

2019 Sit-up Award Won by 'Who Cares'

The 2019 SIT-UP Award has been awarded to LUNG and The Lowry in partnership with Gaddum for its production Who Cares currently moving audiences at Summerhall as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

'Who Cares' is a gripping verbatim theatre production based on a year of interviews that offers a rare insight into the lives of young carers from Salford. The play aims to help

identify 'hidden' young carers in society and signpost them to support available through local young carers services.

Helen Monks Co-Artistic Director of LUNG said 'We are delighted to have received the Sit-Up Award for Who Cares. In the UK, 1 in 12 young people care for someone. The youngest registered young carer in Salford at the moment is 4. But the local support for these young people across England varies drastically and can sometimes be almost non-existent. We believe they deserve more '

Matt Woodhead-Co-Artistic Director of LUNG added: 'None of this would have been possible without the 4 young carers and their families who so bravely shared their stories for this verbatim play, supported by Salford Young Carers Service (Gaddum). Thanks to The Sit Up Award, their message can now be spread far and wide: if you are a young carer, you are not on your own.'

The SIT-UP Awards were set up to encourage productions which had a social message to engage further with their audiences whether that be to change their attitudes and behaviours, to

support related charities and initiatives or because they were directly affected by the issue presented.

The £5,000 Award will be used to further the petition started by the company to improve the rights of young carers and to extend the reach of the message into schools. The SIT-UP Awards felt that Who Cares had made a concerted effort before and during their run to extend the impact of their message beyond the final curtain and had developed coherent and realistic plans of how to take it forward after the run.

Over the last three weeks, the SIT-UP judges attended a number of shows and also engaged audiences in voting about their immediate reactions to the topics raised. It started with an analysis of all the theatre shows (1,032) at the Fringe this year, this led to a long list of 390 (38%) plays covering social issues with themes ranging from racism to mental health, sexual harassment to domestic violence. The long listed productions were encouraged to apply for the award, giving the judges a list for consideration of 163. For the second year running, mental health was the predominant topic.



'Who Cares' waiting room scene ©The Other Richard

Theatre has the power to communicate directly to audiences in a unique way; to talk about topics that deeply affect audience members and to change the attitudes of its audiences. Seeing so many of these productions, the SIT-UP team were largely disappointed by how little follow-up was provided to audiences. Whilst some productions make a real effort to give audiences a call to action that they can take away and follow up, or details of support organisations they can turn to, the team felt that too many still just say 'thanks for coming, please tell your friends'. The SIT-UP team will also be trying to work with other companies who could benefit from additional support.

David Graham, founder of SIT-UP said: "Theatre can change attitudes. The aim of giving this prize is to enable a production to have wider social impact beyond the Edinburgh Fringe".

Robert Iles, co-founder of UK Theatre Web and SIT-UP Team

Member added: "I find it amazing that so many productions still do not provide follow-up and support details to their audiences. When audiences can be left wanting to help but not knowing how, or deeply upset and not knowing where to turn for support, we are fundamentally failing them, and the issue".

'Who Cares' was written by Matt Woodhead, LUNG and co-produced by The Lowry in partnership with Gaddum. It was made in partnership with Greater Manchester Charity, Gaddum and its Salford Carers Service and is funded by Arts Council England and the Oglesby Charitable Trust.