

fostering
achievement
supporting foster carers as first educators



growing success together...



Annual Report
August 2011



“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.”

Robert Louis Stevenson

“Fostering Achievement has done much to enhance the self-esteem & self-confidence of children in foster care which has led to improved educational outcomes. I know from talking to foster carers the value which they truly attach to Fostering Achievement and I cannot praise them highly enough.”

H SCT Manager

foreword

The Fostering Achievement scheme was launched in 2006 with funding from the Children and Young people’s funding package. Its aim was to equip and support foster carers, so that they could help those children and young people in their care to gain a sense of achievement and reach their potential. This aim continues to be realised as evidenced by young people’s achievements, foster carer feedback, Trust endorsement and independent evaluation of initiatives taken.

This report shows that the scheme had another very successful year, making provision for 1280 children and young people through educational credits as well as actively supporting many foster carers through training workshops and advocacy support. This equates to 76% of the 1687 children and young people in foster care throughout Northern Ireland.

Whilst this report focuses on 2010/2011, it is noteworthy that the scheme has impacted upon the lives of several thousand children and young people since its launch, planting seeds of self belief, encouragement, challenge, trust, self confidence and motivation, which are producing a harvest of achievement and positive outcomes in many different ways. One unique way this has been evidenced is through the annual Health and Social Care Trust’s Achievement Awards, pioneered

by Fostering Achievement, through which 461 children and young people received certificates of achievement.

Although much has been achieved, it is apparent that the work is not finished and needs to continue on a longer term basis to ensure continued educational attainment for fostered children. Special attention should be given to early intervention in order to maximise the benefits of the scheme and increase opportunities for learning, development and achievement.

It is our view that Fostering Achievement should continue, so that those children and young people in foster care can have the chance of a brighter future.

“The climbing frame helped me build muscles and the computer helps me with school work.”

Young Person

“An excellent scheme which values children in foster care and listens to the views of foster carers.”

Foster Carer



introduction

The phrase 'Growing Success Together' has been chosen to underline the fact that the scheme has helped ensure growth, in terms of success and achievement for significant numbers of children and young people in a variety of ways, not least in terms of their education. The two case studies below serve to illustrate this point.

case study 1

Before placement, Ashley hated school and saw no point in education. As a result he had a very poor attendance record and no aspirations.

When placed with his current foster carer he changed school and settled in well, attending more regularly and taking more of an interest in school work.

Through Fostering Achievement he initially received a lap top which helped him with general school work, coursework and subject research. At school his teachers identified that his maths was well below standard and as a consequence the Fostering Achievement scheme arranged for him to receive ongoing one to one tuition which, over time, helped him to catch up and understand the subject. This motivated him to want to pass his GCSE maths and led him to attend extra help classes after school.

As his grades began to improve so did his aspirations. He began to look at courses he would be interested in at college and university. As a result of good GCSE examination results (3 A's, 1 B, 3 C's and 2 E's) he gained entry into a further education course that he had wanted to do and is doing extremely well, having been selected to go overseas on a student exchange programme.

He now has his sights on attending university and is currently considering the options open to him.

"Several carers have commented at annual reviews on the benefits of Fostering Achievement in relation to their foster children. One foster carer, who received a Foster Carer of Distinction award this year, said that over the years the impact that her Development Worker had in assisting her liaise with her foster son's schools was of immeasurable benefit. She stated that her Development Worker could 'talk the talk' and translate things for her with regard to educational issues."

Social Worker



case study 2

When Theresa was placed in foster care she appeared to have an interest in drama, but had never had the opportunity to explore this and consequently lacked confidence. With the help of Fostering Achievement Theresa's foster carer was able to enrol her in a stage school, which she has been attending now for three years. This has been of great benefit in terms of increasing her self confidence and ability, as well as providing real opportunities to perform on stage. During the past few years Theresa has participated in all the productions and concerts that the stage school has put on, performing several important roles.

Theresa's drama teacher recognised her natural flair and ability and entered her for a drama exam for which she was awarded a merit. Theresa is also starting singing lessons in September, again through Fostering Achievement, to extend her capabilities.

"A substantial number of my Kinship carers have benefitted from Fostering Achievement monies, enabling the provision of a range of services to Looked After Children, from tutoring, provision of computers, to help with driving lessons."

