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## The Young Carers Festival 2009 (UK)

*Happy 10th Birthday*

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The Young Carers Festival (UK) is organised by YMCA Fairthorne Manor and The Children's Society, this years theme was '10' to celebrate the 10th Birthday of YCF and it took place on the 26th - 28th June 2009

This years festival took the opportunity to take a look back at the past 10 years at what the festival has accomplished through its consultations with young carers, while also providing a fun environment for respite.

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## The National Young Carers Festival

*Celebrating 10 years*

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**YMCA Fairthorne Manor** in partnership with **The Children's Society** came together to organise another amazing weekend.



On the afternoon of the 26th July a familiar sight could be seen as hundreds of tents sprung up on the grounds of YMCA Fairthorne Manor, it was that time of year again - the Young Carers Festival 2009.

This year the excitement reached a new high as The Young Carers Festival celebrated its 10th Birthday - 10 years of fun, time out and Having a Say!!

On Friday evening everyone gathered at the campfire site to open the festival. Celebrity messages were played wishing everyone a happy 10th Young Carers Festival - these included messages from Chris Tarrant (TV Presenter), Jo Brand (Comedienne), Ryan Giggs (MUFC Footballer), Rick Edwards (T4 Presenter) and Sir David Jason (Actor).



One young carer, Ernest Mwangi, had travelled all the way from Nairobi in Kenya, he told the crowd how excited he was to be at YCF. Jenny Frank, Programme Manager of The Children's Society Include Project was also surprised by a celebration of her recent MBE for work with young carers.



The festival was opened by:

- Gloucestershire Young Carers Project, who have attended for the past 10 years told everyone about the highlights and benefits YCF has had for them.
- Basingstoke Young Carers Project, who were attending for the first time, then talked about their expectations for the festival and what they were looking forward to.

To finish off the night almost everyone gathered on the front lawn to take part in the largest silent disco!! With headphones on everyone danced through the night to sounds that no-one else could hear!! For those that wanted a more relaxing evening Lisbee Stainton performed a live acoustic set at the coffee bar!



Saturday was packed full of activities to take part in including:

Abseiling

Arial Runway

Burma Bridge

Kayaking

Bungee Run

Sumo Suits

Obstacle Course



There was also the opportunity to take part in some group activities with your project including the blink fold trail and low ropes. As well as all this a range of workshops were available including circus skills, dance, skate boarding, willow den building and Soccer Skills run by Manchester United coaches!

## *Messages of Support*

### *A visit to 10 Downing Street*

As well as celebrities sending their best wishes for the festival, YCF10 received messages of support from MPs and Peers. These included the leaders of all three political parties.



THE PRIME MINISTER



I applaud the dedication of young carers. The responsibility you shoulder and the support and care you offer your loved ones is truly commendable. I want to thank you for your ongoing commitment.

It's a great achievement for everyone involved that the Young Carers Festival is now in its 10th year and I would like to express my personal thanks for the efforts of the YMCA, Fairthorne Manor and The Children's Society - for their valuable work which supports young carers across the UK.

This weekend is about you relaxing, having fun and celebrating. So enjoy yourselves and have a happy 10th anniversary at the Young Carers Festival.

*Gordon Brown*

June 2009

Prior to the Festival young carers from the National Young Carers Forum (NYCF) and some other projects visited 10 Downing Street and were given a message from Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown PM by Baroness Morgan of Drefelin. This message was read out during Question Time.

Rt. Hon. David Cameron, MP (leader of the Conservative Party) and Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg, MP (Leader of the Liberal Democrats) also sent messages of congratulations and support to YCF.

Other messages of support were received from Annette Brooke, MP - who has been a long time supporter of YCF; Sylvia Heal, MP; Sir Al Aynsley Green, Children's Commissioner for England; Rhodri Morgan, AM First Minister for Wales and Delyth Morgan, Baroness Morgan of Drefelin, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Children, Young People and Families.

