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The Duchess of Cambridge and John Bishop visit school counselling programme focused on tackling the cycle of addiction

Project funded by Comic Relief and The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry

Today (Tuesday 1st July) The Duchess of Cambridge and comedian John Bishop visited The Blessed Sacrament School, Islington to visit the M-PACT Plus project and to hear how the programme is progressing following its launch last year.

Created and funded by Comic Relief and The Royal Foundation, the project focuses on a partnership between Place2Be and Action on Addiction and is a major initiative to provide early support for children, parents and families affected by parental drug and alcohol misuse.

The Duchess of Cambridge attended an M-PACT Plus steering group meeting to discuss progress made so far across the programme and specifically in the four initial pilot sites: Manchester and Salford; the North East; London and Essex, before a meeting with head teachers and a private meeting with children in a school-based mental health support session.

Her Royal Highness then joined John Bishop to meet M-PACT Plus practitioners, supporters and members of The Blessed Sacrament school community to hear speeches and more from head teachers about what the programme means for their local schools and communities.

It is estimated that three million children in the UK are living with parental drug and alcohol misuse. This new partnership has seen Place2Be school staff trained by Action on Addiction to identify and support families affected by these issues. A two-year programme is being piloted in four areas of England, with the aim of larger scale delivery of the programme in schools in the future. The partnership combines Place2Be's expertise in providing emotional and mental health services in schools for children and parents, with the expertise of Action on Addiction's 'Moving Parents and Children Together' (M-PACT) programme, which takes a whole-family approach to tackling addiction.

The value of the programme being based in schools is that it provides an opportunity to identify and address the problems early on before it reaches crisis point and importantly, provides a means for ongoing support for the children as well as their parents.

Since the launch in April 2013:

- 44 schools have been able to refer children and their families on to the programme; eight in Manchester and seven in Salford; eleven in the North East (Durham, Sunderland and Northumberland); ten in London; and eight in Essex.
- A team of 24 practitioners based across the four pilot sites have been trained to deliver the accredited M-PACT programme. Place2Be practitioners bring added expertise in that they are all qualified counsellors.
- The teams have engaged with specialist local agencies to ensure there are good referral pathways both into and out of the programme.
- School staff have been trained to better understand drug and alcohol misuse, helping to identify children affected by this and to initiate conversations with parents around these sensitive issues. This is a vital part of the legacy of the programme, meaning school staff will have the ongoing capacity to do this.

Kevin Cahill, Chief Executive of Comic Relief said:

“Supporting those affected by addiction is a long-standing and important part of Comic Relief’s work. Children who are affected by parents with addiction are particularly vulnerable, so it’s fantastic to be here today to meet the people working hard to ensure that they and their families are getting the support that they need in school”

Nick Booth, Chief Executive of The Royal Foundation said:

‘Through this programme we are shining a light on the needs of children affected by the substance misuse of parents and carers. By equipping teachers and school staff with the skills and confidence to address these issues with children and families, we aim to demonstrate the value and importance of intervening early, reducing the long term impact on children, and enabling them to fulfil their potential in life.’

Nick Barton, Chief Executive of Action on Addiction, said:

“We are delighted with our partnership with Place2Be to deliver the M-PACT Plus project, which will allow M-PACT to reach even more of the children and families that need our help. Children of problem substance users are seven times more likely to develop problems themselves but can receive little support despite being so at risk. Our collaboration with Place2Be enables us to provide young people and families with the specialised support they need.

“We are extremely grateful to our patron, The Duchess of Cambridge, for attending today’s event and for her continued support of the charity’s work.”

Catherine Roche, Chief Executive of Place2Be said,

“We are absolutely delighted and privileged that The Duchess of Cambridge is attending today’s M-PACT Plus steering group to discuss our progress in tackling the impact of parental drug and alcohol misuse on children.

