



HeadStart Programme

Qualitative Insight Report

Early Help Implementation Interviews

June 2018

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Executive Summary

This report is the output of the first wave of interviews conducted with Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) staff involved in the delivery of the HeadStart Kent (HSK) programme. The interviews were conducted primarily to discuss implementation of HSK and to explore certain elements of the programme, with the view to learn what is working and identify any opportunities for change.

Findings are based on ten in-depth interviews conducted between December 2017 and February 2018. Thematic analysis was applied across seven key themes with the related issues identified below:

Initial experiences, expectations and understanding

Most staff interviewed were aware of HeadStart prior to Phase 3 of the programme, although a number of staff commented they initially knew little about the programme. One staff member was particularly interested in the research and development approach of the programme and welcomed the prospect of innovation at a time of austerity.

Several staff were directly involved in writing the Case for Investment (or bid) which was described by many as ambitious with the programme ending up larger than anticipated. However, this growth was deemed necessary to satisfy Big Lottery Fund expectations.

It was the perception of some staff interviewed that services delivering mental health support to young people are overwhelmed, resulting in those working with young people now exploring alternative ways to assist them. Because of this, one staff member's expectation was that there would be a willingness from schools and communities to invest in the programme to bridge the perceived gap in support for young people.

Another expectation expressed by staff was that HSK provides staff in schools and communities with the tools needed to enable them to better understand wellbeing issues and to take a lead in supporting young people.

Further expectations related to an improvement in communication of what HSK was trying to achieve, an explanation of how it worked alongside established and emerging support for young people and further detail around who was responsible for delivery.

When explaining their understanding of what HSK is trying to achieve, most staff referred to the three levels of the programme and the different approaches at each level. The core aims were described as building the resilience of young people aged 10 to 16 and equipping those around them to better understand issues affecting young people, recognising it is everyone's business to support those goals, as well as improving the capability of young people to better understand and manage their own mental health.

Most staff were confident in explaining how their role contributed to what HSK was trying to achieve, although some staff members outside of the HSK team did reflect that it took a while to understand how their role contributed.

Some staff did express concerns that the ambition and purpose of HSK may be misunderstood, with some staff also explaining the importance of clear and consistent communication.

Implementation and adjustments

When recalling what they were asked to deliver in the first year of the programme staff detailed activities carried out in relation to their role during implementation, however there were differences when explaining how they were asked to do this, with some being assigned work by their line manager and others explaining how they were directly responsible for programme plan deliverables. Not all staff identified with a specific plan and described how, at times, they worked reactively as not all deliverables or deadlines were known.

Some staff explained how they thought their role responsibilities were sometimes ambiguous and that clearer role boundaries needed to be defined, with one staff member explaining how they were unable to fulfil certain elements of their role due to capacity. The need for communication of clearer deliverables from the beginning was also mentioned by one staff member, especially in relation to EHPS staff roles outside of the HSK team.

When staff reflected on the implementation of HSK, some recognised how much had been learnt and explained how they considered implementation in the future areas would be more efficient. Several staff also reflected on the assistance provided from both internal and external sources.

Some staff did express that additional expertise when writing the Case for Investment may have been beneficial as those writing the bid had limited expertise in certain fields.

An area where some staff commented the programme had not been adequately assisted was in relation to commissioning support.

Some staff explained how meetings, such as Agile and the HSK Working Groups, had assisted them to achieve deliverables.

When discussing changes to programme during implementation several staff commented that overarching deliverables had not altered, although detail had been added as a result of learning and in reaction to arising situations, with all changes being approved through the appropriate governance.

A topic associated to change during implementation mentioned by several staff was in relation to the length of time taken with commissioning and the subsequent adaptations made to ensure deliverables, such as training school staff, were achieved.

Changes to the Domains Based Conversations (DBC) form was a subject also mentioned by a number of staff, as well as the expansion of the partnership agreements due to growing requirements to support the evaluation of the programme.

One staff member did reflect how the introduction of processes was a positive change.

Involvement of young people

Many staff explained how young people had assisted with the Case for Investment and following the award of grant funding how they were involved with implementation and development of the programme.