Social Worker



The phrase 'Growing Success Together' also emphasises the variety of help offered, together with the increasing number of excellent working relationships that have been formed with foster carers, social care and educational professionals, service providers and other voluntary organisations. This is highlighted by:

- Growing numbers of foster carers, and the children and young people they care for, now appreciate the real difference that educational support can provide. From a very low base in the first year of the scheme (35), the numbers receiving educational support has increased more than ten fold to 385. This represents approximately one third of those receiving support through the scheme.
- Growing numbers of working partnerships with other organisations in providing challenging opportunities for children and young people to achieve in a variety of ways. An excellent example is the vocational programme being delivered in partnership with the Northern Trust and VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care), where young people are involved in developing and maintaining an allotment, learning catering, joinery and photography skills. This will culminate in an exhibition of achievement which is planned for September 2011.
- Growing numbers of young people receiving recognition for their achievements through the annual Achievement Awards. During the year,

a total of 619 guests attended these events, where certificates of achievement were presented to 239 young people.

- Growing and deepening relationships with foster carers who value Fostering Achievement as a means of obtaining relevant and practical support for them and the children they care for.
- Growing numbers of opportunities for children and young people to; engage with others in foster care to reduce their sense of isolation, allow for achievement and build their self confidence through participation in challenging activities.



"Besides having fun and making friends, involvement in the Allotment project taught me how to grow vegetables and take photographs. Some of my photos are going into a book which is brilliant"

Young Person

"The Fostering Achievement staff are always keen to help with advice and suggestions. They go out of their way to assist with any query and contact you to make sure things are going as planned."

Social Worker



scheme uptake

The following two tables present information on scheme uptake levels during the year, comparing them against 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 data. The high levels of early uptake resulted in scheme enquiry and credit targets being met some four months ahead of schedule. An additional 80 children and young people benefited from the scheme this year.

Number of enquiries received per month

Month	2010/2011	2009/2010	2008/2009
April	225	125	33
May	132	122	25
June	228	127	41
July	82	116	120
August	57	83	46
September	34	88	77
October	13	81	146
November	16	47	87
December	35	6	62
January	20	6	60
February	49	0	65
March	0	0	40

Total	
2008/2009	802
2009/2010	801
2010/2011	891

Number of credits per month for children and young people

Month	2010/2011	2009/2010	2008/2009
April	343	193	45
May	132	184	31
June	228	185	61
July	82	188	183
August	57	126	68
September	34	124	132
October	13	142	218
November	16	66	142
December	35	8	88
January	20	7	97
February	49	0	106
March	0	0	53

Total	
2008/2009	1224
2009/2010	1223
2010/2011	1280

Enquiries per Trust and Independent provider

Trust/Independent	2010/2011	2009/2010	2008/2009
Action for Children	1	2	0
Barnardos	28	19	26
Belfast Trust	181	175	157
Foster Care Associates	28	26	26
Kindercare	9	11	7
Northern Trust	193	155	169
South Eastern Trust	159	132	170
Southern Trust	147	138	105
Western Trust	145	143	142

Total	
2008/2009	802
2009/2010	801
2010/2011	891

The table above contrasts the number of enquiries made by the HSC Trusts and Independent Organisations over the past three years. These figures indicate that foster carers from all five HSC Trusts are using the scheme and offer reassurance in terms of equity of provision.

Numbers of benefiting children and young people

Trust	*Total No. of C&YP in foster care	**No. of C&YP who benefited from FA	% Uptake
Belfast	463	287	62
Northern	321	280	87
Southern	280	247	88
South Eastern	333	242	73
Western	290	224	77
Total	1687	1280	

*Trust figures from Children Order Statistical Tables for NI 2009/2010.

**Children and young people being fostered through Independents are included above based on which Trust is responsible for them.

The table above gives a breakdown of the number of children and young people who benefited from the scheme per Trust area, and compares figures with the total number of children and young people in foster care. The Belfast HSC Trust has recorded the lowest level of uptake in percentage terms.

Gender breakdown

Gender	2010/2011	2009/2010	*LAC NI 2009/10	2008/2009
Male (%)	52	52	52	51
Female (%)	48	48	48	49

*Children Order Statistical Tables for NI 2009/2010

The figures presented above show that the gender breakdown of those benefiting from the scheme is the same as the breakdown of 'Looked After Children' in Northern Ireland in 2009/2010.



age distribution

The following table gives a breakdown of the ages of those children and young people who benefited from the scheme during the past three years, and compares this with the age profile of Looked After Children in 2009/2010 in Northern Ireland. The age profile of those benefiting from the scheme continues to reflect that of the Northern Ireland Looked After Children population, demonstrating the representative nature of the scheme.

