

NEON Awards 2024 Nominations

Category

NEON Widening Access Initiative (Outreach) Award

Name of project and institution

Young Carers On Tour, Study Higher Uni Connect

Brief Description

Young adult carers are young people who care for a family member or friend who relies on their support. Often those with caring responsibilities struggle to balance their education with caring, and many worry about making sacrifices to their future employment goals (Carers Trust, 2023). Young Carers On Tour aims to provide the much needed respite as well as the time and space for young carers to focus on their own goals, ambitions and aspirations. The project brings together a community of young people facing similar responsibilities and provides them with opportunities to visit different education providers and employers, increasing their knowledge and awareness of their future options and understanding of the support available in higher education. Evaluation shows that the young carers taking part in the project feel more confident in their ability to progress to HE in the future, and that activities increased their feeling that they would belong in HE.

Why has this project been nominated

The Young Carers on Tour (YCOT) project aims to address the gap in support for young carers and tackles the key issues and the challenges young carers face, providing a platform for those with similar responsibilities to come together. YCOT successfully champions the opportunities available in higher education, and allows young carers the time to explore their options and access relevant and tailored information and guidance. YCOT is co-designed by outreach practitioners, young people, and charities to ensure the content is appropriate and addresses their individual needs and concerns as young carers exploring HE. YCOT is not only an outreach programme, it has successfully brought together universities, charities, local young carers services and schools and has championed young carers, helping making them more visible within the HE sector. YCOT project leads have presented at the Young Carers Alliance, part of the Carers Trust network, as well as delivered online training for the Young Carer Development Trust's development mentors about higher education, the UCAS tick box and the application process. YCOT is a multi-activity project, but doesn't expect or rely on young people attending every session, purely because of their additional responsibilities. Although multi-activity attendance is not expected, the project has seen a year on year increase in the number of participants taking part in multiple activities. Building a sense of community within the programme has definitely contributed to this, and involving current

university student ambassadors who are young carers themselves has added to the positive and supportive culture of the project, as well as helping the young carer participants to feel like they would belong, and thrive, in a HE environment.

How long has the project been running

The Young Carers on Tour project began in July 2021, and is now in its third academic year of delivery (2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24). Young Carers on Tour was preceded by the “You Can” project, a webinar series developed and delivered following the Covid-19 pandemic which aimed to support young carers’ confidence, knowledge about higher education, and skills development.

Number of participants for each year of the project’s operation

Since the project started in 2021, 100 unique young carers have taken part in an activity, with even more young carers having registered their interest in the programme. YCOT is targeted at young carers in years 9-13 (or college equivalent). 2021-22: 40 participants took part in the programme, and 8 of these participants took part in more than one activity. 2022-23: 57 participants took part in the programme, and 33 of these participants took part in more than one activity. 2023-24: 44 participants have taken part in the programme so far this academic year, and 39 have taken part in more than one activity to date.

More details

<https://www.studyhigher.ac.uk/youngcarers/>