These messages are available on the YCF pages of our website: [www.youngcarer.com](http://www.youngcarer.com)



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Question Time and Messages of Support  
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Over Saturday lunch the Voice Tent was also the host of an important event, Question Time. The panel discussed what has changed for young carers over the past ten years, including the increased awareness in schools of young carers issues, and how the festival has aided this. Young carers also took the opportunity to tell the professionals what still need to be changed for them.



This year the panel consisted of:

Tim Loughton MP, Shadow Minister for Children and Young People

John Coughlan, Director of Children's Services, Hampshire  
Jenny Frank Programme Manager The Children's Society  
Include Project,

Peter Cooper, Children's Work Director YMCA Fairthorne Group

Mike Tilbury President of YMCA Fairthorne Group

Alan Wells Chairman of the YMCA Fairthorne Group Board

Andy McGowan, young carers and YCF volunteer,



Tim Loughton MP discussed his continued commitment to young carers since he attended YCF for the first Question Time in 2002, in honour of his continued support Andy McGowan, on behalf of all young carers, awarded him with a commemorative photo montage. Tim Loughton MP also read out a message of support from Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP.

'10 Years of Achievement: I am delighted to congratulate everyone involved in the National Young Carers Festival, as you celebrate ten years of achievement.

These festivals provide a great opportunity to recognise the huge amount of work that young carers do, away from the glare of publicity, throughout the year. They give them a say on the issues which affect them and their families. And they allow time to relax.

Young Carers often make enormous sacrifices to help those they love, and it is easy to feel isolated. So the fact that these festivals have enabled many thousands to get together and share their experiences is a great achievement. I would like to wish you the very best for this year's Festival and for the future'

***Rt. Hon. David Cameron, MP (leader of the Conservative Party)***



The Young Carers Festival Posters



# Dear Young Carers

Over the years, the Young Carers Festival has been a unique way of celebrating the incredible contribution you all make to your families. It has provided an opportunity for thousands of young carers from across the country to get together, share experiences, meet new friends and have fun.

The festivals have also given you a chance to have your say and to offer insights into what is important to you and your families. Those views have been invaluable in helping to shape many of the more recent developments in support for young carers, not least the new action agreed in the Carers Strategy which we published last year.

I would like to pass on my thanks to all the young people who have contributed in this way and to the Children's Society and YMCA Fairthorne Manor, who have organised and hosted the Festival so successfully over the years.

Reaching your 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is a very special achievement. To the organisers and all the young people attending this year, my warmest congratulations. I hope the event will be a great success and tremendous fun and that there will be many more anniversaries to come.

Yours

**DELYTH MORGAN  
 BARONESS MORGAN OF DREFELIN**



*'For the first time for many years sadly I am unable to attend your Festival. Every year I have attended I have left with messages from you - you need more help, support and understanding. It has a slow process but I think there have been real achievements to be celebrated today. But there is much more to be done - Please keep your voice heard and we politicians will listen. I can certainly pledge that I will continue to try to put words into action. THANK YOU for everything you do'*

**Annette Brook MP, Liberal Democrat spokeswoman for Children, Schools and Families.**

## What You Said!

20 Dorset Young Carers enjoyed a fun packed weekend at the 10<sup>th</sup> Young Carers' Festival. Favourite events included the football, where the team played in the final and won an amazing cup as runners up. This event was particularly prestigious as it was coached and refereed by Manchester United coaches. Our sporting prowess and teamwork was also demonstrated in a first place in the canoeing race and runners up place for the Dragon boat. Everyone enjoyed dressing up for the event. Our group also contributed to the anniversary card display with photos going back 8 years which brought back happy memories to many of our young people. The karaoke was a big hit and all of us went home with sore throats through cheering so much. The silent disco was a great idea – please do it again!!



Thank you to everybody who helped organise such a great weekend.