Age distribution of children and young people (%)

Age Range	NI LAC Age Profile	FA 2010/2011	FA 2009/2010	FA 2008/2009
Less than 1	3	1	2	1
1-4	17	13	14	11
5-11	30	34	36	36
12-15	31	30	32	31
16+	19	22	16	21
	100	100	100	100

The age distribution mentioned above, together with the receipt of significant enquiries from all over Northern Ireland, clearly demonstrates that Fostering Achievement meets the objective of being an inclusive and representative scheme, which can be accessed easily by foster carers.



“The sports equipment provided this year meant that my foster child’s long jump personal best improved by about 25cm in one week. The difference it made helped her gain a gold medal in a major Ulster girls event.”

Foster Carer

“The tutor who worked with our foster child was very good. The computer we received has been very beneficial regarding school work, as we live in the country and so access to a library is restricted.”

Foster Carer



scheme performance

To determine how foster carers felt about the general management and performance of the scheme during 2010/2011, those with email accounts were asked on 16 June to take part in an on-line survey. Although only 52 foster carers had completed the survey by mid July, it was felt that the results were still worth including for comparison against results of the previous two years.

1. foster carer survey

View of Foster Carer	% Positive Response 08/09	% Positive Response 09/10	% Positive Response 10/11
My experience of the scheme has been positive	98	95	100
I would recommend the scheme to others	98	100	100
FA staff were very helpful	97	100	100
I felt involved in choosing what was provided	96	96	96
Goods/services were or will be of real benefit	99	100	100
Time taken to provide goods/services was satisfactory	94	97	100
I will use the scheme again	98	99	98

These results would indicate that foster carers continue to be satisfied with the way the scheme is operated.

2. supplier audits

Fostering Achievement relies on a range of key suppliers to provide the goods and services requested by foster carers for the children and young people in their care. A sample of 161 foster carers were contacted by telephone and asked to rate suppliers on a range of attributes. Findings are summarised below and give some confidence that supplier performance is satisfactory, helping to contribute to the overall success of the scheme.

Attributes	Satisfaction Level (%)
Overall supplier performance	93
Delivery timeframe	94
Relevance of instruction/tuition	96
Performance of instructors/tutors	98
Willingness and ability to deal with queries	97
Quality of goods provided	93

“In my team’s involvement with Fostering Achievement we have found all the staff to be very flexible with regard to the needs of Looked After Children who are in placement with our carers. They will very often go the extra mile to accommodate both our carers and those in their care in relation to specific educational needs. We have found Fostering Achievement to be a wealth of knowledge in the area of education.”

HSCT Team Leader



scheme provision

This section of the report presents information on the scale and variety of goods and services provided through the scheme to children and young people in foster care and their foster carers.

1. educational credits

The provision of goods and services to children and young people in care remains the primary focus of the scheme which is aimed at helping with their education by addressing identified needs. The items were provided following discussion with foster carers and HSC Trust staff.

The following tables give a breakdown of provision during 2010/2011. The numbers represent children and young people, and depending on need and cost, more than one item could be provided to an individual.

a. education

Provision	Number
Tuition primary numeracy and literacy	130
Tuition post primary subjects	146
Tuition special educational need	19
Tuition GCSE	90
Educational material (software and books)	218
Pre/early school learning packs	81

The overall number of children and young people receiving tuition during the year was 385, an increase of 66 (21%) on the previous year's figure. It indicates the growing importance that foster carers are placing on educational support as a key factor in helping young people achieve.

b. activity

Provision	Number
Driving lessons	130
Music and performing arts	114
Horse riding	57
Fitness and sport	148
Outdoor activity	18

The numbers are broadly similar to last year with the exception of fitness and sport, where a 74% increase in participation has been recorded.

"I think the tuition I receive will help me get a better grade in my GCSE maths."

