

fostering
achievement
supporting foster carers as first educators



learning with laughter...

Annual Report
August 2010

"My child had an issue with heights but after using the climbing frame we received through the scheme she is progressing and now wants to climb higher"

foster carer



"It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves."

Sir Edmund Hilary



foreword

This report presents information on what was delivered and achieved through the Fostering Achievement scheme during the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

It paints a very positive and encouraging picture, clearly illustrating the ongoing success, benefit and popularity of the scheme. It should be noted that the target of providing goods and/or services to 1200 children and young people was met some 4 months ahead of schedule due to the high rate and number of credit enquiries received.

This meant that a number of changes had to be made to safeguard the scheme against any overspend, given the available funding. These included introducing scaled credits, deferring some credits until after 1 April 2010 and postponing a number of planned programmes.

However in spite of the above, children, young people and many of their foster carers, continued to learn, develop new skills and achieve, with measures of laughter thrown in, as a direct result of the Fostering Achievement scheme.

Once again we can say that the scheme did help children and young people in foster care to gain a real sense of achievement and self belief.

"Since its inception Fostering Achievement has played a critical role in profiling the learning and educational needs of children and young people in foster care. Timely access to technology, tutoring and materials, together with opportunities to promote self belief and confidence, is helping address educational outcomes."

Social Worker,
Western Trust



A new experience during a summer scheme

introduction



Fostering Achievement is an exciting, innovative and unique project, with **unique** being the operative word. It is unique because;

- It applies only to Northern Ireland in recognition of the difficulties children and young people in foster care face in terms of achieving comparable levels of social and educational attainment as their peers.
- It recognizes the invaluable role that foster carers play in helping children and young people in their care to develop in a way that maximizes their potential.
- It equips, supports and actively involves foster carers in the decision making process, thus helping them address and resolve issues affecting the children and young people in their care.
- It focuses on identified needs and provides real and speedy provision against these.
- It clearly recognizes that each child, young person and foster carer is unique, based on circumstance, background and requirement and hence provides tailored solutions to meet these.

The scheme works on the premise that although improving success in education and doing well at school is important, it is equally important that children and young people achieve success and recognition in other ways, based on their abilities and interests. As a consequence, children and young people in foster care are able to access to a diverse range of goods and services through Fostering Achievement, to help them;

- make significant progress regarding their education
- develop their natural talents and abilities
- learn and develop new skills
- overcome social disadvantage, and,
- develop self confidence and interpersonal skills

The scheme aims to provide children and young people in foster care with opportunities to challenge themselves and develop by allowing them to do things they would never have attempted without the scheme's help.

Overall, the scheme recognizes that foster carers can make a real difference to the lives of children and young people in their care, especially if they are provided with sufficient and relevant support to address identified needs and help meet their aspirations.



"My computer makes doing homework easier and more fun."

foster child



scheme uptake

The following two tables present information on scheme uptake levels, comparing them against 2008/2009 data. It is clear that although the overall level of uptake was almost identical, the rate of uptake in 2009/2010 was much faster than in the previous year, resulting in scheme enquiry and credit targets being met some four months ahead of schedule.

Number of enquiries received per month

Month	2008/2009	2009/2010
April	33	125
May	25	122
June	41	127
July	120	116
August	46	83
September	77	88
October	146	81
November	87	47
December	62	6
January	60	6
February	65	0
March	40	0

Total	
2008/2009	802
2009/2010	801

Number of credits per month for children & young people

Month	2008/2009	2009/2010
April	45	193
May	31	184
June	61	185
July	183	188
August	68	126
September	132	124
October	218	142
November	142	66
December	88	8
January	97	7
February	106	0
March	53	0

Total	
2008/2009	1224
2009/2010	1223

The following table contrasts the number of enquiries made by Trusts and Independent Organisations over the last two financial years. Although overall numbers equate, it is interesting to note the increase in enquiries from the Belfast and Southern Trusts and the reduction in enquiries from the Northern and South Eastern Trusts in 2009/10.

