

# **“Little Islands”<sup>1</sup>: Challenges and Opportunities for Student Carers at the University of Westminster**

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## **Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences of student carers studying at the University of Westminster (UoW). Due to the limited data collected at the institutional and national level, little is known about this diverse group of students. To build the evidence base and our understanding, a number of one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with students representing a spectrum of carers. The interviews focused on the challenges and opportunities student carers faced throughout the lifecycle of their Higher Education (HE) experience. Through understanding of both challenge and opportunity it has been possible to formulate a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing student carer experiences in HE.

Structurally, the paper begins with a conceptualisation of student carers which addresses the diversity or spectrum of caring types. This is followed by a literature review investigating what extant work informs us about student carer experiences in HE, as well as what we know about the student carer population at UoW and compared to other HE institutions in the United Kingdom (UK). The second section addresses methodology, method, and ethics, detailing the adoption of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a technique of data analysis and semi-structured interviews as a means of data collection. This is followed by discussion of the findings (section three) which is split into two parts. In part one, a range of caring responsibility impacts (i.e., academic; financial; employment and career prospects; place of residence; emotional and wellbeing; social) are discussed, utilising direct quotations where these capture an impact’s essence. Part two suggests, based on the comments of respondents, areas where HE institutions may look to introduce, amend, or remove an aspect of provision to enhance the experience of student carers. The fourth section consists of some concluding remarks and recommendations based on the findings.

## **Defining student carers**

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<sup>1</sup> Student Carer 5.

The Carers Trust<sup>2</sup> defines a carer as ‘anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.’<sup>3</sup> The Office for Students (OfS) lists carers as a group underrepresented in HE institutions and, as such, there are quality gaps and support needs that need to be addressed. However, there is presently no national data on the total number of student carers (it is estimated that 3-6% of students are carers),<sup>4</sup> and even the identification of student carers is challenging.<sup>5</sup>

It is important, as well, to acknowledge the diversity of student carers.<sup>6</sup> This diversity concerns not only the nature of the care provided, but also how they came to the role; for instance, there may be cultural or other expectations underpinning the carrying out of a caring role.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the nature of the caring responsibility, the decision has been made here to broaden the definition of student carers to be inclusive of students with childcare responsibilities, including international students and their dependents, as well as those who look after younger siblings; student parents/guardians and siblings carers. While there are distinct experiences between caring types, there are multiple areas of crossover, such as self-reported impact on academic performance and social life. Furthermore, at the institutional level it was felt that the sibling carers and parents/guardians constituted a sizeable number of students with caring responsibilities, therefore it would mean missing out on a potentially rich vein of insight if they were to be excluded.

## Literature review

### *Understanding student carer experiences*

Despite the paucity of data on overall number, efforts have been made to understand the experiences of students with caring responsibilities in HE. Student carers face a number of barriers in HE, this is reflected in the attrition rate for young adult carers (YACs) being more

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<sup>2</sup> For the Carers Trust definition please visit: <https://carers.org/about-caring/about-caring>.

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organisation (ILO), *Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future Of Decent Work*, (Geneva: ILO, 2018), [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_633135.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_633135.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> National Union of Students (NUS), *Learning with Care: Experiences of Student Carers in the UK*, (NUS, 2013), [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/304257/response/747550/attach/13/2015%2011%2023%20001%20Furling%20attachment%20201309.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/304257/response/747550/attach/13/2015%2011%2023%20001%20Furling%20attachment%20201309.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1).

<sup>5</sup> Jordan Taylor, Paula Gleeson, Tania Teague and Michelle DiGiacomo, “Practices of inclusion for carers who are higher education students,” *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (2021).

<sup>6</sup> Mary Larkin and Chris Kubiak, “Carers and higher education: Where next?,” *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning* 23, no.2 (2021).

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, Gleeson, Teague and DiGiacomo, “Practices of inclusion for carers.”

than four times the national average.<sup>8</sup> Numerous barriers have been identified in the literature,<sup>9</sup> these include being unable to follow a fixed study routine;<sup>10</sup> not being able to join in activities with peers; loneliness and isolation; guilt at not being fully available to those they care for due to their studies;<sup>11</sup> as well as limited awareness of eligibility for targeted resources.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Runacres *et al*'s scoping review revealed that caring responsibilities could have a negative impact on the physical as well as mental health of carers, though the impact varied according to the different types of care provided; others have reported the financial strain of attending university whilst caring.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it may come as little surprise that student carers report their caring responsibilities as affecting their decision-making.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the personal challenges outlined, several institutional barriers have been identified. These include the infancy of inclusion policies catering for student carers, as well as institutional rigidity in accommodating needs.<sup>15</sup> Whilst Taylor *et al.* found that a 'scarcely' number of carers reached out for formal support, the NUS's (National Union of Students) *Learning with care* (2013) report found that when students did access help that they experienced varying degrees of support which was invariably uncoordinated and unsystematic. Furthermore, while the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service's (UCAS) addition of a tick-box for carers on its application forms is welcomed, there is no guarantee that on reaching university that students will self-identify or be recognised as carers or provided with support.<sup>16</sup> Day and Kirton *et al.* reported a fear of stigmatisation amongst YACs if they were to reveal their circumstances.<sup>17</sup> Several of these structural obstacles were raised by student carers

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<sup>8</sup> Joe Sempik and Saul Becker, *Young Adult Carers at School: Experiences and Perceptions of Caring and Education*, (London: Carers Trust, 2013), <https://carers.org/downloads/resources-pdfs/young-adult-carers-at-school.pdf>; Joe Sempik and Saul Becker, *Young Adult Carers at College and University* (London: Carers Trust, 2014), <https://carers.org/downloads/resources-pdfs/young-adult-carers-at-college-and-university.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Sempik and Becker, *Young Adult Carers at School*; Sempik and Becker, *Young Adult Carers at College and University*; Charlotte Chisnell, Many Pentecost and Sue Hanna, "An Invisible Population – The Experiences of Young Adult Carers Studying at the Eastern Institute of Technology," *Scope: (Teaching & Learning)* 10, (2021).

