



Press Release – For Immediate Release 01.02.17

GARETH GATES UNVEILED AS HOST FOR FIFTH SHINE A LIGHT AWARDS

Gareth Gates, singer-songwriter and musical theatre star, has today (1st February 2017) been revealed as the host of the **2017 Shine a Light Awards** that take place in London on 23 March 2017.

The national awards scheme, run by Pearson in partnership with The Communication Trust, celebrates innovative work and excellent practice in supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication development.

Gareth Gates, who rose to fame on Pop Idol, has spoken publicly about living with a stutter and the impact on life chances. In 2011 Gareth planned and filmed a documentary, *'Stop my Stutter'*, where he taught young people who had stammered since childhood how to use the McGuire Technique after qualifying as a speech coach and course instructor.

Pearson and The Communication Trust, a coalition of over 50 organisations dedicated to supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication, are seeking to recognise the incredible contributions of teams, settings and individuals across England as well as the inspirational journeys of young people living with severe and complex speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

Gareth Gates says: "It is a complete honour to host these awards and I can't wait to meet those involved in March. Too often people take speaking for granted but for many being able to communicate and converse is an everyday struggle. In the past I have found my stutter crippling, affecting my confidence greatly, but I have learnt ways to manage my difficulties with the support of others.

"The fantastic work of individuals and teams that help children and young people communicate can go unnoticed but what they achieve represents a lifeline to many. I am very much looking forward to hosting the Awards and know it will be a humbling experience."

The Shine a Light Awards features a 28-strong judging panel including leading individuals in the speech, language and communication sector as well as previous Award winners from across England. Francesca Martinez - international comedian, writer and speaker who has mild cerebral palsy – has also joined the judging panel.

Francesca Martinez says: "Not everyone finds communicating easy, it can be a tough struggle for children, young people and adults alike. The pressure to be 'normal' can be immense, but what does normal mean? I have cerebral palsy, something I prefer to reference as 'wobbly' but that doesn't stop me from performing whether that be acting, stand-up comedy or appearing on a panel show.

"With support, I attended a mainstream school and I have managed to achieve things beyond my wildest dreams. I am delighted to be joining a stellar judging panel for the 2017 Shine a Light Awards. It is so important to recognise the achievements of those with speech and language difficulties and the families, individuals, team and settings that support them."

The Shine a Light Awards features 10 categories including Primary and Secondary School of the Year, Special Educational Needs (SEN) School of the Year (a new category for 2017), Young Person of the Year and the Communication Champion Award.

Chris Hall, Director of Clinical Assessment at Pearson, says: “We are delighted that both Gareth Gates and Francesca Martinez are part of the 2017 Shine a Light Awards. Both Gareth and Francesca face their own hurdles when it comes to communication and represent inspirational role models of what can be achieved through determination, hard work and support.

“It is vital that we raise awareness of the amazing work that is taking place up and down the country. With such dedication and high spirits, individuals, teams and settings are making a real difference to children and young people giving them the confidence and skills to achieve great things against the odds.”

For further information about the Shine a Light Awards visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk or follow on Twitter #awardsSAL

-Ends-

For more information please contact Laura Smith and Lisa Church at Consilium Communications by contacting lchurch@consiliumcommunications.co.uk / 07467 945661 or lsmith@consiliumcommunications.co.uk / 07467 945848.

Notes to editors

About the Shine a Light Awards

- The Shine a Light Awards are sponsored and organised by Pearson in partnership with The Communication Trust, a coalition of over 50 organisations dedicated to supporting children and young people's speech, language and communication.
- The Awards are designed to promote and celebrate good practice in speech, language and communication for individuals, groups and settings that work with children and young people, particularly those with SLCN.
- The awards form part of the legacy of the National Year of Communication (*Hello* campaign) and have become a key event in the speech, language and communication community's calendar.
- The award categories for 2017 are Early Years Setting of the Year Award, Primary School of the Year Award, Secondary School or College of the Year Award, The Communication Commitment School of the Year Award, SEN School or Group of the Year Award (new category), Young Person of the Year Award, SLCN Innovation Award, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Award, Community Champion Award and Commitment School of the Year Award.
- The full list of judges involved in the 2017 Shine a Light Awards include Octavia Holland, Director of The Communication Trust; Nicola Holmes, Lead Professional Advisor of The Communication Trust; Rosie Alouat, Project Support Officer at The Communication Trust; Emma Hickley, Head of Operations at The Communication Trust; Christopher Hall, Director of Clinical Assessment at Pearson; Lesley Munro, Education & Speech and Language Therapy Manager at Pearson; Peter Sutcliffe, Editor of SEN Magazine; Hilary Berry, Chair of Cheshire West and Chester Primary Heads' Association; Anna Reeves, Manager of ACE Centre; Malcolm Reeve, Executive Director for SEND & Inclusion at Academies Enterprise Trust; Joy Rutter, Local Champion; Bob Reitemeier, CEO of I CAN; Janet Cooper, Early Language and Communication Strategy Lead at Stoke on Trent City Council and Past Shine a Light Award winner; Helen Fiddler, Interim Strategic Lead and Programme Manager at ESCAL; Zoë Peden, Co-founder of Insane Logic; Julie Steele, Speech and Language HLTA and Local Champion; Norbert Lieckfeldt, Chief Executive of British Stammering Association; Clare O'Rourke, Specialist Speech, Language and Communication Teacher at Peacehaven Community School and past winner; John Parrott, Chair of Communication Consortium at NAPLIC; Jonathan Douglas, Director of National Literacy Trust; Wendy Lee, Speech & Language Solutions; Shane Dangar, Communication Champion 2013/14; Jane Comeau, Chair at PACEY; Jill Duffy, SVP at UK Schools; Bev Crisp, Family Outreach Worker at Whitby and the Moors and Communication Champion 2015; Kamini Gadhok, MBE - CEO of Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT); Jonathan Middleditch, Young Person of the Year 2015; Francesca Martinez.
- For further information, visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk.

About Pearson

- Pearson is the world's leading learning company, with 40,000 employees in more than 70 countries working to help people of all ages to make measurable progress in their lives through learning.
- Pearson is the world's largest commercial developer and distributor of educational assessments and psychological testing materials with over 90 years history of commitment to researching and developing products to a reliable high standard.
- Pearson is dedicated to the pursuit of professional excellence, leadership, and growth through acquisition, development, publication, and the maintenance of quality assessment tools in order to anticipate and meet the needs of its customers.
- Pearson have sponsored the Shine a Light Awards since their launch in 2011, as part of the *Hello* campaign (National Year of Communication).
- For more information, visit www.pearsonclinical.co.uk or follow @PsychCorpUK #awardsSAL

About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a coalition of over 50 leading voluntary sector organisations, which raises awareness, influences policy, promotes best practice among the children's workforce and commissions work from its members.
- The Trust's mission is to ensure that every child and young person is supported to communicate to the very best of their ability.
- The Trust works towards its mission by working in partnership to build, skills, knowledge and confidence in the children's workforce, based on a foundation of good practice, robust evidence and effective policy and legislation.
- For more information about the Trust visit www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk or follow @Comm_nTrust #awardsSAL.