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## The Duchess of Cambridge hosts awards party for mental health charity at her Kensington Palace home

Kate Middleton welcomes guests to her London home to honour children who have overcome difficulties and become shining examples to their peers

**By Keith Perry**

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The Duchess of Cambridge welcomed guests to Kensington Palace for a reception and awards ceremony thrown on behalf of a mental health charity.

She invited 170 school staff, volunteers, pupils and supporters into the state apartments of Kensington Palace for the inaugural Place2Be Wellbeing in Schools awards.

The Duchess, who is around four months pregnant with her second child, met unsung heroes who have helped improve the mental health and emotional well-being of schoolchildren.

A patron of the charity since last year, the Duchess wore a black Hobbs top and a blue skirt by Jenny Packham as she chatted about how the charity helps make major contributions to school life.

The Duchess, 32, arrived for the reception at the Queen's Gallery at 6.20pm, leaving her son, Prince George, with his father and nanny next door, and was introduced to Place2Be Chief Executive Benita Refson.

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Writing a foreword in the event programme, she described the awards as recognition for the 'wonderful' work in children's emotional health.

She wrote: "The commitment, dedication and hard work that is going in across the schools involved with Place2Be is truly humbling, and to recognise that feels incredibly important."

She presented the Child Champion Award to 11-year-old Bailey Dunne, from Highfield Community Primary School in Sunderland.

Ms Refson said the awards were a fitting way to mark Place2Be's 20th anniversary.

She said: "The Duchess's support is enormous because of her total belief in

the importance of children's mental health.

### Kate Middleton

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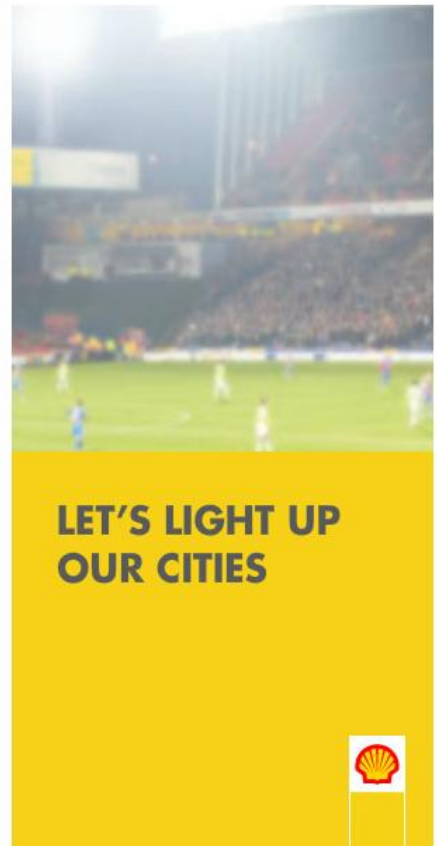
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"She has said really this is an important issue and gives a tremendous boost to the children, volunteers, staff and people involved."

Parents, grandparents and teachers were asked to nominate school leaders, staff, carers and children for the range of accolades.

Place2Be works with more than 90,000 children in 230 primary and secondary schools, often in some of the most deprived areas of the UK, helping them deal with issues such as bullying, bereavement and family breakdown.

The Duchess, who has been Patron of Place2Be since 2013, was scheduled to meet all 20 awards finalists, including Bailey, who has gone from being a quiet boy to one who shows confidence and determination.

His nominator said: "Bailey has taught his peers that it is okay to be individual and that you don't always need to follow the crowd to be successful and popular."

The Duchess also spent time chatting with Bailey's Head Teacher Simon Marshall, who has been working to integrate Place2Be into schools over 14 years and whose inspirational leadership has enthused other Sunderland schools to invest in mental health.

The awards themselves were created by glass company Seguso, which is based on the Venetian island of Murano.

The company, which dates back to the 1400s, was invited by Ms Refson to design and create the awards. The design of the award features a small glass egg leaning against a large glass egg, representing the provision of support to children and young people.

Giampaolo Seguso attended the awards and met with the Duchess of Cambridge, who presented them. Each award was hand blown in the Seguso furnace on Murano, before being flown to London for the evening.

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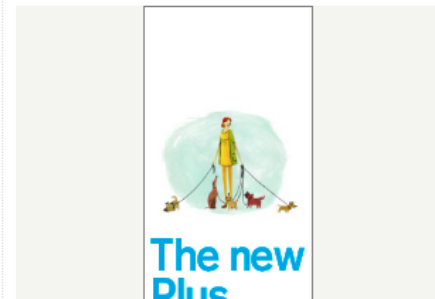
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