

# HeadStart Newham



## BounceBack Newham

a review of Year 1 HeadStart Newham intervention delivery  
from the perspective of pupils, school and delivery staff

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## Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the support and input of many people. We are thankful to all pupils, school staff and HeadStart staff that agreed to take part.

## HeadStart

This report focuses on HeadStart Newham. HeadStart is a National Lottery funded programme developed by the Big Lottery Fund. It aims to understand how to equip young people to cope better with difficult circumstances, preventing them from experiencing common mental health problems before they become serious issues.

The programme supports a broad range of initiatives for building resilience and emotional wellbeing in 10 to 16 year olds in order to:

- improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people
- reduce the onset of mental health conditions
- improve young people's engagement in school and their employability
- reduce the risk of young people taking part in criminal or risky behaviour.

The programme is being delivered in six local authority areas between 2016 and 2021: Blackpool, Cornwall, Hull, Kent, Newham and Wolverhampton. HeadStart Newham is delivered in partnership with the London Borough of Newham.

## The Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest distributor of money from the National Lottery. Every year it distributes around £600 million pounds for good causes, all thanks to the players of The National Lottery. A significant proportion of this funding goes on strategic programmes. HeadStart is one of those programmes.

## Summary

### Introduction and study aims

HeadStart Newham<sup>1</sup> is an early help service for 10-16 year olds with emerging mental health difficulties. BounceBack Newham is a targeted intervention delivered by a HeadStart Youth Practitioner in primary school. Pupils are supported by a Youth Practitioner to explore different life areas linked to building resilience and wellbeing, using a workbook. The aim of this qualitative study was to assess BounceBack delivery as perceived by pupils, school staff, and Youth Practitioners, in year 1 delivery.

### Methodology

A qualitative research design included focus groups with pupils that had completed BounceBack; a focus group and interviews with the HeadStart Youth Practitioner team and a member of school staff. Fieldwork took place in summer 2017. Research encounters were audio recorded and analysed using a thematic approach.

### Summary of findings

*Recommendation to BounceBack.* Pupils had little understanding about why they had been recommended to take part. Before it started, they were not sure what the intervention would involve. Schools took different approaches to informing and consulting parents and pupils about recommendation to BounceBack. Youth Practitioners also took different approaches in 1:1s with pupils. Pupils did not always feel they had a choice in participating and could feel apprehensive about the prospect of taking part.

*First impressions count.* The initial intervention sessions were pivotal to informing a pupil's decision about whether they wanted to continue. A "fun" initial session could secure pupil interest.

*Informal education.* Pupils noted that BounceBack felt distinctly different to regular school lessons due to facilitation by an external Youth Practitioner; learning felt directly applicable to their life now and in the future; working with different peers; a focus on group work; starting with games before the core work; and, permission to talk and for self-expression during the sessions. Pupils stated a preference for activities that involved the whole group, creative activities, required movement or made use of video media.

*Plan, Do, Review: weekly challenges.* The 'plan- do-review' model supported pupil learning; in particular, small behaviour changes could be facilitated through weekly resilience challenges. Pupils valued the opportunity to discuss and share personal reflections about the weekly challenge as well as their individual wellbeing. Use of the BounceBack workbook was inconsistent across groups, however where it was used, pupils reported that it supported their learning about resilience.

*Team work.* The group dynamic was central to pupil's BounceBack experience. Group activities and the emphasis on helping others to build their resilience supported formation of the group as well as individual peer relationships.

*Working with a Youth Practitioner.* Facilitation by an external service was valued by schools and pupils alike. Pupils perceived Youth Practitioners to be different to school staff, noting their emotional control (e.g. calm approach and not shouting or showing anger), compared with school staff. Pupils were comfortable discussing their emotional health with their Practitioner and felt they may not be as comfortable with a teacher. However, pupils felt that Practitioner's pupil behaviour management could be lacking.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/>

*Consistent delivery.* The core format of the intervention was largely consistent across groups, with some variability in weekly content and activities based on Practitioner's assessment of the group. Although pupils generally liked the full range of BounceBack activities, it was unclear how they all linked to building resilience. When Youth Practitioners cancelled a planned session, it could be disappointing and disruptive for pupils.

*Enlisting parents/carers engagement.* Parent/carer engagement varied by school and individual parent-child relationship. Where parents were engaged, they could support their child in making small behaviour changes and reinforce learning from the intervention.

*Pupil outcomes.* Pupils attributed participation in BounceBack to a range of benefits including an improved understanding of resilience; peer relationships; self-confidence; and/or connections at family/home. Pupils believed that BounceBack may have long term benefits, for transition to secondary school. There were also pupils who did not feel any additional benefits of the intervention beyond enjoyment. The school lead suggested a need for pupil progress and outcomes.