The involvement of young people in the central and local SpeakOut groups was most often mentioned by staff, with one staff member recalling how colleagues in EHPS had supported them to identify young people who may benefit from attending the local SpeakOut group. However, there was recognition that not all young people approached would be interested in attending SpeakOut and one staff member explained how they were directing those not wanting to directly participate to the Resilience Hub as an additional resource.

Staff explained that young people now regularly attend SpeakOut groups and reflected on how diverse the groups had become. They described the broad range of ages, mixed abilities and levels of resilience represented by the young people attending. Although one member of staff did note a perceived underrepresentation from ethnic minority groups.

Staff spoke about the development of SpeakOut groups locally to ensure young people with potentially more need around emotional wellbeing issues were also represented at the central SpeakOut group and involved in the programme's decision making.

The incorporation of the Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) into HSK and the attendance of Youth Council members at SpeakOut was mentioned by a number of staff members. These young people were described by staff as being eloquent, confident and articulate, further broadening the variety of young people involved in the programme.

One staff member described how they were making initial sessions of participation appealing to young people to encourage attendance rather than focussing on depth, which may not clearly communicate the programme purpose.

Several staff described the importance of the Participation Worker role in young people's involvement with the programme and explained how young people had been involved in the development of safe spaces and introduction of peer mentoring in schools and the community.

One staff member explained their hope that as the young people involved in HeadStart become older they will remain involved with the programme as volunteers.

Awareness and reach

The direct work with young people carried out by Participation Workers on a one to one or group basis was an area associated by staff with the engagement of young people who would benefit from the programme, with one staff member describing how young people were aware of HSK through this direct engagement but young people outside of that cohort may not be reached.

All staff identified young people aged 10 to 16 as the population predominantly reached through the programme, although there was recognition by some staff that slightly older young people were also engaged with HSK and benefitting from the programme.

One staff member explained there could potentially be additional work to improve reach of the programme to young carers and young people living in a refuge, although this could be localised as another staff member detailed the support they had been providing young people in a refuge.

Several staff explained the various methods of communication adopted to raise awareness and understanding of the programme, with one staff member speaking of the difficulties in communicating to such a wide and varied audience. There was also recognition that prioritisation

of stakeholders was necessary, and that continual communication was essential to reach stakeholders during the phased rollout of the programme.

A number of staff attributed the increased awareness of the programme to the launch of the Resilience Hub and an additional benefit described by some staff was having the HSK team located within the areas they work disseminating information.

Some staff also recognised that although there was awareness of the programme among stakeholders, the social insight work with young people and parents and carers was likely to identify potential gaps which would inform future campaigns. Overall staff reflected there could be an improvement in the reach of the programme to parents and carers.

A number of staff explained their involvement in the engagement of secondary and primary schools and described how the schools were now delivering elements of the programme.

Staff mentioned how awareness of the programme had reached colleagues within EHPS, although one staff member explained how the programme may have been previously misunderstood within EHPS but recognised an improvement in support from senior management.

Staff described how they were working with community organisations to promote HSK and supporting them to access elements of the programme, although it was recognised that the anticipated reach was yet to be met due to the breadth of community organisations.

Integration and working in partnership

Several staff praised schools for their continued engagement in the development of the programme, particularly as there were delays to elements of programme.

The differences between schools in terms of their structure and engagement with HSK was a challenge communicated by several staff. The need for the school Senior Leadership Team to be invested in the programme and to embed the ethos across the school was also expressed, although there was recognition that the HSK agenda was competing with other priorities.

Some staff mentioned they were identifying programme priorities for schools to ensure they remain engaged and were not put off by information overload, with schools acknowledging that cultural change was needed to support young people with emotional wellbeing issues at an early stage and welcoming assistance from the programme to do that.

One member of staff did reflect that the programme had tried to integrate into existing systems and processes, especially in relation to the school's pathway, to ensure sustainability was achieved.

One staff member remarked that during the meetings between HSK and schools in the new areas the focus was on school deliverables, rather than the overarching aims and benefits of being involved in the programme and alluded this could hinder implementation or potentially discourage school involvement.

When discussing how EHPS staff outside of the immediate HSK team were involved in the programme most staff spoke of DBCs. Some staff explained how DBCs were utilised by practitioners as a tool to capture the voice of the older children in assessments, however some

did comment that there was initial misunderstanding around the potential use of DBCs in assessments.