Young Person



c. computers

Provision	Number
Computer installations	167
Computer upgrades	51
Non warranty repairs	70

In addition, approximately 1100 computers received routine services during the year to ensure optimum performance. Parental controls are installed on each computer to ensure that fostered children can be safe when using the internet.

d. equipment

Provision	Number
Art, drama and dance materials	34
Garden play equipment	203
Indoor learning/play materials	162
Sports and fitness equipment	246
Musical instruments	29

In line with the increased number of children involved in sporting/fitness activity mentioned previously, the number receiving sports and fitness equipment has increased from last year by approximately 63%.

"The trampoline helped immensely after contact to bring my child's frustration down. The lap top has also helped as my child has communication problems and a speech delay. We were able to use it to access websites to aid his development."

Foster Carer



2. foster carer support

Fostering Achievement recognises the key role that foster carers play in helping the children and young people in their care to achieve. We are committed to working with foster carers and supporting them through a range of practical measures. The support provided during 2010/2011 is summarised below.

a. training and learning

During the year, 338 foster carers took advantage of the training and learning opportunities provided through the scheme in the form of training workshops, conference attendance or in-home basic/refreshers computer training. The following table provides a breakdown of these.

Training & Learning	No. Delivered	No. Attendees
Basic computing - workshop	4	21
Internet safety - workshop	5	35
Primary education - workshop	4	32
Post primary education - workshop	4	30
Special educational need - workshop	4	29
Educational software - workshop	1	7
Self esteem - workshop	2	21
Child care and practice conference	1	12
In-home computer training	161	161
Total	186	338

"I found the training workshop I attended very informative and helpful. The trainers were well informed and professional."

Foster Carer

b. home visits

191 home visits were made by development workers, primarily to discuss educational credit provision.

c. advocacy

105 cases of advocacy support focused on the following issues:

Issues	% Breakdown
Discussion with Trusts and social workers regarding support and payments	34
Discussion with schools and teachers regarding educational support	28
Discussion with schools, teachers and education welfare officers regarding classroom/behaviour issues	12
Referrals to other organisations for support	21
Referrals to medical professionals	5

d. reviews

763 reviews were carried out with foster carers to discuss the outcome and benefit of credit provision.

e. events

8 events with a fun based element were held throughout Northern Ireland to enable children and young people to experience some fun based learning. It also gave foster carers the opportunity to meet socially with other foster families.

These ranged in scale from small to large depending on their purpose. In total, over 500 foster carers and young people attended these events.

Date	Venue	Carers & Young People
12/6/10	Grove Library Belfast	7
3/7/10	Ballymena Library	14
21/8/10	Lisburn Leisure Centre	110
16/10/10	Irvinestown Library	9
23/10/10	Bangor Library	12
29/1/11	Seven Towers Leisure Centre	107
19/2/11	Lakeland Forum Enniskillen	180
12/3/11	Magee College Londonderry	97



3. education initiatives & events

a. GCSE support

During the year, a total of 72 young people attended a programme of GCSE support classes held at eight venues across Northern Ireland. The classes ran for three days during the 2010 Easter holiday break and on the first Saturday of the month from November 2010 to March 2011. They provided students with help with coursework and examination theory, in both English Language and Mathematics, using qualified and experienced teachers.

To gauge the impact of the help provided through Fostering Achievement (GCSE classes together with one to one tuition) students who sat GCSE exams in 2010 were asked to volunteer their results. The table below presents results obtained and

compares them with comparable results from 2009 and official Northern Ireland data on Looked After Children. These results indicate that the support being provided through Fostering Achievement is having a positive effect on educational attainment.

	NI LAC Figures	General NI School Population	2010 results for 49 young people who received FA support	2009 results for 38 young people who received FA support
5 GCSEs A-C	16%	71%	53%	43%
5 GCSEs A-G	35%	93%	96%	89%
At least 1 GCSE	61%	98%	100%	97%

b. primary school summer schemes

A total of 71 children aged 8-11 years attended the 2010 summer scheme programme which was run using eight separate venues throughout Northern Ireland. It aims to improve literacy and numeracy skills in a fun based way. Individual schemes were managed by qualified primary school teachers and combined learning with games, external trips, library visits and visitors to help maintain high levels of interest and participation. One new aspect which was piloted in the programme was the use

of 'Maths Buddy', a specialist session on numeracy skills. This proved to be very successful, holding the attention of children for two hours as they focused on numeracy using carefully designed mathematical games and puzzles. Such was the success of this initiative, that it will become a feature of future schemes.

The following table provides details of venues and attendance.

