



# CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE

15 December 2020

## CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE RAISES £90,000 FOR 'YOUNG CARERS CONNECT'

### **300 West Sussex young carers will be provided with vital IT equipment and a programme of arts activities**

Chichester Festival Theatre's fundraising appeal to raise £91,000 to reconnect West Sussex young carers with support, education and the arts has achieved its target in just three months. Laptops are now being distributed to young caregivers throughout the county in partnership with schools and West Sussex Young Carers Service.

There are an estimated 6,000 young caregivers in the county under the age of 18 who take on substantial responsibilities, providing vital care and support to their loved ones when they are themselves just children and teenagers.

Due to COVID-19, many remain confined to their homes as they continue to care for vulnerable family members; they have been unable to access the help and support they rely on, simply because they do not own, or are unable to afford a computer or internet access.

**Andrew Strong**, Headteacher of **Portfield Primary Academy**, Chichester, which has received 12 laptops for pupils who are Young Carers, says: *'Now (due to Covid restrictions) more than ever have we realised the importance of staying connected. Many of our children do not have access to a device of their own. We cannot thank Chichester Festival Theatre and all of their kind donors enough for this amazing offer. 12 of our families will be able to access online learning at home. They will be able to complete all of their homework. Being part of the Young Carers Connect project will also enable them to take part in virtual creative activities with CFT. Most of all they will connect with other young like-minded people. What an amazing project.'*

Young Carers Connect will:

- Provide 300 young carers with suitable IT equipment and resources, training and ongoing support to help them become digitally literate and safe
- Deliver a vibrant programme of online arts activities to educate, entertain and inspire – allowing young carers to express their creativity and experience moments of joy
- Enable young carers to connect with each other and build friendships in a safe environment
- Signpost young carers in crisis to the support they need

**Dale Rooks**, Director of Learning, Education and Participation at Chichester Festival Theatre, says: *'We are thrilled and incredibly grateful to everyone who has responded so swiftly and generously to this appeal. Their support will enable 300 young carers in West Sussex to receive the provision, skills and support they need to become significantly more independent, resilient and inspired.'*

*'We have now begun to distribute laptops – which have been specially configured thanks to local IT support specialist Protozoon – to the young carers, who been nominated by their schools and the Young Carers Service. We will be monitoring this pilot project over the next year with a view to extending it in the future.'*

Young Carers Connect is supported by **The G D Charitable Trust** and the **Noël Coward Foundation**.

To read more about the project, please visit [www.cft.org.uk/young-carers-connect](http://www.cft.org.uk/young-carers-connect)

*For further press information or photos, please contact Lucinda Morrison on [lucinda.morrison@cft.org.uk](mailto:lucinda.morrison@cft.org.uk)*