



Press Release – IMMEDIATE RELEASE 24.03.17

OUTSTANDING COUNCIL INITIATIVE HONOURED AT SHINE A LIGHT AWARDS FOR ITS COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S COMMUNICATION

Warwickshire County Council's 'Closing the Gap' strategy has been highly commended in the SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs) Innovation of the Year category at an awards ceremony in London for its continued commitment to developing local children's communication skills. The **2017 Shine a Light Awards**, run by Pearson in partnership with The Communication Trust, took place on 23rd March 2017 and were hosted by singer and theatre star Gareth Gates.

The 2017 Shine a Light Awards is a national awards scheme that celebrates innovative work and excellent practice in supporting children and young people's communication development.

Warwickshire County Council's 'Closing The Gap' is an innovative partnership project commissioned by Warwickshire Smart Start and co-delivered by Bedworth Heath Nursery School, improvement officers and 'time to talk'[™] speech and language therapists to enhance Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

'Closing The Gap' aims to address underlying social, emotional and communication difficulties that affect the educational achievements of the most vulnerable children. It offers training in speech, language and communication development, leadership development, child wellbeing and parental engagement in learning, using data to inform practice.

Practitioners have since been able to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and application of strategies that support speech, language and communication, with whole teams of practitioners being able to reflect on their own practice, develop new skills and enable the progression of the children they support.

The children attending the 'Closing the Gap' schools and settings have made great gains in their understanding and use of spoken language, have improved listening and attention skills, have more positive social and emotional skills, and are able to initiate conversation with adults and peers. Practitioners have shown increased insight into their own use of communication strategies and the positive impact that this has on the children they support.

Deborah Powers and Melanie Packer from Warwickshire County Council's 'Closing the Gap' team said: "We're really privileged to receive this recognition. 'Closing the Gap' has shown how much can be achieved for all participants. One of the major benefits is the continued insight and reflections that practitioners are making in support of children's development as a result of the project."

Gareth Gates, host of the 2017 Shine a Light Awards, said: “The dedication of Warwickshire County Council’s ‘Closing the Gap’ team is outstanding. Being able to communicate with confidence is often taken for granted but for many it is an everyday struggle. I have found my stutter crippling at times but I have learnt ways to manage my difficulties with the support of others.

“It is heart-warming to know that children and young people across England are getting the support they need to develop and achieve goals that may not have been possible otherwise. The ‘Closing the Gap’ team should be extremely proud of their award.”

Chris Hall, Director of Clinical Assessment at Pearson, said: “Congratulations to Warwickshire County Council’s ‘Closing the Gap’ team for being highly commended in the SLCN Innovation Award category. Their excellent system leadership, the training available and strong partnerships with local schools and settings provides a great model for others to follow.

“This is the fifth year we have run the Awards and we remain blown away by the standard of applications. They give an amazing insight into the unsung work that is taking place across the country to improve the speech, language and communication skills of children and young people.”

Octavia Holland, Director of The Communication Trust, said: “Congratulations to Warwickshire County Council’s ‘Closing the Gap’ team and everyone who triumphed at the Shine a Light Awards. They have shown what can be achieved when expertise, enthusiasm and dedication is given to children and young people who struggle to communicate. These Awards highlight the very best practice that is taking place in settings across the country. We would like to say a huge thank you to Pearson for their long-standing support.”

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

-Ends-

For further Information

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

Notes to editors

The full list of winners and highly commended finalists is as follows:

	Winner/s	Highly Commended	Highly Commended
Pearson Outstanding Achievement Award	Caspian Jamie	N/A	N/A
Early Years Setting of the Year Award	Bishop Alexander L.E.A.D. Academy, Newark-on-Trent	Willows Centre for Children, Portsmouth	Bright Beginnings Childcare Centre, Leeds
Primary School of the Year Award	Parkdale Primary School, Nottingham	Broom Barns Community Primary School, Stevenage	Hawthorn Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Secondary School/	Tor Bridge High, Plymouth	Hanley Castle High	William Ellis School,

College of the Year Award		School, Worcester	London
SEN School of the Year Award	Ashmount School, Leicester	New Regent's College PRU, Hackney, London	Elm Tree Community Primary School, Lancashire Moor House School and College, Oxon
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Award	Ingfield Manor School, Billingham	Pace, Aylesbury	1Voice – Communicating Together, Coventry
SLCN Innovation Award	Mable Therapy, Leeds Clearcut Communication (part of County Durham Youth Offending Service), Durham	Closing the Gap' - a project within Warwickshire County Council and South Warwickshire Foundation NHS Trust's 'time to talk'™ project, working in partnership with Bedworth Heath Nursery School, Warwickshire	
Communication Champion Award	Ann Shellard, Early Language Consultant, Blackpool	Caspian Jamie, Manchester	Jane Young, Nottingham
Young Person of the Year	Gregor Gilmour, Bury	Charlotte Seth, Yorkshire	Connor O'Neil, Nottingham
Communication Commitment School of the Year Award	Easton CE Academy, Bristol	Knowle DGE Learning Centre, Croydon	Woodmansterne Primary School, Bristol

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 more than 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 judges involved in the 2017 Shine a Light Awards were:
 - Octavia Holland, Director at The Communication Trust
 - Nicola Holmes, Lead Professional Advisor at 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 Shine a Light Award 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 Pearson 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, international comedian, writer and speaker.

About Pearson

- Pearson is the world's learning company, with expertise in educational courseware and assessment, and a range of teaching and learning services powered by technology. Our mission is to help people make progress through access to better learning. We believe that learning opens up opportunities, creating fulfilling careers and better lives. For more, visit www.pearson.com.
- 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 #awards_SAL.

About The Communication Trust

- The Communication Trust is a coalition of more than 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 partnerships 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 #awards_SAL.