



Sandwell Young Carers'

Forum Report 2015/16



Our Mission Statement

We are the voice of young carers, both hidden and found. We speak for those who cannot and strive to improve the understanding, awareness and support for young carers and their rights across the local area and beyond. We decide what's best for us and the thousands of young carers in Sandwell by assisting Sandwell Young Carers to succeed in its mission to support them.

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Who are we?

Aaron – Senior Co-Chair

I am 13 years old and I care for my mom. I am the Senior Co-Chair and I have been a forum member for 2 years. My role is to chair our forum meetings along with James who is currently shadowing me. I bring them to order and follow the agenda and make sure that everything is discussed that is needed.

James – Junior Co-Chair

I am 13 years old and I care for my mom. I am the Junior Co-Chair and I have been a forum member for 9 months. My role is to help Aaron with the running of the forum meetings. As I am a Junior Chair and I have only just been voted into the role I am currently shadowing Aaron to learn all I can from him.

Caroline – Vice Chair

I am 9 years old and I care for my mom. Even though I am only young my confidence and loudness has meant that after 9 months on the forum I have been elected Vice Chair, this means that if Aaron and James are absent I will take charge and run the meetings.

Becky – Secretary and Young Carers Champion

I am 18 years old and I care for multiple family members. I am the Secretary for the forum and the former Chair I have been on the forum for 4 years. My job is to take the minutes and make sure that everyone has the agenda and have signed in and out of the meetings. I am also a young carers champion which means that I have been trained by the Children's Society to conduct interviews, lobby Politicians and film and produce videos and presentations.

Shanna Mai – Senior Forum Member and Chair of the Junior Forum

I am 11 years old and I care for my brother. I have been on the forum for 2 years and have recently been given that task of helping to lead the upcoming Junior Forum for the under 11's. My role will be to chair this forum and teach them about what it means to be a forum member and what will be expected of them. I have been given this role because despite my age I have been on the senior forum for a long time.

Jasmin – Senior Forum Member and Young Carers Champion

I am 14 years old and I care for my sister. I have been on the forum for 2 years and I am also a Young Carers Champion along with Becky.

Gerhard – Senior Forum Member

I am 13 years old and I care for my mom. I have been on the forum for 9 months.

Tobias – Senior Forum Member

I am 14 years old and I care for my mom. I have been on the forum for 9 months and joined when we went to Frank Chapman.

What have we done?

What follows is just a few of the things that we have achieved over the past year.

Frank Chapman

In August 2015, a group of existing and potential forum members travelled to Frank Chapman for an overnight stay where we learnt everything we needed to know about being a forum member, whilst taking part in some fun activities. Whilst at Frank Chapman we were split into two groups to take part in some team building activities. Whilst one team tried their hand at shelter building and camp survival skills the other team successfully worked together to beat the Frank Chapman record for milk crate stacking. Milk crate stacking was a team building activity in which the young people had to work together to build a stack of milk crates as high as they could. We were responsible for each other's safety as guide rope operators and had to think logically to figure out how to pass the crates up to the others on the ever increasing stack of crates we managed a record number of 19 crates high!

After a delicious evening meal we all gathered as a whole again to complete some forum based tasks including a mock forum meeting where each person had to take on a personality very different from their own and play that part during the meeting. Followed by a mock awareness raising advertisement production.

During the next morning the teams switched activities and the other team outdid the 1st team on the milk crate stacking and broke the short lived record with 20 crates!

“ The time I spent at Frank Chapman was amazing I made new friends and learned a lot about the forum and what it means to be part of a team. ”

“ Frank Chapman was awesome. We got to bond as a forum so that we can lead the organisation better together. ”



Young Carers' Festival

Every year since 2000 during the last weekend in June, 1800 young carers meet in a field outside the YMCA's Fairthorne Manor in Southampton and the Young Carers Festival takes place. Each year there is a different theme and last year it was 'Making it Happen'. We celebrated the Children and Families Act 2014 coming into effect and having young people's voices and opinions fed through to government was a hugely important part of this years event. We went to The Voice Zone, a place for young carers to voice their opinions, and were asked about the changes that we have seen



in our area, asked what

further changes we would like to see, and we made a pledge to take forward with us to help make an impact in our local area. We also took part in an event that launched the 'Influencing Change Toolkit' from the Young Carers in Focus partnership which is to be used to support services, young people and families *Making it Happen* in their local area. As always we attempted to break a world record, danced the night away at the silent disco, made ourselves sick on the fairground rides and finished the weekend with a huge fireworks display.



SHAPE Music Festival

Sandwell Young Carers were named SHAPE's charity of the year and when they held the SHAPE festival last year at Sandwell Valley Park Farm we were invited along as guests to represent the organisation. We got to cheer Tracey along as she raced through the inflatable obstacle course before we all got to have a go ourselves. It was a great bonding experience, but also a test of our competitiveness as we were racing each other.