Staff explained how there was a variation in confidence levels among staff in using the DBCs, although it was recognised that all new tools or changes in practice took time to embed and promotion and support within the units would assist. Several staff did explain that DBCs were viewed by some Early Help workers as an additional piece of work and described how the HSK Senior Early Help Worker (HSK SEHW) role was important in dispelling that belief among peers. However, one staff member did express the challenge in balancing casework of HSK SEHW with other responsibilities such as training.

Some staff commented that senior management endorsement of DBCs could be beneficial to the programme and explained that the support and understanding of the District Manager was also beneficial to the promotion of DBCs, with one staff member expressing optimism that evaluation findings may assist in demonstrating benefits to others and encourage take up of the tool.

Several staff mentioned the flexibility afforded to Participation Workers in their work with young people, with staff alluding that having additional time in comparison to colleagues within EHPS was beneficial to the outcomes of young people. One staff member described the continued support they were providing to young people following closure of cases.

One staff member explained how colleagues in Specialist Children's Services (SCS) may be misinterpreting HSK as a standalone service which can be accessed via stepdown and there was recognition that further work may be needed to develop SCS understanding around the purpose of the programme and their role within it.

Challenges and successes

A barrier to implementation mentioned by most staff related to various aspects of the process to commission HSK providers, with one staff member making particular reference to the length of time taken to gain approval for decisions through internal governance structures.

The delay in awarding the grant funding to schools was another potential barrier to implementation reflected on by several staff, although this challenge was described as not being detrimental to the programme.

A range of matters relating to the externally commissioned training were also explained as challenges by a number of staff. One area related to the organisation of the training, with staff expressing that the wrong people were potentially involved in making arrangements for delivery of the training which caused some confusion and issues with capacity. Another challenge related to the rollout of training to schools and the anticipated attendance of school staff which could not always be realised. One staff member voiced that the quality of training should be discussed with providers following negative feedback from attendees.

The volume of information to be recorded to support the evaluation of the programme was an area some staff felt they had underestimated and they described the subsequent challenges faced to ensure requirements were satisfied.

Another challenge expressed by some staff related to the management of expectations around the speed of delivery and desire to see immediate results.

Working on a busy, fast moving programme with demanding roles was an area some staff members described as a challenge, with the expectation of staff to hit the ground running. Another challenge expressed by some staff related to the lack of capacity within the team to support the HSK apprentices. The demand for administrative support was recognised, although one staff member explained the need for this to be balanced against the programme ambition to support young people.

Another challenge conveyed by several staff related to communication among the HSK team, with staff explaining a potential barrier in communication between the central and local teams. The importance of ensuring there was consistent communication within the team was also raised.

Several staff remarked upon the launch of the Resilience Hub and its subsequent use as a stakeholder resource as an achievement. The direct work with young people, especially in relation to the one to one work with those in a refuge, was also described by a number of staff as having gone well.

The reputation of the HSK programme with the Big Lottery Fund was a topic also remarked upon by some staff as having gone well during implementation.

Future development

Several staff explained that a clearer message to stakeholders around the programme's aims and how their role contributes could be beneficial going forward.

Another area of improvement mentioned by some staff related to the communication and organisation of training. Particularly the need for a clear timeline and more explicit detail around expectations of attendance by school and community staff.

Some staff recognised the need to improve the sharing of learning and good practice identified by HSK, to show the value of the programme and encourage participation.

One member of staff mentioned that a more detailed overview of Resilience Hub content could ensure it is fully utilised as a resource by staff within EHPS, with knowledge gained by staff shared with schools.

Context

This report forms an agreed deliverable of the internal evaluation of HSK. It is intended to outline the findings from qualitative data collection around EHPS staff experiences of the programme's implementation.

Findings from the interviews will be used as evidence to answer evaluation questions which support the evaluation objectives (see Appendix 1).

Views will be collated at various stages throughout the phased rollout of the programme to identify any gaps or opportunities for development in future areas. Themes identified will also be examined alongside previously recorded experiences to qualitatively assess changes made to the programme.

This report aims to reflect the wide variety of engaged and enthusiastic voices encountered during the interviews, and where possible, contains anonymous direct quotes and extracts from the interviews for each point made.