<sup>10</sup> Chantelle Day, "An empirical case study of young adult carers' engagement and success in higher education," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 25, no.14 (2021).

<sup>11</sup> Chisnell, Pentecost and Hanna, "An Invisible Population"; Lynn Kettell, "Young adult carers in higher education: the motivations, barriers and challenges involved – a UK study," *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 44, no.1 (2020); J. Runacres, D. Herron, K Buckless and S. Worrall, "Student carer experiences of higher education and support: a scoping review," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (2021).

<sup>12</sup> Day, "An empirical case study of young carers."

<sup>13</sup> Runacres, Herron, Buckless and Worrall, "Student carer experiences of higher education and support."

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Taylor, Gleeson, Teague and DiGiacomo, "Practices of inclusion for carers."

<sup>16</sup> Sempiks and Becker, *Young Adults Carers at College and University*.

<sup>17</sup> Day, "An empirical case study of young carers"; J.A. Kurton, K. Richardson, B.A. Jack and A.M. Jinks, "A study identifying the difficulties healthcare students have in their role as a healthcare student when they are also an informal carer," *Nurse Education Today* 32, no.6 (2012).

throughout the course of the research, emphasising the importance of tackling these issues to enhance student experience.

Despite these various challenges, student carers attach significant value to studying at university. Carers have highlighted the link between attaining a degree and improving job and career prospects.<sup>18</sup> Others have reported personal development, referring to qualities such as maturity and a sense of fulfilment that what they are doing makes a real difference, as well as organisational and advocacy skills.<sup>19</sup>

Research indicates that there is much that can be done to support and enhance the experience of student carers. Firstly, the identification of student carers would provide a foundation from which to build. If HE institutions know who carers are, they can begin to understand needs and target support accordingly.<sup>20</sup> However, many young adults do not identify with this demographic, with the resultant problem that the student carer population is underreported.<sup>21</sup> Further recommendations, which it is said could be implemented to support inclusion, include flexible attendance requirements, online lectures and participation, modules, academic extensions, and low administrative burden to access support and flexibility during episodic care issues.<sup>22</sup> Having employment-focused activities integrated into degree programmes has been recognised as important, as have the challenges carers face in fulfilling such requirements.<sup>23</sup> These and other considerations could be captured in an academic plan tailored to the specific needs of students with caring responsibilities.

Additionally, the early release of academic timetables; welcome packages detailing support available; first preference in selecting tutorial or seminar times; and facilitation of employment pathways and financial support (i.e., scholarships, bursaries and/or grants) may help to support student carer engagement and inclusion.<sup>24</sup> An undercurrent of many suggestions is the notion of institutional flexibility and allowances for students particularly around episodic

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<sup>18</sup> Taylor, Gleeson, Teague and DiGiacomo, "Practices of inclusion for carers."

<sup>19</sup> Larkin and Kubiak, "Carers and higher education."

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Kettell, "Young adult carers in higher education."

<sup>22</sup> M. Moreau, *Creating Inclusive Spaces for Students in Higher Education with Caregiving Responsibilities*, (Anglia Ruskin University, 2019); D. Svekjær, P. Gleeson and P. Viswanathan, *Carers, We See You, UTS Student Consultation Report*, Centre for Carers Research, Institute for Public Policy and Governance, (University of Technology, 2019); Carers NSW Australia, *Carers at University: Supporting Student Carers*, (Carers NSW Australia, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> Day, "An empirical case study of young carers."

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, Gleeson, Teague and DiGiacomo, "Practices of inclusion for carers."

disruptions to their studies.<sup>25</sup> Support groups or online message boards for student carers may also be valuable.<sup>26</sup> The Carer Passport scheme is relevant here.<sup>27</sup> The scheme, once implemented, helps to identify carers and link up support through an organisation-wide approach. Staff training could facilitate a more supportive and inclusive institutional environment.<sup>28</sup>

It has been noted elsewhere that student carer needs of social integration may be more nuanced than the ‘pursuit of a university-based social life’, with greater value being placed on a supportive community and activities focused on academic study.<sup>29</sup> In a study of YAC engagement, Day found that only a minority invested time on-campus outside of scheduled teaching hours.<sup>30</sup> Braxton *et al.* found that class-based student-to-student interactive learning activities which encourage the formation of a student learning community are most often linked to retention.<sup>31</sup> Space should be afforded for positive stories and experiences of student carers. These could be communicated to promote support services and raise awareness of this population.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Student carers at UoW and other UK HE institutions*

At present, little is known about the student carer population at UoW. To address this deficit in knowledge and make meaningful improvements to the experience of students with caring responsibilities, it is first necessary to understand that segment of the student population. The OfS’ report into 171 2020-21 – 2024-25 Access and Participation Plan (APP) submissions concluded that, along with other smaller groups of underrepresented students, while carers are mentioned in many plans that ‘some of the approaches to addressing the needs of these groups are in the early stages of development or are yet to be scoped.’<sup>33</sup> The UoW APP refers only once to carers in the context of financial support, specifically in relation to applications for the

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<sup>25</sup> Taylor, Gleeson, Teague and DiGiacomo, “Practices of inclusion for carers”; Larkin and Kubiak, “Carers and higher education.”

<sup>26</sup> Taylor, Gleeson, Teague and DiGiacomo, “Practices of inclusion for carers.”

<sup>27</sup> For information on the scheme see here: <https://carerpassport.uk/education/colleges-universities>.

<sup>28</sup> Larkin and Kubiak, “Carers and higher education.”

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Day, “An empirical case study of young carers.”

<sup>31</sup> J.M. Braxton, W.R. Doyle, H.V. Hartley, A.S. Hirschy, W.A. Jones and M.K. McLendon, *Rethinking College Student Retention* (San Francisco: Wiley, 2013); Larkin and Kubiak, “Carers and higher education”; J. van Ameijde, M. Weller and S. Cross, “Learning Design for Student Retention,” *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice* 6, no.2 (2018).

<sup>32</sup> Taylor, Gleeson, Teague and DiGiacomo, “Practices of inclusion for carers.”

