



## **Background on the work of York Youth Council on Mental Health and Well-being**

### **How did it all begin?**

York Youth Council recruits new members every September and each year they consult with the young people of York. With this information they decide on the campaigns for the year. In 2011-12, the young people focused on reviewing the PSHE curriculum in York's secondary schools and suggesting more relevant and engaging material for lessons. Within this review it was found that young people want to be taught about Emotional Health and Well-being, but this isn't being covered.

### **Child & Adult Mental Health Strategy Conference**

The Youth Council presented their findings at the CAMHS conference in February 2012. They shared the view that "There are lots of miserable people in my school". They highlighted the need for

- information on support services to be put in every child's school planner
- peer mentoring services – need to be properly supported by qualified staff, the school needs to allocate time and space
- lessons that educate everyone on how to stay mentally healthy and help friends when they are stressed
- accessible for support for under 16's
- support for victims of bullying

### **Focused work on emotional health and well-being**

The Youth Council worked with Kate Gibbon who is a Primary Mental Health Worker based at Castlegate. The young people shared their experiences of how issues such as family bereavement were or were not dealt with in school. From this the young people identified ways to improve school's approach to emotional healthy and well being.

- A scheme of work with six lessons for each of Years 7 – 11 was developed. The lessons explain where stress comes from and what you can do to manage stress and keep it at healthy level. This is prevention; young people get to work through

strategies for dealing with a crisis and shows young people how to support each other. They do not talk about different types of mental illness.

- A film was commissioned which explains the Risk and Resilience model (stress bag) and can be used in the lessons.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzGIXER5fdc>
- This work was shared with Lesley White (Healthy Schools and Risky Behaviour Consultant) who is supporting a group to develop a mental health toolkit for schools. It is hoped the scheme of work will be developed in to lessons for us in York's secondary schools.
- The Mentally Healthy School Charter has been developed to detail what strategies, resources and support systems should be in place in secondary schools. Schools should balance well-being with academic achievement. The Charter states that there should be mental health sessions in PSHE, so students can learn how to deal with a crisis and develop resilience. The Youth Council gave a presentation at the Headteacher's conference in January. Secondary schools were asked to complete a questionnaire, identifying which of the 12 actions on the Mentally Healthy School Charter they already do in school, so there is baseline data.
- To acknowledge the commitment of schools to develop emotionally supportive learning environments, a three level award is being created.
- The work undertaken in York is being share with the UK Youth Parliament as part of the Curriculum for Life Campaign.