

## MEDIA RELEASE

**For immediate release**

**13 April 2014**

### **Fostered children and young people hit the right note**

More than 120 looked after children and young people joined the Fostering Network Northern Ireland and Belfast Trust Fostering Service in taking part in the annual Fostering Achievement Awards in Belfast at the weekend.

The Awards, held at the city's Titanic Building on Saturday 12 April, recognise the achievements of children and young people who are in foster care and cover a variety of areas including academic, social and sporting successes.

15 year old Callum Kernohan who has lived with his foster carer for the past three years received an award for endeavour. He says,

*"Two years ago I became interested in playing guitar and began to teach myself with the help of YouTube. When your home life is unstable it is not easy to achieve your goals – musical, sporting, studies, whatever. You can feel like you have no one on your side, you have no anchor. But it is one hundred percent true that with the support of foster carers who are always there for you, you can be who you want to be".*

Margaret Kelly, director of the Fostering Network Northern Ireland said:

*"These annual awards are an opportunity to celebrate the fostered children and young people who fill our city with so much pride. Their achievements are a reflection on the positive environment provided by their foster carers, fostering service and the wider community, and it shows real determination and drive on their own part.*

*"As a charity we are aspirational for all fostered children, and those at the awards humbled us in showing what can be achieved. I couldn't be prouder to be part of fostering in Northern Ireland."•*

Colette Quinn, Senior Social Worker Belfast Trust Fostering Service, who coordinated the ceremony said:

*"The Fostering Achievement Awards have gone from strength to strength and this year more than 120 children received awards. We are very proud of all*

*the children and their achievements. For some this has included basic things such as learning English as a first language, attending school every day, doing well in exams to learning a new life skill like swimming or dance.*

She added,

*“Belfast Trust also wishes to acknowledge publicly the wonderful job foster carers do in giving children and young people the secure homes they need to develop their potential.*

*We greatly value the contribution and efforts foster carers make to the lives of children and young people and the Trust is extremely proud of the service it offers to all foster carers and their families.”*

Callum’s foster carer, Julie, is justly proud of his achievements.

*“Callum was 13 when he came to stay with our family. His own home life had broken down and he was struggling with attendance and basic things such as getting his homework done. One of the most important things we have been able to provide him with is a stable home life and he has thrived.”*

If you are interested in fostering for Belfast HSC Trust or would like to find out more please contact 028 9504 0057 or visit [www.adoptionandfostering.hscni.net](http://www.adoptionandfostering.hscni.net). If you live outside of the Belfast area you can contact the Regional Adoption and Fostering Service on 0800 0720 137 who will put you in touch with your local Health and Social Care Trust fostering service. You can find out more about fostering by visiting [couldyoufoster.org.uk](http://couldyoufoster.org.uk).

**WORDS 555**

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**Notes to Editor**

**If you would like to interview a foster carer or a young person who has lived in foster care please contact:**

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If you would like to interview Margaret Kelly, director of the Fostering Network Northern Ireland, please contact: [Dominic.stevenson@fostering.net](mailto:Dominic.stevenson@fostering.net)

- Foster homes are needed for children of all ages who are unable to live with their own families. This may be the result of family breakdown, relationship difficulties, neglect, abuse or parental ill health. Belfast Trust has statutory responsibility for all looked after children in the Belfast Trust area.
- Fostering Achievement is an innovative project specific to Northern Ireland that offers practical and financial support to foster families. It recognises the crucial role that foster carers play in encouraging and supporting children and young people in foster care, to gain a sense of achievement and to reach their potential
- Only 20% of children in care achieve 5 GCSEs at A\* to C compared with 75% of the general school population (visit [http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/children\\_in\\_care\\_northern\\_ireland\\_201011.pdf](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/children_in_care_northern_ireland_201011.pdf) for more)
- In any one day there are approximately 1,920 children and young people living with HSC foster carers across NI (March 2012).
- The five HSC Trusts are the statutory bodies with responsibility for the welfare of all children in care in Northern Ireland.
- People may apply to foster irrespective of race, religion, language, culture, gender, disability, age or sexual orientation
- Visit **[www.adoptionandfostering.hscni.net](http://www.adoptionandfostering.hscni.net)** to read profiles of existing HSC foster carers and children currently waiting for a foster home. You can also read about young people's experiences in foster care