Enquiries per Trust and Independent

Trust/Independent	2008/2009	2009/2010	Changes
Action for Children	0	2	
Barnardos	26	19	-27%
Belfast Trust	157	175	+11%
Foster Care Associates	26	26	
Kindercare	7	11	+36%
Northern Trust	169	155	-8%
South Eastern Trust	170	132	-22%
Southern Trust	105	138	+31%
Western Trust	142	143	

Total	
2008/2009	802
2009/2010	801

Gender breakdown

Gender	2008/2009	2009/2010	*LAC NI 2009
Male	51%	52%	53%
Female	49%	48%	47%

Figures presented show that the gender breakdown is in line with that of 'Looked After Children' in NI in March 2009.

* DHSSPSNI statistical trends for NI Looked After Children 2003 - 2009



"We are very pleased with the support Fostering Achievement gives to our children and young people in care. The scheme is now well imbedded within the LAC Review process for discussion. The flexibility it offers against education is of great benefit"

**Social Worker,
Southern Trust**

age distribution

The following table gives a percentage breakdown of the ages of those children and young people who benefited from the scheme during the last two years and compares this with the age profile of NI Looked After Children, as at March 2009 (sourced from DHSSPSNI report on statistical trends for NI LAC 2003 - 2009). As can be seen, the age profiles presented for those benefiting from the scheme generally reflect that of the general NI LAC population.

It should be noted that the small increase in younger children benefiting from Fostering Achievement in 2009/2010, compared with the previous year, is the direct result of those changes made to the scheme's eligibility criteria in late 2008, which extended provision to children in the age range 0 to 4 years.

Number of credits per month for children & young people

Age	Percentage Breakdown		
	NI LAC Age Profile %	FA 2008/2009 %	FA 2009/2010 %
< 1	3	1	2
1 - 4	15	11	14
5 - 11	32	36	36
12 - 15	30	31	32
16 +	20	21	16
	100	100	100



"My team would be of the view that Fostering Achievement offers a fantastic service to our carers and the children they look after."

**Team Leader,
BFS Trust**

scheme performance & outcomes

In previous years the performance of the Fostering Achievement scheme was measured by conducting postal surveys of foster carers and young people in their care. Although the scores received always indicated high levels of satisfaction with the scheme, response levels were generally poor (approximately 13%) given the number of surveys that were actually posted out.

For the 2009/2010 year to help increase response rates; it was decided to assess and measure scheme performance in the following ways

1. Telephone & On-Line Survey
2. Young People's consultation events
3. One to One Reviews re Credit Provision

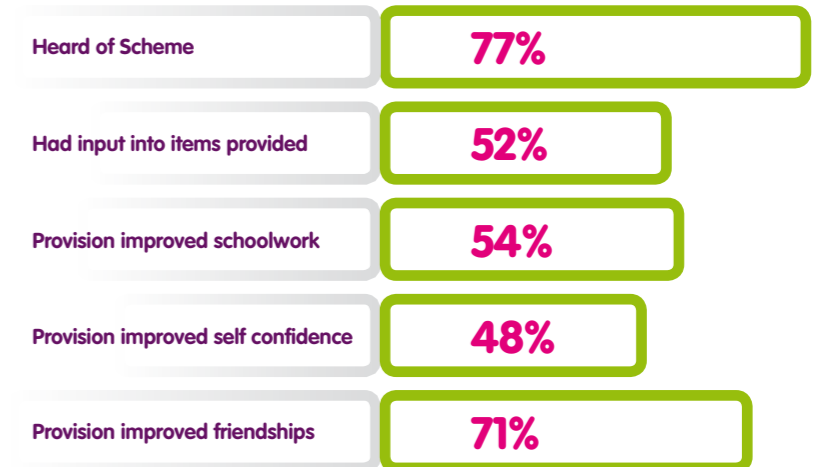
telephone & online survey

In total, 129 foster carers completed the survey either by telephone or on-line. This proved to be a very cost effective method for obtaining information and will be employed in future years in place of postal surveys, which are expensive. Results obtained are presented below and clearly indicate that foster carers continued to be highly satisfied with the scheme in terms of operation and provision.