<sup>33</sup> University of Westminster, *Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 and 2024-24*, (University of Westminster).

Westminster Working Cultures scheme.<sup>34</sup> There is, therefore, room for more work to be carried out in relation to student carers, beginning with that group and their experiences.

Some UK HE institutions have implemented plans to raise awareness of and support the inclusion of their student carer population. For example, Sheffield Hallam University has introduced dedicated support for student carers, covering help with settling into university life; a Facebook page, newsletters and emails detailing opportunities, services and events; one-to-one advice; and referrals to university services and local partner organisations. The support offer includes a carer's support plan, providing flexibility for carers in terms of deadline extensions and changes to seminar groups.<sup>35</sup>

### **Methodology and methods**

The research question for the present study can be framed as follows: what are the motivations, experiences, and expectations of students with caring responsibilities? To understand existing responses to this and similar questions a literature review was undertaken. A search of Google Scholar was carried out to identify articles focused on student carer experiences at HE institutions. This was not limited to the UK, several articles relating to carer experiences from the United States and Australia were located and have been cited. Following this, the websites of UK universities were scoured for any references to student carers and support. This initial review provided the study's foundations.

As the literature review indicated there have been numerous analyses of student carer experience in education. However, it became clear that little was known about carer experience at UoW specifically. Furthermore, studies of student carers omitted those with childcare responsibilities, as well as students looking after their younger siblings. A belief was held that a significant number of students would fall into these latter two groups, and that it would be helpful to gather their views alongside those caring for (long-term) ill relatives or friends.

Echoing the work of Kettell, IPA was adopted to understand student carer experiences in HE.<sup>36</sup> IPA is well-suited to understanding the meanings participants hold based on their

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<sup>34</sup> Office for Students (OfS), *Transforming opportunity in higher education: An analysis of 2020-21 to 2024-25 access and participation plans*, (OfS, 2020).

<sup>35</sup> For information on Sheffield Hallam's support package see here:

<https://www.shu.ac.uk/wellbeing/appointments/inclusive-support-team/priority-groups/support-for-student-carers>

<sup>36</sup> Kettell, "Young adult carers in higher education."

experiences with its emphasis on studying people ideographically.<sup>37</sup> In practice this meant that the questions asked of participants were focused on experience and interpreted “locally” rather than from the starting point of a major theoretical standpoint. Therefore, the approach was grounded epistemologically in social constructivism, with a focus on the voices of the participants and the narratives they produce around experiences of HE. Using NVivo data analysis software, the data was analysed using the seven-steps of IPA data analysis, this was initially carried out on a case-by-case basis before cross-case analysis was undertaken.<sup>38</sup>

The objective was to carry out six to nine in-depth, semi-structured interviews across the university and study levels. IPA works best with a small sample (i.e., three or six participants, though this study interviewed a slightly larger population). It was also essential that the sample be purposive. Therefore, participants were selected based on certain attributes; first and foremost, that they provide unpaid caring responsibilities to a family or friend who would not cope without their support; have childcare responsibilities and/or look after their younger siblings. Participants were recruited regardless of their age or level of study (i.e., eligibility was not limited to YACs as defined by the Carers Trust). A total of nine students were recruited. Recruitment was carried out via communications to members of UoW Student Experience and Opinion Panel, social media (Instagram), as well as by the university’s internal communication channels. Participants were given the option to partake in either a face-to-face or online (Blackboard Collaborate/Microsoft Teams) setting; all opted for online via Microsoft Teams.

The demographics of the participants can be broken down as follows (Table 1.):

**Table 1.** Participant demographics

ID	Study nature	Home or International	Age Range	Gender	Caring responsibility <sup>39</sup>	Work AND Study

<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Smith and Isabella Nizza, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (American Psychological Association, 2021).

<sup>38</sup> S. Charlick, J. Pincombe, L. McKellar and A. Fielder, “Making sense of participant experiences: Interpretative phenomenological analysis in midwifery research,” *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 11 (2016).

<sup>39</sup> Three options for caring responsibility type were available to those who registered to take part in the project: 1) I provide unpaid care for a friend or family member who due to long-term illness, disability, a mental health problem, or an addiction cannot cope without my support; 2) I have other childcare responsibilities (i.e., student parent/guardian); and 3) I look after my younger siblings (i.e., sibling carer). A free text box was also provided for those who wished to provide more detail about the nature of their caring responsibilities.

Student Carer 1	Full-time	International	21-30	Female	2	Yes
Student Carer 2 <sup>40</sup>	-	-	-	-	-	-
Student Carer 3	Full-time	UK student	21-30	Female	1	Yes
Student Carer 4	Full-time	International	21-30	Female	2	Yes
Student Carer 5	Full-time	UK student	18-20	Female	3	Yes
Student Carer 6	Full-time	UK student	18-20	Male	1	Yes
Student Carer 7	Full-time	UK student	18-20	Female	3	No
Student Carer 8	Full-time	UK student	21-30	Female	3	Yes
Student Carer 9	Full-time	UK student	18-20	Female	3	Yes
Student Carer 10	Full-time	UK student	21-30	Female	2	No

## **Ethics**

Consideration for anonymity and confidentiality was important for this project, particularly as the research population consisted of a handful of students. As such there was a risk of them being identifiable from the information they provided. There was also a risk of distress owing to the personal nature of questions asked. To mitigate, participants were given details of support and counselling services at the university at consenting and debriefing stages of the project. Additionally, the project was put through UoW's ethics process.

## **The impacts of caring responsibilities**

### *Disclosure*

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<sup>40</sup> Removed from final report as participant was not a carer as described by any of the caring responsibility type options.