“ We had great fun whilst representing the organisation, I think it's important for us as a varied group to be a face of the organisation so people can see that not all young carers are the same and it can affect all ages, races, shapes and sizes. ”



“There’s no one is there? No one who can actually help” – research launch

Early in 2016 we were asked by the Children’s Society to chair an event at the University of Birmingham to help launch the newest piece of research into the challenges of estimating the amount of young carers there are – “There’s no one is there? No one who can actually help”.

At the event we introduced ourselves and spoke a little about our organisation and what we as a forum do. We then introduced the many speakers who were there to talk about their experience with young carers including the people who carried out the research, Sarah Wayman and Phil Raws and the foremost leading expert on young carers Professor Saul Becker.



“ It was exciting to meet Saul Becker and the other speakers and they were very interested in listening to our experiences and opinions, it made me feel important and valued. ”

Our Trip to the University of Birmingham

During the school holidays over Easter we were lucky enough to go to the University of Birmingham with a group of young carers for a young carers self-esteem and awareness day. On this trip we got to take part in a treasure hunt around the humungous campus, a tour around the art gallery on site and a drawing challenge. We got to hear from young carers that attend the university and picked up lots of information about bursary’s and scholarships available for young carers such as the A2B route, which reduces the grades needed to attend the 3rd best university in the country. We brought all this information back to Sandwell with us to share with all the other young people to show them that they can go to university and there is help and support available to them.

“ I feel like I can go to university now they will support me when I need to care for mom and the financial worries won’t be so big knowing I can get a scholarship. ”

“ It’s nice to be able to tell other young carers that they can get all the support they need to carry on their education, it’s awesome to give them good news. ”

The family events and interviews

Over the year Sandwell Young Carers has held many family events such as the Christmas party and the Spacehoppers events. We have been at these events both with our families and as forum members. At the latest family event at Spacehoppers we were on hand to perform interviews that were part of the Making a Step Change project. Making a Step Change was a pilot project in which Sandwell was one of 6 local authorities (in partnership with Sandwell Young Carers) asked to trial implementing the changes that are to take place as part of the Childrens and Families Act and the Care Act 2014.



Include Young Carers Champions

Children's Society and The Carers Trust

Over the last two years, two of our current forum members have been training to become national Young Carers Champions. This training was run by the Children's Society as part of the Include Project. Becky and Jasmin have been to events all over the country including London, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Cumbria and Dearne Valley. Some of these events were:

NHS 'No Suits' Event

Our Champions had the opportunity to meet with some of the most influential people in the NHS at this event held at London Zoo. The event consisted of one to one chats between us forum members and the heads of the NHS, including the Chief Executive of the Royal College of General Practitioners, the NHS head of Patient Experience and many more, where we got to share our experiences with them and question them about what they were going to do to make sure that young carers are seen and heard within the NHS.



“ We knew this was a massive opportunity and we made sure that our questions were answered. ”

“ I felt like our opinions were being heard and that they mattered. ”

As a result of this and other similar events NHS England have produced two new pieces of literature; “Young Carers Wish List” and “Listening to the Voices of Young Carers” are now both being distributed.



Influencing change and legislation event

We took a trip down to London with a couple of non-forum members to consult on the Children's and Families and Carers Acts 2014. We worked closely with other young carers groups from around the country and discussed the Acts in detail. The Children's Society and DigitalMe worked together to break down the acts into bitesize chunks and briefed us on our rights to an assessment. We were asked how we would like our assessments to work and whether we thought this latest piece of legislation would work. We discussed our communities and who would be most successful in handling the young carers assessments and we discussed our dreams for the future and how we could be supported in achieving those dreams.



“To know that we have had an input into the way the young carers assessment will work is a big deal for me it means that the people in charge are listening and gives me more confidence when dealing with my caring role in the future.”



“Knowing my rights for an assessment and having the process explained to me means that I can pass that information along to other young carers so that they know too.”

What works for us video

Two of our forum members have appeared in a national video about young carers assessment and how the legislation affects us. On one of our many journeys down to London for a Children's Society Young Carers in Focus Event, we were asked to take part in an interview where they asked us various questions including "When did you first realise you were a young carer?" "How has the whole family approach affected your family?" "What do you think of the young carers assessment and have you had one?" and "Who supports you the most?" This video is now available on the Making a Step Change video and has been used at Children's Society and Carers Trust events across the country.

“It's nice to know that my voice is being heard nationwide and that people are taking notice.”



“The new legislation is very important to all us young carers if we can all be assessed and supported it takes away lots of our worries and I'm glad my thoughts about it are being taken notice of.”

This video is available at makingastepchange.info

A message from us to you

“ It’s true, we are children and young people first, but as long as we are, we will always be young carers, please don’t let us down - be young carer aware. ”



Sandwell
Young Carers

Supporting children & young people in their caring roles

The Old Vicarage, 44 Bratt Street
West Bromwich B70 8SB

Support Hotline **0121 525 8002**
Admin Hotline **0121 525 7667**
Email **contact@sandwellyc.org.uk**
Website **www.sandwellyc.org.uk**