Views of foster carers	Positive Response 08/09	Positive Response 09/10
My experience of the scheme has been positive	98%	95%
I would recommend the scheme to others	98%	100%
FA staff were very helpful	97%	100%
I felt involved in choosing what was provided	96%	96%
Goods/services were or will be of real benefit	99%	100%
Time taken to provide goods/services was satisfactory	94%	97%
I will use the scheme again	98%	99%

young people's consultation

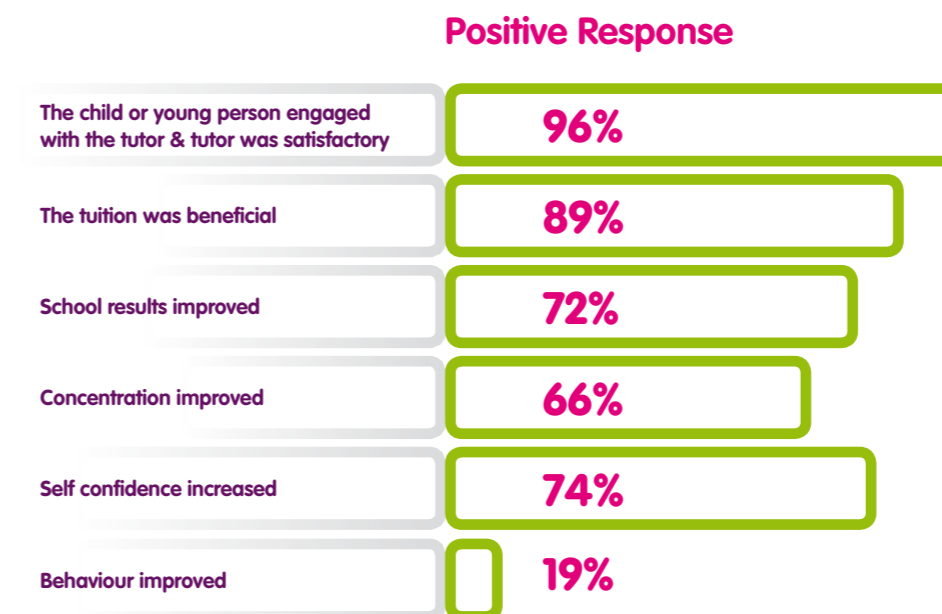
Opportunity was taken during four Fostering Achievement events (Belfast, Lisburn, Craigavon and Larne) to consult with 52 young people regarding their knowledge and experience of the scheme. In summary, the vast majority had heard of and used the scheme to good effect. Those who stated that they hadn't heard of the scheme and/or were not involved in helping select items provided, were generally primary school children. The chart opposite highlights findings.



one to one reviews

During the course of the year a total of 1123 reviews were conducted to determine how beneficial the goods and/or services provided had been. These involved discussions between foster carers and Fostering Achievement Development Workers. Overall it was clear that those items provided through the scheme had real and diverse benefits, as determined by foster carers. The following charts provide some examples of the outcome of the reviews undertaken.