Conversations with student carers raised three important issues regarding (non-)disclosure of caring responsibilities. First, intentional disclosure, purposefully disclosing a caring responsibility to the university, was uncommon, instead it occurred in an *ad hoc* or sporadic manner; in other instances, it simply did not take place. None of the participants reported intentional disclosure of a caring responsibility. However, one participant did relay their experience of an unrelated disclosure which did not create a positive experience. The disclosure was made under the expectation that it would be ‘in their [i.e., the university’s] system,’ and that assignment extensions would be automatic, however, it became apparent that ‘my lecturers weren’t actually aware of it, or any university staff.’<sup>41</sup> Secondly, in terms of *ad hoc* disclosure, this took place on what participants perceived to be a “need-to-know” basis: ‘[S]ituations with children happen...and you’ve had to miss a class...So it did come up with my personal tutor that I’m a mum.’<sup>42</sup> For others, a caring responsibility was disclosed when the need to collect a sibling from school emerged.<sup>43</sup> Thirdly, there are those student carers who are unsure if they have disclosed, which suggests the need for clarity concerning the disclosure process.<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, whether or not disclosure occurs may be related to the trust student carers place in the institution as a whole to use the information consistently, responsibly and sensitively, as well as that which they place in other students. Meeting at the crossroads of *ad hoc* and non-disclosure, one participant commented that: ‘I’ve told the people that need to know’, but ‘I haven’t told all the lecturers or anything because I don’t know the lecturers that well...and they don’t really care about the information you’re giving.’<sup>45</sup> The desire for privacy combined with limited trust may act as a hindrance to disclosure: ‘So, I don’t, you know, I don’t really want to tell them [i.e., other students] that just...in case...they, kind of...spread things around.’<sup>46</sup> Effectively supporting and enabling carers to thrive carries a requirement of knowing who student carers are. To address this issue the process for disclosure should be made clear as soon as possible. In addition, student carers need to hear and see the benefits that relaying this information will bring, whilst university staff-student carer dialogue needs to foster a relationship built on trust.

### *Hierarchy of carers*

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<sup>41</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>42</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>43</sup> Student Carer 5.

<sup>44</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>45</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>46</sup> Student Carer 6.

Where reluctance to intentionally disclose caring responsibilities was common across all caring groups, there was a tendency to self-stratify according to caring type. Those who cared for unwell relatives with long-term illnesses never ranked themselves against other carers. However, student parents and those who looked after siblings often did. Student parents, all mothers in this study, self-consciously and without prompt, placed the role they perform relative to others: ‘I mean, I don’t care for and I’m not a carer to an elder [sic] person, *I’m only a mum*’ [my italics].<sup>47</sup> Those who care for siblings place themselves on the lowest rung: ‘No, [be]cause it’s siblings, so they [i.e., the university] don’t really take that into consideration.’<sup>48</sup> Additionally, student sibling carers felt that while ‘most’ universities were ‘accommodating’ to parents or those looking after ill or disabled relatives, they are not to ‘people who are *just looking after siblings*’ [my italics].<sup>49</sup> There is a self-awareness amongst student sibling carers that there are other student carers with what they perceive to be as ‘more serious and more demanding’ responsibilities.<sup>50</sup> This is an important point owing to the potential intersection between self-stratification and disclosure, as well as the need for staff literacy and empathy regarding different student carer types. It is reasonable to speculate that if students feel disclosure is pointless because the institution is apathetic to their concerns, they may be even less likely to share that information.

### *Academic impact*

Student carers spoke of both the positive and negative academic impact of their caring responsibilities. The concentration afforded by onsite learning created for some a greater appreciation for this style of teaching/learning; though this was offset by the general impact of their responsibilities on concentration and focus (discussed below). Additionally, it became apparent through the course of conversations that all the student carers engaged were, without exception, impeccable planners – a highly organised and, generally, highly motivated section of the student population.

However, mention of the negative academic impacts, or the challenges of studying and caring, far outweighed positive sentiments. The challenges can be segmented into three areas, albeit at times overlapping: 1) attendance, 2) concentration/focus, and 3) courses and assessments (including deadlines). Challenges pertaining to attendance affected all student

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<sup>47</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>48</sup> Student Carer 8.

<sup>49</sup> Student Carer 7.

<sup>50</sup> Student Carer 5.

carer types. Caring carries with it an unpredictability, changing student plans abruptly: ‘Sometimes I’m not able to go to university because, you know, my...[parent] might have an appointment [they] need...to get to.’<sup>51</sup> One student with a young child stated that, ‘[s]ometimes I’m not able to attend classes because...I have, maybe my [child] is not well.’<sup>52</sup> Similarly with sibling carers: ‘[I]t [looking after siblings] did affect me because sometimes I wouldn’t be able to do the classes.’<sup>53</sup> Student carers want to attend lessons but sometimes their responsibilities prevent this.

In addition to not being able to attend classes at all or leaving them early, student parents and sibling carers mentioned challenges with concentration and focus as a product of the demands of caring. It might be assumed that student carers prefer to study online as they are able to quickly respond to any emerging caring needs. However, this view was challenged by a student parent who shared a preference for onsite learning over offsite/home ‘because of the distractions.’<sup>54</sup> A sibling carer commented that it was difficult to find a place in the home ‘where it’s absolutely certain that you won’t be disturbed.’<sup>55</sup> While ‘distractions’ and ‘disturbances’ are not an experience unique to carers, there is a need to respond to them and they may occupy considerable time that would have otherwise been devoted to study. The challenges may become particularly acute around exam time or assessment submission deadlines, linking focus with the third academic-related challenge. ‘[R]evising for exams is very hard because when they’re next to you [i.e., siblings], you really can’t do it.’<sup>56</sup>

The potential and actual adverse impact of caring responsibility on assessment as well as academic performance and grading was present across all caring types. Concerns ranged from anxieties about missing key bits of information; meeting assessment deadlines and the interplay of these with the unpredictability at times of caring demands; absence of adjustments (i.e., extra time or other support) taking into account caring responsibilities; and, relatedly, the perceived rigidity and one-size-fits-all approach to Mitigating Circumstances which left students feeling as though they had to ‘sacrifice’ pieces of coursework; as well as general feelings of overwork and lack of time.<sup>57</sup> One student was very candid about what they saw as the effects of their caring responsibilities on their academic performance:

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<sup>51</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>52</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>53</sup> Student Carer 8.

<sup>54</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>55</sup> Student Carer 9.