Methodology

Due to the phased rollout of HSK across different areas over five years, the local evaluation team identified the need to explore staff experiences of the programme's implementation, with the aim being to learn what has worked and identify any potential opportunities for development in future areas.

In December 2017 a topic guide was developed and eight staff from the HSK team were invited to participate in interviews. All interviews with HSK staff took place in December 2017. To ensure views from EHPS staff involved in delivery of the programme but outside of the HSK team were captured, an additional topic guide was developed in January 2018 and two staff members were invited to participate in interviews. One member of staff was interviewed in January 2018 with the other member of staff being interviewed in February 2018.

Staff were selected to take part based on their job role, the length of time involved in the programme and where relevant, the district they worked. This was to ensure perspectives across the broad variety of job roles were captured from staff directly involved in implementation of the programme in the first year.

This report contains themes gathered from ten interviews. Interviews were held face to face with trained interviewers following a semi-structured format, lasting roughly 40 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes each. This allowed for full exploration of the topic guide, which included but was not limited to:

- Explanation of the interview focus and approach
- Explanation of how data would be used
- Informed and signed consent process
- Introductory questions around their role and length of time involved with the programme
- An exploration of their first experience of HSK, their understanding of what the programme is trying to achieve and their expectations
- An exploration of implementation plans, support in place to achieve deliverables and any changes made to the programme
- An exploration around integration of HSK within EHPS
- An exploration of the involvement of young people
- An exploration around the understanding of who will benefit from HSK and the extent to which the target population have been reached and engaged with
- An exploration of barriers to implementation and any successes
- An exploration of future changes to the programme

Interviews were recorded and transcribed in full for thematic analysis using the MAXqda software package. This analysis was performed following stages of data familiarisation, initial coding and development of a thematic framework for structured analysis. This framework allowed for themes to be contrasted across interviews to find overarching patterns and disparities.

The key themes resulting from this analysis are recorded in the next section.

Key findings

Initial experiences, expectations and understanding

Most staff interviewed were **aware of HeadStart prior to Phase 3 of the programme**. Staff were either involved in delivery of Phase 2 or were aware of the pilots as they were working within EHPS, where the pilots took place.

“They were about halfway through what was called Phase 2, so they were working on just resilience and they were trying it in three small areas. Which was Thanet, Canterbury and Northwest Kent and they were trying small activities in each of those.”

A number of staff commented they **initially knew little about the programme** when either applying for their post or when offered extra responsibility to work on the programme. Although they did remark that it *“sounded quite interesting”* or *“something they would enjoy”* from what they did know.

“[My manager] said to me I know that you wanted extra responsibility, so would you lead this project for us? So that was my first experience. I had heard nothing about it, it sounded quite interesting, but again didn’t get very much information at the start. And there wasn’t a lot of detail, I kind of knew what was going to happen [...] So my first impression was just a new thing I’d not heard anything about.”

One member of staff described how they **specifically looked for the opportunity to work on the programme as they were particularly interested in the research and development approach and welcomed the prospect of innovation at a time of austerity**.

“I already knew about HeadStart from really early on [...] because I was working in Early Help [...] I knew that some of the piloting was going on [...] before we got to Phase 3. And then I was just basically looking out for the opportunities as they were coming up once I knew that the Big Lottery were going to be running with it and taking Kent through to Phase 3. And I was, like, okay, I’m interested now and then obviously I looked for the jobs and I liked the fact that it’s research and development because in the public sector there’s not a lot of opportunity to be innovative with reduced funding and things, so it was good. And obviously mental health’s a big issue in Kent and in Early Help that was actually a real bottle neck, so that’s one of the reasons that I kept an eye on what was happening.”

When another staff member explained their first memory of HeadStart and the journey they have experienced, they affectionately described it as a *“rollercoaster”*.

Several staff interviewed were **directly involved in writing the Phase 3 Case for Investment**¹. Many staff described the **bid as “ambitious”** and some staff explained how they **thought the HSK programme “ended up quite big”** and **“seemed more complicated”** in comparison to other partnerships.

However, the growth of the programme was **deemed necessary to satisfy the Big Lottery Fund expectations** that HSK would improve the resilience of young people along with delivering system wide change, a further ambition following the Phase 2 pilots.

