

## FRASER AND BRIONY

The siblings, 13 and 12, care for their father, David, who suffers from MS. "We argue over stupid things, like who gets to wash the dishes"

## THE COVER CHILDREN

It has been a year of ups and downs for our cover children, Christian Lunn, 16, and Lauren Malins, 13. Lauren's mother, Nikki, has suffered months of bad health and is waiting to find out whether her remaining leg will have to be amputated. Christian's mother, Berenice, is still having daily doses of chemotherapy to stabilise her leukaemia. His father, John, who is bipolar and also has a heart condition has been in and out of psychiatric care. Christian has taken a very heavy caring role. Even so, he has managed to perform his own one-man shows, entertaining residents at nursing homes in Harrogate, and he has been chosen to represent the north of England in the musical-theatre category at the Festival4Stars final in Glasgow in November.

A Sunday Times reader who wanted to remain anonymous paid for Christian to have music lessons and for he and Berenice to have a holiday in Tenerife at New Year. Lauren, who is so much happier at her new school, is having



Above: Christian Lunn, 16 and Lauren Malins, 13, who appeared in the magazine last year

counselling every week and starts the Saturday drama school, Stagecoach, in September.

The charity Miracles agreed to manage funds containing individual donations for Christian and Lauren and Moray Young Carers Project hold a fund for Naomi, 16, and her mother, Georgette. Individual donations totalling £3,500 were sent for Naomi; the money has been used to buy Christmas presents, birthday presents, a new carpet (they had none) and they are carefully considering a new mattress for Georgette and possibly a spring-up chair. Russell Stuart, Moray Young Carers Project Worker says: "Naomi has grown up a huge amount. She's found her independence and she's blooming. It's been wonderful to see how much everyone's interest and concern has boosted her confidence. The response over Christmas was overwhelming. We were able to go out and buy presents and food for families who otherwise wouldn't have had anything. The feel-good factor was amazing."



Naomi, 16, and her mother, Georgette

## REACHING OUT

The Sunday Times chose The Princess Royal Trust for Carers as a means of getting funds to as many children as possible around the UK. The trust is keen that every young carer, wherever they are, should have access to specialist support. Some of the money you gave us will pay for a two-day training conference for 120 young-carer workers from across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, reaching around 100 projects, some of them outside the trust's network. It will pay for a similar event in Scotland, reaching around 50 services. Money will also go to the website team, who provide specialist support online to young carers who, for different reasons, typically those who self-harm or suffer bullying, cannot face attending a project.

## HOW TO DONATE

■ **BY POST:** send a cheque made payable to The Princess Royal Trust for Carers to: The Sunday Times Appeal, c/o The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, Unit 14, Bourne Court, Southend Road, Woodford Green, IG8 8HD

■ **ONLINE:** visit [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org) and follow the links

■ **DONATION HOTLINE:** 0845 270 0336. Lines are open on Sunday from 10am to 7pm and from 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday. If you provide your address, details will be used to send out Gift Aid forms to sign and return. This will allow the government to add 28p for every £1 of your donation at no extra cost to you.

For more information about carers, please call 0844 800 4361 during office hours or visit [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org) or [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)

The Watson brothers at the beach: Josh, 10 (lying down left), JJ, 8 (standing) and Adam, 14. Their father is partially paralysed



asked. She stopped outside the Stardust Ballroom, and a little boy presented her with a flower nicked from one of the low tubs of pansies that hug the ground in a desperate bid for life. "Did you pinch that?" asked HRH with a bit of a twinkle in her eye. It was obvious he had – the salt air and the vicious wind have decimated everything else.

At night, everyone gathers in the Princes Theatre for the evening's entertainment – Charlie Cairoli Junior, whose dad was for years the resident clown at Blackpool Tower circus, is on with his partner. Afterwards, a slow procession of wheelchairs and Motability scooters carrying cargoes of sleepy children rumble across bumpy concrete paths to the chalets. They think they've gone to heaven because they're going to climb into beds they haven't had to make and they'll get up to a breakfast they haven't had to think about.

Briony and Fraser, 12 and 13, are primary carers for their dad, David, who has MS. Briony is a bookworm who loves her dancing, Fraser is mad about football. They live "in a clean place" 30 miles from Inverness, sharing a two-roomed flat where they take it in turns to sleep on the sofa. "We argue over stupid things like who gets to wash the dishes. Me and Briony want to do more than we can cope with sometimes. That causes quite a lot of friction because Dad feels that we do too much. But we don't mind. It



doesn't take long to put on a wash and you can play while you wait to hang it out."

We wanted this story to celebrate the success of the campaign, but everything I see in Blackpool just reaffirms the need. In the dining room, people with faces the colour of whey droop over plates of white toast; it's as if an entire medical dictionary of ill health is taking its breakfast. Bad feet and rickety legs sit next to gnarled and useless hands, and wheezing chests share tables with bent and twisted spines, the wheeled-in, the worn-out. And in among them, little knots of children, whose world this is.