<sup>56</sup> Student Carer 8.

<sup>57</sup> Student Carer 7.

‘So, for me it’s definitely impacted a lot on my academic performance and I feel like if I wasn’t a carer I would have been able to spend more time on the assignments I have...[I]f my [parent] was, you know, just not really as dependent, I would say, I think I would be able to achieve more.’<sup>58</sup>

The demands of caring mean that student carers can feel acutely the pressures of academic deadlines and overall performance. There are ways to mitigate some of these pressures (discussed below) which would act to enhance student carer experience, whilst fostering empathy and encouraging belonging. This is crucial as the act of balancing care and study can become overwhelming, forcing student carers to question whether they should continue their studies: ‘[T]here have been times actually when I’ve thought of not coming to university and giving up or getting a gap.’<sup>59</sup>

### *Financial impact*

Financial challenges associated with caring and studying were raised by all carer types, though it was unpaid carers looking after ill relatives who spoke about it more frequently and in negative terms. In both cases the student is the sole breadwinner in their household.<sup>60</sup> The financial pressure of studying and caring was illustrated in the urgency with which the need for additional funds was expressed: ‘I need the money ASAP because after university I don’t know what’s gonna happen...I don’t know how I’m gonna cope with looking after my family, like, my two families.’<sup>61</sup> Another carer shared that whilst they receive a salary it is still not enough, particularly given rises in the cost of living. Once general necessities and bills are covered there is not much money left over and savings are ‘practically non-existent.’ This has reached a point where the student has had to acquire a second job for the extra money it provides.<sup>62</sup> Financial challenges arising from the combination of studying and caring have knock-on effects in other areas such as perceptions of employment prospects and socialising.

### *Employment and residence*

Student carer perspectives on employment and/or further study prospects, as they pertained to caring responsibilities, were mixed. Comments on employment/further study focused on, 1) in-study work; 2) post-study work; 3) employment location; 4) university and/or course choice;

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<sup>58</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>59</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>60</sup> Student Carer 3 and Student Carer 6.

<sup>61</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>62</sup> Student Carer 6.

as well as 5) living location. The combination of studying, caring and working could create ‘pressure’ and feelings of stress for student carers.<sup>63</sup> The financial cost of caring and studying meant that sometimes work had to take priority, particularly where extra cash earned would help to pay off bills or debts.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, owing to the costs of care, in this instance the cost of raising a child whilst studying, frustrations concerning the restrictions on the number of working hours permitted arose. These frustrations could be compounded for international students with dependents and no recourse to public funds in the UK.<sup>65</sup> Student carers recognise the need to earn money to support themselves and those they care for but are equally aware of the added pressures that working brings on time available for study and caring.

A number of students expressed concern about post-study careers and/or further studies, including feelings of being in a weaker position vis-à-vis their non-caring competitors; being restricted to certain job or contract types; or guilt at prioritisation of careers over caring responsibilities. One student carer anticipated their responsibilities becoming progressively heavier and that this might mean having to quit their job which presently provides most of the household income. Whilst income would be most immediately affected, there were concerns about the long-term effects of this decision on employability prospects: ‘I would be sacrificing a lot...especially in the job market nowadays, it’s quite competitive and the more experience you have, the more better [sic] it is.’<sup>66</sup> Others noted the restrictions that caring responsibility placed on the type of jobs they were able to apply for (i.e., remote jobs), contract type (i.e., part-time over full-time) and expected this to continue in the future: ‘I can only truly do...online work experience...[A]fter I graduate, I’m going to have to look for jobs where I can work from home, it’ll just be more convenient.’<sup>67</sup> Finally, a student parent spoke of guilt at wishing to undertake further studies (‘Won’t it look like I’m neglecting [my child]?’) and apprehensiveness about the future relationship they will have with their child, whilst simultaneously not wanting to miss out on child developmental milestones.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, sibling carers did not express such concerns. A credible explanation might be the knowledge that their younger siblings will grow up, have more autonomy, and not require the ongoing support of their older siblings.

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<sup>63</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>64</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>65</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>66</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>67</sup> Student Carer 9.

<sup>68</sup> Student Carer 4.

At the same time, student carers raised potential opportunities. Some are positive that they will find employment that will work around their caring responsibilities.<sup>69</sup> For instance, degree completion and earning a qualification could enable a move up the career ladder and open access to higher paid positions. The increased earning power would make securing outside care more affordable.<sup>70</sup> This taps into veins of student carer attitudes that emerged throughout the course of conversations (i.e., resilience, determination, and planning). This also raises the crucial role to be played by university careers and employability services in working with student carers from an early stage in the student lifecycle and preparing them for the job market.

Caring responsibilities also influence where student carers seek post-study employment. This is not necessarily perceived as a negative, with student carers consciously looking for jobs close to home or the location where they carry out caring responsibilities:

‘I’d rather stay close...so I can easily commute to both of them [i.e., they care for two relatives in different locations]...I don’t mind travelling back and forth to these two houses because it makes my life easier and I don’t wanna cut ties with my family.’<sup>71</sup>

On the contrary, others felt the need for greater independence and their ‘own space.’<sup>72</sup> The two examples given illustrate a contrast in perspective between a student who cares for an ill relative and one who looks after their siblings. Either way, it raises the importance of tailored employment and careers advice that is empathetic of the diversity of student carer experiences.

In addition to tailoring career and employability advice, marketing and admissions might also benefit from tailored communications. Student carers tend to stick close to home when it comes to university choice, even if this is not their personal preference – for UoW that means London, which also constitutes the market within which it competes for applications and enrolments.<sup>73</sup> Of course, the content of the course is very important to student carers as with other students,<sup>74</sup> but so is proximity.<sup>75</sup> With carefully curated communications and an attractive support offer that demonstrates the institution’s understanding of student carers and

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<sup>69</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>70</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>71</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>72</sup> Student Carer 7.

<sup>73</sup> Student Carer 5 and Student Carer 7.

<sup>74</sup> Student Carer 1, Student Carer 5, Student Carer 8, Student Carer 10.