“[After the bid was approved] we then sat down and thought wow, we now have to deliver what we’ve said. [It] seemed to be much more complicated than the other partnerships were doing.”

“It was really ambitious. Really positive, but really ambitious, especially in terms of the size of Kent.”

When detailing their expectations, many spoke of the programme’s **aim to build the confidence and knowledge of staff to support young people around emotional wellbeing issues**, a key mechanism to achieve the outcomes of the programme detailed in the HSK Theory of Change (see Appendix 2).

It was the perception of some staff interviewed that **services delivering mental health support to young people are overwhelmed, resulting in those working with young people now exploring for alternative ways to assist them**. Because of this, one staff member’s expectation was that there would be a **willingness from schools and communities to invest in the programme** to bridge the gap in support for young people.

“Because the services generally were overwhelmed [...] mental health services are overwhelmed [...] So that was definitely an expectation [...] an expectation that other services that were experiencing those bottlenecks and the same sort of frustrations would also want to support the programme and be champions for the programme [...]”

Another expectation expressed by some staff members was that HSK **provides staff in schools and communities with the tools needed to enable them to better understand wellbeing issues and to take a lead in supporting young people** within their different settings, as opposed to referring onto other services.

“My expectations [are to...] give a workforce more skills and confidence in working with young people very directly, rather than just referral to other services and expecting someone else to engage with them.”

“What we’d like ultimately is that every person is competent to have a conversation with a young person around their resilience and their emotional wellbeing [...]”

¹ KCC Early Help, 2016. *HeadStart Kent Phase 3 Case for Investment*

Further expectations expressed by some staff related to an **improvement in communication of what HSK was trying to achieve, an explanation of how it worked alongside established and emerging support for young people and further detail around who was responsible for delivery.**

“[My expectations were] more around people’s understanding and the communication around what HeadStart meant and how everyone takes ownership. So it wouldn’t just be KIASS or Early Help doing HeadStart, in a bigger, wider involvement, and involving the schools’ community as well as KCC.”

“So, what I felt from the delivery of the presentations was we were doing really well at selling the branding of the idea of HeadStart, but how it fitted in with the business seemed a little bit obscure to me [...] So, I think, at the beginning, my view on it was there was a lot of gloss, but the actual detail, obviously, hadn’t yet been worked through; in time, is something that we needed to have to do that.”

When explaining their **understanding of what HSK is trying to achieve, most staff referred to the three levels of the programme and the different approaches at each level;** Kent-wide, Universal Plus and Additional, as detailed in the Theory of Change.

When describing the aims of the programme, most staff spoke of **building the resilience of young people aged 10 to 16 and equipping those around them to better understand issues affecting young people,** with the recognition that it is **“everyone’s business” to support those goals.**

Some staff also acknowledged the **variance in intensity of support needed by young people** and mentioned the ambition of **improving the capability of young people to “self-serve” to better understand and manage their own mental health.**

“And obviously for now it’s ten to 16 year olds [...] But then the idea that everybody in Kent gets something and then the next level is that some people get a little bit more i.e. the schools and the staff training etc. And then you’ve got the additional level right at the top.”

“So it’s about building resilience in young people. And it being everybody’s business and taking that responsibility for that.”

“I think it’s trying to achieve giving all persons, including professionals, young people, parents, just confidence and knowledge within emotional well-being framework almost and building resilience. So making young people more confident and with adversity to move themselves forwards and navigate their way through services etc. to achieve that.”

“It’s not just down to the schools, because obviously I think early on there was quite a focus on schools, now it’s a much more systemic approach in terms of what Phase 3 is trying to do I think.”

Most staff were **confident explaining how their role contributed to what HSK was trying to achieve**, with the varied activities needed to carry out the broad range roles interviewed reflected in the responses.

Although some staff members outside of the HSK team did reflect that it **took a while to understand how their role contributed**, with further communication around the subject helping to clarify this.

“I think everyone mostly is clear on their role and what the HeadStart ambition is, and what they need to do within those areas.”

“If you looked at delivery, it was quite difficult to see your role. If you looked at sustainability, and who was responsible for that, it was easier to see how Early Help could have a role [...]”

Some staff did **express concerns that the ambition and purpose of HSK may be misunderstood**, particularly in relation to understanding around the programme’s approach.

