. It has also reduced their capacity to take on part-time work which due to financial pressures, is of particular significance to these students.

In relation to learning and teaching

This time pressure forced student carers to prioritise activities which may impact generally on their overall skills and academic performance. As one student put it:

'I suppose one of the things you tend to do is you prioritise, when you only have limited hours you prioritise the things that you must do and so all the things like learning how to use the IT equipment properly and things like that, they get overlooked and missed, which is difficult.'

One student believed a lack of time had prevented her from meeting her Tutor.

'Um I just think it's a time thing. It would be nice if they (student carers) had more support like via email for example when you, I've not been...I've never been to a tutorial with a teacher because, like it's quite tricky to like fit in times when it would be suitable for me, because I'm like, I can't do this, can't do this can't do this cos they've got meetings and stuff and then if they say, like offer it on like a day that I'm off, then I often have to work and I can't say 'No' to the work. So I've never actually had a tutorial.'

Overall the student carers were managing to attend formal teaching sessions although some stated that they had missed lectures and groupwork as a direct result of their caring roles. Again, deadlines were generally being met, but additional pressures were mentioned in meeting these due to caring responsibilities.

Some impacts were due to financial pressures. For example, one student felt unable to take up an educational opportunity abroad because they felt they were not able afford the trip in addition to paying rent to their mother.

For the PHD student, the impact of caring has led them to taking a break from their studies.

B. Practical barriers to studying for student carers at the University of Winchester

Students highlighted several barriers to their studying at the University. These barriers were primarily not course related, but rather practical. Two students had reported that parking was a particular issue to them as student carers and one which had a direct impact on their attendance at lectures. The students felt unable to park at the Park and Ride in case there was an emergency with the person they cared for.

'I can't park at Park and Ride because then if there was an emergency it would take an extra half an hour or whatever to get home. Um so I need to be able to park on campus and if I drove down here one day and couldn't park I would drive back home.'

'If she has an illness she can go downhill here very quickly. And also she has a learning disability, so doesn't necessarily understand if she's feeling ill, she needs either myself and my husband to be there with her um so what I can't afford to do is to be on campus, get a phone call that says she's poorly, then after walk to the bus stop 10 minutes, then have to wait 10 minutes for a bus then 15 minutes to get to park and ride, then from park and ride which is further from home, to her.'

This has led one of these students to miss lectures because they had arrived late at the University as a result of their caring responsibilities. At the time they did arrive they were unable to find a parking space and did not wish to park in the Park and Ride.

'Say she's had an appointment at the hospital, or something like that, so it means that she is gone into school late and I've got here at 10:30 or 11, there's

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been times when I've driven round and round and round and round and I've gone home and missed lectures, because I haven't been able to actually Park.'

Another practical issue that has been a distraction to one student carer is caused by the poor mobile reception 'black spots' on the campus. This has led to wasted time and worry whilst on campus.

'I do find, there's a lot of black spots, this is a bit of a silly thing, there's a lot of black spots in this University, on the Campus in the sense that you can't get phone reception …but when you are a carer that's actually a really bad thing'

Timetabling

Timetabling was also felt to be a barrier for two of the students. One student felt there should be more consideration with regards to timetabling for student carers.

'And also like, I think they should be more considerate when doing activities like what I told you about, when people who are carers and commute from home. I think they should be accommodating to the timings and start [of the seminar]. So if you put like maybe, if you had to care for somebody and you had to wait for the whole, at the end of the day to attend a seminar, whereas you could just go home and care for that person and start studying I think that would be much better.'

Another student found that finding childcare for a disabled was difficult and that where timetables and optional seminars for example are published late, this increased the difficulty further.

'So the main um practical difficulty that I said is actually around timetable, it's not about the course in particular. If you have a disabled child it's a lot harder to find childcare. A lot lot harder to find childcare especially as she's not a baby… so finding childcare is really really difficult for her so the fact that timetables come out so late - in August - um basically most childminders on holiday, they don't really working in August because they work when the schools are around. It's really hard then to basically find suitable child care for when my modules run over the school run.'

'I understand University can't timetable for individual circumstances, and I wouldn't expect them to. It's how late it's left for me to get that timetable. And also the fact that you don't know your semester 2 timetable until November!'

This student highlighted the difficulty caused when several assignments are set at a time corresponding to school half-term holiday periods. This has led to increased pressure for students, whereas normally they would have more time to work on assignments.

