

Monday 17 June 2019

# HeadStart Heads Up

**What are local HeadStart partnerships doing to support the mental health of children and young people aged 10 to 16?**

## Key Policy Findings

- 1. Five types of interventions for young people that have been put in place by HeadStart partnerships are outlined here. They may be a useful way of considering other community interventions being trialled to compare across initiatives.**
- 2. Future data that is being collected by the HeadStart Learning Team may highlight which of these approaches has most impact.**



## The HeadStart Programme

Started in 2016, HeadStart is a five-year, £58.7 million National Lottery funded programme set-up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It aims to explore and test new ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10 to 16 and prevent serious mental health issues from developing.

To do this, six local authority-led HeadStart partnerships are working with local young people, schools, families, charities, community and public services to design and try out new interventions that will make a difference to young people's mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

## What is this briefing?

**Heads Up** is a new briefing for policy makers based on learning from the evaluation of HeadStart, one of the biggest ongoing interventions and studies of young people's resilience in the world.

It aims to provide up-to-date policy implications emerging from this pioneering evaluation at the forefront of child mental health research.

**Heads Up** will be emailed to those signed up at the beginning of every other month.

The HeadStart partnerships are in the following locations in England:

1. Blackpool
2. Cornwall
3. Hull
4. Kent
5. Newham
6. Wolverhampton.

In the first year, five of the six partnerships ran interventions. Overall there were 58 interventions from 5 local areas (15 from Blackpool, 4 from Cornwall, 12 from Hull, 19 from Kent, and 8 from Newham). The overall aim of the interventions were to help young people and their families to cope better with mental health difficulties, prevent mental difficulties for young people, improve mental wellbeing of young people and to support those young people who are already experiencing mental health difficulties.

The majority of the interventions were directed towards children and young people and aimed to provide skills, and change behaviours and attitudes that are important in children's social and emotional life. Mostly they were delivered face-to-face by the local authorities. While there were common goals and similar delivery methods to the interventions, many partnerships opted for innovative interventions and involved young people in the co-design, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of the services. Examples of interventions include but were not limited to peer support training, mindfulness sessions, one-to-one counselling and equine therapy.

The Evidence Based Practice Unit at the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families and UCL is working with The National Lottery Community Fund and the HeadStart partnerships to collect and evaluate evidence about changes in young people's mental health over time and whether the interventions being put in place are making a difference.

Partners working with the Evidence Based Practice Unit on this evaluation include the Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC), Common Room and the University of Manchester.

## Background to this briefing

Across the five HeadStart areas who had begun to deliver their interventions by the end of the academic year 2016/17, key information about each intervention was collected by the partnerships and sent to the HeadStart Learning Team.

The information collected related to:

1. The main outcome the intervention was hoping to achieve. Either to:
  - a. *increase wellbeing*
  - b. *reduce onset of mental health problems*
  - c. *increase school attainment or to reduce risky behaviour*
  - d. *or to improve employability.*
2. Whether the intervention was aimed at:
  - a. *all young people*
  - b. *those with certain attributes that made them potentially vulnerable*
  - c. *just those with an existing specific problem.*
3. What activities were involved in the intervention.
4. How the interventions were delivered e.g. face-to-face or online.

## Analysis

The information gathered about the interventions was entered into a cluster analysis. Cluster analysis aims to find commonalities between groups.

On this occasion, it enabled us to group the HeadStart interventions by their similarities, giving us five coherent and discrete subgroups of interventions.



## Findings

Following the cluster analysis, five discrete types of intervention emerged:

### 1. Whole-school wellbeing promotion

*Overall 6 interventions were clustered in this group.*

These interventions tend to be preventative, whole-school approaches with a high degree of young person involvement. They are often creative-type activities, delivered to groups of young people.

Please see an example intervention below:

#### **Bounce Forward, HeadStart Blackpool**

*Bounce Forward is a classroom based course, delivered to Year 5 pupils as part of the curriculum to prepare them for their transition to secondary school.*

*The intervention consists of ten weekly activity-based sessions which involve the family as well as the pupils. It uses examples and concepts that the young people relate to in order to support them to build resilience.*



### 2. Staff training

*Overall 15 interventions were clustered in this group.*

Interventions in this group usually comprise staff training or supervision at school.

Please see an example intervention below:

#### **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Training, HeadStart Kent**

*YMHFA is a face-to-face and online training course for teachers and youth workers being delivered in primary schools, secondary schools and youth/community hubs. Staff learn how to :*

- 1. spot the early signs of a mental health issue and feel confident to provide first response help*
- 2. help protect a young person who might be at risk of harm*
- 3. help prevent a mental health issue from getting worse, guide the young person towards support and help them to recover faster*
- 4. reduce stigma.*

### 3. Targeted wellbeing interventions

*Overall 27 interventions were clustered in this group.*

Specific help delivered directly to those with identified problems to increase their wellbeing.

Please see an example intervention below:

#### **More than Mentors, HeadStart Newham**

*A peer-to-peer mentoring programme over 10 to 12 1.5-hour weekly sessions aiming to improve resilience, build confidence and gain problem solving and goal setting skills.*

*Supported and supervised by a trained Youth Practitioner and Mental Health Practitioner, pupils in years 9 and 10 can train to be a mentor, and pupils in years 7 and 8 can sign up as a mentee.*

*Each session entails group activities and 1:1 mentoring. Mentors work through a toolkit with their mentee which explores focus areas and goal-setting around wellbeing and emotional resilience.*

## 4. Targeted mental health interventions

*Overall 6 interventions were clustered in this group.*

Interventions in this group usually comprise specific help delivered directly to those with identified problems.

They aim to reduce the onset of mental health problems and risky behaviours, and boost school engagement.

They also aim for a specific outcome other than wellbeing, such as reduction of self-harm in the example below.

### Facilitator one-to-one support, HeadStart Kernow

*The youth facilitator intervention is one-to-one support for children and young people (CYP). CYP can be referred from a range of sources including by professionals (e.g. youth/community workers), and by parents/carers.*

*CYP engaged by this intervention are both school and non-school attendees. The intervention is delivered through a commissioned organisation called The Learning Partnership.*

*Their partner organisations provide staff akin to youth support workers to work with referred CYP for 12 individual sessions.*



## 5. Parent/carer interventions

*Overall 4 interventions were clustered in this group.*

Specific forms of help delivered directly to parents and carers.

Please see an example intervention below:

### Parenting Group Work Programmes, HeadStart Hull

*Parenting support is provided by HeadStart Hull's Parenting Practitioners. It aims to help parents to provide emotional warmth, stability and consistency, to empower their children to grow into healthy young adults.*

*The programme consists of group work projects including 'Strengthening Families 10-14' and 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities (SFSC)'.*

*The projects also offer up to five sessions of one-to-one support before and after the course to help parents to access courses.*