



MEDIA RELEASE

David Cameron highlights ‘emotional journey’ parents’ face upon child’s epilepsy diagnosis as he launches new school building

Wednesday 28 February 2018

- Former Prime Minister, Rt. Hon David Cameron opened the new St Piers School building in Lingfield, Surrey following successful £5.63m capital fundraising appeal
- Mr Cameron is a Vice President of Young Epilepsy (who operate St Piers) and he supported the capital appeal launched by Samantha Cameron in 2011
- New research published today shows extent of stress, anxiety and depression amongst parents – particularly mothers - of children with epilepsy

Former UK Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. David Cameron, today visited Young Epilepsy in Lingfield, Surrey, to officially open the new St Piers School building.

Mr Cameron, who is a Vice-President of the charity, has praised the new building as a ‘school for the future’. His wife, Samantha, launched the capital appeal to help fund this school in May 2011 at Downing Street as part of National Epilepsy Week. Epilepsy is close to the couple’s heart as their late son, Ivan had highly complex epilepsy.

St Piers School educates more than 50 children with highly complex epilepsy and other neurological conditions. It offers brand new, state-of-the-art facilities including an Imaginarium and high-tech interactive rooms, ideal for those learning new cognitive skills.

Mr Cameron’s visit comes on the day when Young Epilepsy published the SEEN study (which stands for Sussex Early Epilepsy and Neurobehaviour) which highlights the impact of a child’s diagnosis on parents. The study finds:

- Mothers of children with epilepsy were significantly more likely to score in the ‘at risk’ range than fathers on depression (55% v 33%), anxiety (47% v 26%) and stress (55% v 31%).

- Mothers of children with epilepsy were also significantly more likely to score in the at-risk range than mothers of children with a neurodisability on measures of depression and stress.
- There is a need to explore what parent and/or child focussed interventions might be useful to reduce the mental health difficulties reported by mothers of young children with epilepsy.

The research was completed in partnership with UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, Great Ormond Street Hospital NHS Trust and the Child Development Centre at Crawley Hospital, West Sussex. All the parents who participated resided in the Sussex area.

St Piers was recently rated 'Good' by education regulator Ofsted.

David Cameron, former UK Prime Minister and Vice-President at Young Epilepsy, says:

"It's a huge privilege to open St Piers School today.

The new building and facilities are second-to-none, the staff are exceptional - and it was a real pleasure to see the impact on the learning and behaviour of the young people.

Samantha and I know first-hand from our much-loved son, Ivan, the emotional journey that parents go through when a child is diagnosed with epilepsy. Thanks to the hard work and research of Young Epilepsy we are learning more and more about this complex condition - and families are receiving that much needed reassurance that their loved ones are getting the appropriate care and support they deserve."

Carol Long, Chief Executive at Young Epilepsy, says:

"We'd like to thank David Cameron and all of the many generous donors who made our new St Piers school building possible. We take great pride in the quality of the education we provide to our young people and we take even greater pride in their development and achievements.

"Young Epilepsy has a proud 120 year history of supporting young people with epilepsy and we look forward to continuing to do so for many years to come."

Sir Gerald Acher, President at Young Epilepsy, says:

"St Piers School looks absolutely magnificent and has facilities many schools could only dare to dream of. I am delighted that David Cameron was able to open the school, and I am thankful to him and the many generous donors and contributors who made the capital appeal such a success and helped to ensure that young people for years to come will benefit from these incredible facilities."

Jane Ramsey, Chair of Trustees at Young Epilepsy, says:

“The SEEN study highlights the importance of the work Young Epilepsy do in ensuring young people and their loved ones receive the right support at home and elsewhere. For our former Prime Minister, David Cameron, to approve this vital research as part of the opening of St Piers School speaks high volumes, and we’re delighted to be linking the two together.”

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Link to images of David Cameron’s visit:

<https://wettransfer.com/downloads/764cf2a8196f80a05cfc3ee00a3d0a7b20180228131730/9e815673e7bebb3f789b5aacee5640b020180228131730/0362d4>

Link to SEEN Study:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S152550501730879X>

About Young Epilepsy:

Young Epilepsy is the national charity working on behalf of children and young people with epilepsy. Epilepsy affects 112,000 children and young people aged 25 and under in the UK, and the charity supports them in addition to their loved ones, and education and healthcare professionals nationwide.

With 120 years of experience we are a leading provider of specialist health and education services, the charity offers support, information, and training for health, social care and education professionals and campaigns to improve access to, and quality of, health and education services.

Epilepsy is the most common serious neurological condition in childhood. On average one child at every primary school and five at every secondary school will have been diagnosed with epilepsy.

For more information on research at Young Epilepsy, visit youngepilepsy.org.uk/research.

If you need support or information, please contact our helpline on 01342 831342 or email helpline@youngepilepsy.org.uk. For further information on Young Epilepsy, please visit: www.youngepilepsy.org.uk

About St Piers School:

St Piers School is part of the Young Epilepsy family. It educates more than 50 children and young people aged between five and 19 years who have highly complex epilepsy and other neurological conditions.

St Piers is funded by Local Authorities. The school has been rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted (November 2017).

For more, visit: www.school.youngpilepsy.org.uk

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