

May 2019

Introduction

This document summarises learning from interviews with staff from the HeadStart Kent (HSK) Level 3 additional support delivery partners commissioned by the programme and also young people who received the support. The interviews were conducted to explore their views on how the support is being delivered and experienced, with a view to learn what is working and identify any opportunities for change. Findings are based on six in-depth interviews with young people conducted in February 2019 and nine in-depth interviews with delivery partner staff conducted in March 2019.

Staff experience, aims and approach

Staff feel supported, have had sufficient training to carry out their roles and a number explained how they were using the resources provided through HSK in their work with young people. Most mentioned how the approach to delivering the support was either focussed on the strengths of the young people or based around their hobbies and interests, with goals being set in agreement with them. They explained how the support was led by the young people and adapted to their individual needs.

Implementation and referrals

After some initial administrative and logistical challenges, alongside differing levels of engagement from schools, staff explained how the volume of referrals had increased, with some now having waiting lists. Several staff remarked that it seemed schools were referring to multiple services at the same time to get external support for their students and explained how this could potentially cause confusion for the young people and parents/carers. The young people interviewed all understood why they were referred and also welcomed the support.

Level of need

Although staff mentioned that the level of need of young people accessing support varies depending on the individual, overall themes related to managing emotions, specifically issues with anger, stress, confidence or relationships at home. Staff reported that a high proportion also have autism or ADHD and often come from complex families. They explained that the level of need of those referred was sometimes higher than appropriate for the support they provide and commented that the perceived changes to the Early Help support levels and overstretched specialist services may be contributing to this.

Delivery of support

Although staff are using tools and techniques in the sessions to help young people to achieve their agreed goals, the sessions are led by the young people and tailored to their individual needs. They usually consist of discussion and games/crafts to engage the young people. Most young people voiced that they would have liked the support for longer and explained how they experienced a decline in their wellbeing after the support ended. Staff explained how they were ensuring the young people continued to be supported following the intervention by directing them to other sources of support. However, some young people expressed reluctance in accessing other support, particularly at school, as they did not view it as confidential.

Outcomes

It was evident that most young people interviewed had built a strong relationship of trust with their worker and staff stated that having dedicated time to talk to someone in confidence, not associated with the school, was the element that made the support successful. The young people explained what they liked about the sessions and how it helped them, which differed depending on the individual. However, overall themes related to regulation of emotions, such as anger, anxiety or stress and improved relationships with family or friends.

Challenges and future development

The challenges expressed by staff mostly related to difficulties in co-ordination with schools and some also mentioned the continual need to recruit volunteers. The suggestions for future developments related to more support being provided to young people within their school and also additional support for parents.

Conclusion

Staff are using tools and techniques to deliver the Level 3 additional support to young people who have varied levels of need. The sessions are being led by the young people and tailored to their individual needs, with a focus strengths and goals. It was evident that the young people interviewed built a strong relationship of trust with their worker and most would have liked the support for longer. Having dedicated time to talk to someone in confidence was the element that staff felt made the support successful.

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