



the lulus model

A peer support pilot program for young carers

Developed by Sarah Waters and Amanda Rigby

Generously supported by Portland House Foundation

Acknowledgements:

A special acknowledgement and thank you to Portland House Foundation for funding this pilot project.

This program was developed by Carers Victoria in consultation with, and the generous support from the following organisations, their staff, and young carers:

Centre for Adolescent Health, Victoria, 'Paying Attention to Self' (PATS) program

Carers Victoria Respite Connections, Young Carers at Risk Program

Essential background research for the program included the published reports and evaluations for existing peer support programs developed by:

- Siblings Australia
- Gaining Ground Adolescent Program
- KOPING Adolescent Program
- Cyclops

The Lulus model: a peer support pilot program for young carers / developed by Sarah Waters and Amanda Rigby.

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ISBN 0958594203

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background

Carers Victoria has long recognised the existence of a previously hidden group of young carers (involving children and young people under the age of 25), and since 1999 has worked to access funding to provide specific support programs for this group of carers. Although academics have argued that all children perform caring roles and therefore it is impossible to differentiate young carers from other children, a new 2007 research report¹ concludes:

"The nature, frequency and time spent by young carers each week on domestic and caring tasks differs from that of other children and young people in the general population. Young carers are a distinctive group who spend more time on domestic and caring tasks and take sole responsibility for helping and caring within the home than other children and young people who are not carers."

This conclusion supports the research conducted by Carers Australia in 2001 and the findings from the first National Young Carer Summit (August 2004), which indicates that for young carers there are enormous gaps, and great variation, in access to both information and support. A major barrier identified is the lack of recognition of young carers by service providers, school staff, and the wider community and among young carers themselves. Added to this, is a lack of accessible information about what assistance exists for young carers and their families and how to get it.

At the 2004 Summit, young carers, service providers, politicians and policy makers came together nationally for the first time to discuss the key issues facing young carers and to develop a plan of action to address these issues. Young carers shared stories of their struggle for recognition as carers by the very services involved with their care recipient; the repeated misconception, by the service providers, of the responsibility and level of care the young carers provided for the primary client. Young carers identified the fact that they were generally overlooked in consultations with their families. The lack of recognition was also pertinent at school where, because of the demands of their caring roles, young carers were often criticized for being late or not handing work in on time. At this summit young carers also asked for

"...more peer support activities whereby young carers can meet or connect with other young carers to support each other."

In addition to the lack of recognition of young carers, it was also noted that caring was impacting on young carers' own health². Yet, young carers talked of the value of the caring role they play in their family³ in spite of its demands and the negative impacts on their own health, social, educational and recreational opportunities.

During 2005 Carers Victoria began a resource project aimed at raising awareness

1 Children & Society Volume 21, (2007) pp 136 - 146

2 Carers ACT 2005 "Young Carers Summit Report 2004" Canberra

3 Carers Victoria 2005 "Just care for us: Supporting young carers" (DVD), Melbourne.

of young carers, their needs and ways to support them. This resulted in the production of a DVD, titled *Just care for us*, which features the stories of five young carers who share their experiences of caring and the impact this role has had on their daily life, schooling, their health and future plans. A key message from this DVD is that young carers recognise their need to be supported in achieving a balance between their caring roles and their own lives.

Very few young carer support groups exist even though there are many general carer support groups.

Carers Victoria made a commitment to address this gap by piloting a peer support program for young carers. This eight week pilot program, located in the western metropolitan region of Melbourne, aimed to support young carers who were in secondary schools.

The outcome of this pilot program was The Lulus model.

introducing young carers

Young carers are children and young people up to 25 years of age who help care in families where someone has an illness, a disability, a mental health issue, or has an alcohol or other drug problem.

The person they help care for may be a parent, a sibling, a grandparent, other relative, or a friend. A young carer might help out with cleaning or cooking, with medications, appointments, with keeping the person safe or watching out to make sure they're feeling okay.

It is estimated that there are 388,800 young carers in Australia, which means that one in every eight young people aged 15 to 25 years is providing significant care. This equates to at least two young carers in every classroom in Australia⁴.

the caring role for young carers

Young carers often perform major care tasks for the person they care for. Depending on the condition or illness, this might include:

Providing personal care:

- Showering and other self-care tasks
- Administering medications
- Assisting with mobility
- Arranging transport
- Assisting with financial tasks such as paying bills or arranging tax
- Attending medical appointments
- Translating or interpreting information

Managing household duties:

- Cooking meals
- Cleaning
- Grocery shopping
- Garden maintenance
- Other domestic tasks
- Providing care for younger siblings
- Filling in forms

Providing emotional support:

- Keeping an eye on someone
- Providing reassurance
- Problem solving
- Talking someone through a difficult period
- Negotiating the service system
- Seeking support from service providers

4 Carers ACT 2005 "Supporting Young Carers: Supporting Families Supporting Young Carers", Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

issues for young carers

Although young carers recognise that they have primary responsibility for many daily tasks in their household, many acknowledge that the constant worry associated with their caring role is more of an issue for them than actual household management.

Typically young carers tell us that caring can be a very positive experience, but there are often times when it can get too much. Young carers have indicated that providing significant care often allows them to build closer relationships with their family and develop new skills.

Caring for a family member or friend who is unwell can negatively impact on a young person's health and well-being, they can become 'at risk' of poor health which is underpinned by a lack of self-care, sleep deprivation and anxiety. The amount of time that caring occupies can affect a young person's ability to participate in social activities, education, paid work and relationships.

Young carers have also indicated that caring can impact on their lives in the following ways:

- Limited sleep and the emotional and physical aspects of caring can make it difficult for young people to focus on their own well-being
- They experience feelings of sadness, guilt, anger, fear and worry
- Some young carers find it difficult to balance their time between caring and hanging out with their friends
- Being distracted by worry and duties prevents them getting or keeping any employment at all
- Disengagement from school

A young carer, who is featured in Carers Victoria's Just care for us DVD reflected upon her experiences at school:

"My schooling was affected at one point, I remember sitting in class and just feeling so sick and having anxiety attacks, just worrying about mum at home. It just wasn't worth going."

Young carers who participated in the Youth Coalition of the Australian Capital Territory's 2005⁵ young carers study shared their experiences that fear of harassment and fear of attracting inappropriate intervention that threatened family privacy, prevented them sharing their caring experiences with the outside world.

Many young carers also state that they would not change their caring role, and they treasure the experience. One young carer said:

"It's hard, but what you can take out of it can be a precious gift."

Other young carers⁶ say:

"I now see how much I can actually do for others instead of just laying

5 2005 Youth Coalition of ACT, "More than Words: Supporting Young Carers and their Families, ACT.

6 Moore, T, "Reading Between the Lines: Listening to Children and Young People about their Experiences of Young Caring", 2005, Youth Coalition of ACT Canberra, p33.

around the house.”

“I’m a good helper. I feel good about myself because I can do something for others.”

“I’m more responsible, I’m happy all the time even though I’m put through a lot.”

barriers to supporting young carers

There are many barriers to young carers accessing support for their caring role, such as:

- Young people with significant caring responsibilities often do not identify as being young carers. For those established in the role it is part of normal family life⁷
- Young people may be hesitant in seeking help, due to loyalty to their families
- A lack of awareness of young carers and their support needs amongst services working with young people and services working with their family members
- A lack of age-appropriate services to support young people with significant caring responsibilities

Teachers, youth workers, counsellors, health professionals can all play a role in recognising young carers and supporting them to fulfil the caring responsibilities they manage. Linking young carers with suitable supports in the community is crucial in supporting young carers.

the rationale for a peer support program

In addition to the research conducted by Carers Australia in 2001, a specific request from young carers at the 2004 Young Carer Summit was for:

“...more peer support activities whereby young carers can meet or connect with other young carers to support each other.”

