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INSPIRATIONAL 14-YEAR-OLD FROM LONDON HIGHLY COMMENDED FOR HIS COURAGOUS COMMUNICATION AT SHINE A LIGHT AWARDS

James Curtis, aged 14 from West Hampstead, has been highly commended for the *Young Person of the Year Award* at a glittering awards ceremony in London, hosted by comedian David Baddiel, for his courage and determination to communicate and achieve incredible heights despite being born profoundly deaf.

The **2015 Shine a Light Awards** are a national awards scheme organised by Pearson, in partnership with The Communication Trust, to celebrate innovative work, inspirational individuals and excellent practice in supporting children and young people's communication development.

James Curtis is an inspirational advocate for deaf children and young people. He was born with a profound bilateral hearing loss, which was diagnosed when he was eight months old. He began wearing hearing aids a month later and went on to have two separate operations for cochlear implants. After three years of auditory verbal therapy as a young child, James listens and speaks on a par with his hearing peers and excels at mainstream school.

James bravely shares his personal experience of deafness to educate young people and adults. He became Auditory Verbal UK's first young ambassador and has confidently supported the charity in raising awareness about deafness. James continues to demonstrate that he has no barriers to what he can accomplish – he is part of a rowing team, enjoys skiing and has made a video blog that has inspired parents who have recently found out their child is deaf.

James Curtis said: "I am so honoured to be highly commended for the Young Person of the Year Award at the 2015 Shine a Light Awards. It would be easy for me to take for granted that I am able to communicate with everyone I meet, as I was very young when I had my cochlear implants and learnt to listen with the help of Auditory Verbal UK (AVUK). But it was a great deal of commitment and work of family and teachers at AVUK that helped me, and I was incredibly fortunate for that. I therefore want to thank them for all their assistance.

"Having the ability to fully communicate with the world around me has enabled me to achieve so much and I am now in an amazing position to show others what is possible and help them listen and speak just like me, and plan to carry on advocating the importance of AV therapy for deaf children everywhere. Thank you."

David Baddiel, Host of the 2015 Shine a Light Awards, said: “Because of the important work that the Shine a Light 2015 winners and highly commended finalists have achieved, children and young people’s language and communication development, especially for those with SLCN, has been supported.

“Speech and language problems too often go under the radar, so everyone should not only be congratulated for their work but for bringing this important issue to the attention of others. I would like to say well done to all those shortlisted who have shown true grit and determination to better themselves and others. They are all a true inspiration - keep up the good work.”

Chris Hall, Director of Clinical Assessment at Pearson says: “Congratulations to James for being highly commended for the *Young Person of the Year Award* at the 2015 Shine a Light Awards for his remarkable achievements. Each year the applications get stronger and more inspiring. We have seen examples of children and young people with SLCN like James achieving far beyond what professionals could have imagined thanks to true grit and determination.

“The Shine a Light Awards, now in their fourth year, continue to grow and we have been delighted to welcome an incredible judging panel who represent the very best of the education and special educational needs (SEN) sector. To once again partner with the Communication Trust and celebrate these inspiring people and organisations is a real privilege.”

Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust, says: “Congratulations to the winners and highly commended finalists whose work will help inspire and motivate people right across the country. James is a wonderful example of this inspiration in practice and he has shown what can be achieved with persistence and support from skilled professionals and a courageous spirit. We’re delighted to have this partnership with Pearson, which allows Shine a Light to be a true celebration of the amazing work up and down the country and for helping the Trust to reach more children and young people and the professionals who work with them.

“The Shine a Light Awards are a key fixture for the speech and language sector as they reflect a range of best practice and innovative work taking place across the country. At a time when early years, health, education and SEN services are going through significant reforms, Shine a Light focuses attention on what can be achieved through expertise, sheer determination and never giving up on children and young people’s potential.”

The Shine a Light awards are designed to honour individuals, teams, campaigns, communication-friendly settings and communities that have excelled in their support of children and young people’s communication, particularly for those with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN).

