

Press Release

Ten year old YAP (Youth Advocate Programmes) Ireland expands to deliver an intensive support programme for young people with autism

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(Embargo Thursday 8th November @ 0700hrs) Today on the occasion of its 10th Birthday and in recognition of the increasing incidence of mental health difficulties including autism, YAP Ireland has organised specialist training for staff to ensure the programme meets the needs of young people with a diagnosis on the autism spectrum. Established in 2002, YAP Ireland is already the leading provider of intensive support programmes for young people and families and now operates in 16 counties across the country in partnership with the HSE. The YAP Intensive Support Programme is provided for young people aged 10 -18 with very complex needs and are at high risk of placement in care, secure care and custody using a strengths based, family focused approach. Intensive support of up to 15 hours a week is provided by a community based trained advocate. Between January 2011 and June 2012, YAP Ireland provided intensive support for 462 young people and 116 of these had a diagnosis of mental health illness.

Speaking about the new training programme for staff working with young people with autism, Siobhan O'Dwyer, CEO YAP Ireland said "The incidence of autism is now believed to be 1 in 100 children occurring more frequently in males. In view of this, our vast expertise of supporting young people in the community setting and specific experience we are gaining in working with young people with an autism spectrum diagnosis, we decided to provide specialist training for staff. We are already working with a small number of young people in six counties and we are able to accept referrals from HSE Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams and Disability Teams and perhaps in time from parents of young people with autism spectrum disorders dependent on funding becoming available."

Jeff Fleischer, CEO, YAP Inc. USA who is in Dublin addressing the YAP Ireland 10th Birthday event said *"YAP Inc. which serves over 12,000 families and young people in over 18 states and 25 major US cities has had a very successful intensive support programme for young people at risk of out-of-home placement with autism since 1975. We have recently been training the YAP Ireland staff and advocates on how to deliver this kind of programme. During this training, we have focused on how lack of communications can manifest as challenging behaviours, the importance of presuming intellect rather than deficiency and how mutual engagement around a young person's interest can build trusting and powerful relationships amongst other topics. YAP Inc. is confident that YAP Ireland can rollout a successful intensive support programme for young people with autism."*

YAP Ireland will celebrate its 10th Birthday with an event in Dublin today. In addition to Siobhan O'Dwyer and Jeff Fleischer, other key speakers at the event will include Dr. Tony Bates, Director Headstrong, Mary Hargaden, HSE Area Manager Louth/Meath, and Tommy Linnane, Chair YAP Ireland Board. Presentations from young people, parents and Advocates will also take place.

At the 10th Birthday event, YAP Ireland will also reveal outcomes data it has collected on 426 young people who completed the six month intensive support programme between January 2011 and June 2012. The outcomes data showed the following;

- 218 (51%) of these young people reported mental health issues at the beginning of the programme but 83% of all young people on the programme reported an improvement in their mental health status at the end of the programme
- 56 (13%) of these young people reported self-harm behaviours at the beginning of the programme but 96% of all young people on the programme reported an improvement in this behaviour at the end of the programme
- 89 (20%) of these young people reported abusing substances at the beginning of the programme but 92% of all young people on the programme reported an improvement in this area at the end of the programme
- 82 (19%) of these young people reported domestic violence at the beginning of the programme but 92% of all young people on the programme reported an improvement in this area at the end of the programme
- 46 (10%) of these young people reported issues in their cooperation with the JLO/ Gardai at the beginning of the programme but 90% of all young people on the programme reported an improvement in this at the end of the programme

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