During 2005, Carers Victoria began a resource project aimed at raising awareness of young carers, their needs and ways to support them. This project involved the creation of a young carer DVD – *Just care for us*.

Just care for us features the stories of five young carers who share their experiences of caring and how it has affected their schooling, their free time, their health and their plans for the future. A key theme from this DVD was the young carers’ need for recognition and for connecting to support structures. In the DVD young carers said:

“If I’d known at the time that I wasn’t the only one going through that, I thought I was the only one with a sick mum.”

A crucial message from the DVD was the need for young carers to realise that they are not alone and to be supported in achieving a balance between their own lives and their caring roles. According to one young carer featured in the DVD:

“If I’d been able to go to a support group or something, just anything would have been helpful.”

While general carer support groups are available, there are very few specifically catering for young carers. Carers Victoria aimed to address the gap of identification and support as

⁷ 2005 VCSN Time out for Studies and Life: A Practice Guide and Worker Resource for The Young Carers At Risk Respite Program.

identified by young carers through the peer support pilot project.

benefits of peer support

Key benefits of peer support groups consistently emerge across different age groups of carers including⁸:

- Being able to talk about feelings, often for the first time
- Being understood
- Talking with other carers
- Managing life in a more positive way
- Better communication with family members
- Not feeling so alone
- Increased confidence
- Not being as scared and anxious

expected outcomes of the peer support group

At the beginning of the young carer peer support program, the following expected outcomes were defined⁹.

Young carers involved would:

- Experience increased community connectedness
- Develop confidence
- Develop coping strategies
- Develop a young carer support plan.
- Develop awareness and understanding of support services that can assist the
- young carers and their families
- Take up opportunities to act as mentors within their community.

8 Carers NSW "Young Carer Telegroup Counselling Training Manual. Carers NSW. September 2002."

9 The program proposal was developed by: Amanda Rigby (Young Carer Support Worker, Young carers 'at risk' respite program, Carer Links West), Sarah Waters (Young Carers Peer Support Program, Carers Victoria).

establishing the peer support group

youth participation framework

Youth participation is defined by young people being involved in decision-making processes on issues that affect themselves¹⁰.

Carers Victoria's young carer peer support group was devised with youth participation as a guiding principle. An important consideration was to make the group as flexible and open as possible for the participants, in recognition of the already competing demands of their caring roles and lifestyle. The project workers wanted to enable young carers to feel connected to the group and, instead of making it an extra commitment for the participants, for them to acknowledge the purpose and value of bringing the peer support group together. Using a youth participation framework would help the peer support program achieve its aims by assisting young carers participating in the project to feel ownership of the group.

The youth participation process is a powerful way of working with young people and began with the group choosing their own name – The Lulus. The initial group meeting was held at the Dancing Dog Café, across the road from Carers Victoria. It is a quirky café that celebrates local culture, dancing, art, music, and dogs – the walls are covered with photos and tributes to dogs. The young carers chose their favourite dog photo and decided to name their group after it – Lulu, and so, The Lulus was born.

Key indicators demonstrating youth participation in The Lulus were:

- young carers being involved in the decision-making processes
- young carers being active in making suggestions
- young carers increasing connections with other participants
- young carers increasing connections to service providers

During the first meeting of the peer support group the project workers and young carers discussed what was important to the young carers about coming to the group and what they would like to do in the group time. It was important to establish key considerations as identified by the young carers such as:

- Having fun
- The group not being like school
- Respecting each other
- Respecting participant's decisions not to come to every session
- Confidentiality

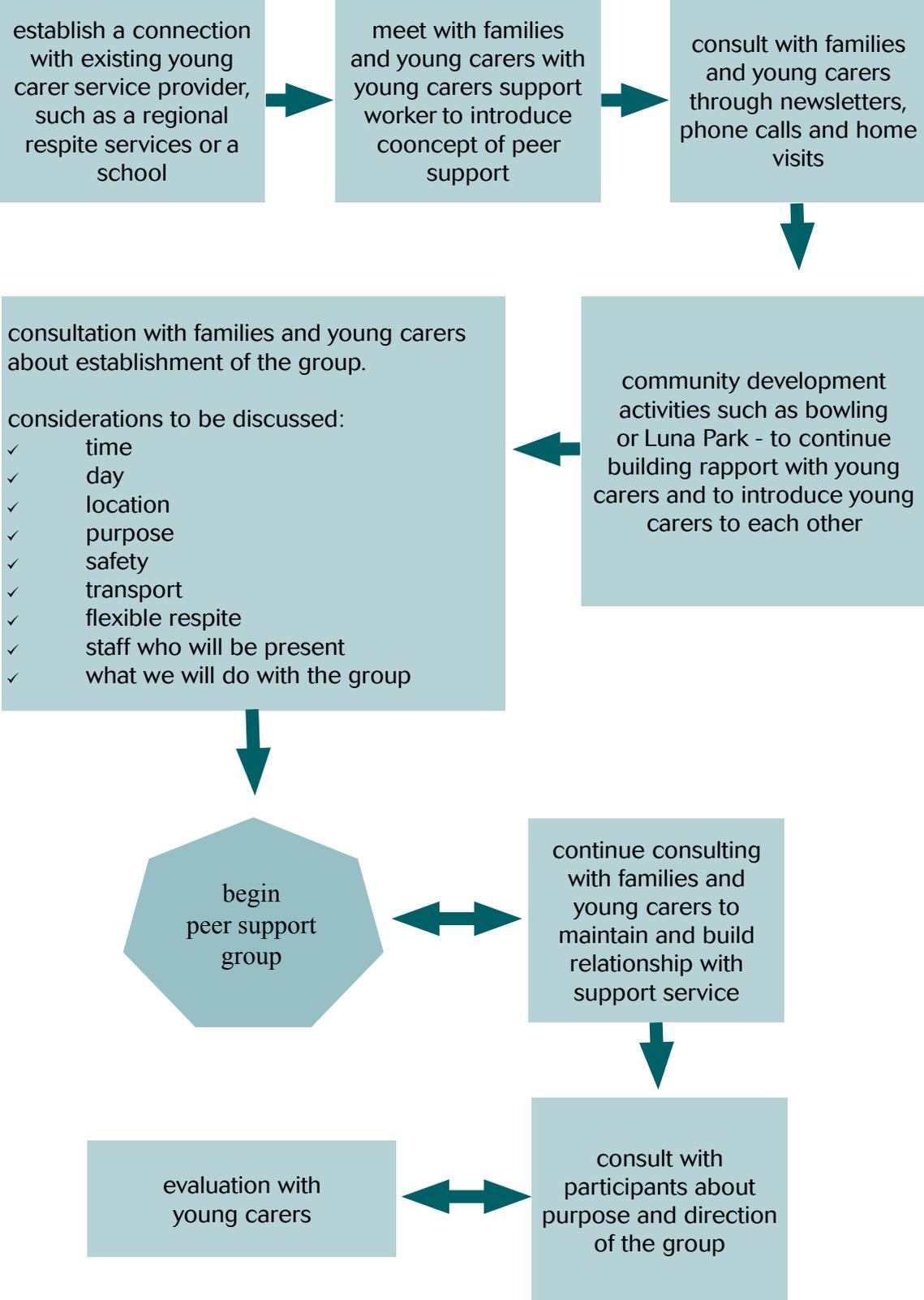
To provide ownership of the group and to develop a framework for the operation of the group, the young carers established the following:

- Group Name (The Lulus)
- Group purpose

10 2004 Office for Youth. Taking Young People Seriously Consulting Young People about their Ideas and Opinions, Victoria.

