



Partnership for Children
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Registered Charity Number 1089810



MISSION

To help children and young people, throughout the world, develop skills which will enhance their present and future emotional wellbeing.

Norwegian government gives Zippy top marks

Norway's National Directorate for Education and Training has endorsed the expansion of Zippy's Friends to primary schools across the country.

At a press conference in Oslo on October 12, the Directorate announced the results of its review of 29 mental health and social competence programmes for children of all ages. Many programmes were rejected and some were deferred for further consideration, but Zippy's venner was one of 11 to be recommended to schools.

The Directorate commended the programme for being research based and having documented benefits for children, and said that Voksne for Barn, the agency that manages Zippys venner, had a sound strategy for implementing the programme. The Directorate added that a full Norwegian evaluation of its impact on children was now needed.

'With this proviso, we recommend this programme for use in Norwegian schools,' it said.

Zippy's venner is already expanding steadily in Norway. Only five schools took part in the first pilot, but 26 joined last year and the number has doubled to 50 this year. Teacher training workshops have recently been held in Rogaland, Oppland, North Nordland and South Trøndelag, and the programme is to be included in the next National Action Plan on mental health in schools.

Norway differs from other countries in that, in addition to teachers, school nurses are involved in the delivery of Zippy's venner.



One nurse commented: 'I find that often older pupils come to me with something on their mind, without being able to put it into words. Only when I give them alternatives do they nod and accept the words that fit. It is often a matter of painful feelings in connection with divorce, like loss and guilt. A programme like Zippys venner trains pupils to put words to

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Norway's National Directorate for Education and Training

feelings. This makes it easier for kids to deal with feelings, and easier for us to help those who may need help.'

Nina Grindheim of Voksne for Barn, who manages the programme nationwide, said that it has been widely welcomed.

'Teachers, school nurses, educational psychologists, parents and children – everybody thinks that Zippy is a great programme, and in Norway that sort of multi-disciplinary support is very helpful,' she said.

A Norwegian evaluation, as recommended by the Directorate, is now being planned by the Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, under the leadership of Prof Mette Ystgaard, who also worked on a major evaluation of Zippy's Friends in Denmark and Lithuania five years ago. The Norwegian study will be the most comprehensive yet, following 1,500 children over four years and gathering data from children, teachers and parents. It will look not only at the effects on individual children, but also at whether the programme improves the learning environment in the classroom.

'We also want to see whether particular groups of children benefit more than others,' said Prof Ystgaard. 'This will tell us how successful the programme is not only when the teachers are enthusiastic but across all schools. Does it work in everyday life in everyday schools, or is it exclusively for those schools that are interested and supportive?'

Norway is one of ten countries where Zippy's Friends is now running.

Voksne for Barn's website has more information (in Norwegian) about Zippys venner and the Directorate's review – www.vfb.no/xp/pub/topp/prosjekter/zippy2/zippys_venner_bakgrunn/123142.



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