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PRESS RELEASE

Northern Ireland raises 'In Loco Parentis' to a new level

The Department of Health in Northern Ireland has made a contribution of over £100,000 to Junior ISAs and Child Trust Fund accounts of young people in its care, providing an additional £90 to each live account, benefiting over 1,000 Looked After Children.

The Share Foundation, which administers these accounts for the UK Government, gave a warm welcome to their generosity, which is the first United Kingdom country to make such a contribution.

“It's really important for care leavers to have the benefit of this money when they begin adult life” said Chair Gavin Oldham, “and combined with the life skills they gain when taking our Stepladder financial awareness programme it provides the opportunity they need to achieve their potential going forwards.”

Northern Ireland's Minister of Health, Robin Swann said: “These savings make a tangible and positive difference to a care leaver's life as they commence independent living and I am pleased that my Department has been able to help these young people by adding funds to their accounts.

“We are aware from the feedback from young care leavers of the many ways that Junior ISA and Child Trust Fund monies can be used to assist them in making a successful transition from care. This can include helping them to budget for items they may require such as a deposit for a flat, furniture or other furnishings, and giving them more options and support for the future going into their independent adult life.

The Minister concluded: “We are committed to delivering real and lasting improvements in the wellbeing of care-experienced children and young people here and will continue to work closely with The Share Foundation to ensure care leavers in Northern Ireland can derive maximum benefit from the Child Trust Fund and Junior ISA schemes.”

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Notes for editors: The Share Foundation (www.sharefound.org): is a registered charity which operates schemes on behalf of the Department for Education [England] designed to improve the life skills and financial resources of Looked-After children throughout the United Kingdom: the Junior ISA (since Q4 2012) and Child Trust Fund (since Q4 2017). These arrangements have thus far benefited over 165,000 children and young people in care, and include an incentivised learning programme, the 'Stepladder of Achievement', for those aged 15-17. The Share Foundation is also leading a major recovery campaign for the Child Trust Fund generally, with a search facility designed for young people aged 16-18 (findCTF.sharefound.org).

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