- How to look after each other as a group (guidelines and rules)
- What behaviour is not okay for the group
- How to make the space feel like the group's own, eg. music
- What the group would eat each week
- How the group members would all get home safely

preparing for the group – flow chart



planning for the peer support group

This is a step-by-step plan of the procedures, tasks, activities and outcomes as the project workers developed The Lulus peer support group for young carers.

procedures	tasks / activities / outcomes
<i>Establish a connection with existing young carer service providers, such as a regional respite service or a school</i>	Consultation with the co-located Commonwealth Carer Respite Service (CCRC), Carer Links West (CLW)* confirmed that young carers in their region were interested in being involved in a peer support group.
<i>Meet with families and young carers with Young Carer Support Worker to introduce concept of peer support</i>	Working in partnership with the CCRC meant the families already had a connection with the service. Building relationships with young carers and their families required time, energy, information-provision and diplomacy (regarding family dynamics).
<i>Consult with families and young carers through newsletters, phone calls, home visits</i>	Initial communication with the young carers (approximately sixty) who had been referred to the CCRC was done through a newsletter, which included an invitation to a day out at Luna Park. Then parent/s/guardian/s were sent an explanatory letter with an invitation for the young carers to attend the Luna Park day out, plus medical forms and consent forms. Follow up phone calls to young carers and their families covered such issues as the purpose of the event, supervision, transport, and respite. Taxi vouchers enabled young carers to attend this outing.
<i>Community development activity, such as bowling or going to Luna Park to continue building rapport with young carers and to introduce young carers to each other</i>	The outing to Luna Park enabled further relationship-building with the young carers (and their families). It was an opportunity for young carers, new to the service to begin their connection, and for all the young carers to meet each other and have fun. During this outing young carers were consulted about their hopes for a peer support group.
<i>Consultation with families and young carers about establishment of the group</i>	Further phone calls, family meetings and mail outs were conducted. Consultations to assist in establishing the peer support group included the following considerations:

* In September 2007 Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre/Carer Links West was renamed Carers Victoria Respite Connections.

Time and Day The group needed to meet out of school hours, on a day that suited the majority of young carers, and that interfered least with their caring responsibilities, homework and other interests. From 4.30-6.30pm on a school day emerged as the most suitable time.

Location A location central to this large region was a necessary, although this would inevitably increase travel for some participants or prevent some attending. The Dancing Dog Café in Footscray was chosen. Meetings were held after hours when the café was closed for business. This was an ideal location as it was low key and had plenty of space for the peer support group members to make into their own each fortnight. In the evaluation one participant said:

"It was good having it in the café because no one knew why you were going there, if we had done it in the office it would have been different, because it says Carers Victoria on it, so people go there for problems...going to the café is for anyone."

Purpose The main purpose of the peer support group was to provide the young carers with some time out from their caring role and an opportunity to connect with other young people in similar situations to themselves. A peer support group would decrease isolation, build resilience and offer collaborative assistance.

Transport With group meetings from 4.30pm-6.30pm mid week, during winter, safe travel was essential for the participants. While some members were picked up by their families, public transport at night was not a safe alternative for the others, so the decision was made to use taxis as a quicker and safer option. Using a buddy system meant that groups of young carers travelled in the same taxi, reassuring families and offering a further opportunity for friendships to develop.

procedures

tasks / activities / outcomes

Flexible Respite Respite was responsive to individual family needs; it ranged from traditional model of in home respite to more flexible options such as after school care for siblings or domestic assistance, such as someone to cook the family meal the night of the peer support group. Respite was funded by CCRC.

Staffing present at the group Collaboration with a CCRC (and their) young carer support worker was crucial in ensuring the success of the group. The project workers (ideally) needed prior experience working with young carers and in group facilitation plus the skills to extensively consult with young carers and their families (who needed sufficient understanding of young carer issues) before the commencement of the group.

What we will do in the group Consultations with the families and young carers were transparent about the purpose of the group - to give time out for both the young carers and their family. It was not like school, but an opportunity for young carers to participate as a group to learn how to achieve a balance between their caring role and their schooling. It would involve enjoyable, creative activities to explore such things as stress, feelings and time out.

Begin peer support group During the first meeting of the group, discussions with the young carers covered what would be important for them in coming to the group and what they would like to do in the group time.

Continue consulting with families and young carers to maintain and build relationship with support service

During the first session the group decided to have a movie day for the final group session. Once a date was set, families were again consulted, transport and respite for the day were organised.

The day before each session the young carers were sent a text message reminder. When young carers missed a session, the project workers would phone them prior to the next meeting, to see how things were going.

procedures	tasks / activities / outcomes
<i>Consult with participants about purpose and direction of the group</i>	At every session young carers were asked what they wanted for the following week. A reflection time was included at the end of each session using the St Luke's Tools* to enable the young carers to assess their own feelings and advise the workers on how they were finding the sessions. This was crucial in keeping the momentum of the sessions.
<i>Evaluation with Young carers</i>	During the last session, the key worker advised the young carers that she would be in contact to organise a time to come and take them out for a coffee to get feedback about the group. Phone calls, texts messages and visits were all used to explain the need to get feedback from the young carers about the group and to organise an appropriate time with the young carers and their families.

* St Luke's Anglicare is an Australian community agency providing diverse human services. St Luke's is known for its strength-based and client-centered philosophy. Social justice and community development are agency priorities and it has developed a range of 'seriously optimistic', strengths-based books and materials (St Luke's Innovative Tools) used by families, counsellors, teachers, therapists and social workers to encourage strengths-based, solution-focused, client-directed practice in personal growth and change.

additional considerations

appropriateness of participants

The workers met with the young carers before the commencement of the group to provide an opportunity to assess whether the young carers would find the peer support process helpful. A consideration in this assessment was whether peer support would be the most appropriate form of respite for the young carers.

worker time

It is essential to allocate adequate time for the preparation, running the group session and debriefing afterwards. The key worker spent approximately one day per week planning the activities and the support worker needed to allocate at least two hours for planning in between each session and for reflection afterwards, in addition to the time spent running the group.

During the two-hour planning time, workers reflected on the previous session using the group notes from the previous session/s as a guide. Workers then mapped out a plan for the following session and selected activities based on the interests that the young carers had suggested.

supervision

Like any group process, running a peer support group was a learning process. In an effort to ensure best practice and to guide the development of the group, it is recommended that the workers facilitating the groups be supported through skilled external supervision provided by their employer agency.

sustainability

The peer support program provided participants with an opportunity to be further involved in young carer activities run by the CCRC, such as camps and other outings. It was also the foundation for friendships between participating young carers and, in order to help sustain these important connections, some additional resources such as respite and restaurant vouchers have been provided.

overview of the lulus model

session one – getting to know you (introductions)¹¹

This ‘getting to know you’ session enables the young carers to meet each other and the facilitators, and, for the group to work out what is important for their time together. This includes developing a group name, and some group rights and responsibilities.

During this session, participants are also asked to begin creating individual pictures to illustrate specific aspects about themselves, their personality and their family. This activity provides an opportunity for young carers to discover common interests in movies, fashion and music, and initiates discussion.

session two – group cohesion and framework

This session builds on the ‘getting to know you’ aspects of the previous session.

It needs to be flexible, unstructured and offer sufficient time for the participants to feel comfortable with each other. Allowing the young carers to share games or activities they enjoy helps to overcome individual shyness. A key purpose of this session is for the young carers to talk about things they would like to do in the group so they feel involved in the direction of the session planning and experience group ownership. Discussion includes activities for session five, a workshopping session.

(Note – if group members know each other well, it may be possible to combine sessions 1 & 2)

session three – being young carers

The purpose of this session is for participants to begin sharing their caring experiences. Watching the DVD *Just care for us*¹² is a catalyst for this process. The DVD focuses on the experiences of five young carers and is broken up into five sections, and, at the end of section there is a group activity.

