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## LETISHA & CHARLENE EDUCATION AWARD SCHEME INFORMATION SHEET

### What is the Letisha & Charlene 'Award'?

The Letisha & Charlene Education Award (LCEA) organisation was established in memory of Charlene Ellis and Letisha Shakespeare, who died tragically in a drive-by shooting in January 2003. The organisation consists of the families of the two girls and representatives from Aston Pride New Deal for Communities, the Birmingham Mail and Birmingham Community Foundation. Birmingham Community Foundation is the Administrator for the organisation. The organisation has the following vision:

*"Enabling people to be the best that they can"*

Since 2006, LCEA has run a highly popular, local educational award scheme entitled the: Letisha and Charlene Education Award. The £2000 awards are targeted at harder to reach people in the North West area of Birmingham in need of financial support to enable them to continue to study. Eligible costs include: course fees, computer equipment, accommodation fees, textbooks, travel expenses, childcare costs etc. To date, there have been 22 winners.

The need for this award scheme is clear from the high level of applications received each year and the testimonies of previous winners who talk about the importance of receiving the extra money. When asked about the impact that the award has had on their lives, the following comments were made:

*"Without the award I would have found it very difficult to get through the year. Having a laptop means I can do my assignments from home now"*

*"It had a great impact as it eased financial pressure greatly"*

*"It has made me more confident in my work knowing I can do it [on my laptop] anywhere anytime - I look forward to what the future brings"*

*"Very positive - it helped me to achieve what I wanted to and has shown that there are genuine people around who want to make positive impacts in the lives of young people"*

*"I am sure that I would have incurred some debt if it weren't for the award"*

*"Without this award I think I would have given up"*

*"It really meant a lot"*

No other education award scheme focuses solely on the North West area of Birmingham. LCEA members see this geographical focus as an important 'foothold' for local people in that they do not have to compete with people on a city-wide or national level to win an award as they do for other schemes.

The award is a fitting legacy to the two girls (who were both students attending a local college) and serves to create positive futures for young people and reinvest confidence back in the community where the incident occurred. Indeed, a key objective of the LCEA is to foster the emergence of beneficiary role models.

Partners have each brought expertise to the table, which has enabled the organisation to flourish. With marketing support from Birmingham Mail, 'young person expertise' from Sutton Coldfield College, financial administration from Birmingham Community Foundation, project management and fundraising input from Aston Pride NDC and the all-important publicity-drawing input of the two families, the organisation is well placed to get results. Partners share a sense of pride that something so positive has emerged out of something so negative. More so, because of the unique nature of the partnership that combines an unlikely but effective mixture of: a regeneration programme, a college, a newspaper, a community foundation and individual family members, all working together for the benefit of the community.

### **Who we work with**

LCEA has good links with service providers in the North West area of Birmingham that work with the harder to reach target group that LCEA aims to support. For example, partners include: Connexions, City College, Young Disciples, St George's Post-16 Centre and City United. Service providers help us to promote the award scheme and are also on hand to support award winners should one of their service users receive an award. Organisations that also provide 'in kind' support to LCEA include: Aston Villa FC, Birmingham City Council and the Damilola Taylor Trust.

### **Contact**

For more information, to apply or to donate please contact us:

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