

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

County Council joins forces with ChildLine

A new partnership between East Sussex County Council and the charity ChildLine will create a ground-breaking peer support programme in the county's schools.

The new support programme will see young people trained to help each other in preventing and dealing with bullying and other issues. The CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) programme builds on work already being done throughout the county by the county council's anti-bullying team.

The CHIPS work, which covers a whole range of activities from peer befriending to peer mediation, will enable the anti-bullying team and schools to work more closely to consolidate existing peer support work. The scheme will provide access to additional expertise and resources and ChildLine accreditation for schools and young people involved in peer support activities.

Lynette Fitzell, Senior Training Coordinator with the council's anti-bullying team said: "We know that young people are more likely to turn to other young people for support when they experience bullying than to adults. This work is about providing children and young people with a range of skills to support each other better."

Work to identify the first wave of secondary schools is already well underway. Each school will examine their particular needs, and decide on the peer support strategy which best meet those needs. Once this initial work is completed, training will be

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provided to children and young people, and a staff member (whether that be a teacher, learning mentor, counsellor or school nurse) who will provide supervision for the peer supporters.

Lindsay Gilbert, Head of the CHIPS program at ChildLine, said: “Recently secured funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) means ChildLine can work in more innovative ways with individual local authorities to deliver a range of peer support work. We are really excited to be working with East Sussex, and feel that this partnership approach will prove to be a model of best practice with the potential to be adopted in other local authorities.”

Ratton Secondary School in Eastbourne saw the potential of peer support early on, with over 30 young people successfully trained in peer listening and befriending skills. Peer supporters have already made a positive start to the new academic year by helping to support the new Year 7 pupils settle in at the school.

David Linsell, head teacher, said: “I am very proud of the work of our peer supporters who never cease to amaze me with their enthusiasm compassion and maturity. They are young leaders making a real difference to the lives of others.”

Cllr David Elkin, the county council’s Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness said: “This is yet another example of the excellent work being developed in East Sussex to address bullying behaviour. Of course it does not remove the vital responsibility of schools to tackle such issues but it recognises that children and young people want to help each other. Those directly involved in peer support training are being taught important life skills to resolve conflict, offer support, and help other young people to make friends.”

Ends

Notes for editors

If you would like to know more about this work please contact Lynette Fitzell or John Khan, Head of Service, Anti-Bullying Team, on tel: 01323 747 081 or Tracy Cadman, Communications Manager at ChildLine on tel: 01293 651841.

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