Session Four – stress mural

This session provides the group with an opportunity to discuss what stress means for them and come up with some strategies about dealing with stress. It involves the creation of a group stress mural to illustrate the look, feel and sound of stress. This is followed by group brainstorming on good and bad ways of dealing with stress.

session five – workshop week – part 1

In this session the group watches the movie “*What’s Eating Gilbert Grape*” which tells the story of a young carer who has taken on the responsibilities of caring for his intellectually disabled brother and two sisters and also his agoraphobic mother, repairing the house, as well as

11 The pilot program facilitators were: Amanda Rigby (Young Carer Support Worker, young carers ‘at risk’ program, Carers Victoria Respite Connections)

12 ‘Just care for us’ (DVD) 2005, Carers Victoria.

running the small family grocery shop. His chaotic home life threatens a budding romance and forces him to rethink his life journey as further tragedies occur. The movie offers relevant themes for the young carers to discuss and workshop.

session six – workshop week – part 2

In this session the group watches the remainder of “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape” but before this begins, there is a group discussion to ensure the young carers are coping with the movie content. The group decides that if anyone is uncomfortable at any stage, they could leave the room for a break. Afterwards, a brainstorming exercise helps young carers to formulate what their tough days look like and to plan both a mini reward and mega reward list to help them get through these days.

session seven – focus on feelings

This session focuses on feelings, providing the young carers with the opportunity to identify what feelings they experience and to discuss how different situations evoke different feelings in everyone. This session aims to normalise some of the feelings that young carers experience.

session eight – conclusion and celebration

This is a celebration of the peer support program and the final session. Over the course of the program, the young carers are consulted as to what they would like to do for this session. This group chose to hold their final session on a Saturday, so that they could meet for lunch and a movie.

getting to know you (introductions)

aim: Introductory session for young carers and facilitators to get to know each other and to establish a group identity, rules and responsibilities, and begin to work out how they want to spend their time as a group through the eight-week project.

purpose: To foster social interaction and connections between the young carers, to begin the process of group formation and group identification, of having fun together, understanding themselves better, sharing information and realising there are other young carers in similar situations, plus having respite from caring responsibilities.

materials & equipment:

- Food – ingredients to make nachos (corn chips, cheese, sour cream, salsa and guacamole)
- Paper bag interview - materials – see Resources, page
- Individual pictures – butcher’s paper, pkts coloured texta pens, glue, magazines, scissors
- Bears cards (St Luke’s Innovative Tools)¹³
- Stones cards (St Luke’s Innovative Tools)

On arrival:

1. Ask young carers to have some food (make nachos) and mingle. (25 mins)
2. Pack up food
3. Facilitators introduce themselves and the project. (10 mins)

introductory activity:

4. Paper Bag Interview (15 mins)
See Resources, page 55, for instructions and materials for this activity.

establishing the group:

5. As a group: establish group identity, rights and responsibilities, and how group time will be spent. (20 mins)

Some questions to initiate the discussion:

- How do we look after ourselves?
- How do we look after each other?
- Do we want a name for the group?

¹³ St Luke’s Anglicare is an Australian community agency providing diverse human services. St Luke’s is known for its strength-based and client-centered philosophy. Social justice and community development are agency priorities and it has developed a range of ‘seriously optimistic’, strengths-based books and materials (St Luke’s Innovative Tools) used by families, counsellors, teachers, therapists and social workers to encourage strengths-based, solution-focused, client-directed practice in personal growth and change.

- What do we want / hope to get from the group?
 - How do we want to spend our group time?
- (The facilitators used the wall full of dog pictures, to start a conversation about naming the group, group picked out favourite dog names, and a then the whole group decision was Lulu).

activity:

6. Who am I? Butcher's paper drawing (40 mins)

Butcher's paper, coloured texta pens, magazines, glue

In pairs draw pictures of yourselves and then fill them in with words, pictures from magazines or drawings to illustrate:

- What do you want people to know about you?
- What makes you laugh?
- How do you like to spend your spare time?
- Who's in your family?
- What are you proud of?

closing activity:

7. Bears and Stones

Pick a card or stone to show what you thought about this afternoon.

(Bears cards and Stones cards)¹⁴

outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Meeting and talking with other young carers
- Realising that they are not alone in this caring role
- Being able to talk about feelings, often for the first time
- Enjoying a positive respite activity
- Beginning to understand and experience peer support
- Beginning to develop new friendships

group cohesion and framework

aim: This flexible, fairly unstructured session builds on the 'getting to know you' aspects of the first session, reducing shyness amongst the group members through a series of games. It is also an opportunity for the young carers to begin thinking about what they would like to do in the workshop week (session 5).

purpose: To further encourage and develop group cohesion and framework for the peer support group, positive social interaction, to reduce shyness and involve the young carers in sharing their feelings, decision-making and group ownership.

materials & equipment:

- Food – Chocolate cake, apple juice, Easter eggs
- Individual pictures – butcher's paper, pkts coloured texta pens, glue, magazines, scissors
- Life (in a) Row game – materials – see Resources, page 57
- Celebrity Head game - materials – see Resources, page 57

on arrival:

1. Ask young carers to have some food and mingle. (25 mins)
2. Pack up food
3. Facilitators introduce session, and give summary of 1st week. (10 mins)
 - Group name
 - How we look after each other
 - What activities we would like to do
 - Overall purpose of the group

introductory activities:

4. The Itch name game (15 mins)

My name is Sarah and I itch here (scratching head). Then the next person says 'this is Sarah and she itches here (scratching head), my name is Amanda and I itch here (scratching her shoulder), and so on.
5. Who am I? Butcher's paper drawing (40 mins)

Butcher's paper, coloured texta pens, magazines, glue

In pairs draw pictures of yourselves and then fill them in with words, pictures from magazines or drawings to illustrate:

 - What do you want people to know about you?
 - What makes you laugh?
 - How do you like to spend your spare time?

- Who's in your family?
- What are you proud of?

games:

6. Life (in a) Row

See Resources, page 57, for instructions and materials for this activity.

7. Celebrity Head

See Resources, page 57, for instructions and materials for this activity.

closing activity:

8. Using one of the following tools (Bear Cards, Strength Cards, Mood Dudes, Pocket Full of Stones)¹⁵ ask the young carers to select a card to share how they are feeling at the end of the group session.

outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Enjoying positive respite with other young carers
- Developing trust in the group
- Realising that they are not alone in this caring role
- Being able to talk about feelings and feel empathy for / from others
- Cohering as a peer support group
- Being involved in the direction of the group and feeling ownership
- Reflecting on and beginning to express what is important to them in life / family etc

¹⁵ Borgman J, 1989. "Mood Dudes" Creative Therapy Associates, Cincinnati, OH.
Deal, R; "A pocketful of stones", St Luke's Innovative Resources, Bendigo, 2003.
Veeken, J; "The Bears", St Luke's Innovative Resources Bendigo, 1997.
Veeken, J; "Strength cards", Bendigo, 1992

being young carers

aim: This session offers an opportunity for young carers to share their personal caring story with other members of the group. It uses a DVD about young carers as a catalyst.

purpose: To encourage young carers to talk about their caring experience with the group, to see the similarities and to empathise with the other young carers. To think about other ways of thinking and other things they can do in response to their situation.

materials & equipment:

- Food – Pizza
- Strength cards (St Luke's Innovative Tools)
- DVD – Just care for us – young carer DVD, Carers Victoria, see appendix 1, pages x – xxx, for copies of the DVD section statements
- Butcher's paper scale – long piece of paper marked off in sections 1-10
- Hand drawing – butcher's paper, pkts coloured texta pens

on arrival:

1. Spot and Touch Game

Facilitator calls out the name of an object in the room, eg. Find the window or something wooden, or something starting with the letter 'S'.