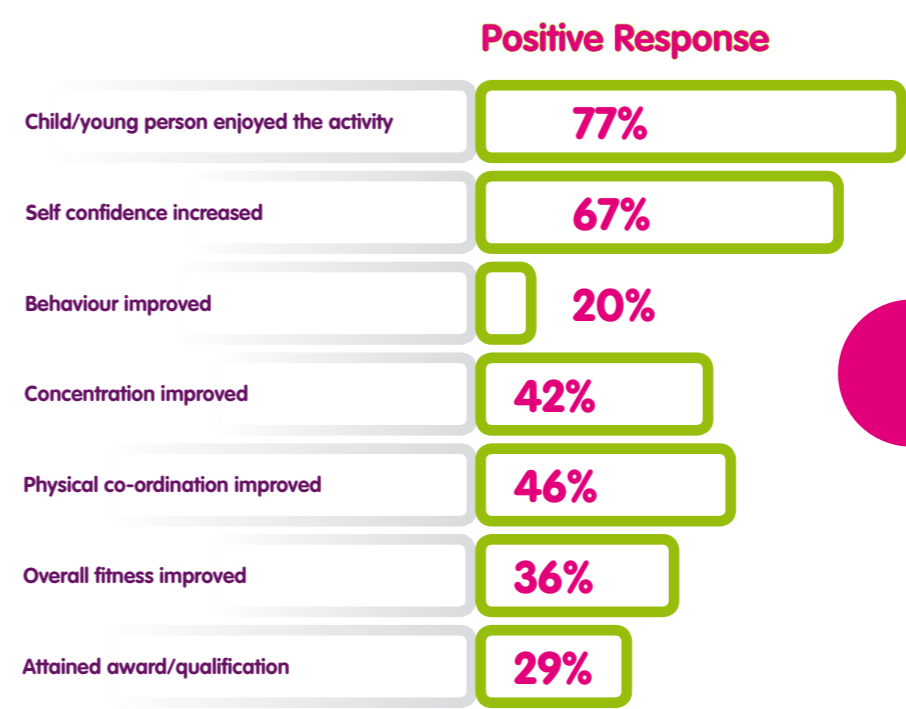
(a) one to one tuition



"We have numerous examples of children and young people who we look after benefiting from the scheme. We have been delighted with the response of the Fostering Achievement staff, who are clearly motivated to help meet the needs of these children."

foster carer

(b) activities (based on 87 reviews)



"The GCSE Revision Classes were useful. They helped me get a B in my Maths and English."

foster child

(c) play equipment (based on 299 reviews)



"The events are great for networking, confidence building, self esteem building."

foster carer



scheme provision

This section details the variety and extent of provision through the scheme aimed at benefiting foster carers and those children and young people that they care for.

1. educational credits

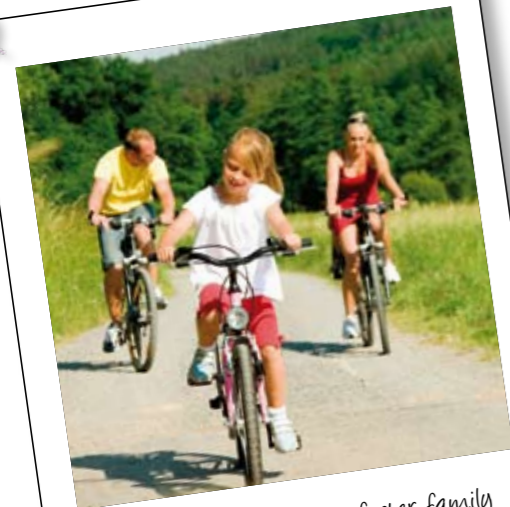
The provision of goods and services to children and young people in foster care remains the primary focus of the Fostering Achievement scheme and a crucial element in helping them achieve. The following table presents summary information on categories of provision during 2009/2010.

Category	2009/10
Activities	391
Education	528
Equipment	697
Computers	149

A more detailed breakdown of provision is given below.

activities

Activities	2009/10
Driving Lessons Packages	123
Music Performing Arts	101
Fitness & Sport	85
Horse Riding	65
Outdoor Adventure	17



Enjoying cycling as a foster family

"Through the drama lessons provided by Fostering Achievement the young person has gained in confidence and entered into drama at school, receiving a great drama production. She has now started dance classes."

foster carer



"Young person has been receiving French GCSE tuition and has made really good progress. Being only one of two in the school to be entered for the higher exam."

foster carer

education

Education	2009/10
Tuition	319
Educational Material	209

It is worth note that increasing numbers of young people and foster carers are realising the value of tuition and hence requesting its provision.