'I struggle sometimes with and I think this does again it relates to her, the fact that the University has a 12 week semester and we don't have a reading week in the middle of our course, it's inevitable it happens every single semester, whenever my children are on half term, I have one, possibly two assignments

cos it always is that sort of 6 week point. So whereas I have time and space at home to be working on my assignment normally, I have children at home and again I have issues around childcare, I can't leave them. It just makes it more difficult to actually then get those assignments done.'

C. Student carers as learners

The student carers present themselves as extremely conscientious and independent learners. They had all had caring roles that had lasted for a significant time and were used to managing their studies and their caring roles. On average they had caring roles that had lasted 12 years (from 9 -16 years). One student acknowledged her caring role as having helped her manage her studies. Although time was pressured for them, in general they were meeting their deadlines for their courses.

'I guess being a carer and having like a parental role … I had like a timetable with my Mum and I was very much the parent, so I'm kind of used to having things done and then I'm used to being in charge and not rely on anybody else.'

'And then I guess I get quite like stressed, so I always, like I always go to all my lectures, I haven't missed one which is really good…I'm the kind of person that does like to get on with their work so I've never struggled with that which is good.'

Related to being conscientious and independent learners, the students reported that that they did not wish to have any special treatment because of their situations and that they would not seek support unless they really needed it. A couple of the students said that they did not wish to have sympathy or pity.

'I wouldn't go and ask for an extension or ask for flexibility or support if I didn't really need it. Because I'm the sort of person as well, who doesn't want people to pity me or to pity my daughter and I don't want sympathy and I don't want special treatment unless I really need it, because there really is no other option. So I just really want them to have an awareness and to not treat me, I don't want to treat me any differently unless I need that, if that makes sense.'

'It may sound like you're trying to gain sympathy if you just go and say I'm a student carer or something like that. I think if it's not relevant like suppose say if I'm struggling with my homework or you know I've been struggling with the deadlines I could just say to them 'I've got these responsibilities along with my health,' so, at that point of time maybe yes, but directly going and staying that would be a bit of, I don't know, a bit weird.'

Again, when asked whether they wished staff on their course to know they were a student carer, one student reported that they wouldn't unless it was particularly relevant and their caring role was impacting their studies. This student stated:

'Not unless I'm struggling with something directly due to me being a carer. So if I'm struggling, so if I'm caring for my mother and that's hampering my studies or only then but not because, I don't think that would be very, I feel it would be getting sympathy, unwanted sympathy.'

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This apparent stoicism of these student carers may lead to their learning being impacted upon negatively before they begin to reach out for support from staff.

D. Existing support at The University of Winchester

Students feel the University and staff are supportive

One student had chosen to study at Winchester specifically because they had heard that the University recognised and supported young carers.

'The reason I came to Winchester is because I did a little conference in the Stripe before I came here and told them about my life and stuff like that and um they will like, they spoke to me afterwards, They were like mentioning what they did here and that obviously that they recognise young Carers which I had never really heard before. And it was obviously quite near home as well, so it made sense that I can go easily back home to visit my mum.'

And students generally felt that the University and staff were supportive although this was not necessarily because they were student carers.

'I feel that my faculty are so supportive and so flexible, I just wouldn't want that to change.'

'So whilst I don't know specifically about other people who have caring responsibilities, I think that our lecturers are so welcoming and supportive that I would hope anybody else on my course would feel the same.'

'I'm sure that if my daughter was ill, if she had emergency appointments which are rare but it does happen, I think that they would be incredibly understanding and that there wouldn't be any issues. I feel that, very confident that I could go to them and explain and that they wouldn't just push me away and that they would take it seriously.'

However one student did not feel supported by her lecturers:

'Most of the stuff is groupwork and everyone has to participate and it was quite hard, at times I would have to go home and I wouldn't be within the group to do groupwork. I found that also made me struggle within group terms because I was always a little bit behind with what they were doing and I don't think lecturers try to help me get back in kind of thing.'

This student thought that they would stop studying if their caring responsibilities started to impact their studies:

'Um personally I think I would just stop studying…because I don't...because I'm not getting the support I feel I need, I feel like I would just stop studying.'

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Being on the HE Ambassador Scheme is helpful

Student carers are a targeted group at the University for working as HE Ambassadors (managed by the Widening Participation (WP) team.). For three students this was felt to be particularly useful. Firstly, since being an HE Ambassador is a paid post, the programme supported them financially – which appears especially important to student carers. Secondly it recognises the students as carers in a positive way by recognising their skills for the post. The role of HE Ambassador also enables students to meet other carers and help build their skills and confidence.