Members move as quickly as possible to find and touch this object.

2. Stones Cards

Spread cards out and ask each group member to pick one up and say something about Lulus, how they're feeling about being a part of the group. Facilitators to ask questions related to answers, eg. What's something that was fun?

3. DVD – Just for carers

Put statements (after each section from the DVD) up on the wall:

- School & Education
- Friends
- Health & Wellbeing
- Time out
- The Future

Put the butcher's paper scale on the ground, marked with sections: 1 –10, 1 representing 'This really relates to me' and 10 representing 'I have no idea what this means'

After watching each section of the DVD, refer to individual statements on the wall and ask participants to position themselves on/beside the butcher's paper next to the number that represents how they feel about the statement.

4. BREAK – PIZZA – eat and mingle (10 mins)

5. Strength Cards

Pick a card representing a strength you bring to your family.

6. Hand Drawing

Ask members to trace their hands, and write in each finger five people they can talk to when they experience some of the issues highlighted in the DVD.

closing activity:

7. Movement

Follow the leader – see Resources, page 58, for instructions.

outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Enjoying positive respite with other young carers
- Developing trust in the group
- Drawing strength from the empathy and support in the group
- Gaining a better understanding of their own situation in relation to the 5 key areas covered in the DVD
- Beginning to recognise their own strengths
- Beginning to develop strategies to better balance their life and caring role

stress mural

aim: Through creative activities and discussion, this session offers an opportunity for young carers to acknowledge and discuss the stresses in their caring role with other members of the group.

purpose: To encourage young carers to talk about their caring experience with the group, to recognise the stressful aspects of this role, and to consider different ways of dealing with these stresses.

materials & equipment:

- Food – Fruit salad and doughnuts
- Individual drawings - butcher's paper, pkts coloured texta pens, magazines, glue
- Stress Mural – paint, paper, paint brushes, drop sheets, coloured paper, paper words, coloured textas, scissors, glue
- Tools to accompany stress activities – see Appendix 1, pages (i – ix)
- Stones cards (St Luke's Innovative Tools)

on arrival:

1. Enjoy food – Fruit salad & doughnuts
2. Continue to work on individual paper drawings
 - What do you want people to know about you?
 - What makes you laugh?
 - How do you like to spend your spare time?
 - Who's in your family?
 - What are you proud of?

3. Name game - Bibbidee Bobbidee Boo

Stand in a circle – one person stands in the middle of the circle and points to someone in the circle and says 'left' (or right) bibbidee bobbidee boo". The person who has been pointed out has to call out the name of the person on their left (or right if this is said instead of left) before the person in the middle has finished saying bibbidee bobbidee boo.

4. Stress Mural - What is stress?

- What does it look like?
- What does it feel like?
- What does it sound like?

Working as a group and using the paint, paper and other materials, select words to create a stress mural.

5. How do you deal with stress?

Break into two groups

One group writes down ten bad ways of dealing with stress

One group writes down ten good ways of dealing with stress

Come back together and share the small group work.

Closing:

6. Stones cards

Pick out a stones' card and tell the group what you are feeling now at the half way point of the sessions.

7. Group discussion

Workshop for next two weeks - what would the group like to do?

8. Game - young carer to facilitate

Outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Enjoying positive respite with other young carers
- Strengthening the group trust, empathy and support
- Recognising the role of stress in their lives
- Owning their emotional responses and realising there are alternative responses
- Developing strategies to cope with stress and their emotional responses
- Recognising the need to talk to other people to help cope with stress

workshop week (part 1)

aim: This session offers young carers an opportunity to think about a wide range of issues associated with young carers and to consider how they may cope with these issues.

Purpose: To encourage young carers to think and talk about their caring experience with the group, to recognise the wide-ranging aspects of this role, and to further strengthen their coping skills / development of strategies / resources.

materials & equipment:

- Food – Popcorn and dried fruit/nuts, juice
- Hamburgers activity - see Resources page 55, for materials and instructions
- Movie – What's Eating Gilbert Grape? (118 mins)
- Board games or comics - paint, paper, coloured paper, coloured textas, scissors, glue
- 'Two Truths, One Lie'¹⁶ activity – paper and biros
- Bears cards¹⁷

on arrival:

1. Get some food and take a seat
2. Facilitators give revision of previous session
3. Stress Mural –
 - What is stress?
 - What are stress busters?
 - What are stress growers?

warm up activity

4. Hamburgers
See Resources, page 55, for instructions and materials.
5. Movie – What's Eating Gilbert Grape (118mins)
6. Group discussion after film – what did they think of the film?
7. Alternative activity – design a board game OR comic
Design a board game or comic about a typical day for you.
For a board game this could include:
 - Challenges eg Forgot to get mum's medications - go back two steps
 - Positives eg Got the afternoon off school - go forward two spaces.

16 Two Truths, One Lie – activity developed for the Gaining Ground Adolescent Program – a Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) project.

17 Bears cards - St Luke's Innovative Tools

8. Two Truths, One Lie¹⁸ - activity

Each group member writes down two things about themselves that are true and one thing that is a lie. Then break the members into groups of three to four. Each person reads out his/her statements and the other group members have to pick which one is the lie.

closing:

9. Bears cards¹⁹

Pick out a Bears card to represent how you are feeling at the end of this session.

Outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Enjoying positive respite with other young carers
- Strengthening the group trust, empathy and support
- Revisiting the role of stress in their lives and strategies to deal with it
- Recognising that being a young carer may involve a wide range of issues, some of which may be in the future for them
- Recognising that they have choices and they are responsible for developing coping strategies, and their right to plan for their own future
- Confirming the value of sharing problems with others, especially in relation to stress relief and making decisions

18 See footnote 12

19 St Luke's Innovative Tools

workshop week (part 2)

aim: This session offers young carers a further opportunity to think about a wide range of issues associated with being young carers and to consider how they may cope with these issues.

purpose: To further encourage young carers to think and talk about their caring experience with the group, to recognise the wide-ranging aspects of this role, and to further strengthen their coping skills / development of strategies / resources.

materials & equipment:

- Food – Fruit salad and dips and crackers
- Movie DVD – “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape”
- Movie discussion – butcher’s paper, textas
- Reward yourself - butcher’s paper, texta pens

on arrival:

1. Share some food and take a seat.
2. Grandmas’ shopping list - game

Standing in a circle, one person starts by saying, “My grandma went shopping and bought”. The next person say person’s name and what her grandmother bought before adding her item to the list. The game continues until the last person tries to remember everyone in the group and everything their grandmother bought.

3. Movie - “What’s eating Gilbert Grape” (final 60 minutes)
4. Group discussion

Someone to act as a scribe for group comments

Start discussion with –

- Although there were funny parts in the movie, there were also very sad moments.
- Call out some words that the movie made you think about
- What were some of the bad things the family experienced?
- What were some of the feelings we saw in the characters?
- What were some of the ways the characters reacted to these feelings?
- What were some positive ways the family dealt with the situation?
- If you could say one thing to Gilbert and his family, what would it be?

5. Reward Yourself:

As we just saw in the movie, we all have tough days. Sometimes it seems really hard just getting through to lunchtime. Having a reward list is sometimes an incentive.

Let's each make a list:

- What are some things that can be tough to get through?
- What would be on your reward list?
- You can have both little rewards - like going for a walk and also big rewards - like going on an overseas holiday.