Foster child receiving the 1000th computer provided by Fostering Achievement

equipment

Equipment	2009/10
Garden/Play Equipment	232
Indoor Learning/Play Equipment	243
Sports Equipment	78
Bikes	73
Musical Instruments	21



2. support for foster carers

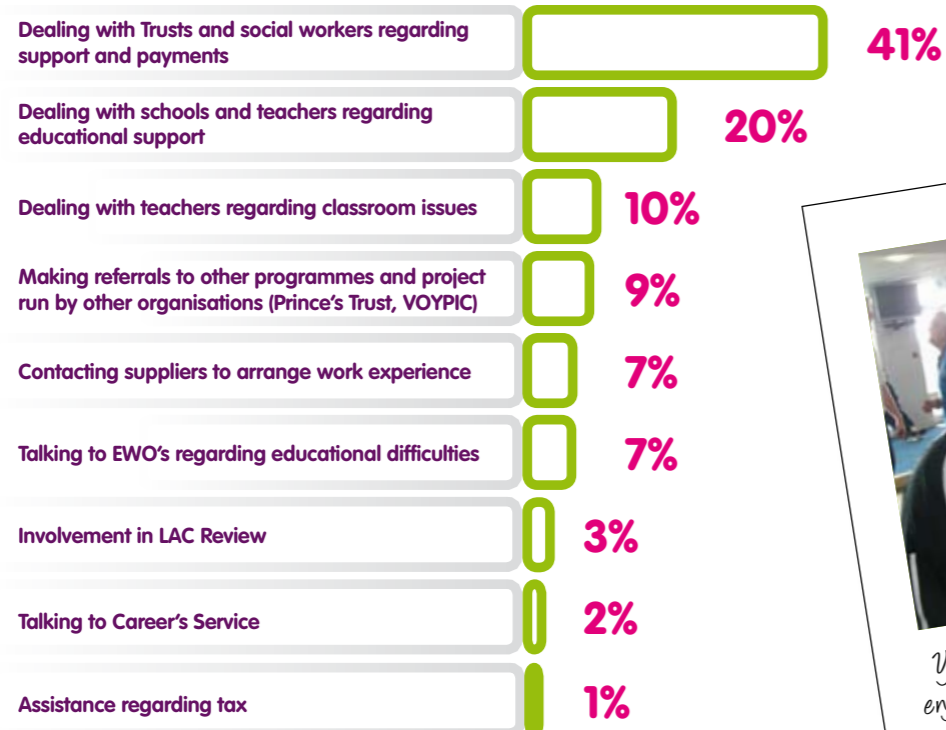
Although the scheme is focused on ensuring that children and young people in foster care gain a sense of achievement and reach their potential, it is recognised that this couldn't happen without the encouragement and help of their foster carers. Consequently, the Fostering Achievement scheme is fully committed to supporting foster carers and does so in a variety of practical ways. For the 2009/2010 financial year this support was provided through the following;

(a) 25 training workshops to 274 foster carers.

Workshop	Number Delivered	Total Attendees
Counting on Carers	8	77
Internet Safety	7	70
Education System in NI	2	20
Advocacy	4	54
Self Esteem	4	53
Total	25	274

(b) 176 home visits, primarily to discuss educational credit provision.

(c) 74 cases of advocacy, covering the following issues;



(d) 1123 reviews to discuss the outcome and benefits of credit provision.

(e) 1457 occasions of advice being given to foster carers via telephone.

(f) 4 'Live Laugh Learn' family days were provided to ensure social interaction and fun based learning for foster carers and the children they look after.