'They (Student Services) also put me into contact with careers which got me on the he ambassadors doing work with young Carers.'

'I've gained my confidence, I've, you know you just change me completely as a person so one of the best things about coming to the University of Winchester has been the WP program as well apart from the studies and learning different things. I think yeah one of the added, I don't know if that is provided by the University but that program as a young carer has really helped me as a person and I gained a lot of skills and you know enhanced my personal dispositions and stuff like that so yes.'

Financial support eases pressure

Finance was talked about as a pressure, particularly since having to work came on top of studying and their caring responsibilities. The benefit therefore of the Dame Mary Bursary for student carers was important to those receiving it.

'Yeah they do give the bursary Dame Mary, which is really helpful.'

'The University as a whole through the financial bursary that has helped me a lot because that means like I can actually go home.'

Extensions easing time pressure

One student highlighted the importance of extensions for them to ease time pressures.

'So I got extensions for all my essays, that does help me, it gives me more time to do my essays and stuff.'

Another student stated that having extensions might support them if caring began to have an impact.

'I will go and talk to one or all of them (lecturers and Tutor) or actually the course leader as well, she's great and just basically have a discussion with them about what impact the caring was having and trying to find a solution whether it's going back to being part time or having extensions…'

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E. Staff Awareness and understanding

Students were often not sure whether or not their lecturers or tutors were aware that they were carers. Some assumed that they would know, if someone else was aware in the University or if it had been recorded as part of the admissions process or the allocation of the student carer bursary. The assumption was that this information would have been shared with staff on their course, however students were unsure.

'At first I just assumed that after speaking to social...no Student Services, I assumed that they would inform my lecturers and so I wouldn't have to inform them myself. However I didn't see any inkling that they did um I think it was when we were doing a documentary, I'd mentioned I'm a young carer and I think that's when the lecturers started to know about it yeah.'

'Not that I'm aware of and I don't remember when I filled in all the initial forms for the University, signing or ticking anything that said I was a carer.'

'I don't think so no um I kind of assumed that they would read like.. I know it's a lot of students but I kind of assumed that they'd may be read, if they'd noticed that there were some actual notes that was important that they might read them but I don't think they do which, I know they're busy, yeah but I don't think they know.'

Students also stated that they found people did not necessarily understand their situations and that they found it difficult to talk to their lecturers or tutors about their caring responsibilities.

'Although they understood, my situation, I don't think they fully understood my situation.'

'I don't know but it's all so difficult, I find it kind of like hard to discuss it with people that don't really understand because sometimes they ask me awkward questions and sometimes they don't I think, some people want to show they're trying to be helpful, but if it's like a teacher asking what is so, what do you have to like, what is the issue exactly? Then I...I feel like they're being a bit probing.'

Students wanting staff to be aware and understand
Students however wanted staff to be aware of and understand the impact of caring on studying. They felt that this would help them reach out for support and talk about what was going on, if they ever needed to.

'They don't really understand. It's a bit awkward…obviously you don't want to explain in front of everybody…'

'Yeah so it would be good if they understood a bit more without me having to tell them because it can be quite an emotional thing to have to like talk about and everyone is well, if I have to tell every teacher that's quite a lot.'

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'I feel as though if they know your situation and they can talk to you about it you'll feel more confident about going to your lecturer and telling them any worries you have. So for them to at first when you meet them to sit down and talk about your situation with you, get to know you a bit better and they can see that what you struggle with that help you with it if you need help. So just making sure that they are aware of the whole situation and that they can help you in the way that they know how.'

Despite the difficulties in sharing with staff that they were carers, several had shared this information in various ways and in some instances due to the necessity of the situation.

'I told them. Yes I needed to because it was interfering with my study.'

'I think I went to Student Services after about a month and I think I saw a counsellor, and I said to them that I was a young carer and that's when they put me over to the young carers (HE ambassador programme) and careers and all that stuff. But they didn't know beforehand. I had to go to them and say I was a young carer.'

F. Communication of the support for student carers at The University of Winchester

Not knowing about support for student carers

The students generally knew if they needed support, that they could go to Student Services as a first stop, or look on the University intranet. However, they were less clear on any specific support for themselves as student carers. Three of the students were aware of the bursary for student carers and the HE Ambassadors Programme. However in general none had received any specific information or advice as a student carer apart from one of the students who had been supported by Student Services to access Carers Allowance.

'No I don't know (about specific support) apart from the Dame Mary I don't know, no.'

'I'd only know to go to Student Services if I needed something, but other than that I don't know any other way or anything else no.'

