

# Brighter Futures for Young Carers in Ireland?



**NUI Galway**  
**OÉ Gaillimh**

## **Presenters:**

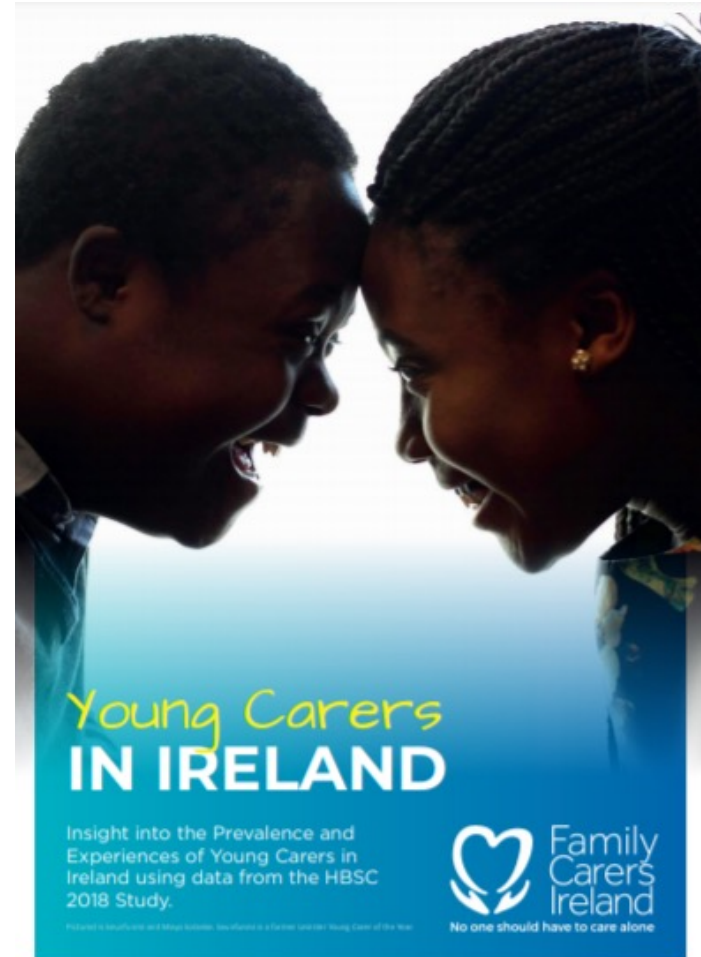
Dr Nikki Dunne (FCI) &  
Young Carer, Sean Collins

## **Co-authors:**

Dr Colette Kelly, Aoife Gavin, Prof. Saoirse  
Nic Gabhainn (NUI Galway), Padraig  
McGrath (FCI)

# Overview

- Irish Context: Prevalence & Policy
- Health Behaviour in School-aged Children 2018: Background & Methods
- Findings
- Bringing the findings to life:  
**Sean Collins, young carer**



# Irish Context: Prevalance & Policy

- Limited data on young carers in Ireland
- HBSC 2018 survey - carer-oriented policy in Ireland tends to focus on adult family carers
- No national legislation, policy or mainstream supports for young carers in Ireland
- State commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child



Shauna Tighe is 18yrs old. Her brother Daniel has Sotos Syndrome. She is his big sister *and is a young carer.*

# Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: Five National Outcomes

## NATIONAL OUTCOMES

Active & healthy, physical & mental wellbeing

Achieving full potential in all areas of learning & development

Safe & protected from harm

Economic security & opportunity

Connected, respected & contributing to their world

### AIMS:

*Children and young people are or have ...*



# 1

## Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC): Background & Methods

# Health Behaviour in School Children 2018 Study

- Collaborative study with the WHO European Regional Office.
- Irish study asks children aged 10-17 about their health and wellbeing and health behaviours in different contexts.
- School-based, self-completion survey.
- Participants: 15,557 10-17 year olds from a stratified sample of 255 primary and post-primary schools across Ireland in 2018.
- Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software and Pearsons Chi-square was used to test for significance.

2

## Outcome 2: Achieving potential in all areas of learning and development

# Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are significantly less likely to report that they are happy with the way they are (48.6% compared to 53.4%)  
 $p < 0.01$
- Young carers reported significantly higher scores on the Mental Health Inventory 5 than non-carers ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating poorer mental health among young carers





# Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are less likely to report liking school – 34% answered no when asked if they liked school, compared to 28% of their peers without caring responsibilities ( $p < 0.05$ )
- Young carers are significantly more likely to report feeling pressured by school work (47.2% compared to 42.9%)  $p < 0.01$
- Young carers were significantly more likely to have been bullied (37.5% compared to 28.3%)  $p < 0.001$

2

## Outcome 5: Connected, respected and contributing

# Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Feeling high level of support from peers and having at least one caring adult to confide in were not significantly associated with having a caring role.



**Séan Collins is hugely involved in the care of both his sister and his Mum.**

# Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are significantly more likely to report that they make a positive contribution to the world (27.8% compared to 25.9%)  
 $p < 0.05$
- Young carers are significantly more likely to report that they take part in volunteer work (18.1% compared to 13%)  $p < 0.05$
- Young carers are significantly more likely to report that they know their rights as a young person (40.4% compared to 37%)  $p < 0.05$

# Comparisons between young carers and those without caring responsibilities

- Young carers are significantly less likely to report that they feel valued and respected as a person (56.2% compared to 55.3%) ( $p < 0.05$ )



# What does this mean?

- Joseph et al (2020, 79) raise the point that many studies of young carers adopt a ‘medicalised approach to caring as if it were a pathogen that leads to illness’.
- Range of studies showing caring at a young age can be associated with increasing maturity (Hunt et al, 2005) or qualities of compassion and empathy (Stamatopoulos, 2018)



# Conclusion

- Ireland has demonstrated a commitment to children's wellbeing
- However, young carers are doing worse than their peers across a number of areas
- Findings suggest nuances of caring
- Supports developed based on what helps young carers
- More work to be done on dataset



# References

Hunt, G., Levine, C., & Naiditch, L. (2005). Young caregivers in the US: Findings from a national survey. Bethesda, MD: National Alliance for Care Giving and the United Hospital Fund.

Joseph, S., Sempik, J., Leu, A. *et al.* Young Carers Research, Practice and Policy: An Overview and Critical Perspective on Possible Future Directions. *Adolescent Res Rev* **5**, 77–89 (2020).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-019-00119-9>

Stamatopoulos, V. (2018). The young carer penalty: Exploring the costs of caregiving among a sample





**Sean Collins, Young Carer**