Date	Venue	Carers	Children
13 June 2009	W5 Belfast	20	40
25 July 2009	Lisburn Leisureplex	18	26
21 August 2009	Carnfunnock	39	67
12 September 2009	Craigavon Civic Centre	16	33
Total		93	166



educational initiatives & events

GCSE revision classes

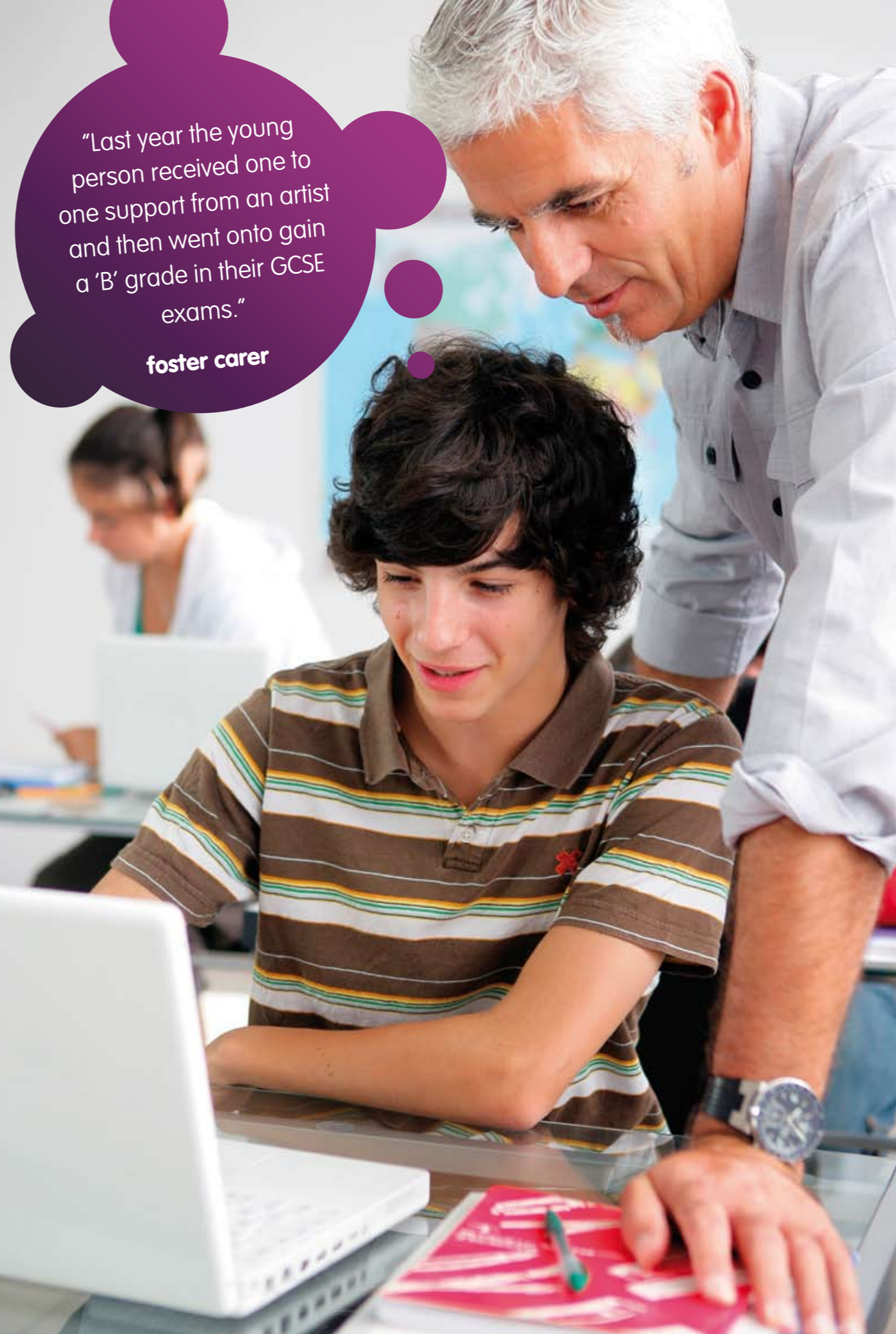
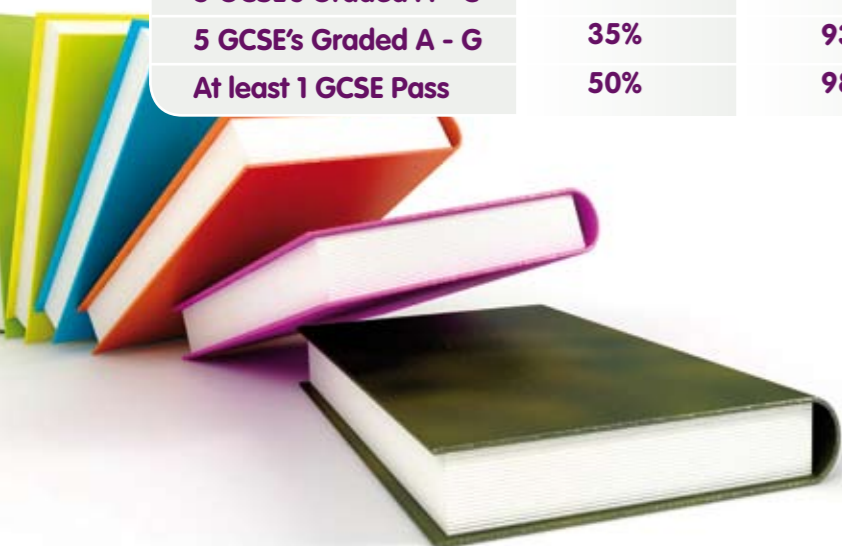
Venue	2009
Royal College, Armagh	15
Slemish Integrated College, Ballymena	9
Bangor Grammar	6
Malone College, Belfast	7
Oakgrove College, Derry	7
Erne Integrated College	5
Friend's, Lisburn	8