6. Preparation for next week / fortnight

Comic books and board games

Bring any pictures, magazines or drawings

Bring something to use as tokens

If you are having rewards (like monopoly) bring tokens for that too

Bring to Week 7 – Hand drawing; and (to present to group) Individual pictures

closing:

7. KNOTS game

Stand in a circle and take the hand of another person (except the person standing next to you). Then take the hand of another person with your other hand. The aim is to undo the knot and reform as a circle, without letting go of each others' hands.

outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Enjoying positive respite with other young carers
- Further strengthening the group bond and support
- Revisiting the issues involved in being young carers and developing additional strategies to deal with them
- Further recognising that they have choices and they are both responsible for and capable of developing coping strategies (including rewards)
- Recognising their right to plan for their own future
- Developing the capacity to share problems with others, especially in relation to stress relief and making decisions

focus on feelings

aim: This session focuses on feelings and offers young carers an opportunity to think and talk about their feelings in relation to their caring role.

purpose: To encourage young carers to identify what feelings are and to discuss ways that different situations evoke different feelings, and ways of responding.

materials & equipment:

- Food – Sliced fruit, garlic bread and cabana
- Common ground activity – butcher's paper, textas
- Feelings activity – A4 sheets of paper, texta pens, coloured pencils, blue tack; list of feelings statements (10- 20) Note 16 sample statements given p38
- Jelly beans game – several large bags of multi coloured jelly beans divided into a bowl for each group member

on arrival:

1. Share some food and take a seat.
2. Grandmas' shopping list - game

Standing in a circle, one person starts by saying, "My grandma went shopping and bought". The next person says first person's name and what her grandmother bought before adding her item to the list. The game continues until the last person tries to remember everyone in the group and everything their grandmother bought.

4. Common Ground activity

Break into pairs, the challenge is to make lists of as many things that you can that you have in common with each other.

Then come back for a whole group discussion:

- How easy was it to find something in common with each other?
- How are we alike / different?
- How can having things in common bring us together?

5. Feelings activity²⁰

Use St Luke's Bear cards²¹ for inspiration for drawing the faces

Using the paper provided, make faces for the following mix of feelings and put them up around the room:

- Happy

20 Adapted from "Facilitators Manual: Groups for siblings of children with special needs". Siblings Australia

21 St Luke's Innovative Tools

- Sad
- Angry
- Frustrated
- Embarrassed
- Scared
- Stressed
- Excited
- Surprised

When I read out the following statements, run to the face that you think fits.

Sample statements:

- When someone says something nice about me I feel.....
- When I get home from school I feel....
- Spending time with my family makes me feel....
- If I forget to give the person I care for their medication I feel.....
- When I know it's the weekend I feel...
- If I haven't had time to do my homework I feel.....
- Eating chocolate makes me feel...
- On my birthday I feel...
- When I'm late to school I feel...
- When someone yells at me
- When I get some new music I feel...
- When I try to explain being a young carer....
- When I come to the group I feel.....
- When I ride my bike, go for a walk/run I feel.....
- When I have to do a test....
- When people ask questions about the person I care for I feel....

6. Jelly beans game

Pick out the appropriate jelly bean for each scenario below

blue- SAD, yellow – HAPPY, red – ANGRY, green – JEALOUS,

purple – RELIEVED, white – EXCITED, orange – NERVOUS,

black – SCARED, pink - FRUSTRATED

Scenarios

- Your friends are having a slumber party; you can't go, as you have to help out at home.

- You found out that you made the soccer team at school....
- The person you help care for is in a happy mood...
- You're going away for a week on a young carer camp....
- You have a new teacher for a class at school...
- The person you help care for is unwell.....

7. Group discussion

Did everyone have the same feelings about the different situations?

There are no right or wrong feelings, some just make us feel good and some don't. We all have both, the ones that make us feel good and the ones that don't make us feel good.

We've talked before about what we can do with these feelings, eg. The stress busters list. One of these things was talking to a friend. Were there any others?

Do we do anything with the good feelings?

In our third session we talked about who might be our support networks, on our hand drawing. Can we add any more people to that?

Can we think of anything else we can do with our feelings?

Supports - Bring out the hand drawings from Week 3

closing activity:

8. Individual drawings – present these to the group
9. Talk about the outing for the final session

The Lulus chose to go to the movies together on a Saturday.

outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Enjoying positive respite with other young carers
- Adding the emotional layer to the group bond and peer support mechanism
- Recognising that their feelings are 'normal'
- Developing additional strategies to deal with their feelings
- Recognising their right and responsibility to plan for their own future
- Strengthening their capacity to share problems with others, especially in relation to stress relief, feelings and making decisions

conclusion & celebration – movie day

aim: This final session is a celebration of the project and the peer support group.

purpose: To encourage young carers to understand and celebrate the positive achievements they have made throughout the peer support program and to recognise the importance of continuing social contact with each other, while implementing the strategies they have developed, including decision-making.

planning for this session:

Throughout the project the project it is important to discuss how the group would like to spend its last session together.

As the peer support groups aim to provide young carers with an option to connect with other young people in a similar situation and give them some time out from their caring situation, it is essential that they have the opportunity to make a group decision about the activity for the last session.

The Lulus decided on a movie day on a Saturday to enable them ample time to get to the designated meeting point and also spend some time just informally chatting. This is also a great way for the young people to provide some feedback on the peer support project.

The day was fairly unstructured: the group met for lunch and then had an hour of free time before the movie. During the free time which one half of the group played in the games area and the other half went window shopping.

considerations for this session:

As for all other sessions, the following has to be considered for this:

- Transport
- Respite
- Food
- Cost of activity
- Keeping in touch

It is imperative to talk to the group about ways in which they can keep in touch with each other if they choose to, eg. MSN, SMS, email.

Group questions

Throughout the program, and especially during the movie day, the young carers kept asking:

- What next?
- Why can't the group keep meeting?
- When can we all get to see each other again?
- When will we see the workers again?

It was crucial to be realistic with the group from the beginning about:

- the number of planned sessions for the program, and,
- possible future group activities. In this case the facilitators could talk about an upcoming camp with the group. Camp planning was to give priority to young carers who had attended The Lulus group to enable them to build on the friendship and peer support developed during course of the project.

feedback / evaluation of the project:

The young carers were advised that their feedback was essential in evaluating the project and that the workers would be contacting them over the following two weeks to set up a suitable time to meet over a cup of coffee and discuss the project.

outcomes: The key outcomes for young carers from this session include:

- Enjoying positive respite with other young carers
- Celebrating the peer support project on an group outing they had chosen
- Recognising that the pilot project had a finite number of sessions
- Recognising their responsibility to plan for continued social connection with the group members
- Realising that there would be some additional social activities the group members could attend, including a camp

evaluation procedure

An evaluation procedure was devised to measure key benefits and outcomes for those who attended the peer support group. An evaluation tool compared The Lulus program with the following standards as presented in the initial program proposal:

- the benefits of peer support networks, and
- the expected outcomes of peer support groups

The peer support program evaluation tool²² used a set of specific questions based on

- the young carers' caring and life experiences prior to the program
- the young carers' overall response to the project as well as to specific aspects and activities along the way
- what the young carers would take away from the program
- what they could tell other young carers about peer support

The evaluation procedure involved individual consultations between a project worker and each young carer after the conclusion of the program. It was important for the young carers to be able to talk freely, consequently most of the evaluations were done out of their homes. The worker met with the young carers individually and took them out for a coffee to discuss the evaluation. This process was lengthy. Given the size of the region, it was only possible to meet with one young carer each day, after school for approximately one hour, to do the evaluation.

These meetings gave the young carers an opportunity to reflect on their experiences of the peer support group program. It enabled the facilitator, using judgement and open-ended questioning, to elicit a deeper level of feedback than may possibly have been obtained from a written survey (which, if used, may also have reminded the young carers of school tests). Although the workers met with most of the young carers individually to discuss the project, two evaluations were done over the phone. As well as the evaluation consultations, some young carers also expressed their thoughts about the peer support group project in a letter.

evaluation discussion points

Evaluation consultations with the young carers involved the following discussion points²³:

- Can you tell me a little about what things were like for you before The Lulus project, in terms of:
 - Home?
 - School?
 - Friends?
 - Feelings?
- What did you like about coming to The Lulus?
- How about the venue?
- What did you think about some of the activities?