Summer Scheme Venue	Attendance Number
Saints and Scholars Primary School, Armagh	9
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School	8
St Joseph's Primary School, West Belfast	8
Millstrand Primary School, Portrush	10
Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan	8
Braidside Integrated Primary School, Ballymena	10
Spires Integrated Primary School, Magherafelt	10
Robinson Centre, East Belfast	8
Total	71

"The teachers are very friendly and helpful. With only small numbers attending I don't find the classes at all stressful. I am enjoying the classes and they are giving me more confidence in terms of my examinations."

Young Person

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

Young Person



c. teen's adventure programme

Following the success of the pilot programme in 2009, Xplore Outdoors provided six residential adventure programmes for 68 teenagers during July and August 2010. They experienced the opportunity to challenge themselves by participating in a range of outdoor adventure activities such as rock climbing, kayaking, abseiling and orienteering. From the excellent feedback received from the young people and their foster carers, the programme helped to improve self

confidence, reduced feelings of isolation, allowed for the making of new friendships, and increased a sense of personal responsibility. As a result of this positive feedback, which emphasised the need for constructive activity for teenagers, Fostering Achievement will provide extra places next year.



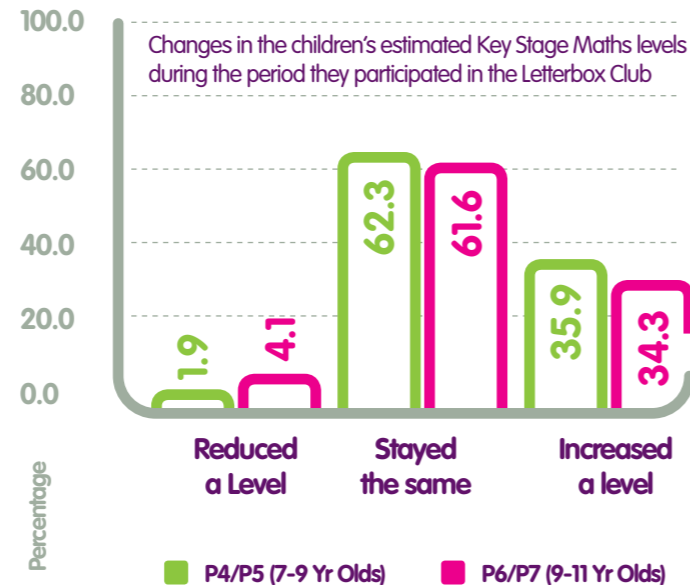
d. letter box club

The Letter Box Club aims to help improve the numeracy and literacy skills of P4 and P6 fostered children through the monthly provision of individualised parcels, containing selected educational materials, over a six month period.

A total of 140 children participated in the club, with each receiving a series of six monthly parcels and being tested pre and post the programme, so that any changes in their numeracy and literacy skills could be measured. The independent evaluation by Queen's University Belfast, showed that there was clear evidence that children made significant progress during the programme in

relation to their reading accuracy, comprehension and number skills (a full report can be found on the Fostering Achievement website). In addition, findings indicated that participation in events such as the FA summer scheme and Letter Box events, was associated with higher gains in reading accuracy.

During 2010, the Letter Box Club was supplemented by four separate Letter Box events which were held in libraries across Northern Ireland. These involved children participating in treasure hunts, book readings and art and craft workshops.



e. university of ulster events

Working in conjunction with the University of Ulster, VOYPIC and the HSC Trusts, an open day for potential students was held on 19 June 2010 in the university's Jordanstown campus. This proved to be a successful day as 42 young people attended, together with foster carers. During the day, a tour of the campus and its facilities was provided, together with opportunity to talk to key members of staff and attending students, to find out about university life, course programmes, enrolment procedures and ongoing support within the university.

The valuable working partnership with the University of Ulster continued with a sport's coaching week for nine teenagers in the Jordanstown campus during late July 2010. The nine teenagers who attended received coaching on, and participated in, basket ball, football, tag rugby, volleyball, hockey and archery. In addition,

opportunity was taken to show them around the university campus, together with its range of facilities and deliver to them tailored sessions on career advice and basic computer programming, which allowed them to gain a five credit university module. Due to the success of the week, it was decided to undertake a similar programme during 2011.



f. 'can't cook...can now!' programme

A total of 12 young people, supported by six foster carers, participated in a 'Can't Cook...Can Now!' programme during the third quarter of 2010. This was delivered through seven weekly sessions in partnership with Northern Trust and VOYPIC, using community facilities in Carrickfergus, and was aimed at teaching the young people how to cook simple meals and be aware of health and food hygiene issues. Through this programme, all of the young people obtained formal OCN qualifications in cooking and basic food hygiene certificates. Following the successful completion of the programme, the young people used their newly acquired skills to help cater for a Christmas party within the Northern Trust which 164 foster carers and Trust personnel attended.