Classes were held in the venues opposite and overall attracted 57 young people, 25 of whom were sitting examinations in May/June 2009. These classes provided students with help in terms of course work and examination theory.

Total
57

To assess the impact of help provided through the Fostering Achievement scheme, contact was made with young people who had sat their GCSE examinations in 2009, to allow for a review of their results. The following table presents GCSE pass rate data for the 35 young people who received help through the scheme, by way of one to one tutoring and /or GCSE revision classes and compares them with the official 2007/08 NI figures. From this data, it would appear that the help provided through the scheme had a beneficial effect on educational attainment, as measured by GCSE exam results.

	LAC Figures (NI)	General NI School Population	Young people who attended GCSE revision classes &/or received in home tuition
5 GCSE's Graded A - C	16%	68%	43%
5 GCSE's Graded A - G	35%	93%	89%
At least 1 GCSE Pass	50%	98%	97%



"Last year the young person received one to one support from an artist and then went onto gain a 'B' grade in their GCSE exams."

foster carer



Mr McGimpsey, Minister DHSSPSNI, talking to young people at a Belfast Letterbox event

letterbox club

This was a new initiative, undertaken in conjunction with the Book Trust, as a means of helping to improve the numeracy and literacy skills of primary school children in years P4 and P6. It involved making up parcels containing educational materials (books, calculator, rulers, etc.) and posting these on a monthly basis, during the period May to October, to identified children. The idea was that because the parcels were addressed to the children, they would be more likely to take ownership of the materials and use them. Overall, 164 children received Letterbox parcels. Feedback from foster carers and children indicated that this initiative had been well received and was having a positive effect. An analysis of numeracy and literacy assessment data, pre and post the initiative, indicated that the Letterbox Club did help improve children's numeracy and literacy skills.

To promote the Letterbox Club initiative, two fun days were held. One took place at W5 Belfast on Friday 31 July and the other at the Strule Arts Centre, Omagh on 30 October. Both events included a book reading by the author Malachy Doyle, together with a workshop on dance and drama. Overall 26 foster carers and 46 children attended the events. In addition to the above the Minister met representatives of the Letterbox Club, Fostering Network and some young people in Castle Buildings on Tuesday 18 August.

"I love getting my Letterbox Club parcels. my favourite part is getting books to read. when I grow up I'd like to be an author."

foster child

primary school summer schemes

A total of 134 children attended the 2009 summer scheme programme, which was held in 13 venues throughout the Province to ensure representation across the whole of Northern Ireland. The following table provides attendance numbers per venue. The overall aim of the programme was to help improve literacy and numeracy skills in a fun based way. Feedback received from foster carers, teachers and attending children indicated that the programme had been very successful.

