



Press Release

## **Graduation Celebrations for North and West Students**

67 adults with learning disabilities received their Graduation Certificates from at a lavish ceremony held in the Millennium Community Outreach Centre featuring gowns, awards and lovely sunshine.

The NØW Project, based on the Springfield Road, delivers a range of high quality training courses designed to enable people with learning disabilities to get, and keep, the job they want. A National Training Award winner for the last two years, NØW hosts this annual ceremony as the perfect opportunity to acknowledge each individual's personal achievement. Trainees celebrated successfully passing courses in money management, work preparation training and independent travel as well as vocational qualifications in hospitality and catering.

In her keynote address to the audience, Dr McGinley said: "The success of the NØW Project in training people with learning disabilities is impressive, particularly as it is working in an area which has suffered from high social and economic disadvantage. It is important that the right job is now found for each individual and the appropriate support is available to ensure that the job is sustained. I am pleased that my Department has been able to be involved with this project through our Disablement Advisory Service and provision of European Social Fund assistance through the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme."

Presenting The Special Achievement Awards, Pat McCartan, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust reminded those in attendance of the excellent relationship between NØW and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. In particular he commended “the excellent work of NØW in supporting people with disabilities to develop new friendship and career opportunities”

This year NOW Introduced the Employer of the Year Award picked up by The Merchant Hotel. Maeve Monaghan, Executive Director of the NOW Project, said: “NOW are always keen to build links with local employers and it gives us great pleasure to acknowledge The Merchant Hotel as a company truly committed to promoting equality within their business. We welcome the opportunity to engage with such a high profile employer and look forward to working with the Merchant Hotel over the coming years.”

NOW's Chair Margaret Dunlea said

“So often people with learning disabilities miss out on the Graduation Ceremonies experienced by their brothers and sisters, we at NOW are very conscious of the hard work and dedication of our students and feel that this is an excellent platform on which to raise awareness about the educational milestones reached by local people with disabilities on their way to getting paid jobs in their local communities.”

## **Ends**

**For additional media information contact Simon Rea - 07789903034**

## **Notes to Editors**

- NOW is a Company Limited by Guarantee with charitable status. It delivers high quality training and supported employment services to adults with learning disabilities living in North and West Belfast. All courses are person centred, accredited and recognised by local employers.

- NOW also operates a successful social enterprise called Loaf Catering which delivers high quality catering to private parties and business functions in the Greater Belfast area. More information about Loaf Catering can be found at [www.loafcatering.com](http://www.loafcatering.com) or by calling 028 90900071.
- NOW receives funding support from the following bodies:
  - Skills Programme – Peace II managed by Proteus NI.
  - Hospitality Training – funded by European Social Fund under Building Sustainable Prosperity, Department for Employment and Learning (Disablement Advisory Service) and Belfast Health & Social Services Trust
- ❖ NOW delivers the Department for Employment and Learning’s Workable NI and New Deal for Disabled People in partnership with the ACET Consortium. For more information on these or any of the programmes NOW delivers contact [www.nowproject.co.uk](http://www.nowproject.co.uk) or telephone 028 90900071.