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## **CASPr Graduation Ceremony February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017**

Ladies and Gentlemen, honoured guests, Deputies and Councillors and most importantly graduates and friends, you are all very welcome to our Graduation ceremony today. We are especially grateful to our Lord Mayor Brendan Carr who has agreed to present the awards and allow us the use of this house today.

Today is a day of pride and thanksgiving and is dedicated to all of you who are to receive your awards today, it very much a day of pride for your families and friends many of whom have come to witness your success. All in CASPr are hugely proud of your achievement and commend your dedication and effort. You continue to be a fantastic example to all of the children you look after so well in the projects. I must also mention those who are with us today to receive their awards but who work with different projects. We are no less proud of you or your efforts

To get to this day there have been many sacrifices, by you and your families. You may even have had some doubts as to whether you would get here and so you are to be congratulated and this is why we are all gathered here today, to bask in your glory and to tell the world, publically, of your achievement.

On your behalf and with your permission I would like to take a moment to thank all of those who work beyond the call of duty in the background to make sure that all can be as smooth as possible for you as you learn and work. In particular I must mention Mary and the tutors who carefully prepare all that must be taught and learned. I mention Ann who perseveres even in difficulty to manage what sometimes must be very difficult. Ann does this with the constant help and support of Theresa, Ruth, Louise, Caroline, Enda, Siobhán and John. Out in the projects with Carmel, June and Katie there are so many working to provide a very valuable service to the children of the North East Inner City. The Steering Committee must also be mentioned generously for their exemplary and continuing service to CASPr and to the children on the North East Inner City and in particular I name Theresa, Dave, Alma, Gary,

Anna and Claire. Being honest, if they did not volunteer then there would be no CASPr.

That said without the children and the local support there would be no CASPr either and on behalf of the children you look after, teach, help, mind, care for and care about I congratulate you today.

We have many supporters and funders without whom much of what we do would be impossible. I mention the staff of the DSP, CDYSB, LDTF, SVP, Bernadette Sproule and her colleagues of the CDET, The Inner-City Co-op, and DCC. The list of supporters is long and we depend upon each and every one of them for our survival, increasingly so, as it happens.

Since our last graduation, there have been some very obvious and difficult changes where we work. There is a new stress that can be felt everywhere with gangland violence, there is the constant and nervous presence of the Gardaí in town, there have been difficult funerals and all of this is in the full view of the young children with whom you work. These are new and challenging stresses for all in town. Your graduation therefore offers hope and example, it offers diversion and support. We are looking forward and we are very concerned for the prospects of young girls and boys, in particular as they head for secondary school and how they will navigate their teenage years growing up in a tense stressful and often violent environment.

CASPr has always adapted to the changing circumstances that prevail where we live and work. To be fair that's one of our strengths, we adapt what we do to accommodate new ways of living and growing up in town for children in school and adults who train and work with us. We don't have all the answers but we do have quite a few and all we want is the chance to develop and grow so that that we can continue to aim for the brighter future that the children of the North East Inner City deserve. We are putting a lot of store in the support we hope for from Kieran Mulvey's Task Force Report. We hope that it will be supported with money and policy to ensure a lasting change where we work.

That said we offer your graduation, you're learning, your work, your commitment and support of children as a down-payment on a brighter future for all children in the North East Inner City. We just need politics and policy to get their act together and get busy helping or failing that they should really just get out of our way!

Before I hand over to Mary for the more formal part of our ceremony today, I would mention that there will be some refreshments afterwards and you are all invited to remain.

Brian O`Toole

Chairperson