

Publication

Caring in mind? Professionals' awareness of young carers and young adult carers in Switzerland

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Findings from international research emphasis the need of these young people to be identified and recognised. Therefore, a nationwide quantitative study of professionals' awareness was conducted in the Swiss context. Data were collected from professionals working in education, healthcare and social services. The study examined professionals' familiarity with the terms used to describe young people with caring responsibilities; their ability to identify the population in their professional context; their perception of the relevance of the issue; their ability to support them; and their own training needs. Potential study participants were contacted via email. Data were collected using an online survey, which was open for 14 weeks during the period of September to December 2016. Survey data from 2,311 professionals, who reported being regularly in contact with young people with caring responsibilities in their occupational context, were included for analysis. Of all terms presented in the survey, young carer (YC) was the term most familiar to all professionals. Among healthcare and education sector, the percentage of professionals familiar with this term was higher than that among professionals from social services. Professionals from social services were the most likely to consider the issue relevant to their work, those from education were the least likely. Professionals who were familiar with the terms describing YC were more likely to consider the issue relevant to their work. Study results showed that more than half of the respondents had not identified young people with caring responsibilities, and that the ability of participants to identify YC was related to their occupational sector. The perceived ability to support YC was related to their reported ability to recognise them. In order to enable professionals to support YC, raising awareness, providing training for professionals and a national network of existing organisations should be well considered.

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