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## **Lisburn social enterprise claims Northern Ireland's 'Business of the Year' prize at the Chamber Awards 2012**

A social enterprise committed to making it easier for parents with children to get into and stay in employment has secured a prestigious achievement for Lisburn after it was announced as the Chamber Awards 2012's Business of the Year for Northern Ireland (sponsored by Westfield Health).

Employers for Childcare Charitable Group (EFCCG), which employs 38 people, beat off significant competition from across the country, impressing judges with its ability to bounce back from cuts in funding to develop a thriving ethical business.

It currently operates two social enterprises in Employers for Childcare Solutions and Employers for Childcare Vouchers, the latter being delivered through the workplace as an employee benefit, saving both parents and employers thousands of pounds ever year.

EFCCG's services do not cost the taxpayer a penny and are free to customers. These include a freephone helpline, dedicated Childcare Benefits Advisory Service (CBAS), research, policy and information, a library and a community outreach programme.

There were eight other winners from Northern Ireland, including a creative burrito bar, a manufacturer of kitchen textiles and an insurer that has developed a smartphone app to monitor driver behaviour.

The full list of Award winners, who are all members of the Northern Chamber of Commerce, includes:

- Alana Interiors' Carol Little (Entrepreneur of the Year)
- Autoline Insurance Group (Excellence in Innovation)
- boojum (Marketing Campaign of the Year)
- Keys Commercial Finance (Most Promising New Business)
- People 1st (Commitment to People Development)
- Shredbank (Excellence in Customer Service)
- Ulster Weavers (Achievement in International Business)
- Williams Industrial Services (Sustainability Award)

President of the British Chambers of Commerce Martyn Pellew said: “There has never been a more important time for businesses to showcase the amazing work they are doing on a day-to-day basis.

“The Chamber Awards is a perfect platform for them to do just that and receive the recognition and profile they deserve for helping move the economy forward and create employment, often in local areas.”

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) Chamber Awards 2012 is committed to finding the best businesses through a series of regional heats followed by a National Final, due to be held at London’s Guildhall on November 29th.

Now in its 9th year, the competition is one of the showcase events that highlights the role of business as a positive force for recovery and the success of local communities and individuals.

EFCCG was formed in 2004 after Government funding ceased, with the organisation taking just four years to become entirely self-financing – a unique achievement in a Northern Irish funding context.

Through its two social enterprises it currently processes £21m per annum on behalf of its clients and provides services to 60 of the top 100 companies in the country.

In the last year it has seen business increase by 32% to over £1m, national market share reach 98% and parent participation up 16% year-on-year.

Importantly, the Employers for Childcare Charitable Group has saved parents £6.8m and employers £3m, with all profit generated directed back into its activities.

Martyn concluded: “A record number of firms have taken part this year, all determined to prove that ‘Business is Good’ for the recovery!”

The Chamber Awards 2012 is supported by the RBS Group, BT Business, Dell, DHL Express, Westfield Health and Acua Limited.

For further information or to book your place at the National Awards Final, visit **[www.chamberawards.co.uk](http://www.chamberawards.co.uk)**

**ENDS**

**For further information, please contact Russ Cockburn on 07812 600271 or email [russ@dc-pr.co.uk](mailto:russ@dc-pr.co.uk)**

#### **Notes to Editors**

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) is the national voice of local business.

The BCC sits at the heart of a powerful nationwide network of Accredited Chambers of Commerce, serving over **100,000 businesses** across the UK, which **employ over five million people**.

For more information visit: **[www.britishchambers.org.uk](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk)**