Venue	Attendance No.
Saints and Scholars Primary School, Armagh	12
Braidside Integrated Primary School, Ballymena	12
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School, Derry	7
Downpatrick Primary School	11
Brookland's Primary School, Dundonald	8
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School	14
Brownlee Primary School, Lisburn	8
Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan	12
Spires integrated Primary School, Magherafelt	14
St Peter's Primary School, Newry	9
Omagh Integrated Primary School	8
Milstrand Integrated Primary School, Portrush	11
St Joseph's Primary School, Belfast	8

Total
134

The summer scheme has made me more confident. It doesn't matter if you are fostered or not you can still have fun & learn."

foster child



Kayaking at teens adventure week

post primary summer adventure scheme

During August 2009 two adventure schemes were run specifically for teenagers. Activities included water sports, orienteering and hiking. Overall 22 young people attended and found the experience educational, challenging and enjoyable. Based on the excellent feedback received it is planned to cater for increased numbers of young people in future years.

dance workshops

In conjunction with the organisation VOYPIC (Voice Of Young People In Care) Fostering Achievement ran a series of ball room dance workshops for 12 young people in their late teens/early twenties. As well as mastering basic ball room steps and a number of dance routines, which were demonstrated at several events, the young people were also able to enhance their communication, team working and interpersonal skills in a fun based activity and non threatening environment.



Young people demonstrating their new found dancing technique



Archery instruction at primary level summer scheme

recognition of achievement



Towards the end of the 2009/2010 financial year, the Southern Trust, supported by Fostering Achievement, organised and hosted an event in Craigavon Civic Centre to recognise the achievements of young people in its care. The event proved to be extremely successful, with over 60 young people attending, together with friends and family, to receive certificates of achievement.

In addition to the presentation of the certificates and a number of speeches, one from a care experienced young adult, several young people show cased their talent and achievement by entertaining the audience with a display of their musical and dance ability. It is the intention of the Southern Trust to make this an annual event.

future plans

Fostering Achievement will continue to provide goods and services through educational credits and to organise and run its usual range of events during the coming year. However, based on feedback and experience gained, we have plans to;

- Extend the Letterbox Club to cater for young people in early post primary education and children with learning difficulties.
- Develop and expand the number and range of events for teenagers, including adventure skills training and sports coaching.
- Form working partnerships with a range of organisations and service providers, including University of Ulster, Department for Employment and Learning, VOYPIC and Learning Space.
- Promote and support further Achievement Awards events within the five Health Care Trust areas.

As in previous years, the Fostering Achievement scheme has provided significant numbers of children and young people in care with the 'tools' and the opportunity to both learn and achieve. It is because they have taken the opportunities presented and applied the learning, that the scheme has been so successful in helping them to achieve and realise their potential.

Looking ahead, based on what has been achieved, the Fostering Achievement team has confidence that the lives of children and young people in care will continue to be transformed through the scheme and their application of learning.

"My 18 year old foster child is learning to drive and has received more help than she could have hoped for. She fully understands the commitment that Fostering Achievement have in helping her towards this goal."

foster carer



the current fostering achievement project team

Hugh McAllister, Project Manager

Josephine McAlister, Senior Practitioner

Katy Lynn, Fostering Achievement Administrator

Helen Brogan, Assistant Administrator

Colette Byrne, Training & Development Officer

Emma McAleer, Information & Communications Officer

Craig Lyttle, Development Worker

Lorna Cassidy, Development Worker

Maria Macdonald, Development Worker

Monica O'Neill, Development Worker

Nuala Fitzpatrick, Development Worker

Yvonne Kielt, Development Worker

The work of Christina Bradley, who performed the role of Training & Development Officer, and Lorna Patterson, who performed the role of Fundraising & Events Co-ordinator, during the period under review is acknowledged.