“I am concerned people misinterpret HeadStart as being a resource of its own, and coming with, so it’s like a service package, and people say, oh, well, they’re a HeadStart school, so we’ll refer them to HeadStart. You don’t really refer to HeadStart as such, it’s more what can we all do collectively.”

“I think that it just took time for people to understand the project, because it’s a complex project.”

Some staff members also explained how **clear and consistent communication was important to understanding of what HSK is trying to achieve**, especially with the increased awareness of the programme by stakeholders.

“I think because people now are a lot more aware of HeadStart and what it is, so we need to be a lot clearer on just communication for everyone. So communication for our stakeholders, but people who are also interested in the programme because we can’t do the programme without it being clear to everybody else what their expectations are around it I suppose. And because the team has widened, so there’s people in each area now to disseminate that information.”

Implementation and adjustments

When staff recalled what they were asked to deliver in the first year of the programme most staff **detailed activities carried out in relation to their role during implementation**. As expected, the activities varied depending on the role of the staff member interviewed.

However, there were **differences when staff explained how they were asked to do this**, with some staff describing how their line manager had assigned them work and others explaining how they were directly responsible for deliverables in the programme plan.

"[My line manager has been] very, very clear and articulate in terms of what we're trying to do. I've felt from the very beginning that those things have been communicated really clearly to me and kept an eye on and well supported."

When discussing deliverables **some staff seemed not to identify with a specific plan**, such as the programme plan and described how, at times, they **worked reactively as not all deliverables or deadlines were known**. Although one staff member did credit the HSK team with their ability to handle these situations.

"[The team] were really happy with the programme, doing work the kind where we didn't know all the answers [...] So they've been really positive and creative and flexible in their approach."

One staff member did express that the **communication of clear deliverables from the start would be useful**, especially who does what, when and why, in relation to the role of EHPS staff outside of the HSK team.

"I think it's about getting the roles and responsibilities really clear at the beginning."

Some staff explained how they thought their **role responsibilities were sometimes ambiguous and that clearer role boundaries needed to be defined**, with one staff member explaining how they were **unable to fulfil certain elements of their role due to capacity**.

"I think in some ways we're all still trying to find our roles [but we] need to be clearer on everybody's roles and responsibilities. And when people should be involved and when they shouldn't be involved and where decisions get made and who's around the table when these decisions are made. And maybe people's jobs getting wider than they should do and maybe some of them need to be stripped back and a bit more specific."

When staff reflected on the implementation of HSK, some **recognised how much had been learnt and explained how they considered implementation in the future areas would be more efficient**.

"It's been really interesting to see Swale and Gravesham because they were the first two. They've had to do a lot of the learning and the testing and the rollout of things. And I think Ashford, Shepway and Canterbury and the following grouping areas have got it much easier [...]"

When discussing how staff were supported to deliver the programme during the implementation, a number of staff reflected on the **assistance from both internal and external sources**.

Staff described the **support from the EHPS Information and Intelligence team in developing the Resilience Toolkit and HSK pathways**. The support from **Public Health and Strategic Business Development and Intelligence was also recalled by some members of staff**. Other KCC departments mentioned by some staff were Finance and Digital Services.

“We got some support from information and intelligence with part of the deliverables, so there was pathways and processes for the programme developed and information and intelligence were helpful with those.”

External to KCC, the Big Lottery Fund and Deloitte were described by some staff as being “supportive” and “helpful” during the development and implementation of the programme.

Some staff did express that **additional expertise when writing the Case for Investment may have been beneficial** as those writing the bid had limited expertise in certain fields and alluded this **may have aided implementation of the programme**.

“[Those writing the bid] all came from very different backgrounds and didn’t have expertise in some of those areas [...] And it was a big ask and maybe some of the support wasn’t either provided within KCC or maybe we didn’t ask for it. I don’t know, it could’ve been a combination of the two to be honest with you. But I think it was a huge bid and actually more people should’ve got properly involved [...] And that was our naivety, we didn’t call on the right people’s expertise.”

An area where some staff commented that **the programme had not been adequately assisted was in relation to commissioning support**, with one staff member explaining the difficulties in navigating unfamiliar systems and processes and another describing the inconsistency in support.