<sup>75</sup> Student Carer 7.

their responsibilities, UoW may be more appealing to those with caring responsibilities in the London vicinity.

### *Social, emotional and wellbeing*

Whilst largely negative, some student carers spoke about the positive impact of their responsibilities on social activities. Others expressed mixed views such as feeling free to engage in social activities as they wished, whilst at the same time not being able to partake in some of their hobbies.<sup>76</sup> Numerous restrictions on social activities were raised including not being able to go out with friends/classmates or celebrate events;<sup>77</sup> joining student societies;<sup>78</sup> observing strict curfews.<sup>79</sup> One student carer spoke of their social opportunities being limited to open days and ‘meetings within the university.’<sup>80</sup> However, the point was raised that with planning it was possible to get to social events.<sup>81</sup>

Caring responsibilities may place strains on wellbeing. This is not confined to a particular caring type. Balancing study and care was described as ‘exhausting’ and ‘stressful’,<sup>82</sup> ‘draining’, both physically and mentally;<sup>83</sup> and ‘intense.’<sup>84</sup> Others spoke of feeling ‘overwhelmed’;<sup>85</sup> or feel guilty for not making the ‘sacrifice’ to care for a child and instead prioritising studying, leading to a self-perception that they are a ‘bad’ parent;<sup>86</sup> or guilt at thinking about the deleterious effect of caring responsibilities on studies.<sup>87</sup> One respondent captured many of these feelings:

‘[M]entally it [i.e., balancing caring, studying, and finances] does have a big impact, I mean, I’m on anti-depressants, I go therapy sometimes and I have, like, [a] support worker that work[s] with me to help me, you know, be a better parent.’<sup>88</sup>

At the same time, the experience of caring and studying fostered a positive mindset, especially among those with childcare responsibilities, with students demonstrating determination to succeed despite challenging circumstances: ‘I want to be really successful, not just for me, but

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<sup>76</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>77</sup> Student Carer 3, Student Carer 4 and Student Carer 5.

<sup>78</sup> Student Carer 5.

<sup>79</sup> Student Carer 8 and Student Carer 9.

<sup>80</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>81</sup> Student Carer 1 and Student Carer 7.

<sup>82</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>83</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>84</sup> Student Carer 8.

<sup>85</sup> Student Carer 7.

<sup>86</sup> Student Carer 4.

<sup>87</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>88</sup> Student Carer 10.

for [my child].<sup>89</sup> For all the challenges that student carers face, they are resilient and driven, it is crucial that the university taps into this vein of resolve as doing so may help to enhance experience.

#### *Time and the layering of caring responsibilities*

One frequently raised issue overlapping all the impacts discussed to this point is that of time, specifically not having enough of it to complete assigned work. The acuteness with which time pressures are felt by student carers becomes more apparent when you appreciate the *layering* or aggregation of caring responsibilities that they undertake. For example, one student spoke of the care they provide for a family friend, however, further discussion revealed that they also provide some care for their parent. Caring for this student involved regular travel across London at considerable costs in terms of time and money.<sup>90</sup> The following further illustrates the reality of *layering*. In addition to being the family's sole breadwinner, other activities included arranging hospital visits for their parent; interpreting and translating medical information related to their parent's condition; alongside providing some care for their other parent. The time commitment this entails should not be underestimated. With regards to understanding at times complex medical terminology they felt they had to 'educate' themselves, going on to state that 'it feels like...GCSE science,' and that 'it's a huge learning curve, and it's mainly learning outside of the university.'<sup>91</sup> Student carers may be severely time poor and, owing to reasons already discussed, the full extent of their caring responsibilities not disclosed to the university, making the provision of any support difficult. Furthermore, this highlights that, in the event of disclosure, the entire scope of a carer's responsibilities need to be discussed and any reasonable adjustments made. This, along with a range of enhancements, can act to enhance student carer experience in HE.

### **Enhancing the HE experience of student carers**

#### *Student support: advice, guidance and flexibility*

The previous section detailed the myriad challenges faced by student carers of all types. This section focuses on what student carers said would enhance their HE experience. There exists a reluctance on the part of some student carers to ask university services for help. This may,

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<sup>89</sup> Student Carer 4. Student Carer 10 made a similar comment: 'I don't want [my child] to have to experience the life that I've experienced when I came to this country. So I need to be better for them.'

<sup>90</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>91</sup> Student Carer 6.

speculatively, be related to an absence of belonging. Nevertheless, on reflection student carers would tell others in situations similar to theirs to seek out help when needed from staff as well as other students.<sup>92</sup> Supporting student carers requires a tailored approach owing to varied experiences and circumstances. For example, student parents returning after a break due to raising a child may need support with the transition back into education: ‘I needed...appropriate guidance...[C]oming back to school, it’s really difficult.’<sup>93</sup> Tailored guidance and support may help to ease the transition of people with young children (back) into study. There is scope for such guidance to be co-created through collaboration between the institutions and those with lived experience. Furthermore, exam periods can be acutely stressful for student carers as they look to balance revision with caring responsibilities. Provision of additional mental health and wellbeing support around and during the exam season may help student carers manage at this potentially stressful time.<sup>94</sup>

Awareness of general or tailored student support is important and should not be taken for granted. There remains some confusion about key members of staff that students can go to for support:

‘I’m not really sure who my personal tutor was...I wasn’t really ever told of who it was, or, you know, I’ve never met them...So, when it came to any sort of assignment or any sort of in-class tests, I didn’t receive any sort of extra time, or any sort of...readjustments to it.’<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, making students aware of counselling and mental health services should take place early in the student lifecycle;<sup>96</sup> this could be at the application stage.<sup>97</sup> Cognizance needs to extend to tools such as Mitigating Circumstances, and reducing the occurrence of students learning about such academic support by chance.<sup>98</sup> Similarly, financial advice and support, as well as information about bursaries and scholarships should be communicated at an early stage.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, clarity on the role and purposes of counselling support would also benefit some student carers who report not being sure if they need support.<sup>100</sup> Raising awareness and preparing students could be achieved via stalls at Freshers’ Fairs or student carers groups, as

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<sup>92</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>93</sup> Student Carer 4.