The full list of winners and highly commended finalists include:

	Winner/s	Highly Commended	Highly Commended
Pearson Outstanding Achievement Award Early Years Setting of the Year Award	Lord David Ramsbotham GCB CBE	N/A	N/A
	Robert Mellors Primary and Nursery School Foundation Unit, Nottingham	Bambini Childcare Ltd, Bedworth, Warwickshire	N/A

Primary School of the Year	Aerodrome Primary Academy, Croydon	John Ruskin Language Unit, John Ruskin Primary School, Southwark, London	Lark Hall Primary School, Clapham, London
Secondary School/ College of the Year Award	Hampstead School, London	St Marylebone CE Bridge School, Westminster, London	Peacehaven Community School, Peacehaven, East Sussex
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Award	Woodlands School, Leatherhead, Surrey	N/A	N/A
Community Friendly Award	Talk About Team, Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust, Norwich, Norfolk	N/A	N/A
SLCN Innovation Award	I CAN's Talk About Talk programme, London	County Durham Youth Offending Service, Durham	Talk About Team, Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust, Norwich, Norfolk
Communication Champion Award	Bev Crisp, Whitby & Moors Children Centre, North Yorkshire	Cordula Hastings, Charles Warren Academy, Milton Keynes	
Young Person of the Year	Jonathan Middleditch, Moor House School and College (Suffolk)	James Curtis, London – AVUK	
Communication Commitment School of the Year Award	Holy Trinity Primary School, Halifax, Yorkshire	Longmoor Community Primary School, Liverpool	Fonthill Primary, Bristol

For further information about the Shine a Light winners and highly commended finalists, visit www.shinealightawards.co.uk and follow us on Twitter #SAL2015.

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For further Information

For more information, or to arrange interviews, 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.
- Nearly 80 applications were received with 10 winners and 11 highly commended finalists picking up coveted awards at a glittering ceremony hosted by comedian, David Baddiel.
- The award categories were Early Years Setting of the Year Award, Primary School of the Year Award, Secondary School/College of the Year Award), Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Award, Community Friendly Award, SLCN Innovation Award, Community Champion Award, Young Person of the Year Award and Communication Commitment School of the Year Award.
- 25 judges were involved in the Shine a Light Awards including Anne Fox, Director of The Communication Trust; Kamini Gadhok, CEO and Derek Munn, Director of Policy and Public Affairs of Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT); Virginia Beardshaw, CEO of I CAN; Norbert Lieckfeldt, Chief Executive of British Stammering Association; Peter Sutcliffe, Editor of SEN Magazine; Jonathan Douglas, Director of National Literacy Trust; Chris Hall, Managing Director at Pearson; Lesley Munro, Education & Speech and Language Therapy Manager at Pearson; Jill Duffy, Managing Director for Schools, Pearson; Hilary Berry, Chair of Cheshire West and Chester Primary Heads' Association; Clare O'Rourke, Specialist Speech, Language and Communication Teacher at Peacehaven Community School and past winner; Michael Beakhouse, Adults & Children's Commissioner at Reading Borough Council and past winner; Shane Dangar, Communication Champion 2013/14; Anna Reeves, Manager of ACE Centre; Malcolm Reeve, Executive Director for SEND & Inclusion at Academies Enterprise Trust; Janet Cooper, Programme Manager of Stoke Speaks Out and Past Shine a Light Award winner; Liz Bayram, Chief Executive of PACEY; Zoë Peden, Co-founder of Insane Logic; Laura Steuart-Fotheringham, Programme Manager for The Communication Trust; Shona Crichton, Professional Advisor for The Communication Trust; Jack Williams, Project Officer for The Communication Trust; Joy Rutter, SEN Governor at Linton Colliery First School; Julie Steele, Specialist Speech and Language HLTA; Helen Fiddler, ESCAL Interim Strategic Lead and Programme Manager at Sheffield City Council; Aidan Baker, Young Person of the Year 2013/14.
- 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 #SAL2015

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 #SAL2015.