### Dorset Young Carers Project

*'The festival gave me confidence with new people it gave me the experience to do all the different activities and I would like more people to get involved. At the weekend I did zip wire, abseiling, rock climbing the inflatable bouncy pillow and kayaking it was fun I capsized in the kayak and got really wet. I also went to the disco, which was fun. The people I met really enjoyed it and all want to come back next year. The venue was brilliant with lots of space to run around. I enjoyed the food especially the chicken kebab it was really hot and sunny. I have had a really nice time'*

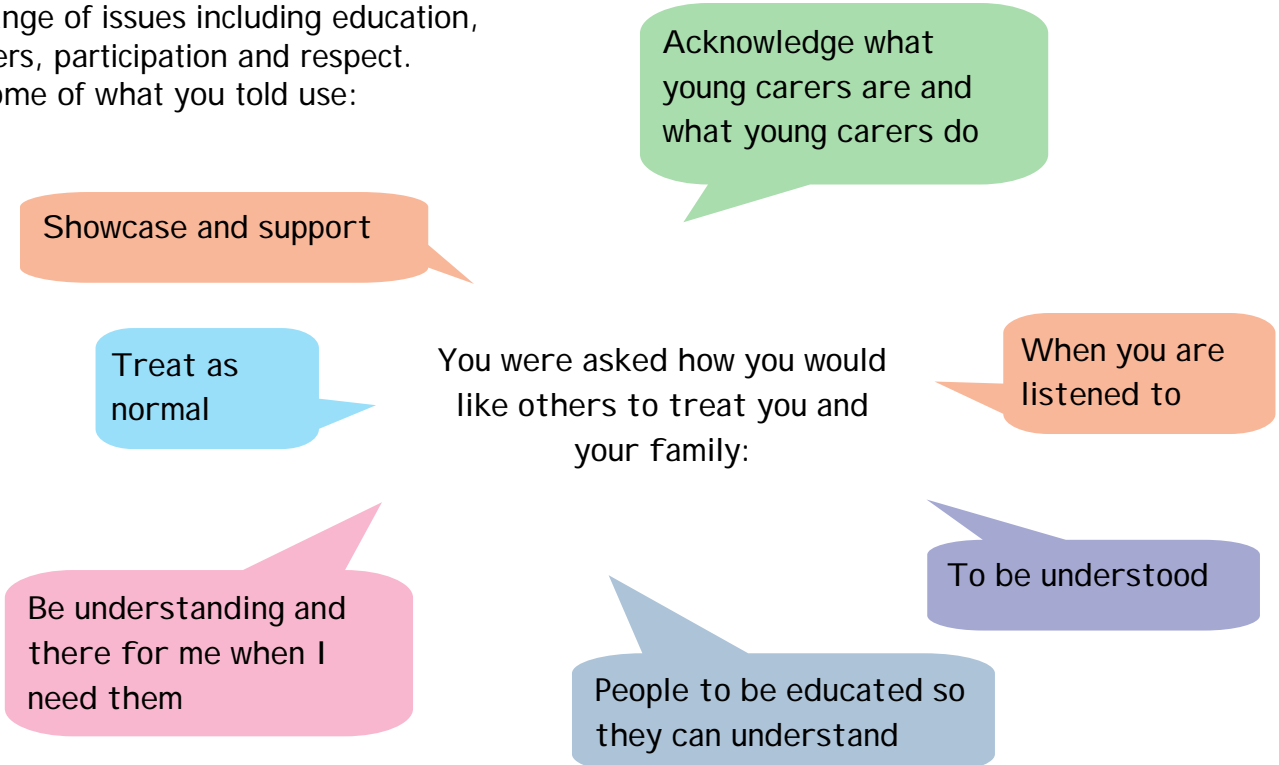
**Simon Trafene (14) Action for Carers written for First News**

## The Voice Zone

This year, to celebrate the tenth National Young Carers Festival the Voice Zone created a quiz about the last 9 years, with the opportunity to win an Ipad touch and a signed Wayne Rooney football Shirt - the winners were both from Sunderland Young Carers Project - A Very Lucky Group!!