<sup>94</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>95</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>96</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>97</sup> Student Carer 9.

<sup>98</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>99</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>100</sup> Student Carer 6.

well as other university communications; these should occur at regular intervals to maximise coverage.

The Mitigating Circumstances process is greatly value by student carers.<sup>101</sup> It is important that the process presents minimal administrative burden, making it straightforward for student carers to complete, particularly given the unpredictability of caring roles. To smooth the process there needs to be greater cross-institutional links so that student carers do not have to repeat themselves.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, the research conversations revealed a craving for greater flexibility. One participant spoke of ‘sacrific[ing]’ a piece of coursework because Mitigating Circumstances claims were ‘only...like, twice a year.’<sup>103</sup> Therefore, greater flexibility with the regard to the number of Mitigating Circumstances claims that can be made per term/academic year would likely be well-received. This research also suggests the standardised length of extensions be revisited. The short extension for coursework deadlines may not, in every instance, be sufficient for student carers, while securing a longer deferral may feel onerous. This speaks to a general point about flexible assessment deadlines, giving students with caring responsibilities more time to complete assignments.<sup>104</sup> An alternative would be to create a tailored process for student carers to secure extensions.

The theme of flexibility extends beyond the Mitigating Circumstances claims into the areas of timetables and attendance. While it may be difficult to change lecture or seminar times to account for caring responsibilities, having a later seminar time to allow for a school drop-off, and making the academic timetable available as soon as possible would enable student carers to better plan how to manage study and care.<sup>105</sup> Giving student carers priority in selecting seminar times would allow them to choose a time that works best for them, removing the worry of having to join a group they know it will be difficult to attend.<sup>106</sup> It was the view of one student carer that too much emphasis is placed on attendance. This creates a pressure to attend and does not account for the challenges of caring.<sup>107</sup> Building flexible attendance requirements into the academic plans of student carers, as well as not tying funding to strict attendance levels, would help to relieve some of the pressure to attend and create a sense that the institution considers and acts on student carer needs.

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<sup>101</sup> Student Carer 1, Student Carer 3, Student Carer 4 and Student Carer 8.

<sup>102</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>103</sup> Student Carer 7.

<sup>104</sup> Student Carer 1 and Student Carer 7.

<sup>105</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>106</sup> Student Carer 5.

<sup>107</sup> Student Carer 5.

### *Funding and jobs*

Financial matters, both present and future, often occupy the minds of student carers, particularly those who care for relatives with long-term illness. As has been established, they are also, generally, time poor. Therefore, funding or bursary application processes operated by the university should not be cumbersome. In addition, making funding, bursary, or scholarship opportunities more visible would aid some student carers.<sup>108</sup> Participants would also welcome bursaries aimed specifically at carers.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, a number of students spoken to carried out paid roles at the university. These roles formed an important source of income, helping to pay household bills and purchase food or travel. Furthermore, student carers may require tailored careers and employability support owing to their particular circumstances and the jobs they are able to do in terms of contract type and location.

### *Enabling autonomy and downtime, enhancing planning*

It has been demonstrated that caring responsibilities can feel restrictive for student carers.<sup>110</sup> The responsibilities that student carers undertake can limit the jobs or internships they are able to perform, as well as opportunities for self-care.<sup>111</sup> Understandably, independence and autonomy are greatly valued: 'Freedom is like the most precious, like, and most valuable thing a person can have. And when it's taken away, you, kind of, start to, psychologically, feel like you're in a cage.'<sup>112</sup> Closely related to this is the availability of downtime away from their caring responsibility, which provides time for wellbeing and self-care.<sup>113</sup> This could be simple activities such as walking, reading, or playing video games. What works is unique to each carer, where the university can help is in the sharing of advice and tips, or providing a platform to enable this, on how student carers balance caring and studying.

Student carers also report being in a better place when planning their time. As highlighted earlier, student carers constitute a set of highly organised students who plan their time meticulously. This can be illustrated with a few examples. '[T]he first strategy is having a schedule;' 'it's all about time management really, you know, and being able to work around [my child's] time, not just mine;'<sup>114</sup> 'I use Google Calendar to organise everything.'<sup>115</sup> Others

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<sup>108</sup> Student Carer 6.

<sup>109</sup> Student Carer 4, Student Carer 6 and Student Carer 7.

<sup>110</sup> Student Carer 1, Student Carer 4, Student Carer 5 and Student Carer 7.

<sup>111</sup> Student Carer 3 and Student Carer 4.

<sup>112</sup> Student Carer 5, Student Carer 1 and Student Carer 8.

<sup>113</sup> Student Carer 3 and Student Carer 8.

<sup>114</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>115</sup> Student Carer 6.

keep multiple diaries;<sup>116</sup> make use of lecture recording and strive to commence assignments as soon as possible.<sup>117</sup> A majority of student carers had, through experience, developed strategies to effectively manage their time. However, this does not necessarily extend to all student carers and even existing carers may benefit from advice and guidance from their peers.<sup>118</sup> Providing a module, workshop, or guidance on effective time management, including the experience and advice from student carers, may help existing and new carers arriving at the university.

### *Increasing visibility*

There is also scope for these good news stories to be shared via the university's communication channels, raising awareness and visibility of carers and demonstrating that the university cares about carers. When asked about how they would feel on completion of their studies in the context of combining it with caring responsibilities they spoke of 'pride,'<sup>119</sup> happiness,<sup>120</sup> and that it would 'mean a lot' in 'an emotional sense.'<sup>121</sup> These positive sentiments and other stories of determination and resilience are worthy of sharing and to heighten the visibility of student carers. However, this needs to be handled sensitively and built on a solid groundwork of trust and genuine empathy.