“I just think with the commissioning and everything like that, that we’ve kept finding new departments and new hoops, new things that it needs to go through. New process, new systems, again, just you’re not aware of unless you’ve done it before. I think we all thought it would just be this, this and this and then it’s turned into maybe five more stages [...]”

“We have had commissioning support, it’s just a bit, kind of, you feel like you have to really ask for it, rather than it just be given, like other people seem to be just given commissioning support [...] We’ve been given it, but not in a consistent way [...]”

Some staff explained how **meetings, such as Agile and the HSK Working Groups, had assisted them to achieve deliverables** by knowledge sharing and having representation outside of the immediate HSK team providing support.

“[The team] meet regularly in Agile meetings [to talk about] about what our deliverables are, what’s coming up, so everyone’s aware of the programme a whole and share learning. So if we’re not aware of something and someone’s come across it in another grouping, we can share that across the other groupings and that’s really important.”

“We had five working groups that were set up that involved other people from outside the programme that kind of helped us with those deliverables as well.”

When discussing changes to programme during implementation several staff commented that **overarching deliverables had not altered**, although they recognised that **detail had been added to the plan** as a result of learning and in reaction to arising situations. One staff member explained that **all changes go through the appropriate governance for approval**.

“I wouldn’t say fundamentally the deliverables have changed.”

“Most of the changes that we’ve done have been just adding detail to what we’re doing [...] every change that we do has to be approved by the executive group and by the Big Lottery [...]”

"I think because we're having to learn as we go and having to do some stuff and then learn from it, it's a bit like kind of do it and then look back at it, reflect and then it needs changes."

A topic associated to change during implementation mentioned by several staff was in relation to the **length of time taken with commissioning and the subsequent adaptations made to ensure deliverables, such as training school staff, were achieved.**

"Our biggest change, and it was only change of three or four months, was that our commissioning was delayed, for example. And then you then have to reschedule your plan and your rollout to take account of that change."

"I think as a team, when we've had delays like through other services, like the commissioning that we've then been able to adapt and being flexible and creative, put training together, to then implement that in the schools [...]"

Another subject discussed by a number of staff was in relation to the **changes to the Domains Based Conversations (DBC) form.** Staff explained the importance of the changes to ensure the tool was utilised by staff, especially within schools.

"Changes to the domains conversation, that's changed quite a lot because what we first drafted to about version 15 now, not that all version went out obviously, but actually that's changed a long way. And we're still talking about there might be more changes to come with that because the barriers with the schools and actually we need schools to be having [domains conversations]. And we find it useful, but they don't have the time and that's crucial, but we want what they do to be quality and not tokenistic. So that's changed quite a bit and I still think we're on a journey with that."

The **expansion of the partnership agreements due to growing requirements to support the evaluation of the programme, which were not previously anticipated,** was an area of change also recalled by some staff.

"There's just been, for example, around the partnership agreement. It's just expanded from when it first started with the schools and community to where it is now."

One staff member did reflect that the **introduction of processes was a positive change** made to the programme.

"Just the processes around us doing things I think have changed. So we've introduced quite a lot of processes [...] which has been really useful."

Involvement of young people

When staff were asked the extent to which young people had been involved in the programme many explained how they had **assisted with the Case for Investment presented to the Big Lottery Fund.**

“Right from the start, the Big Lottery emphasised to us the importance of involving young people in the programme. And so we set up in effect it was a shadow board of young people and they would look at the Theory of Change, they would look at the deliverables. They would advise us on what they felt the outcomes of HeadStart would be. And so we wrote our mission statements and the Case for Investment based on their contribution. So that was done at that time that was done centrally through a shadow board that then turned into what we now called a County SpeakOut [...] and they were brilliant, and we partly got the funding because of the success that they had done [...]”

Following the award of grant funding, staff illustrated how young people had been involved with the **implementation and development of the programme**, especially in relation to decision making around staff appointments, the award of contracts to providers and also the promotion of HSK.

“They've been involved in things like the logos and all our promotional materials, they've been involved in interviewing staff [...] they've been involved in coming up with the ideas for things like Pay It Forward and some of the other mental health road shows that we've done in schools. We've got the young evaluators [...] they've come up with the ideas of how they want to do [the evaluation...] They've been coming to conferences with us [...] They've got involved with commissioning services [...]”