Charlotte is only 15 and she can't cope. Bullied and ostracised at school, not qualifying for any kind of help at home, she's drowning without anyone even noticing. She sits crouched under her hoody, too shy to talk at first, and then when she does start, she really can't stop. Big tears roll down her cheeks as she describes a situation that has spiralled so out of control that I can't think of a single thing to say that will be of practical help. It's hard enough being 15 without all this as well.

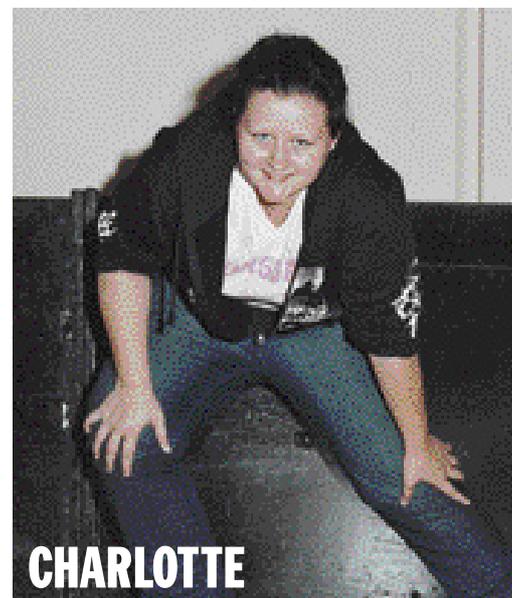
Charlotte's mum suffers from arthritis and depression and is morbidly obese, sometimes she manages to get out of bed, sometimes she doesn't. At home are Charlotte's two younger sisters, one with a club foot, and a brother who is bouncing

off the walls with ADHD. Charlotte spends all her time trying to keep control. "And I can't," she wails. "My role in the morning is to get everyone up and give them their breakfast, then tidy up and wake my mum and try to encourage her to get up and dressed..." She takes a deep breath. "If only Mum could be out of pain, and if the kids would do what I ask them, if my brother didn't have ADHD and my sister

## Five carers were chosen to go to Brunei. Their passports, inoculations, suntan lotion were all paid for by you

didn't have her bad foot..." Her voice trails off. "But I'm not God and I can't make it go away."

I'm thinking: "Could Charlotte's mum lose some weight, possibly?" which might help her arthritis. Then feel bad for mentioning it as Charlotte catalogues for me, with infinite patience, the various ways that Charlotte's mum has tried and failed to exercise and lose weight. While Charlotte prays for someone to wave a magic wand and make the adults in her life well and functional, she embodies all the reasons that



## CHARLOTTE

Charlotte, 15, looks after her mother, who suffers from depression and arthritis, her two younger sisters and her brother, who has ADHD

centres for young carers must exist and go on plucking children out of situations like this.

The more chaotic the situation at home, the more isolated children become. Nobody at school understands what's going on with Charlotte. Friends, the few she has, don't come round. We talk about her local young-carers project, and the kind of things she might do there. She's mortified at the idea of anyone finding out about her life. But everyone there is in the same boat, nobody will judge you. Will she go? "I don't know," she says. "I might." When I next see her, she's tottering back from the ice rink, giggling. It's the first time I've seen her smiling. "This," she says, "is the best fun I've had in ages."

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Sutton in south London is one of the most socially polarised boroughs in the country – there's a six-year life expectancy differential from one group of streets to the next. Here, the post of support worker for young carers had to be frozen last year, due to lack of funds, despite more than 270 young carers already registered and an increasing number of referrals.

The CEO of Sutton Carers Centre, Rachael MacLeod, estimates that hundreds more are hidden and that this figure represents only 20-30% of young carers locally. She shows me a file, a hundred pages thick, containing details of children who have been identified, but not yet assessed. And, she says, "there are many, many more". Sutton has now received a grant of £13,000 from The Sunday Times fund and there's another £25,000 in reserve to rescue another service facing severe cuts.

I meet Bertrina Andrew, 12, in the newly equipped young-carers' room. She is the most beautiful girl, with a face suffused with sadness. She doesn't tell anyone she's a young carer because she doesn't want people to feel sorry for her. At school, she says, everyone tells her she's ugly. At home, her mother, Gloriana, who ➤➤➤➤

suffers from osteoarthritis, relies on her to look after her and her four-year old brother, William. Bertrina wants to be able to read a chapter of her book without being disturbed. She has big sad eyes that say: "It's all too much." All of the young carers here have the same look. Grant Fulker, 14, who looks after a disabled brother and sister, and his nan, says that support at school has stopped him going "round the bend". Bertrina and Rebecca Holding, 15, whose brother has autism and ADHD agree that their school has a long way to go. "Tell you what," says Rebecca to Bertrina, in a brilliant piece of networking, "let's go see your head of year together...". The paint isn't yet dry on the walls here, and already there's progress.

