

## **73% of Young Carers surveyed began caring from the age of nine**

### ***New research on Young Carers launched at Carers Conference***

DRAFT [7<sup>th</sup> May 2010] Seventy three per cent of Young Carers surveyed began caring from the age of nine, finds new research launched at the 'Under the Radar – A Focus on Young Carers' conference hosted by The Carers Association in Croke Park today. Opened by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Barry Andrews TD, the conference also heard of support policies for Young Carers in place in the UK and Scotland and a presentation from Young Carer, Conor Hughes.

"There is a serious lack of awareness around young carers and the unique issues they face in providing varying levels of care usually to parents or siblings in their childhood" says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association. "We are hosting today's conference, not only to launch new research into the experience of young carers in Ireland, but also to look to the UK and Scotland, the supports they have in place there and explore what Government can implement here in Ireland to support our young carers."

The research, titled Study on Young Carers in the Irish Population, was undertaken by the Child and Family Research Centre of NUI, Galway and commissioned by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Key findings presented today by Dr. Allyn Fives of NUI Galway, included;

- 73% of young carers surveyed began caring before the age of nine
- 34% of Young Carers researched are primary carers
- 61% provide "intimate" care, including bathing
- The report also found that Young Carers are forced into premature adult roles which has developmental implications

"With no supports currently in place for young carers, we are asking Government to implement cost-effective measures to help them in their caring role such as a dedicated young carers web-site with information and forums" says Enda Egan.

The conference heard from young carer, Conor Hughes (18) from Balbriggan who helps his mum, Angela, provide care for his two siblings. His sister Christina (15) had a stroke in 2005 leaving her wheelchair-bound and partially paralysed. Conor also helps care for his brother Odhran (4) who is autistic and has Aspergers Syndrome.

Conor highlighted the difficulties he faces as a young carer, such as missing school during the year which he felt placed him at an educational disadvantage, a lack of sleep, and his social life suffering, to the point where he had to give up playing sports as it clashed with hospital appointments.

Guest speaker Professor Saul Becker from the University of Nottingham spoke of the legal framework and policy context for young carers in the UK and the introduction of the National Carers Strategy in 2008 and its immense importance.

For more see [www.carersireland.com](http://www.carersireland.com).

**ENDS**

For further information or to arrange interviews, please contact:

Mary Tallent, Purcell Masterson on 056- 7723211/ 085 8018946  
[mary@purcellmasterson.com](mailto:mary@purcellmasterson.com)

Catherine Cox, Communications Manager of The Carers Association on 086-8521611

**Editorial Note:**

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'Study on Young Carers in the Irish Population' available from [www.carersireland.com](http://www.carersireland.com). Figures provided based on research sample of 26 young carers.

Conor Hughes speech available on request