### *Empathy, trust, belonging and networks*

Conversations with student carers highlighted the importance of empathy and trust. To share information about their caring responsibilities student carers need to trust the university and perceive that it cares about them as individuals and their circumstances. Student carers want university staff to understand their situations. The outcome can be very positive when student carers feel like the university cares or caters for their needs.<sup>122</sup> However, the present deficit means some student carers perceive only indifference. Most starkly, a student parent stated the university 'don't know if I have caring responsibilities and they don't care if I have caring responsibilities.'<sup>123</sup> There needs to be a rethink on how sibling carers are perceived because at present some feel the demands they have to manage alongside study are not taken seriously.<sup>124</sup> Empathy could be a bit "hit-and-miss;" evident at an individual or one-to-one level, but lacking

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<sup>116</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>117</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>118</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>119</sup> Student Carer 10 and Student Carer 3.

<sup>120</sup> Student Carer 7.

<sup>121</sup> Student Carer 9.

<sup>122</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>123</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>124</sup> Student Carer 5.

on an institutional scale. Addressing the shortfall of empathy and trust requires genuine and meaningful collaboration and dialogue.<sup>125</sup> For example, student carers could work in the early stages of the student lifecycle with personal tutors to discuss how they can best be supported, trust that their needs will be acted on, and express how widely they want information about their caring responsibilities to be shared.

Furthermore, increased student carer engagement and belonging may be attained through various support initiatives, including the building of networks. Student carers have reported feeling alone and that their peers are unable to relate: ‘they’re all surprised, “oh, you’re a mum, I didn’t know that,” stuff like that. And then they don’t, they can’t relate.’<sup>126</sup> This confirms what other student parents have said about feeling in some way different or apart from other students.<sup>127</sup> A sibling carer compared carers to ‘little islands,’ evoking a sense of separateness or detachment from the rest of the student body.<sup>128</sup> However, there is also a feeling that university staff are not adequately equipped to provide support.<sup>129</sup> As a means of tackling isolation and/or lack of belonging, student parents were generally receptive to the idea of setting up a group for student mothers (no student fathers were spoken to), either online or in-person (‘Oh, I would love that.’<sup>130</sup>). Additionally, having a stall for student mums at Freshers’ Fairs; as well as signposting to opportunities via their personal tutor.<sup>131</sup> Developing such groupness or community need not be restricted only to student parents.<sup>132</sup> The essential requirement is to understand student carer interests and needs and to signpost to appropriate initiatives, networks, or communities. There is also room for staff training on the roles and responsibilities of student carers to be developed, further breaking down barriers to belonging and strengthening empathy.

The introduction of a Carers Passport, done sensitively, could help to tackle issues of support, planning and flexibility as it relates to academic study. The advantages of a Carers Passport from a student carers perspective includes the reduction in the need to explain their situation over and over again; gives a clear signal that the university is acknowledging their unique and challenging circumstances; raises awareness of the student carer population and

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<sup>125</sup> See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Penguin, 2017).

<sup>126</sup> Student Carer 10.

<sup>127</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>128</sup> Student Carer 5.

<sup>129</sup> Student Carer 3.

<sup>130</sup> Student Carer 1.

<sup>131</sup> Student Carer 1 and Student Carer 10.

<sup>132</sup> Student Carer 3, Student Carer 5, Student Carer 6 and Student Carer 9.

provides the impetus for support and services; and fosters increased (self-)identification which may help to strengthen a sense of belonging. For example, a Passport might include provision for automatic extensions on assignments. For faculty and the institution, a Passport would indicate to prospective students with caring responsibilities that it understands them and has mechanisms in place to support them; as such, it might make UoW an attractive destination for students of the future. Increased awareness and visibility of this group would also create opportunities for the institution to benefit from ongoing carer insight and involvement. This point loops back to that raised around collaboration and dialogue. To be trusted and subscribed to by student carers, and to be successful, precisely what the Carers Passport looks like needs to be co-created by those most likely to feel its effects.

## **Conclusion**

This research highlighted how a reluctance to disclose caring status derived from a deficit of trust in the institution and perceived lack of empathy; the self-stratification of student carers into a hierarchy was also offered as an explanation as to why students do not reveal the caring responsibilities they undertake in addition to their studies. The study then explored the range of challenges faced by student carers, before offering some suggestions as to how these might be addressed. Flexibility is vital in meeting student carer needs, be this in terms of attendance or deadline extensions. Institutional flexibility takes the edge off some of the demands experienced by student carers. Additionally, student carers value solid planning, something that the university can support through provision of tuition on time management tools and skills. Finally, fostering empathy, trust, and belonging is arguably the most crucial requirement. Various strategies are available which the university could invest in, in collaboration with student carers, to enhance the experience of this valuable student demographic. Delivering on these areas would diminish the sense that some student carers feel of being cut adrift, and so that they no longer have to feel like islands unto themselves.

## **Recommendations**

UoW should collaborate with student carers to co-design a Carers' Passport(s) using the findings from this study. Items for inclusion in the Carers' Passports could include but should not necessarily be restricted to the following:

- Student carers should be given priority in terms of seminar selection times. Carers are often time poor or have commitments which make some seminar times difficult if not impossible. For example, student parents may need to do school drop-offs and pick-

ups, while those who care for ill relatives may have regular hospital appointments they need to attend.

- Student carers should have an academic plan, discussed with their personal tutors, that allows for reasonable adjustments, such as automatic extensions on assignment deadlines and flexibility regarding attendance. This may include provision for tailored careers and employability support that takes into account the specific needs of student carers. For example, student carers may have locational needs (i.e., need to stay close to home), contract or other needs that differ from non-carers.

Additional recommendations include:

- Dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. The Carers' Passport and any other student carer-related material or resources should be developed in collaboration with the population most directly affected: student carers.
- Creation of student societies focused on community and/or support for carers. For instance, there is scope for the development of a student parents society or community.
- The development of a staff training module or webinar covering the range of roles and responsibilities undertaken by student carers alongside their studies.
- Development of curated recruitment communications aimed at student carers the London-based carer population, giving UoW an edge against its London competitors.
- Creation of or signposting to time management webinars or workshops. For instance, this could entail training on effective use of Google Calendar for planning.
- Communication of positive news stories relating to student carers. This could include tips from student carers about managing and thriving at university.

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