



12 December 2022

## **Local Lad Scoops Top 5 place in Focus on Ability' Short Film Festival 2022**

Celebrations were held today in the Mayor's Parlour at the Guildhall, for local lad Conor McGinnity. 'Conor's story – Making it Work', a short film starring Conor, recently scooped a Top 5 Place in the International Documentary category of the Focus on Ability Short Film Festival 2022.

Conor starred in the short film to highlight his journey as a young man with a learning disability, to finding and securing employment with the support of Mencap NI. Conor is now a familiar face on the shop floor in Derry/Londonderry's busy Primark store where he works as a sales assistant, helping customers and colleagues alike.

Presenting Conor with a special certificate to mark his international achievement, Mayor of Derry City and Strabane Council, Cllr Sandra Duffy said: "I was delighted to welcome Conor and his family into the Guildhall for an official reception in recognition for all his incredible work over the recent months.

"I'd like to officially congratulate Conor on all his fantastic achievements in not only being a part of this amazing short film, but also being one of the Top 5 Short Films viewed in the International Documentary category at the Focus on Ability Short Films Festival 2022 and I believe his was the only entry from Northern Ireland. This is definitely an accomplishment you should be very proud of".

Speaking at the event Grainne Close, Director of Mencap said "We're delighted for Conor, his family, and his community. We feel that Conor's Story captures the essence of the importance of meaningful work and the positive impact this can have on a person's life. We're so proud Conor agreed to take part in this short-film, his story has been shared globally increasing awareness and promoting visibility and representation."

Commissioner Siobhan Cullen, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland said: "We are delighted for Conor on the success of his short-film at international level. The Commission is committed to working with partners to help more disabled people secure and retain paid employment and Conor's story highlights just how important this work is.

"However we continue to urge government to ensure that projects such as those which helped Conor to find employment will continue to be fully supported when EU funding comes to an end in the New Year."

In closing the event, Edyth Dunlop, Regional Manager, NIUSE said: "While it's great to have this very public celebration for Conor and all that he has achieved both with

his film and in his job, unfortunately a cloud of uncertainty is hanging over this vital work to provide employment support services to disabled people.

“The European Social Fund Programme which funded Mencap to support Conor to find employment is ending in March 2023 as a result of Brexit. Due to the uncertainty of a replacement programme or local government interventions, other disabled people may not receive the support and opportunities that Conor has had to fulfil their career aspirations and that is unacceptable”.

### **Note to Editor**

- [View "Making it Work" – Conor's Story short film](#) (Youtube)
- ['Focus on Ability Short' Film Festival website](#)
- Conor has been supported on his employment journey by Mencap under their European Social Fund Project and under Workable NI programme (Department for Communities)
- Conor's Story short film was originally produced as part of the “Making It Work” campaign, a partnership between the Equality Commission for NI and Northern Ireland Union of Supported Employment (NIUSE) and its members. Download our pdf publication: [Making It Work - Employment support services for people with disabilities](#)

'Making it Work – Conor's Story' was entered in to Focus on Ability Short Films Festival 2022, International Documentary category.

The Festival 2022 is its 14th consecutive year and was founded by NOVA Employment (Australia) which asks film makers to "Focus on the Ability" of people with a disability and tell a story on film for the world to view.

There were 126 short films entered into the International Category. There were over 50,000 votes and over 380,000 views worldwide. Conor's story was the only entry from Northern Ireland.

Ryan Goodwin the FOA Creative Director heaped praise on 'Conor's Story.' “Conor's Story is a wonderful example of the focus on ability theme of the festival. Conor is clearly a talented employee who brings dedication and skill to his role at Primark. Documentaries such as this one help us demonstrate to employers world-wide that people with disability deserve every chance of employment.

The 2022 festival saw 281 finalists from across 19 countries.

European Social Fund Programme will end on 31 March 2023. ESF Programme funds social inclusion and employability programmes under 4 Themes - Disability (21 projects), young people not in education, employment or training (19 projects), long term unemployed and economic inactive (20 projects) and community family support

(5 projects). The European Social Fund is administered by the Department of the Economy and match funding is provided by a number of Departments including Department for Communities and Department for Justice, local councils, Regional Colleges and self-financing.