22 The evaluation questions were developed by Sarah Waters, Young Carers Peer Support Program worker

23 Discussion questions devised by Sarah Waters (Young Carers Peer Support Program, Carers Victoria).

- Watching the young carer DVD and the activity?
- The Stress Mural?
- Going to the movies?
- Watching “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape?”
- The Feelings activity, where we drew pictures of feelings?
- How was it having an open group?
- If we had the group closed, meaning that everyone had to come to every session, how would that have been?
- Are there things that we did in the group that you would like to take out?
- Are there thing that you would like to have made a part of the group?
- If you could send a message to another young person who might be starting at a group and was feeling nervous, what would you say?
- If you could send a message to yourself before coming to The Lulus, what would it be?
- Is there one thing in particular that you have taken away from being in The Lulus?

benefits of peer support networks

Key outcomes of peer support networks consistently emerge across different age groups of carers including²⁴:

- Being able to talk about feelings, often for the first time
- Being understood
- Talking with other carers
- Managing life in a more positive way
- Better communication with family members
- Not feeling so alone
- Increased confidence
- Not being as scared and anxious

expected outcomes of the young carer peer support group

Participants of the young carer peer support groups were expected to:

Short term

- Experience increased community connectedness
- Develop confidence
- Develop coping strategies
- Develop a better understanding of the illness or condition of the person for whom they are caring
- Develop a young carer support plan
- Develop awareness and understanding of support services that can assist both themselves as young carers and their families

Long term

- Take up opportunities to act as mentors within their community

24 Carers NSW “Young Carer Telegroup Counselling Training Manual. Carers NSW. September 2002.”

achievement of expected benefits & outcomes

The evaluation process enabled the young carers to provide feedback on the peer support program, the outcomes and benefits for them individually, what they liked about the group, and to suggest their preferences for aspects not included in the program or for the exclusion of aspects of this program for future groups.

According to the group members the most useful part of the group was meeting other young people who were in similar situations to themselves. Participants said that they “thought they were the only ones who were going through this.”

Overall, while the expected benefits and short term outcomes for The Lulus peer support program were definitely achieved, there were some standout aspects.

For the purposes of this report, several key expected benefits and outcomes will be explored in more detail. It is important to note that many of these were interlinked, such as talking with other young carers and not feeling so alone.

being able to talk about feelings, often for the first time

Sessions four and seven in particular concentrated on feelings. However, at the closing of each session, the young carers were asked to reflect on their feelings using some of the St Luke’s tools eg: the Bear Cards and Pocketful of Stones. Questions helped draw out the young people’s feelings, including:

“What was it like coming into the room tonight?”

“What’s it like now that the session is over?”

This process was highlighted by one person acknowledging

“Each week we were feeling different emotions”.

Another young carer said that the session in which stress was discussed helped him realise that:

*“I was stressed all the time, but I didn’t know what it was,
I didn’t know how I was feeling was different, now I know it was stress.”*

talking with other young carers / Not feeling so alone

Key feedback from the group members was the importance of having an opportunity to talk to other young people in situations similar to themselves. The participants juxtaposed their prior thinking with group experience:

“We were the only ones going through this” with what they liked most about coming to the group as “meeting other young people in similar situations.”

Young carers said that just meeting other young carers helped reduce the sense of isolation they experienced prior to joining the group. In asking the participants what they would say to other young carers about the group, they replied:

“Just go, it’s worth it, just to know you’re not the only one.”

developing awareness and understanding of support services that can assist the young carers and their families

An integral part of the group was the time workers spent in talking to the young carers and

their families. One family described how this resulted in them engaging in both the Carer Respite Service and the peer support group.

"Last year we wouldn't have come to the group, or a camp...Having (the Young Carer Support Worker) meet with us and Mum, that way Mum wanted us to go too. We had fun at the group, it helped. Now we're going to the camp and footy..."

managing life in a more positive way

Prior to the evaluation, some young carers shared the impact that participation in the group had had on different areas in their life, for example school. The group had assisted young people in looking at ways to stay more focused at school, such as getting enough sleep.

Two other young people wrote in a letter that attending the group had:

"take[n] our minds off stress and anger..[and] talking about ways to get rid of stress, it [had] really helped at home."

developing coping strategies

The young carers were very positive in their feedback in relation to how the program had helped them to identify and discuss difficult situations where they were then able to develop coping strategies. In relation to strategies to cope with stress, some young carers reflected on their capacity to now put their stress in a box and throw it away. One person in particular said:

"now I take out the stress and chuck it away."

conclusions

Young carer peer support groups provide an opportunity for young carers to meet other young people in similar situations to themselves. The evaluation of the Lulus model – a pilot program - confirmed that the greatest benefit of peer support groups is in reducing the isolation young carers experience because of their caring responsibilities.

Providing young carers with the opportunity to explore and discuss their feelings, often for the first time, and talk about coping strategies was clearly beneficial. Young carers shared:

*“I was stressed all the time, but I didn’t know what it was,
I didn’t know (that) how I was feeling was different, now I know it was stress.”*

This project began with the intention of catering for a previously unmet need for a peer support group for young people with caring responsibilities. This pilot program was for young people who are in a caring role for a variety of reasons, such as, having a sibling/s or parent/s with a disability, mental illness chronic illness, or having parent/s who are frail aged.

There had been some discussion about grouping young carers together according to the condition of the person for whom they were caring eg: groups for young carers of people with a disability, or a chronic illness. However, it was decided to have a generalist young carers group. The Lulus provided an opportunity for young carers to come together irrespective of the specific condition of the person for whom they were caring. This offered the young carers a chance to meet others in a similar situation to themselves and also to broaden their concept of caring situations. The facilitators discovered that the young carers often perceived other young carer’s caring situations as being more difficult than their own experience.

key learnings

The following are key recommendations devised from the feedback from the young carers who participated in The Lulus peer support project:

- Young carers need to be given an early opportunity to identify and state their individual reasons for being involved in a peer support group, and (without naming them) to talk about the person for whom they are caring;
- The success of the project in reducing young carer isolation and helping them to develop better coping strategies inherently leads to the group members wanting the project to continue after the scheduled eight sessions; so,
- It is essential for the group facilitators to be absolutely transparent about the purpose of the group, the number of sessions and the availability of resources for the project; and,
- Peer support groups are a stepping stone to further involvement of young carers with a Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre because they felt more comfortable about accessing the service and being involved in the CCRC’s activities such as camps and community development days.

After the completion of The Lulus program, two of the participants expressed their thoughts about the project in a letter to the facilitators of the peer support group.

We would like to close this practice guide with the young carers' words:

"We are very grateful and thankful for your help, services and generosity. We have been going through some tough times and you have eased our minds by making a group (called The Lulus) to take our minds off stress and anger.

Going to the Lulus takes us out of the house and allows us to meet new people and take part in a variety of fun activities. It calms us down and allows us to meet teenagers who are living in our shoes and who are going through the same or even worse situations. We talk about how we feel about living with a family member with a mental illness. It's nice to know that you're not the only one, and by talking about ways to get rid of stress, it really helps at home.

Watching a video about living with someone with a mental illness is great to see because you get to see how others cope with it, and gives you new ideas about ways to make a family happier.

Thank you!!!"

activities bank: ice breakers and warm up games

paper bag interview

Materials – paper bags, one per pair

Fill the paper bags with a variety of questions on separate pieces of paper

- If you could be on a TV show what would it be?
- What's your perfect meal?
- Favourite weather?
- If I could go on holidays to one place in the world it would be?
- If I could have a famous friend, it would be?
- My dream job would be?
- My ultimate day would be?