Social isolation is one of the biggest problems for young carers. Too many schools still aren't aware of the issues – children who carry a heavy burden at home are poor timekeepers, they get their homework in late, or not at all, and often miss school altogether to help at home. Of the money you donated, £39,000 will be spent on developing an education pack for the UK, advertising it and circulating it round 5,000 schools. Around 20 schools will also be provided with £1,000 grants to identify and support more young carers; £68,000 will be divided between maintaining and developing The Princess Royal Trust for Carers online support service, which targets children who cannot or do not have the confidence to attend local projects. Another £8,000 will be spent on research to identify ways of finding and supporting very vulnerable young carers who slip through the net.

Sainsbury's donated hampers and gift vouchers worth £171,600, while reader donations totalling £15,000 were sent straight to East Ayrshire Carers' Centre; its manager, Jane Smith, had e-mails from people all over the country. "Oh, it was a wonderful feeling. Everyone was really happy. A lady from London called to ask how many children would be at the Christmas party and she sent £400 for toys. When we gave out the presents I was able to say to the children: 'Someone who really cares about you wanted you to have that.'" On Christmas Eve, Jane spent £50 on food for one family, "all the nice things, all the treats", parcelled it all up with a teddy bear, toys and – because I know they didn't have any furniture" – a glass coffee table that someone had brought into the office. "The mum didn't have anything for Christmas. She burst into tears when she saw me."

Double glazing worth £25,000 was donated for the house in Dalmellington – an ambitious redevelopment project, to extend services to poor isolated rural areas in the Doon Valley – another company promised building materials and a local counsellor pledged his wages for the year to pay for the work. Jane is working out a business plan to turn it into a training centre for young carers, 50% of whom don't attend school full time and leave with no qualifications; 30% are sleep-deprived and another 30% self-harm.

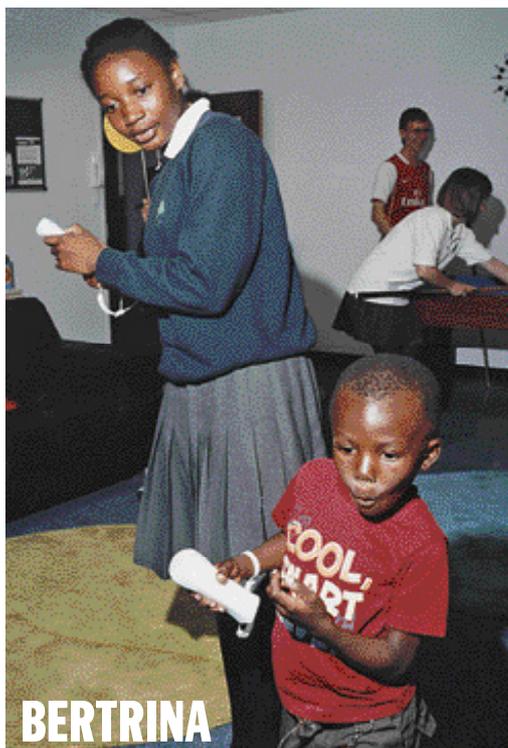
Five young carers – Natalie Sharp, Vicky Butcher, Sarah Borelli, Matthew McBride and Susanne Murray – were chosen to go on a once-



## SUTTON YOUNG CARERS

From left: Lewis and Jack Young, 13 and 11; Rebecca Holding, 15; Grant Fulker, 14; Ryan Skinner, 12; and Bertrina Andrew, 12

**'A lady phoned to ask how many children were going to be at the Christmas party and she sent £400 for toys'**



## BERTRINA

Bertrina, 12, with her four-year-old brother, William. Bertrina looks after her mother, Gloriana, who is in constant pain from osteoarthritis

in-a-lifetime trip to Brunei. For weeks, they were in training in the Borders, walking 16 miles in the rain, their rucksacks filled with rocks. Their walking boots, inoculations, passports and suntan lotion – even their packed lunches – were all paid for by you.

Of the money you donated, £125,000 will be spent on activities like Outward Bound breaks, confidence-building getaways where children have a chance to spread their wings. It's impossible to overestimate how important these trips are. They give children a chance to look beyond their everyday lives. Jane recently took a group of children to the Scottish Highlands. One of them said that her gran would be getting her mosquito repellent for her birthday. "We've got money from Sunday Times readers," said Jane. "We'll be getting that for you." She says it was "blissful" just to have that bit of extra cash. Two sisters of eight and nine whose parents have mental-health problems came with a bag containing one pair of pants each, one pair of socks, and a pair of trousers with a broken zip. Jane was able to go out and buy "nice wee outfits" for them both.

I had an idea to bring some of the most deprived children down to London and take them to the theatre. When I asked The Really Useful Group for tickets, they said: "How many do you need? And would you like to go backstage as well?" Hilton Hotels gave us rooms at the Waldorf as part of their First Theatre Memories programme, then, just as everything came together, the cost of the flights went through the roof and we had to postpone. But Jane, a woman not much given to vacillation, said: "Caroline, if I can get a bunch of young carers to the jungles of Borneo, I think we can get them to London." And we will. And when we do, the ice creams are going to be on you, the readers. Thank you ■  
The Princess Royal Trust for Carers. Contact: 0844 800 4361; [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org) or [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)