# Headroom Charity – New Premises in Farnham

**The High Sheriff’s Speech – Mr Peter Cluff.**

It is an absolute pleasure for me to be here this evening, with Suzanne, and there are three very good reasons for that. Firstly, as High Sheriff of Surrey, it is my privilege as the King’s representative, to thank wonderful charities, and volunteer organisations, like Headroom, for the incredible role they play in our local community; secondly, as a Trustee of the Community Foundation for Surrey , we supported Headroom last year with a grant and I know the vital work they perform; and the third reason I am glad to be here is because my prior engagement was at His Majesty’s Prison at Send and the fact that I am here means they kindly let me out!

As some of you may know, a High Sheriff during his or her year in office has the opportunity to shine a light on a particular issue which resonates with them and for me it is trying to stop young people from becoming NEET, that is Not in Education, Employment or Training. Last year there were nearly 1,500 16-18 years olds that were NEET or their status was unknown in the County and there is a conveyor belt of other potential NEETS arriving each year. Every individual is different and the factors behind them being at risk will be interwoven and include family matters, education attainment, social issues and their own health and well-being.

By focussing on these factors and implementing earlier or alternative interventions, it is possible to change future pathways and that is exactly what you do here at Headroom, by providing reassurance, aiding emotional intelligence and teaching effective coping strategies that can lead to more positive and brighter futures.

The social and economic cost both to the individual and the state is magnified if these interventions do not happen, or if they occur too late and sadly the provision for youth support from central and local government is not sufficient to deal with a growing mental health crisis, brought about in part by COVID and the cost of living crisis and there is a urgent need for free and timely access to mental health support for young people which thankfully Headroom help provide.

The Community Foundation asks the charities it supports to provide an end of grant report so we can see the impact of the funding and I must say the submission by Headroom was one of the most comprehensive I have ever seen and a testament to your dedication and commitment. We learned the grant enabled the provision of 146 sessions of 1-2-1 support and positively benefitted 33 young people, parents and carers.

It therefore gives me immense pleasure to be here this evening at the opening of your new premises in Farnham, that will enable you to offer more services and support to young people and their parents and carers, hopefully for many years to come.