

HOW MAY CARING FOR A PARENT WITH MENTAL ILL HEALTH AFFECT A CHILD?

Children who are living with an adult with mental ill health can experience a number of challenges because of their caring role. Such as:

- High levels of anxiety and a belief that the sadness or negative emotions their parent is facing is because of something they have done wrong.
- Constantly worrying about the person, they care for. This can impact their education, causing them to be distracted at school or staying at home to keep their parent safe.
- Feeling angry and/or frustrated at not understanding the behaviour of the parent with mental ill health.
- Feelings of isolation and loneliness. Young people caring for a parent with mental ill health are often isolated from their peers, this could be because they cannot take part in social activities or clubs other young people their own age are.
- Fear that if they share their parents' mental ill health with anyone that they will be 'taken away' by social services.
- Feeling responsible for their parent who has mental ill health which leads to them sacrificing their own needs to care for that person or their siblings.
- Suicidal thoughts/self-harming because of the fear or pressure of living with a parent who has mental ill health. In Surrey, 3 young people caring for a parent who has mental ill health have taken their own lives in recent years.
- Challenges around transitions from primary to secondary school. At primary school young carers are more likely to report feeling supported by their classroom teacher or pastoral worker. Fear of being seen as different and a desire to fit in increase when young carers enter secondary school, therefore young carers are less likely to ask for support.
- Challenges around transitioning from school/college to university. Young carers can struggle to leave home because they do not have someone who can take over their caring role or do not wish to pass on their responsibility to younger siblings.