Press Release For Immediate Use.

Work of local Charity supported by Awards for All

Portsmouth Disability Forum (PDF) was delighted to receive a grant of £9,799 toward their volunteer project School Special Educational Needs Champions (School SEN Champions). Lynne Rigby Principal Officer said ‘we are so pleased to have the funds to continue our work’, School SEN Champions support parents of children with special educational needs who are in mainstream schools. The project was initiated by PDF in 2016 in response to SEN reforms introduced by the Government in 2014. School SEN Champions support parents of children with special educational needs who are in mainstream schools. The champions;

- provide a listening ear
- provide a reliable source of support and can sign post effectively
- they bring parents together to enable them to support and learn from each other
- and have a good understanding of the school, its policies and procedures and work closely with the SENCO

Each Champion aims to, amongst other things:

- Empower parents, build their confidence and enable them to be actively involved in the decision making for their children and young people

- Understand the environment of SEND in Portsmouth, the local SEND Strategy and its’ restraints

- Develop a culture of positivity and achievement and parent to parent support to reduce parental isolation

- Build the confidence of parent and carers in using the ‘local offer’ to find information on what is available to benefit their family

- Help parents understand the opportunities available to them to work alongside Education, Health and Social care

'We currently have fourteen active Champions working in a variety of primary and secondary schools across the city, with this additional funding we aim to increase by at least 100% if not more’ says Lynne.
Parents who have already benefited from the project say -
“Such a good idea and I no longer feel alone in the playground as I have met other parents who were struggling just like me.”

“Before meeting my SEN Champion I was unable to keep up with what happened in the school. As it’s a secondary school you very rarely see a teacher and everything is online. My school champion helped me to work through the email set up and now I have open communication with his teachers. This has reassured us all as a family that we are able to get support when needed and my child now is able to complete homework as I now understand how to access it and help him if he gets stuck.”

The project provides all the training required and continues to support the volunteers during their volunteering experience. They will be putting on the next induction training mid-January 2019.

If you are interested in hearing more email Kara Jewell co-ordinator - engagementofficer@p-d-f.org.uk

Notes to editor

**Portsmouth Disability Forum** works;
‘To promote the care, welfare, interest, education and advancement of disabled people their families and personal assistants and their independence and inclusion within the community of Portsmouth and the surrounding areas’.

It aims

- To be the independent umbrella organisation of and for disability organisations and disabled people in Portsmouth.

- To be an expert voice of and for disabled people by lobbying, campaigning and through consultation and partnership with any appropriate body both locally and nationally.

- To promote awareness of disability issues.

For more information please contact Lynne Rigby Principal Officer on 023 9281 5266