

Learning from HeadStart

Update #2: Findings from interviews with HeadStart staff members

January 2018

HeadStart

HeadStart is a five-year programme set up by Big Lottery Fund which aims to improve the mental wellbeing of 10 to 16 year olds and prevent serious mental health issues before they develop.

Using National Lottery funding, HeadStart partnerships in Blackpool, Cornwall, Hull, Kent, Newham and Wolverhampton are piloting new approaches to build young people's emotional resilience.

A wide range of interventions are being trialled in schools and the community at each site.



School interventions include whole school, year group and class level support, such as education around what mental health is and what to do when experiencing a mental health problem.

Other interventions, such as one-to-one counselling sessions, are for particular groups of young people e.g. those who are at higher risk of developing a mental health problem.

Find out more:

www.annafreud.org/about-us/partnerships-collaborations/headstart

The Learning Team

Dr Jessica Deighton at the Evidence Based Practice Unit (EBPU) is leading a consortium of partners to evaluate and share learning from HeadStart between 2016-23.



Partners include Common Room, The University of Manchester, the Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC) and LSE.

The team is using a mixture of questionnaire and interview methods.

Young people complete questionnaires every year to help track changes in how they are feeling and behaving over time. Professionals provide information regularly about what is being offered.

Professionals and young people take part in interviews annually to explore challenges and opportunities around delivery and what young people find helpful.

HeadStart Year 1: National Qualitative Evaluation Findings

22 staff working on HeadStart at the six partnerships were interviewed by the Learning Team, led by Dr Emily Stapley, to understand the challenges they have faced so far in the delivering the HeadStart programme and solutions to these challenges.

Interviewees included the programme lead from each partnership and a range of school, digital, coproduction and project leads.

15 key challenges were identified. Seven of the most prevalent of these challenges, in terms of how many of the staff members spoke about them, are shown in the mindmap overleaf.

The challenge identified by all was working with schools. This related to how to engage schools with the programme and how to maintain consistent programme implementation. Key solutions to this suggested by the staff members included encouraging ownership of the programme by schools, acknowledging that a 'one size fits all' approach to programme delivery may not be feasible for schools, and keeping administrative burden on schools as low as possible.

The full report can be found on the HeadStart Learning Team page on www.ucl.ac.uk/ebpu

