

# Local Evaluation Qualitative Insight Report

## HeadStart Year 1 – School Implementation Interviews

April 2018

### Introduction

This document summarises learning from the second wave of interviews with HeadStart secondary schools. The interviews were conducted with school staff to primarily discuss the implementation of HeadStart Kent (HSK) and explore certain elements of the programme, with the view to learn what is working and identify any opportunities for change. Findings are based on eight in-depth interviews across four HSK schools.

### Schools introduction to HeadStart

Staff recalled feelings of excitement when asked about their initial expectations of the programme, particularly in relation to staff training. The assistance from the HeadStart team was described as supportive and helpful and schools also explained how they had been assisting each other within the network of HSK schools. However, the HSK model was described as broad by staff in alternative provision schools and not inclusive of the needs of all students.

### Student needs and involvement in HeadStart

There were common themes across the schools when discussing the level of need and challenges faced by students. The main issues affecting their wellbeing were described as self-harm, depression anxiety and lack of confidence. Students were described as being academically able but having emotional issues, with most able students sometimes demonstrating the highest need. Staff also raised that students need someone to talk to. The level of involvement of students with HSK varied, with those already linked to interventions that support emotional wellbeing, and students who sit on school councils, most likely associated with the programme's development. The HSK Participation Workers were said to be valuable in facilitating the involvement and voice of students.

### Approach to wellbeing in schools

The support in place for students with emotional wellbeing issues and how schools currently approach wellbeing was varied. Staff described how a majority of the model of support suggested by HSK is already in place within the schools, however, they recognised that it was not as structured. Schools explained how HSK was running alongside already established systems in place to support students.

### HeadStart influence and supporting tools / training

Having the opportunity to meet as a community to discuss emotional wellbeing was seen by schools as a benefit of being involved with HSK. The tools and resources provided by the programme, such as the Resilience Toolkit, are being utilised by staff and the training well received. However, the difficulty in leaving school to attend training was expressed by staff. The receipt of daily notifications of domestic abuse incidents was described by one staff member as shaping the way they deal with safeguarding in school.

### Domains Based Conversations and putting them into practice

The conversations were regarded as a useful tool by staff, with the documentation described as user friendly and visually pleasing. However, there was a general view that, if done properly, Domains Based Conversations took a long time to carry out and some staff expressed they were unable to do them in addition to their teaching role and were sometimes difficult to use in reactive situations. Suggested improvements were providing practical techniques, such as workshops, 'how-to' guides, scenarios and videos for staff to access.

### Wellbeing Measurement Framework

The advantage of having survey results available to identify wellbeing issues within the school and to use as evidence to show improvements around emotional wellbeing was recognised by one school. Staff reflected on various challenges in completing the survey, with these varying depending on school designation.

### Conclusion

Schools see the benefit of being involved with HSK and are using the tools, resources and structured support offered through the programme, with staff particularly excited about the training available to them. Schools explained how slight adaptations are needed to the programme to ensure all elements are accessible to students with different needs across the various settings.

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