

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Celebrating 21 years of the Voice of Young People in Care**

Last night, leading children's charity VOYPIC celebrated its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and 21 years of supporting children and young people in care at a party and exhibition in the Oh Yeah Music Centre, Belfast. The birthday exhibition featured multimedia and art installations to mark 21 years of VOYPIC's growth and achievements.

Welcoming guests, Vivian McConvey, CEO of VOYPIC, said:

*"Twenty-one years on from our very first meeting, young people are once again taking over a venue to tell the story of care from their own perspective".*

Children and young people living in care across Northern Ireland created a multimedia exhibition to reflect how life in care has changed over the last 21 years. Party guests and visitors watched short films made by children and young people; marvelled at a patchwork quilt celebrating 21 years and toured an array of artworks. The whole exhibition depicts VOYPIC through the years and features a special creation of young people's concept of home.

Darren - a young man who has been part of VOYPIC for ten years said:

*"VOYPIC has changed my life - from going to groups to becoming a volunteer and now I'm about to become a VOYPIC intern. I hope to keep developing my skills and experience and to be here for another ten years."*

Sarah - another young volunteer who helped with the exhibition – said:

*"I came into VOYPIC for a young women's group and my life began to change. In the last four years I have made friends and gained lots of confidence. I can be myself here; I've learned that people really do like me for who I am"*

**ENDS**

## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

1. VOYPIC (Voice of Young People In Care) is a charity working across Northern Ireland promoting the rights and improving the lives of children and young people cared for away from home. They may be living at home in care; with foster or kinship carers; in children's homes; in secure settings; or in supported accommodation. They may be preparing to leave care or be care leavers.
2. We work in partnership with children, young people, staff, managers, agencies and government. We have four main services: advocacy, mentoring, participation and policy.
3. At 30 September 2013, there were 2892 looked after children in Northern Ireland:-

• In foster care	2172 (75%)
• Placed at home with parents	343 (12%)
• Residential care (children's homes)	213 (7%)
• Other care (hospital, secure, intensive support)	164 (6%)

(Delegated Statutory Functions, including Corporate Parenting Report, Statistical Report 30 September 2013, Health & Social Care Board)