



News release and photo for immediate use

Wednesday 14 March 2012

Strictly Come Dancing dream is realised

Cariad Howat has Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type 1 (a disease which causes muscle wasting). Despite being confined to a wheelchair, she loves dancing. So much so that when asked by Make-A-Wish Foundation® UK, the charity that grants magical wishes to children and young people fighting life-threatening conditions, what her one wish would be – she chose to watch the Strictly Come Dancing Live Tour.

On Thursday 16 February Cariad's wish was granted. She travelled with her parents, Dee and Jeremy, from her home in Southampton and spent the day in Cardiff enjoying afternoon tea and sampling a new cuisine – Chinese – before taking her seat to watch Strictly Come Dancing live. After the show she got to meet the dancing celebrities including Harry Judd from McFly and Waterloo Road star Chelsea Healey. Cariad's Mum, Dee, said: "On the day of her wish she was very excited; she loves dancing and even wants to do wheelchair dancing."

Cariad was diagnosed with SMA Type 1 at just four months old. Babies diagnosed with this type of SMA generally do not live past the age of two but despite Cariad contracting a lung infection when she was seven months old and Pneumonia a few years ago, this September she celebrates her ninth birthday. Cariad needs to sleep using a ventilator, has physiotherapy every day and is taken to school by two carers. Dee explains; "this is just normal life for us – we don't know any different".

After Cariad's wish, Dee said: "Strictly Come Dancing is Cariad's favourite show. Chelsee is her favourite celebrity dancer so meeting her was the icing on the cake. Cariad even said 'this is the best day of my life' and it really was; when we got home Cariad cried because it was over!"

There are currently 20,000 children and young people in the UK fighting a life-threatening condition and this year alone 1,400 children will turn to Make-A-Wish to have their wish granted. The charity needs to raise £6.8 million in 2012 to achieve this.

To make a donation to Make-A-Wish please visit www.make-a-wish.org.uk or telephone 01276 40 50 60.

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Notes to editors:

1. More photos available if required
2. Please note that Make-A-Wish does not use phrases such as 'terminally ill' in order to respect the sensitive nature of life-threatening conditions and what they mean to children and young people and their families. We would ask that this approach is followed and that the term 'life-threatening conditions' is used in material for publication.
3. Make-A-Wish should be referred to as Make-A-Wish Foundation[®] UK in the first instance. Thereafter 'Make-A-Wish' or 'Make-A-Wish Foundation' is suitable. We would ask that you try to keep 'Make-A-Wish' on the same line.
4. Make-A-Wish grants magical wishes to children and young people fighting life-threatening conditions. The charity was founded in the UK in 1986. Registered charity number: 295672/SC037479 www.make-a-wish.org.uk