'I think maybe it was just, I didn't really know who I could talk to if I needed some help. I wasn't really sure where to find that cos I guess a lot of people have that support network at home if they're a bit upset or something, but I .. or they can.. you know sometimes people just talk to their parents about things I guess um so I guess just letting them know like.. maybe if they said there was like people you could talk to like originally, I didn't really know what Student Services was exactly and I didn't know where to find information on it.'

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One mature student thought there was support available to carers but only for 'young carers' rather than 'mature student carers'.

'Whenever I've seen student carers mentioned within University, it all seems to be framed within that sort of 'young Carers', so I've always I probably just not really looked at it because I thought well it's young Carers...'

Information for student carers is important

Two of the students felt there should be more information for student carers from the University:

'I think there should be more, like they should be made more aware like the facilities and the help for University gives.'

'Um I'd also say just giving us more information in terms of like, say if we are applying for carer's allowance or giving us information about what we entitled to as a young carer.'

G. What would support student carers at The University of Winchester

Additional support as a carer would be helpful

Although generally students felt the University and staff were supportive, they said they would benefit from additional support and some practical changes. Firstly, one student felt that staff should be more proactive with student carers and checking how they were progressing with their studies.

'I feel like if they know you're a young carer they should reach out to you a bit more and maybe ask 'do you need support in these areas?', or even like, regular meetings to see how you are doing. I think it would be good because so far I haven't had anything.'

'I have to push myself to get it done but I would like a bit more help if that makes sense.'

'Mmm I'd say just being able to sit down one to one with a lecturer maybe to discuss what's slowing me down and they can give me advice on how to speed it up a bit and yeah just the little things.'

'I wouldn't say repeating or having extra lectures, but I think sometimes going over stuff twice helps quite a bit. But I do struggle with concentration a lot.'

Being able to talk to someone

Some of the students spoke about how talking to people is and would be useful to them as student carers. Two had seen a counsellor and one had a mentor through the Disability Student Allowance.

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'I've I found the talking (with a mentor) is very helpful. And I can't really talk a lot of things with my mother so you know talking to a third person it's very good and it really helped clear mind.

'I think it would be useful to have a support group.'

Practical changes to save time

Students suggested various practical innovations, such as improvements with the timetabling and car parking that they felt would help them as student carers, by saving them time.

'For me, it really is about those practicalities and I know there's a 'timetabling project' going on, so if some of this can be fed into that, it would be really useful.'

'Yes so as I said it would be nice if they would be happy to email me rather than actually in face tutorials and if they would like be happy just to like briefly look over work to see if it was on the right track it would be nice just because there is less time to go in.'

One student suggested that increased use of email by tutors to support student carers would be beneficial, since attending tutorials for carers was not always possible.

'So if I email them saying can I just email you like what I'm working on so far, and you can just say like, this is like, you're on the right track, it's quite good just make sure you remember this or something like that, that would be really nice, because I guess that's kind of what they do in tutorials but for like people like me, you can't really always go in tutorials.'

Recording lectures

Again, since student carers sometimes missed lectures or part of lectures due to their caring responsibilities, it was suggested by two of the students that recording lectures would be helpful.

'Mmm yeah I think that's a bit of a struggle…um they, It's quite full on the course. very full on, although we do have group work there is quite a bit of individual work as well and I find it's hard for me to keep on top of group work which is even harder for me to do individual work as well so I'd appreciate if, because sometimes if I'm missing a lecture or something, they would put the content online for me to see but I would appreciate a little bit more of an explanation cos when you're in a lecture they speak, they expand a lot more than if you view it online.'

'So I suppose that actually is something for carers, is to have the lectures recorded and things like that because we don't, they put PowerPoint up on Canvas but PowerPoints don't mean anything unless you hear the conversation that was going on. Yes, so actually recording lectures would be useful.'

Support with equipment

One student was aware of support that fellow students received because of their learning needs and felt that a similar scheme would benefit them as a student carer.

'I know some of my friends have like dyslexia and things like that and they get like a laptop they can use, um because I've had a lot of trouble because of like obviously a lot of carers have financial concerns and I've had it before. I've had to like, kept borrowing library computers until I could afford my own laptop. And that was a problem, so it would be nice if we sort of were taken into account like other groups were and that we might need extra support like Dragon Speech. That would actually I mean that would be very beneficial for me because it would actually save me a lot of time being able to like speak the work.'

Study skills

One student was receiving study skills through the Disability Student Allowance however this was because of their disability rather than being a carer. Another student felt that targeted study skills for student carers would be beneficial to their studies.