There was also an opportunity to have a say about a range of issues including education, lead teachers, participation and respect. Below is some of what you told us:



We also asked . . .

### What do politicians need to do to help improve support for young carers aged 16-25?

- I would like similar projects for older young carers
- Create better links between young carers projects and adult carers. Possible with specific groups for 16-25 year olds
- I would like to get together with people, like at the festival
- The recognition is good but there needs to be more action. There needs to be more knowledge of young carers in schools and health care and it should be obligatory you have this basic knowledge so people are able to support us.
- More projects specialised for them
- More advice on jobs
- Increased awareness in higher education, starting at college when they need to make decision about what they want to do.
- Provide secure and consistent funding for young carers projects to develop / provide support for 16-25's



**10 out of 10**

**YCF 10 Song**

**Verse 1**

There's so many things to do  
Before this weekend is through  
Your new friends will agree  
That YCF is the place to be

**Bridge**

10 years of feeling good about ourselves  
Where people embrace a true feeling x 2

**Chorus**

Feeling good, 10 out of 10

Meeting new friends, 10 out of 10

A place to be, 10 out of 10

YCF is 10 out of 10 x 2

**Verse 2**

Flashing colours everywhere  
Having fun without care  
Celebrating the joys of a break  
With the new friends that we make

**Bridge**

**Chorus x 2**

**Outro** YCF is 10 out of 10

*Hawaiian Regatta*

On Saturday afternoon the banks of the river filled with people for the YCF's Hawaiian regatta, hats and costumes had been made in the Art tent and Chill Out zone and everyone was ready to cheer on their teams. Bell Boats, Kayaks and Ducks filled the water as everyone cheered from the side lines.



(left) Chris Hand and Peter Cooper of the YMCA model their Henley Hawaiian style to oversee the races!



**What You Said!**

*'Friday we arrived mid afternoon after a long coach journey. We set up camp and then went off to meet people and show-zolise. We met some really cool people from other groups and went to the biggest ever-silent disco, which was awesome. Saturday we had to get up too early for brekkie but was I still eager to do all the activities that we could, we slid down zip lines, got our nails painted and everything else in between. That night we met people from different groups and went to the big bash with them. There were awesome fireworks even though some were a little bit short!!!*

*Sunday was sad because we had to say bye to all the friends we made so we swapped contact details and hopefully see then next year at the 11<sup>th</sup> young carers festival.*

*The venue was mint and the atmosphere was about as good as you could get. I think every young carer loved it because the weather was scorchio (hot). The only bad thing was it had to end and I cant wait till next year, which hopefully I will get a place on it'*

**Sarah Thomas (15) Action for Carers Wiltshire written for First News**



As usual we were joined all weekend by Express FM giving voice to the atmosphere, entertaining us and those listening from home. This year there was also an opportunity to star gaze, Max Alexander brought along a telescope so to give everyone the opportunity to see the stars up close.



As the sky began to darken we watched a short film of highlights of the festival, then it was time for the fireworks display. To finish off an amazing day the Big Bash took place on the main lawn the party got started and didn't stop until midnight! What an amazing day!!

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### *The Closing Ceremony on Sunday*

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And once again the weekend drew to a close. On Sunday morning Nelson from Portsmouth Young Carers won the Karaoke final, and the 5-a-side football finals were held. Then everyone gathered on the front lawn to see the prizes awarded to the winners of the boat races, including Southend-on-sea winning the *'loudest and best dressed'* category at the Regatta.



After hearing this year's festival song performed by Solent University and the Karaoke finalists, Bill Badham from Hear by Right spoke about the changes that have happened over the years at the festivals and the influence the young people at these events have had across the country.

And then it was time to sing Happy Birthday to the festival one last time, while a large Birthday cake was cut and 2000 small cakes were passed around for everyone!

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