

March 2019

Introduction

This document summarises the learning from the second wave of interviews with Early Help & Preventative Services (EHPS) staff involved in the delivery of HeadStart Kent (HSK). The interviews were conducted primarily to discuss the implementation of 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 eleven in-depth interviews conducted between November and December 2018.

Working within the HSK team

When detailing their deliverables, overall themes mentioned by staff related to partnership working or facilitating the voice of young people. Despite various challenges relating to workload and deliverables, the HSK team continue to work together to support each other and partners to advance the programme and achieve key deliverables.

Awareness and reach

Staff explained that overall awareness of the programme has improved, and stakeholder engagement has been positive during rollout to the new areas. However, some stakeholders may still perceive HSK as a service and future development is needed around communication of key messages and publicity to ensure they understand the programme aims. They mentioned that reach could be further expanded to others in the VCS, particularly volunteers who work with young people. They also felt reach could be improved to parents/carers and young people in hard to reach or vulnerable groups.

Integration and working in partnership

Staff are working in partnership with schools and the community to deliver and embed the programme and further expand reach. There have been varied levels of engagement from schools. School staff have been described as busy and staff turnover was highlighted as a challenge. Staff suggested that in order for elements of HSK to be embedded and sustained going forward there is the need for a team of staff in school to have this responsibility. The programme is embedded within parts of Early Help, however, staff voiced that the information recorded may not be reflecting the activity due to administrative challenges.

Young people benefitting from HSK

Staff consider the participation of young people in the programme a success and they detailed how young people had grown personally as a result of being involved with HSK. However, they also stated that at times there were difficulties in ensuring that the involvement of young people in co-production is not tokenistic. Young people are benefitting from access to interventions and grant funding, with Safe Spaces, Talents and Interests and Pay It Forward grants most often mentioned by staff. A number of staff commented that in order for an increased volume of young people to benefit from the programme, future development of the Resilience Hub as a resource was imperative.

HSK influence, training and tools

Nearly all staff commented how well they thought the training was received by participants and how they considered this to be a success of the programme as it has improved the confidence of staff. However, reach of the training may need to be expanded to ensure sustainability. They explained that tools such as Resilience Conversations and Self-Reflection tool are assisting staff to have conversations with young people. They did mention that it was possible they were not being used in their truest form, however, the principles around the tools were being adopted. By working in collaboration with internal and external partners, HSK is influencing thinking around the emotional health and wellbeing agenda.

Sustainability

Staff were of the opinion that schools and colleagues in Early Help were likely to want to sustain the commissioned services and grants, in particular Kooth and the mentoring services. However, they recognised there would be difficulties sustaining these due to funding. There was hope that universal elements of the programme, such as Safe Spaces and Peer Mentoring, would be sustained going forward.

Conclusion

The programme continues to expand reach, embed into the new areas and staff are working in partnership. Training has been well received and is improving the confidence of staff. Young people are benefitting from HSK through participation in the programme, access to grant funding or services. However, further development is needed to improve communication to stakeholders and reach can be improved to parents / carers and young people in hard to reach or vulnerable groups.

Full report available by contacting: Sarah Collins, HeadStart Kent Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (sarah.collins@kent.gov.uk)



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