'In my first year I went to like a study skills, 'Study Buddy' person, um just to see if they could offer any tips on managing stuff, but maybe it would be beneficial if they had that but actually for people with my situation (a carer) because what they can do might not be what people like me could do. I don't know it might be and sometimes it's nice, I don't know maybe it would be a nice idea if they had like children who used to be in care or young Carers, they could maybe possibly help people with like techniques to try and get the most out of studying.'

One student felt that because of the time pressures on student carers that they should be offered different timescales to complete their studies in order to ease the pressure on them.

'So I think there should be different timescales for carers.'

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3. Recommendations

This section posits recommendations that have been developed to respond to the findings of this research in order to improve the learning and teaching of student carers at the University of Winchester. Whilst some of the recommendations will be specific to the University of Winchester, others would also hold relevance for other universities.

These recommendations are based on the premise that student carers face specific challenges and barriers to their learning and engagement with teaching. Furthermore, the recommendations are in line with the University's 'Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy 2015-2020', that states that the University will: *'Continue to improve the life chances of those from vulnerable groups, building on our successful work with care leavers, young carers, asylum seekers and people with a disability' (1.2.3)*

The recommendations are also in line with the University pledge *'to support the Student Carer Commitment, as set out in Supporting Students with Caring Responsibilities published by Carers Trust and co-authored by the University of Winchester.'* (The University of Winchester Access Agreement 2016-2017).

General recommendations

- The University should recognise that there are often a broad range and combination of factors that can impact negatively on the engagement and learning of student carers. In addition to the worry about the person they care for that is experienced by student carers, two other significant factors are the pressure of finance and the pressure of time.

- The University should build on its reputation for supporting young carers and take measures to further develop an ethos that is accommodating and supportive to student carers.

- The University should consider developing and implementing an overarching strategy or offer for student carers based on recommendations within this report and in 'Supporting Students with Caring Responsibilities (Carers Trust 2015).

Specific support with learning

- A personal learning plan should be developed with student carers that addresses their specific support and learning needs.

- Courses should closely monitor the attendance and progression of student carers and take proactive steps if attendance drops or is erratic and if progress is not as expected.

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- Student carers should be offered targeted study skills support, especially around time management and ensuring that student carers are able to use and maximise IT equipment and other university equipment and systems.

- Student carers should be offered a mentor who is trained on issues related to carers.

- The bursary should be promoted to student carers in order to support them to purchase essential equipment such as IT equipment and time-saving equipment, for example speech recognition software.

- Lectures should be recorded and made available to student carers.

- Consideration should be given to offering greater flexibility with extensions for students when caring responsibilities impact their studies and communicating this with student carers.

- Tutors should ensure that they meet regularly with student carers and are proactive in asking about how they are manging their studies alongside their caring responsibilities.

- Tutors should consider how increasing support and guidance with email can complement face to face tutorials.

Practical modifications

- The University should consider offering priority parking for student carers when this would be beneficial to enable students to park flexibly on, or close to campus in order to minimise the time needed to reach the person they care for in an emergency.

- Timetabling needs as far as practicably possible, to be considerate to student carers and minimise any unnecessary spread of lectures, seminars and groupwork across the day.

- Timetables and additional activities such as optional seminars should be published as early as possible to enable student carers and others with parental responsibilities to organise childcare or replacement care.

- Where possible, the setting of assignments should avoid school half-terms when student carers who are parents are likely to have less time than at other points during the semester.

- Whilst mobile coverage remains poor in certain areas, systems could be established that would enable student carers to be contacted in an emergency.

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Communication of the support available for student carers

- Support for student carers should be clearly promoted to existing and new students via the University intranet (including a single dedicated portal for student carers), Student Services and through the Student Union.

- The HE Ambassador Programme should continue to target student carers and continue to be promoted.

- The Dame Mary Bursary scheme should continue to target student carers and continue to be promoted.

- Student carers should be given targeted information that sets out wider support for them as carers.

Staff awareness

- All relevant staff including tutors, teaching and administrative staff, should be provided with training and/or information about the specific needs of students who are carers.

- Tutors need to understand the issues related to student carers and be able to provide information or signpost students to support.

- Protocols for sharing information about student carers among staff should be established in order that relevant staff are aware of and able to support individual students.

- The University should take a proactive approach to identifying student carers by providing ongoing and easy opportunities for student carers to identify themselves on their course, especially through the personal tutoring system.

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5. Acknowledgements

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