



Major new study confirms benefits of Zippy's Friends

The biggest ever evaluation of *Zippy's Friends* has confirmed that children taking part in the programme significantly improve their coping and social skills. It also found that the programme increases academic skills, reduces bullying and, in a new finding, improves the social climate in the classroom.

The study was conducted in Norway by a team from the Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health. With the support of the country's Directorate of Health, *Zippy's Friends* has spread widely across Norway in recent years and now benefits over 25,000 children each year.

The study itself involved nearly 1,500 children in a randomised controlled trial, making it the largest and most rigorous evaluation of the programme so far. Ninety-one second grade classes in 35 schools took part, including urban and rural schools

from the north, middle and south of Norway. The team used more sensitive measures than previous studies, to ensure that the results were as accurate as possible. Responses from children, teachers and parents were collected and

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analysed before and after the programme was run.

The study made a number of positive findings. The main aim of *Zippy's Friends* is to increase children's repertoire of coping strategies, and the study found significant effects here, particularly with girls and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Teachers assessed that children's academic skills had been increased by their participation, and also reported a significant reduction in bullying.

Finally, the study found that the social climate in the classroom had been improved.

Programme Director Caroline Eggar welcomed this new finding.

'Teachers have often told us that *Zippy's Friends* improves

relationships in the classroom and leads to children co-operating more and helping each other, and this study shows conclusively that that's true,' she said.

Hilde Randgaard, who co-ordinates *Zippy's Friends* in Norway, also welcomed the study's findings.

'They're helpful on two levels,' she said. 'The emphasis in Norwegian school politics these days is on developing a good psychological and social environment for children, free from bullying. Yet at the same time the importance of high academic achievement is also strongly emphasized. So these strong results, which show that academic achievements are linked to children's social and emotional wellbeing, are very valuable.'

For more information about the Norwegian evaluation on our website, [click here](#).

There has also been further recognition of the value of *Zippy's Friends* for Norwegian children. The programme is one of only six to be listed in the top grade of mental health promotion programmes by the University of Tromsø.



Iron man Steve

Supporter Steve Tyler, who celebrated 2012 by setting out to raise £2,012 for us through a succession of physical challenges, can finally take a rest.

His gruelling schedule of triathlons, marathons, half marathons and open water swimming races culminated recently with marathons in Miami and Copenhagen and a so-called Half Ironman in the UK. By the time Steve crossed the line of the last event – exhausted but happy after swimming 1.9kms, cycling 92kms and running a half marathon (21.1kms) in 5 hours 40 minutes! – he had reached his fund raising target.

'I feel very proud to have raised money for such a good cause and have been humbled at the backing I have received from friends, family and other supporters of Partnership for Children,' he said. 'Whenever the going got tough, one of the key motivations for keeping my legs pumping was the knowledge that I was helping children.'

You can donate online and read more about Steve's extraordinary efforts at www.stevevs2012.co.uk.



Beating bullying

Romutė Petkūnaitė, who teaches *Zippy's Friends* at a kindergarten in Lithuania, explains how the programme helped one boy in her class.

Tadas was very quiet, even timid. His mother trusted him very much and so let him play in the yard with older friends without any fears. No one saw anything bad in that, and the mother was happy that her son had friends. However, when he joined Zippy's Friends, the truth came out.

One day we were talking about bullying. Tadas was especially silent during that session. Later, when he went back home, he asked his mom to talk with him, and it was then that she learned the shocking truth. It turned out that the older boys were sneering at him, bullying and abusing him, and he hadn't told anyone because he felt intimidated. During the session he learned that nobody has the right to bully other people and that he has to ask for help if he is bullied. Only then did he dare to open up.



More than 4,000 children are taking part in *Zippy's Friends* this year in Mauritius. The programme was launched there in 2009, and a study is being made to assess its impact over the past five years.

Books balanced after tough year

We spent 14 per cent less in 2012 than we did ten years earlier in 2002 – even though we helped many more children.

Total income for the year was £319,558 and expenditure was £317,140, leaving a modest surplus of £2,418. That compared to a deficit of £10,078 in 2011.

Director Chris Bale said: 'It was a fair result in difficult economic times. Total expenditure was equivalent to just £2.08 for each child who completed *Zippy's Friends* during the year, our lowest figure ever.

'Having said that, the outlook for 2013 is very challenging. We've got our costs well under control – in fact, we've just won a rent reduction on our office – but fund raising this year is proving to be really tough.'

Cheques in support of our work can be sent to our office (right) or you can donate online at www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk.

Please contact us if you would like more information

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