“Place2Be works in schools in some of the most deprived areas of the UK and we see first-hand the urgent need to help children and families living with addiction. When we, together with the school are able to intervene early we can support children and enable more parents to tackle these issues, the whole family benefits from improved health and wellbeing and an improved ability to cope and succeed in their lives. This important collaboration, funded by The Royal Foundation and Comic Relief, means we are able to deepen our expertise in this area through our partnership with Action on Addiction.”

- Ends -

Spokespeople:

The Royal Foundation

Nick Booth, Chief Executive

Victoria Hornby, Director of Grants and Evaluation

Comic Relief

Kevin Cahill, Chief Executive

Gilly Green, Head of UK Grants

Place2Be

Catherine Roche, Chief Executive

Sarah Kendrick, Service Manager for Central London

Action on Addiction

Nick Barton, Chief Executive

Emma Bond, Project Manager M-PACT Plus

For more information contact:

Comic Relief

Lucy McGill, Media Manager

L.McGill@comicrelief.com

T: 020 7820 2500

Kensington Palace Press Office

Miss Katrina McKeever, Communications Officer

T: 020 7024 5940 M: 07702 267424

Place2Be

Charlotte Buxton, Press and PR Manager

T: 020 7923 5545 M: 07515 587 433

Charlotte.buxton@place2be.org.uk

Action on Addiction

Amanda Thomson, Communications and Research Manager

T: 020 7793 1011 M: 07825 620138

amanda.thomson@actiononaddiction.org.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Comic Relief

Comic Relief is a UK charity, which aims to create a just world, free from poverty. To date, Comic Relief has raised over £960million. That money has helped, and is helping, people living incredibly tough lives, both at home in the UK and across the world.

Comic Relief was launched on Christmas Day in 1985, live on BBC One. The idea was simple – Comic Relief would make the public laugh while inspiring them to give generously to help people in desperate need.

Before too long, Red Nose Day was created and the first ever event in 1988 raised a staggering £15million. Since then, it has become something of a British institution. To date, 14 Red Nose Days have raised more than £700million.

In 2002 Comic Relief created the first ever Sport Relief. Now one of the UK's biggest fundraising events, Sport Relief brings the entire nation together to get active, raise cash and change lives. Since 2002, seven Sport Reliefs have raised over £265million.

For information about Comic Relief and the work it carries out, please visit www.comicrelief.com

Comic Relief, registered charity 326568 (England/Wales); SC039730 (Scotland)

About The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry

Established in 2009 The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry has three core areas of focus:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Helping children and young people to build their skills, confidence and aspirations.

VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Promoting the welfare of those who are serving or have served their country in the Armed Forces.

CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Supporting communities to protect and conserve their natural resources for future generations.

Their Royal Highnesses intend to use The Royal Foundation as the main vehicle for their philanthropic activities and hope it will become a leading investor, effectively using its time and resources to create lasting change in target areas and geographies. Through seed funding, the Foundation's ability to raise awareness of important issues, and utilizing its leverage as a means to collaboration, The Royal Foundation believes it can make a valuable contribution to projects and issues of particular interest to The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry.

About Place2Be

Place2Be is the leading provider of integrated school-based mental health services supporting 80,000 children in 210 schools across the UK. Place2Be trains staff and volunteer counsellors to provide support for children, parents, teachers and school staff.

Place2Be works in some of the most deprived areas of the UK and helps children cope with a range of complex social issues including bullying, bereavement, domestic violence, family breakdown, neglect and trauma, enabling them to grow up with prospects, rather than problems.

About Action on Addiction

Action on Addiction is a national charity that works to find and disseminate ever more effective ways of disarming addiction in individuals, families, communities and society as a whole.

Uniquely, the Charity works across the addiction field from prevention to recovery, providing front-line services like treatment and recovery programmes and support for families and children, as well as research, professional education and campaigns.

Action on Addiction has designed and developed the Moving Parents and Children Together (M-PACT) programme which takes a whole family approach and brings different families together to support each other in understanding addiction and making changes to family life for the benefit of the children.

Action on Addiction will train, supervise and support Place2Be counsellors to deliver the programme in school settings across England.