### Making use of the findings

The findings identify areas of delivery that HeadStart Newham may wish to review:

- Recruitment and communication of the intervention by schools and Youth Practitioner; including information provided about the intervention (beyond having fun) and an opportunity for pupils to opt-out.
- Making a good first impression: ensuring initial sessions are engaging.
- Pupil behaviour management, specifically, disruptive behaviour and drawing quieter pupils into the group.

- A review of session activities and ensuring they help pupils to make the link between the activity and how it relates to building resilience or other intended outcomes.
- How to ensure consistent delivery across Youth Practitioners.
- Supporting school and parent/carer engagement to support pupil learning and outcomes.
- Ensuring a supported ending and using exit 1:1s as an opportunity to discuss and refer on to wider HeadStart intervention.

## Our learning

The research suggested areas for learning and improving how BounceBack is delivered. Headstart Newham is committed to learn and refine the BounceBack intervention so that it works for young people and schools; and is delivered consistently well. The table below sets out how HeadStart has responded to the research findings.

Our learning	HeadStart Newham's response
<p><b>Recruiting pupils to the intervention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment and early communication of the intervention varied by school and Youth Practitioner.</li> <li>1:1s were not seen as an opportunity to opt-out nor did they provide detailed information about what the intervention would include, beyond having fun.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Explaining BounceBack</b></p> <p>We've learnt that we need to help all stakeholders understand the intervention. We now have a range of promotional material for schools, parents and young people to help explain BounceBack, and this is consistently shared e.g. all schools receive a factsheet about BounceBack.</p> <p><b>Pupil choice is non-negotiable</b></p> <p>We've realised that we need to be clearer with schools that taking part in BounceBack must be the pupil's choice. We will explicitly discuss pupil choice at 1:1 or first session.</p> <p><b>1:1s</b></p> <p>Our 1:1 process is being reviewed. We are considering the ways to make sure these are useful or whether a different approach may be needed to help inform HeadStart and the young person about whether BounceBack is the right intervention for them.</p>
<p><b>Pupil behaviour management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupil behaviour management in sessions, specifically, disruptive behaviour and drawing quieter pupils into the group. Pupils suggested a need to have more than one facilitator to support behaviour management.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Our approach is different</b></p> <p>Our approach to learning and managing the range of pupil behaviour may be different to the school's usual approach. That said, we do want all pupils to feel safe, happy and included in our interventions. To address young people's concerns about behaviour management, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our resilience training leads have run training on behaviour management in a primary school context. The aim of this training is to provide Practitioners with a toolkit of techniques to use and increase their confidence to manage the behaviours, e.g. a HeadStart top tips approach to running primary school intervention</li> <li>In some schools we have co-facilitated BounceBack with a member of school staff. This meant that the schools behaviour policy was used, and the chance to share good practise between school staff and practitioner</li> <li>We've realised the importance of including Practitioners with expertise in primary education</li> </ul>

Our learning	HeadStart Newham's response
<p><b>Linking activities back to resilience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review of the range of session activities and ensuring they help pupils to make the link between the activity and how it relates to building resilience or other intended intervention outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Standardising delivery while leaving room for Practitioners to be themselves</b></p> <p>We want to ensure consistent interventions and allow space for each Practitioner to put their stamp on it. This year we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Run Practitioner training on how to implement BounceBack</li> <li>Protected time each week for Practitioners to plan and prepare for upcoming intervention sessions</li> <li>Introduced a new pupil workbook and session-by-session guidance for Practitioners</li> <li>Set up a bank of resources for Practitioners to use</li> <li>Run termly best practice workshops for Practitioners to share what works</li> <li>Collect young person feedback about their experience of the intervention</li> </ul> <p>We are also working towards...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a model for a good first session</li> <li>Developing our quality assurance approach.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Consistent delivery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to ensure consistent delivery across Youth Practitioners.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Engaging schools and parents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting school and parent/carer engagement with the intervention, and ways in which they can further support and reinforce pupil learning.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Engaging schools</b></p> <p>We plan to offer training to school support staff, so they feel confident in engaging with BounceBack.</p> <p><b>Measuring pupil outcomes</b></p> <p>We have introduced a pre and post intervention survey to measure progress of pupils across key measures. This information is reported back to schools.</p> <p><b>Engaging parents</b></p> <p>We are keen to engage Parents and carers in supporting their young people on their BounceBack journey. We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produced materials and accessible information about the intervention on our website, including a video showing a typical BounceBack journey for a young person</li> <li>A parent pack provides information about the intervention alongside a fridge magnet as a reminder about the young person's weekly challenge</li> <li>Youth Practitioners have piloted sending feedback to parents on their child's progress via HeadStart postcards</li> </ul>
<p><b>Onward support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exit 1:1s as an opportunity to discuss and refer on to wider HeadStart interventions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A good goodbye</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having a celebratory final session</li> <li>This year exit 1:1s are standard practice, allowing time for the Practitioner and young person to meet at the end of the intervention to discuss their experience and discuss possible ongoing support.</li> </ul>

If you would like a full report, please contact:  
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