Break the group up into pairs, give each pair a paper bag filled with questions, ask the pairs to take it in turns pulling out a question and asking each other it.

grandmas' shopping list

Standing in a circle, one person starts by saying, "My grandma went shopping and bought The next person says the first person's name and what her grandmother bought before adding her item to the list. The game continues until the last person tries to remember everyone in the group and everything their grandmother bought.

hamburgers

Group size: 15 – 25

Materials – Make up a sheet of fourteen questions such as:

- What did you have for dinner last night?
- What is your favourite TV show?
- What's your favourite food?
- What's your favourite thing to do with a spare ten minutes?
- What did you do on Monday?
- Where do you want to go on a holiday?
- If you had a million dollars, what would you do with it?
- If you got to buy anything in the world what would it be?
- Do you sleep on your back, stomach or side?
- Are you an only child?

Hand out the sheets to the participants and ask them to fill in the answers quietly without anyone seeing their answers.

Then have everyone stand up and walk around comparing answers with the rest of the group, the aim is to find someone with the same answers as you. When you have four answers the same as someone else, yell out "hamburgers."

two truths, one lie (gaining ground adolescent program)

Materials – paper and pens

Group members write down two things about themselves that are true and one thing that is a lie. Break the group into groups of three to four. Each person reads out their statements and the other members of the group have to pick which one is the lie.

honey if you love me!

Group stands in a circle with one person in the middle of the circle.

The person in the middle turns and looks at someone in the circle and says “honey, if you love me just give me a smile”. Without laughing or smiling the other person has to say “I know you love me but I can’t give you a smile”.

If the second person cannot say, “I know you love me but I can’t give you a smile”, without laughing or smiling, they go into the centre of the circle and then continue.

fish & chips

Group stands in a circle, one person starts by saying “fish” and clapping their hands in the direction of a person on either side of them, this person then repeats “fish” and the clapping to a person next to them. At any point one person can change the direction of the game and say “chips” and clap towards the other person in the other direction. The aim of the game, is to keep the flow of “fish, fish, fish” without mixing it up, if a person claps the wrong way or says fish when they should be saying chips or vice versa they are out, it gets a lot harder with a smaller group.

name game

Stand/sit in a circle and each person says their name in turn. Then one person says their name twice and someone else’s name twice, and continues.

life (in a) row

Materials – toilet paper and textas.

Everyone is asked to take as much toilet paper as they think they will need.

Participants then need to write on as many squares as possible what they would like people to know about them, then place the squares on the ground in a row.

bibbidee bobbidee boo

Stand in a circle – one person stands in the middle of the circle and points to someone in the circle and says ‘left (or right) bibbidee bobbidee boo’ the person who has been pointed out has to say the name of the person to, for example, the left of herself/himself before the person in the middle has finished saying bibbidee bobbidee boo.

celebrity heads

No of participants: 5 – 20

Materials - three headbands, small slips of paper and textas

Three people sit at the front of the group with the headbands on their heads.

The rest of the group comes up with three celebrities to attach to the top of the headbands without letting the person know the name that is on top of their heads.

The three people then take it in turn asking only questions that can have yes or no answers eg. Am I a man, am I a singer, am I on TV?

If they get a yes answer they can continue asking questions until they get a no answer, then it's the next person's turn.

The people with the headbands on can guess at any time who they are eg. Am I Britney Spears?

quickly touch an object as called by the leader

E.g. Something red, something soft.

After a couple of rounds, the person who touches the object first gets to call out the next object.

follow the leader

Everyone sits in a circle, one person volunteers to leave the room. A leader begins a movement, which the whole circle copies, such as tapping their right foot. Once the volunteer comes back into the room, the leader keeps changing the movement, the volunteer has to try pick who is the leader.

balloon game

Everyone stands in a circle; one person taps the balloon into the air, then the person next to them, and so on. You can't tap the balloon if it's not your turn and you can't tap it more than once to stop it from touching the ground. The aim of the game is to keep the balloon from touching the ground for as long as possible

i will never laugh again

One person volunteers to think of a vegetable. Other group members ask questions, the volunteer can only answer by naming the vegetable e.g. What is your jumper made of? Potatoes

The round finishes when the player laughs or doesn't reply with the name of the vegetable.

birthday line

Players need to get into a line in order of their birthdays, without talking only using sign language.

knots

Stand in a circle and take the hand of another person (except the person standing next to you). Then take the hand of someone else with your other hand. The aim is to undo the knot and reform as a circle, without letting go of each others' hands.

newspaper headlines

Materials - A4 paper cut in half length ways, with lines drawn on it. Textas

Each player is given a slip of paper and told to write a descriptive word on the left side e.g. Angry, Happy

The player folds the paper under, along the first line and passes it to the player on the right.

Players then write a type of person e.g. mother, butcher. And then fold the paper under.

Pass the paper to the next person, folded under, who then writes a doing word, such as, jumping, driving, walking, eating.

The next fold of paper will say 'to'

The last fold of paper will say a place.

When it is completed, unfold the paper and read it from top to bottom.

appendix 1: additional resources

1. Accompanying tools for stress activity pages: i - vi

2. Accompanying tools for the activity
attached to the DVD – Just care for us
 - School pages: vii - viii
 - Friends pages: viii - ix
 - Health & wellbeing pages: ix - x
 - Time out pages: xi - xii
 - The future pages: xiii

*How do I know
if I'm stressed?*

feeling
nervous

HAVING TROUBLE
CONCENTRATING

can't sit
still

can't stop
thinking about
the one thing

FEELING
GRUMPY

trouble sleeping

head ACHES

*not feeling
hungry or
eating heaps*

feeling sick
in the stomach

*What does
stress do
to me?*

ANXIOUS

Fighting with
friends and
family

*Not interested
in anything*

DEPRESSION

sore back,
sore head,
stomach aches

*feels like i'm
losing it!*

**can't cope
anymore**

school

"Caring can add a lot of stress
at school"

school

"Sometimes I'm so into what other
people want, I forget about myself ..."

school

"My teachers didn't really understand
because I didn't really tell them."

school

"The main thing that teachers who knew would do is ask if I was OK, it showed they cared."

friends

"I think it affected me and my confidence with my friends."

friends

"I've got a friend who I can ring, who's in a similar situation - that helps."

friends

"I have to be there for my sister,
my family comes first."

friends

"Being open about it with friends has
really helped, they know mum's sick."

health & wellbeing

"If I want to be as good as I can for
mum, I've got to look after myself."

health & wellbeing

"Support groups helped as I met others in a similar situation and learnt ways to cope with it."

health & wellbeing

"Prior to the group, I didn't know that anyone else was in this situation."

leisure & fun

"It's a 24hr job, not being able to do things that other kids do."

timeout

"Which ones do you like"

HOMEWORK?

**TIME AWAY FROM
THE HOUSE?**

CAMPS?

DAY TRIPS?

PART-TIME JOBS?

the future

"You're going to come across tough times. If you have already had a few, you know you can get through them again."

the future

"Caring's a big part of my life, I wouldn't change it ... I'm lucky to have her."

the future

"Maybe a lot more help around the house would be useful?"

appendix 2: the budget

Here are just a few considerations to think about when budgeting for the program.

Room Hire	
Catering <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly food costs 	
Community Development Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entrance fee Ticket cost Transport Food 	
Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To and from group sessions 	
Stationery	
Staff Wages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overtime Hours out of normal work hours 	
Respite <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meals After school care In home care Block respite 	
Materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> St Luke's Tools Paper Texta pens Paints Brushes 	
Administration costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone calls Text messages Postage 	

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