"Our foster families received a very high quality programme that supported and helped some of our most vulnerable and challenging young people to achieve OCN and Basic Food Hygiene Level 2 qualifications."

social work team assistant





“The Awards on 11/6/2011 was an event that the majority of those carers attending said was the best they had ever been at as foster carers. The venue, the food, the whole effort that went into it on the part of Fostering Achievement illustrated that looked after children were valued and their achievements important.”

BFS Trust

recognition of achievement



Fostering Achievement has been working with the five Northern Ireland HSC Trusts since early 2010 to introduce an annual programme of achievement award events as a means of recognising the achievements of young people in foster care. From an initial Southern Trust event in March 2010, 5 events were held during 2010/2011, covering four of the five HSC Trusts with plans to run an event for the remaining Trust area. The following table presents information on the events held during the year.

HSC Trust	Timing	Venue	Certificates Awarded	Total Attendance
South Eastern	21 Aug 2010	Lisburn Leisure Centre	44	110
Northern	29 Jan 2011	Seven Towers Leisure Centre, Ballymena	35	107
Western	19 Feb 2011	Lakeland Forum, Enniskillen	41	109
Western	12 Mar 2011	Magee College, Londonderry	49	113
Southern	22 Mar 2011	Craigavon Civic Centre	70	180
Total			239	619

Based on the success and impact of these events, which combined the formal recognition of achievement with the opportunity for foster carers to engage in social interaction and young people to participate in fun based learning activities, each Trust has stated that they plan to hold the events annually.



conclusion & future plans

Fostering Achievement has had yet another extremely successful year in which large numbers of children and young people (and foster carers) not only benefited from the scheme, but gained a real sense of personal achievement.

During 2011/2012, we plan to apply the learning gained from talking to foster carers and fostered children so that the scheme continues to develop in an effective, practical way. A celebration of the success of the scheme is planned which will

demonstrate the value placed on it by the children and young people who have benefited, on many different levels.

This will be the final year of this cycle of funding. We believe that further intervention is required to address the educational challenges that children and young people in foster care face, and we will make representations to have the scheme extended for a further five years because, as the results demonstrate, it works.

the current fostering achievement project team

Hugh McAllister, Project Manager
Josephine McAlister, Senior Practitioner
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
Emma McAleer, Information & Communications Officer
Michelle McCoy, Events Assistant
Katy Lynn, Administrator
Kellie Long, Training Administrator
Pamela Stewart, Assistant Administrator

"Although the year was extremely busy and challenging it was also very rewarding as significant numbers of children and young people in foster care continued to achieve and be successful in so many ways. To me the scheme works and does make a real difference."

Project Manager,
Fostering Achievement



watch our new dvd showcase

“Together we can achieve anything”

and see the difference we can make in young people’s lives

This DVD builds on the expression “a picture is worth a thousand words” as it uses the media of film to highlight the stories of a number of young people in foster care who have benefited from the Fostering Achievement scheme. It is a moving testament to the difference that the scheme has and can make to the lives of vulnerable children and young people and the invaluable role that foster carers play. Because the scheme is totally committed to helping young people achieve, a number of young people in foster care were directly involved in producing this professional DVD by way of filming and editing its contents. Our thanks go to Manleys Branding House for facilitating this.



DVD Features:

- Videos of Young People enjoying the benefits of ‘Fostering Achievement’
- Testimonials from Foster Carers
- Development workers have their say
- Foster family interviews
- Highlights from ‘Fostering Achievement’ events



“Everyone who is in foster care really needs a group like Fostering Achievement because they are always there to help!”

Young Person

play me...



PLAYING THE INCLUDED DVD

PC'S AND LAPTOPS - The DVD will run automatically on computer systems running Microsoft windows 7 or Apple Mac OSX. However previous versions of windows may require additional software. We recommend the free VLC media player: <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>
STANDALONE DVD PLAYER - The DVD will run automatically on all standalone DVD players

