



Information on Training in the FRIENDS Programmes for Primary and Post Primary Teachers in DEIS Schools 2018-2019

About the **FRIENDS** Programmes

'**Fun FRIENDS**', '**FRIENDS for Life**' and '**My FRIENDS Youth**' are evidence-based anxiety prevention and resilience building programmes developed by Dr Paula Barrett in Australia. The programmes have an international evidence base, and the FRIENDS for Life programme has been cited by the WHO (2004) as a prevention programme for anxiety in children that is effective at all levels of intervention.

The 10 session FRIENDS' programmes complement the SPHE curriculum. They help students, aged 4-16/17 years, to develop resilience by teaching them effective strategies to cope with the normal everyday challenges they face and by helping them to develop effective coping and problem-solving skills to manage emotional distress, including worry, stress, change and anxiety. Skills learned throughout the programme help students both now and in later life. Professor Paul Cooper and Barbara Jacobs, University of Leicester, authors of the NCSE commissioned research Report No. 7: *Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Children with Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Difficulties: An International Review* (2011), recommended the FRIENDS Programmes as a cost effective intervention that could be delivered by teachers in schools.

In order to deliver the programmes, teachers must attend an accredited training. NEPS psychologists deliver this training over two days. Following training, teachers can register as certified facilitators with FRIENDS Resilience based in Brisbane. They may then order materials and access resources for running the programmes in their classrooms.

Under the **Action Plan for Education 2016-2019** and the **DEIS Action Plan 2017**, NEPS are continuing the roll-out of the FRIENDS programme to primary and post primary teachers, specifically targeting schools in the DEIS School Support Programme. Training in the Fun FRIENDS and FRIENDS for Life Programmes will be delivered to Primary School Teachers and Training in the FRIENDS for Life and My FRIENDS Youth Programmes will be delivered to Post Primary School Teachers.

Who should attend?

Class teachers, special education teachers, principals, SPHE teachers and guidance counsellors will all benefit from attending training. Primary and post-primary schools should, as far as possible, facilitate a minimum of two teachers attending a programme.

Costs: The Department of Education and Skills will cover the cost of teacher substitution and lunches for the training. The DES does not cover the cost of programme materials for teachers or pupils. The current cost per facilitator manual is c. €16.00. The activity book cost ranges from c. €11 to c. €14.00 euros per participant (depending on the programme and exchange rate on date of purchase). Every child must have their own book. Schools will need to have considered the cost of programme implementation prior to application for training places.

FRIENDS Resilience no longer allows manuals or activity books to be supplied as part of training for teachers. Following training Schools and/or trained facilitators will need to order facilitator manuals and activity books for each pupil directly.

NEPS Evaluation of the ‘*FRIENDS for Life*’ Programme 2013-2014: Twenty seven primary schools from across Ireland took part in the study. The sample included DEIS, non-DEIS, urban, rural, mixed and single sex schools. 57 teachers and 709 pupils aged 9-13 took part in the study. The study examined universal classroom delivery of the programme. Teachers were trained and supported by NEPS psychologists to deliver the programme. The effects of the programme on Anxiety, Self-concept, Coping Efficacy and School Connectedness were examined. Following the programme, pupils demonstrated a statistically significant reduction in anxiety as rated by their parents, and in specific types of anxiety, as rated by the pupils themselves. In addition, there were statistically significant increases in measures of self-concept, coping efficacy and school connectedness, which were chosen as markers of resilience. Qualitative data indicated that the *FRIENDS for Life* programme was very positively evaluated by children, parents and teachers.

NBSS Evaluation of the ‘*FRIENDS for Life*’ Programme 2012: The ‘*FRIENDS for Life*’ programme was introduced to 14 post-primary NBSS partner schools as a Level 1 whole school support and a Level 2 targeted intervention. The schools that participated in the ‘*FRIENDS for Life*’ National Project were geographically distributed and included single sex as well as co-ed student populations. Of the 14 schools, two adopted a “universal approach” teaching the programme to all first year students (one a boys’ school, one a girls’ school). The remaining 12 schools elected to focus on small groups of first year students some of whom had elevated anxiety levels. The findings from the research project demonstrated significant reductions in anxiety levels following the ‘*FRIENDS for Life*’ programme. Positive gains in young people’s emotional wellbeing, reported in previous Irish and international research, were confirmed by students and their parents in both universal and small group settings in post-primary schools geographically distributed across Ireland. Learn more about NEPS and NBSS research on *FRIENDS for Life* at the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHYNhUlyyPA>.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9ixEqO1h-I>

See Irish Primary and Post Primary **teachers/principals’ reflections** on the *FRIENDS for Life* programmes at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDj1ny98hp0>