

UK Youth Voice member **Jack Rivers** looks back on his day as Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families!....part of the 11 Million Take-Over Day 2009.

# Jack takes over!

**O**n November 11, I took over from Ed Balls, as Secretary of State for Children Schools and Families. After my visit to the Labour Party Conference (covered in last month's edition of the Source) I contacted Ed Balls and asked for the chance to follow what he does on a day-to-day basis – and I was very pleasantly surprised by the offer that came back!

## A full day

I worked in the Department for Children Schools and Families for the whole day and was able to go to all of Ed Balls' meetings, including those with other Ministers and a group of agony aunts from national publications.

He/we also carried out newspaper interviews and went to a meeting of the National Council for Educational Excellence, followed by a meeting with Secretary of State for Health, Andy Burnham, over at the Department for Health.

Later in the day I was shocked and excited to be able to enter Downing Street, alongside Ed Balls, for a meeting involving senior ministers and the Prime Minister! Being in a meeting at number 10 was a fantastic opportunity, as the setting was extremely smart, with grand cabinet rooms and staff running all over the place!

The day didn't end until 11pm, as I was invited to attend the 'Music for Youth – Last Night of the Proms' at the Royal Albert Hall. The work of Music for Youth was truly inspiring. This aspect of young people should be much more widely promoted, as it would help to combat the negative perceptions of young people so often shown in the media.

## Looking back

Taking over Ed's position for the day was fantastic. I am lucky, as – partly through my involvement with UK Youth Voice – my involvement in the political arena has



## About Takeover Day

Takeover Day is the initiative of 11 Million – formerly known as the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

11 Million Takeover Day creates opportunities for children and young people across the country to work alongside adults and to get involved in decision-making in a diverse range of organisations. The idea is for young people to gain an understanding of how organisations work – and for organisations to recognise the potential and abilities of young people.

This year's event was held on November 6.

grown rapidly over the last year. I wish more young people could be given opportunities such as this.

On the day, I saw first-hand just how much work there is to the job as a Minister and especially as a Secretary of State. It's not just 9-5, as I had previously thought. The job is pretty much 24/7 – and lunch times are simply non-existent!

**Jack Rivers (16)** is a member of UK Youth Voice, the youth-led voice of UK Youth.

**UK Youth Voice members are elected at their annual youth conference held in June.**

**contact** ▶ Claire Dever for more on joining UK Youth Voice.