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Commonwealth Young Carer Champion – Oritsé Williams - highlights need to respond to the voices of young carers on Commonwealth Day – 13 March 2023

“Thousands of children and young people around the Commonwealth help look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol addiction”, said [Commonwealth Young Carer Champion](#) and JLS star [Oritsé Williams](#), speaking on the eve of Commonwealth Day 2023.

Some of these are children as young as four or five years old – and I was one of them. I want to ensure that, on Commonwealth Day 2023, the voices of these children are heard”, Oritsé continued.



Oritsé highlighting young carers at Commonwealth HQ Marlborough House on 30 January 2023.

In his new role as Commonwealth Young Carer Champion, working with the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW), Oritsé will be attending the [Commonwealth Day Service](#) at Westminster Abbey on Monday 13th March as a guest of COSW and in the presence of King Charles III, Head of the Commonwealth.

As a teenager, Oritsé was a young carer for his mother, Sonia Williams, who has Multiple Sclerosis. She will also be attending as a guest of COSW, supported by Temisan Williams, Oritsé’s brother and successful Arsenal Youth Team coach.

Also attending will be Jenny Frank (international authority on young carers), David N Jones (COSW Board member) and Rachel Jones with support from the Noel and Thea Jones Fund.

COSW, working with staff from The Children’s Society and associations and organisations in several countries, supported by the Noel & Thea Jones Fund, has been supporting young carer programmes for almost 20 years and over the past three years sponsored a consultation with young people in Australia, Canada, England, India, Kenya, New Zealand, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda to develop a Commonwealth Charter.

The draft [Commonwealth Young Carer Charter](#) was launched at the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda. It is hoped that the Charter will get formal Commonwealth recognition before the 2024 CHOGM.

‘Young carers deserve and demand a voice in the Commonwealth and that their particular needs and circumstances are recognised’, said David N Jones, COSW Main Representative to the Commonwealth institutions. Oritsé added: “young carers provide an amazing community service, often unseen and at personal cost. But they also develop skills and personal resilience. Heads of Government need to listen and respond!”

ENDS

NOTE TO EDITORS

Oritsé Williams, musician, poet and founding member of the JLS Band, presented a BBC World Service programme on young carers in January (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct4m2h>). The Band has just announced a nationwide tour of 20 stadium venues (<https://www.jlsofficial.com>).

PRESS RELEASE



COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is supported by social work associations in the Commonwealth. It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers. This statement can be found on the COSW website www.cosw.info/news

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