

Magical Edinburgh – young carers create exhibition of amazing illusions

Magical images created by young carers are on show in a special free-to-see exhibition of photographic illusions as part of Edinburgh's 15th annual MagicFest.

It's a journey of discovery where popular stories and the mysterious side of Edinburgh's history are mixed with the magic of young imaginations.

Magical Edinburgh, is also part of the Edinburgh 900 celebrations, which marks the city's 900th birthday.

The exhibition is a collaboration between partners including Edinburgh International Magic Festival (MagicFest), the Edinburgh Young Carers charity and illusion expert Professor Richard Wiseman.

Pictures include one inspired by the great Scottish writer JM Barrie's *Peter Pan* – with young people in costume as Peter and the Darling children taking off from a wall at Edinburgh Castle.

Others have the young carers (aged eight to 15) as spell-casting witches, some flying on broomsticks and yet others are inspired by Harry Potter. Then there are fabulous images using mirrors and other trickery to make the seemingly impossible possible.

Iona (aged 10), said: "My favourite part of the photoshoot was when I got to wear the Wendy dress and I got to fly when we did the optical illusion of Peter Pan."

Svetlana McMahon, MagicFest Creative Director and Producer, said: "We love working with young people, they are so creative."

"We teamed them up with top magic-makers, including Richard Wiseman, who works with the world's most famous magicians, to let their imaginations run wild – and create a fabulous exhibition of photographic illusions."

"Many of the pictures are inspired by stories and the magical history of Edinburgh and Scotland, but ultimately it was about letting these remarkable young people show just how talented they are."

The project involved a great deal of expertise, including special photography, costumes, props and make-up.

Locations included Edinburgh Castle, The Festival Theatre (courtesy of Capital Theatres), the Camera Obscura and The Hub (courtesy of Edinburgh International Festival).

The exhibition is at the Scottish Storytelling Centre until 26 January. Visitors are invited to figure out how each illusion was created – and there is a video taking them behind the scenes. In the video some of the 17 young people involved talk about the loved-ones they care for – including brothers, sisters and parents.

Lennon, aged 11, helps look after his mum and brother, who has autism. He said: "I talk to him and play with him so he stays calm. And with my Mum, every time she doesn't feel well I make sure to get her the stuff she needs."

Being involved with Edinburgh Young Carers allows the young people to meet friends, take part in activities and have fun

in a friendly, supportive environment.

Gary Shaw, Edinburgh Young Carers Youth Development Worker, said: "Most of the young people who participated in the project are caring for siblings and parents.

"They often do many tasks at home normally done by an adult. They often help with cooking, cleaning, getting siblings ready for school, helping parents get dressed or undressed, making sure they have had their medication, and keeping the cared for person company – but always putting the needs of the cared for person before their own.

"Young carers often don't have a lot of time to do activities for themselves, so the project with MagicFest was all about them, they were the stars of the show.

"Projects like this help us create long-lasting memories the young carers will cherish and sometimes they can open up a new avenue of interest for that young person.

"A lot of our families struggle financially and are unable to visit tourist attractions, so the visiting the Camera Obscura and having a behind-the-scenes tour of the Festival Theatre was just brilliant."

The exhibition is also supported by the National Lottery Community Fund, the Edinburgh 900 Civic Fund, The University of Hertfordshire and Kiran's Trust.

Kate Still, The National Lottery Community Fund Scotland Chair, said: "*National Lottery players can take pride in knowing that their contributions have helped people across Scotland lead more fulfilling and connected lives.*"

Photoshoot partners included Camera Obscura & World of Illusions, the Edinburgh International Festival and Capital Theatres.

The main run of MagicFest events and activities is 17-30

December. There will be spectacular performances at venues across the city including shows with Edinburgh's own international star Kevin Quantum.

- Tickets here magicfest.co.uk

