**Gus the Tiny – Bringing Children out of the Dark and into the Classroom: By Isabella Eastwood, Lissan Primary School, Cookstown**

**(Slide 1 - holding slide)**

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Isabella Eastwood and I am here to talk to you today about my cousin Charlie Craig

**(Show Slide 2)**

This is my cousin Charlie Craig – and this is me.

I am here to talk to you about Charlie as I believe his story lives and breathes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - changing it from lots of words on a page into something real - something that helped create a significant and meaningful change in his life.

**(Show Slide 3)**

This is Charlie when he wasn’t well. Charlie was diagnosed with Leukaemia in 2013 and underwent two bone marrow transplants in Bristol.

This meant Charlie spent **five** out of his **nine** years in relative isolation - in a hospital room or at home.

During this time he was entitled to, and received, 4 and a half hours of home tutoring per week. This was purely focused on English and Maths.

*(We all know that its art, music, religious education and PE that kids love the most!)*

And so therefore, the rest of the educational curriculum, for Charlie, was largely in the dark.

Charlie’s outings were trips to the Royal Victoria Children’s Hospital – not to the Zoo or W5.

His ability to socialise was with his mum, dad, sister Nancy and immediate family – because of the nature of his illness. He did not have the opportunity many of us children have, to play with our friends, ENJOY (funny face) homework or the day-to-day school activities the rest of us take for granted.

Charlie and the family were determined that he was not going to be defined by his illness.

And also, a huge part of his rehabilitation had to come from the educational setting

Under the terms of the UNCRC Convention, our government is required to meet children’s basic needs and help them reach their full potential.

I have to ask those in positions of power here at today’s Summit -

**Q. Was it right that Charlie remained in the dark with regards to his education?**

**Q. Was 4 and a half hours per week enough time to allow him to reach his full potential?**

**Q. Do you think this was this enabling him to actively participate in his school community - or was preparing him for making a valuable contribution to society?**

The collaborative approach involved in Charlie’s case - shows how success *can* be achieved.

**(Show Slide 4)**

Charlie’s mum and dad - Cliodhna and Fintan - did ***their homework.***

They spoke to the Children’s Law Centre who referred them to the UNCRC Charter, helping them to build the case in order to be able to broaden Charlie’s educational world.

And, as the Charter advised - they worked together with Children’s Cancer Unit charity - Charlie’s primary school - and Charlie himself - to make sure that he was able to enjoy the rights that he was entitled to.

My cousin Charlie was quite the master Lego builder. During his illness his passion grew and his skills were un-rivalled for any adult, never mind child of his age.

He had been motorising Lego for a number of years and when he was consulted about the use of technology to help get him back into the classroom he was very excited.

This was only ever seen as a first step back through the School gates.

**Another question for you - Wouldn’t that work for other kids, who for any reason, can’t go back to school? Those, for example, with anxiety or mental health issues?**

*Isabella indicates Robot – ‘Gus the Tiny’*

Meet ‘Gus The Tiny’, christened by Charlie after his favourite TY Teddy.

Essentially Gus is an Ipad on wheels and the first step towards Charlie coming out of the darkness with his education. The use of this highly innovative technology was piloted in Northern Ireland thanks to Charlie, and was a huge success.

Here’s a short video to explain more

**(Slide 5 - Show Video)**

From the point that Gus was introduced to both Charlie and his classmates, he brought Charlie directly back to them, and them to Charlie. There was a steady stream of kids wanting to visit Charlie after that.

**(Slide 6)**

Let me show you all the impact Gus the Robot had on Charlie’s education:

The first image here is what Charlie produced during a Religious Education lesson - the very first lesson he ever took part in with Gus the Robot. Charlie blew his teachers away with this Prayer. I won’t read all of it to you now, but let me highlight the very last line – in which Charlie says he will “Never Give Up”

Educationally – Charlie never did.

For Religious Education – Charlie got Full Marks

*(Isabella holds up Scrapbook shown in Slide) -* In ‘The World Around Us’ – Charlie got Full Marks

*(Isabella holds up Artwork shown in Slide)* In Art & Design – Charlie got Full Marks

**Video Plays of Charlie Recorder playing** And in Music – Charlie achieved Full Marks

I have to tell you - that pulling funny faces behind the teachers back with his classmates was even more beneficial than any A star or Full Marks and had a huge impact on Charlie’s mental health

**(Slide 7)**

Since the 2nd of August this year – when my cousin Charlie went to Heaven – we have collectively raised over £20,000. I, and Charlie’s sister Nancy have sold copies of a Joke Book they wrote together

We held a fundraiser last Saturday in Lisburn Parish Hall along with many other events to raise much needed funds for this very worthwhile cause.

Known collectively as Charlie’s Classmates, we have already secured some robots and this money we have raised will help to fund more.

Through the UNCRC Charter and the resulting teamwork, Gus the Tiny was born and Charlie Craig - using his own words - no longer had to remain in the dark educationally.

As we all know – Charlie is not the only child in the province who had cancer. He was not the only child who could not attend the school classroom - despite how much he wanted to physically be there.

**Do they all not have the right to be brought into the light educationally?**

Thank You