



## Including children with learning difficulties

**H**undreds of new resources have been developed to make it easier for children with learning difficulties to be included in *Zippy's Friends*.

The programme, which helps children to develop coping and social skills, was originally developed for children in mainstream classes, but tests showed that it could also be adapted to help those with learning difficulties.

So, over the past two years, all sorts of adaptations have been produced and piloted in schools. Some of the new resources are designed to help children who have special needs but who are integrated into mainstream classes, while others are for children who have more severe and complex needs and study in special schools.

The supplementary resources include: ideas and advice for teachers; activities which can be used with whole classes, small groups or in



one-to-one sessions; dozens of visual aids; games; social skills stories; stickers; and pocket cards to remind children of what they have learned. There is even a CD of all the *Zippy's Friends* stories read by one of Britain's leading actors, Sir Derek Jacobi, to help children who want to listen to them again and again.

Project Co-ordinator Caroline Lifford, who has herself given classroom support to children with special needs, said that the project's biggest challenge was to cater for children with a very wide range of abilities and disabilities.

'One of the remarkable things about *Zippy's Friends* is that the same programme can be taught to children in different countries and cultures, and we know from evaluation studies that the results are consistently positive,' she said.

'But the phrase 'special needs' covers many learning difficulties and so we've had to produce a huge range of resources. For instance, each of the six stories in *Zippy's Friends* has had to

be adapted for four different levels of comprehension.'

Currently the various resources are being trialled in 12 mainstream and 11 special schools. Teachers are giving feedback and Caroline has also been visiting classes, to see at first hand how things are going. The resources will then be refined in the light of the trials, with the aim of making them available to schools across the UK from September. Teacher training courses will be organised, and international rollout will follow.

This work has been made possible by generous support from HSBC Global Education Programme, the National Association of Independent Schools and Non-Maintained Special Schools (NASS), The Eranda Foundation, The Funding Network, and The Bailly Thomas Charitable Fund.

### Rules for Choosing a Good Solution

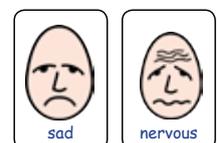
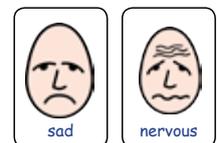
- It makes me feel better



- It doesn't hurt me or anyone else



### Expressions Task - Nervous



## News from around the world

- In the **US**, *Zippy's Friends* has recently been listed on the federal government's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP). This is an important validation and paves the way for expansion beyond the current programme, which is limited to New Jersey.

- A study now getting underway at the National University of **Ireland**, Galway, will look at how *Zippy's Friends* is being implemented in Ireland, six years after it was launched there. The study is being overseen by Prof Margaret Barry, Head of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Promotion Research and a Trustee of Partnership for Children.



- Following success in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing, *Zippy's Friends* is now running in a fourth city in **China** – Tianjin. A total of 100 teachers in 30 kindergartens started to run the programme late last year. Sponsorship is again coming from HSBC.

- Dr Pranas Gudynas, Chair of Vaiko Labui, the agency which runs *Zippy's Friends* in **Lithuania**,

recently presented the results of a study into the impact of programmes which promote children's mental health. They show that skills taught in *Zippy's Friends* enable children to feel good in school and suffer less bullying, and that, four years after they completed the programme, its impact on children is perceptible and statistically significant.

- We have a new partner agency in **Argentina** – SER+. For the past three years, *Los Amigos de Zippy* has been run successfully by an agency called Lekotek, but co-ordinator Gabriela Oller and a colleague have now set up their own agency and taken over the licence. HSBC is continuing to fund the programme.

## Annual Review

**O**ur latest Annual Review not only reports on our work in the past year but also marks our tenth anniversary. In the past decade, more than 700,000 children have completed *Zippy's Friends* in 26 countries. Yet, while enrolment has risen throughout the past ten years, we actually spent 15% less in 2011 than we did in 2002.

You can read the Review online [here](#) or we will be happy to send you a hard copy – just call or email us with your address.



## Charity comments on global action plan

**T**he World Health Organisation recently invited Partnership for Children to comment on its draft Global Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020.

The plan's focus is on the gap between the incidence and treatment of mental illness, but we called for much more emphasis to be placed on mental health promotion, especially for children and young people. Quite apart from the human benefits, many studies have now shown that health promotion is much more cost-effective than treatment.

Drawing on our own international experience with *Zippy's Friends*, we pointed out that even children as young as four or five can learn coping and social skills which will help them to cope with difficulties in their lives. We also encouraged more co-operation between the Health and Education sectors.

With *Zippy's Friends* now helping children in 27 countries, Partnership for Children is able to speak with confidence and credibility on the importance of promoting children's mental health, and this will be an increasing priority for us over the next two years.

### Please contact us if you would like more information

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