The **involvement of young people in the central and local SpeakOut groups was the area most often mentioned by staff.**

“I think where I've seen narrative from young people, it's been a really big deal to them. You know, the SpeakOut groups, they've really been clear that they're for them, and that was really nice to see [...]”

One staff member recalled how **colleagues in EHPS had supported them to identify young people who may benefit from attending the local SpeakOut group.**

“[In the local] group you've got actually quite a few young people who have been pushed our way due to the Early Help workers/Youth workers identifying that there is the possibility of lack of self-esteem, lack of resilience [...] We've got good links with the Early Help team where they brought young people.”

There was also recognition that **not all young people approached would be interested in attending the SpeakOut group**, with one staff member explaining how they were **directing those not wanting to directly participate in the programme to the Resilience Hub**, as an additional resource to support those young people.

“You can always leave us but just have a look on our website, there’s some really good stuff on there [...] a young person might not want to talk to anyone but if you go and you’re promoting the Hub, you’re promoting the online counselling, they can take that away.”

Staff explained that **young people now regularly attend SpeakOut groups** and reflected on how **diverse the groups had become**. They described the **broad range of ages, mixed abilities and levels of resilience represented** by the young people attending. Although one member of staff did note a **perceived underrepresentation from ethnic minority groups**.

“HeadStart Kent SpeakOut had to be a mix of young people, so it had to be people from different cultures, different areas, backgrounds in terms of need, deprivation etc. And we’ve succeeded on that, so the people may be on SpeakOut has been a real growing change, when they started off lacking confidence and they’ve ended up with lots of confidence.”

“I think we have got a bit of a mix, I still think there’s some work to be done, I still think diversity, I think most of them are white British [...]”

Staff also spoke about the **development of SpeakOut groups locally to ensure young people with potentially more need around emotional wellbeing issues were also represented at the central SpeakOut group** and involved in the programme’s decision making. One staff member did describe this as a challenge due to the central group meeting on a Saturday, when some young people may not want to attend.

“They wanted some of the local young people to be part of the central group [...] And that wasn’t as straightforward because obviously the central group is on a Saturday, not all the kids want to go out and do something on a Saturday.”

The **incorporation of the Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) into HSK and the attendance of Youth Council members at SpeakOut was mentioned by a number of staff members**. These young people were described by staff as being “eloquent”, “confident” and “articulate”, further **broadening the variety of young people involved in the programme**. Although one staff member did remark there was a need to ensure all voices were heard at SpeakOut groups.

“We also ended up in Phase 3 with incorporating Kent Youth County Council within the team [...] Obviously we then ended up with some very eloquent, sensible representatives of young people who also helped with HeadStart Kent.”

“So I think we have got some mix [at central SpeakOut] and I think that needs managing, that different voices, so you don’t just hear the articulate ones, the confident ones, and that actually we need to make sure we do hear the more vulnerable ones. And I think [locally] we’re definitely doing that [...]”

One staff member also described how they were **making initial sessions of participation appealing to young people to encourage attendance** rather than focussing on depth, which may not clearly communicate the programme purpose. Findings from the National Qualitative Evaluation around young people's perspectives² showed that young people sometimes did not understand the meaning or purpose of HeadStart activities, which was a potential factor limiting the impact of HeadStart.

“So we went in and ran activities first just to get the young people through the door, explain what HeadStart is trying to achieve. But we didn't go in too heavy because it had to be fun to get young people aware of what we're doing.”

When discussing the involvement of young people in the programme, several staff described the **importance of the Participation Worker role**, thoughts echoed by school staff when interviewed around implementation of HSK and involvement of young people³.

“[...] because the enormous amount of work and input and the skill with Participation Workers, they make it easy, without them it's impossible.”

A number of staff also mentioned the involvement of young people in the **development of safe spaces and introduction of peer mentoring in schools and the community**.

“And then young people are also involved in the programme through what's going on in the school through things like peer mentoring and the safe spaces.”

One staff member explained their hope that as the **young people involved in HeadStart become older they will remain involved with the programme as volunteers**.

“It's not just that [the young people] give credibility to the programme which they do but we really do listen to them. And they really are involved in it and but those young people, they obviously will grow up and they will develop their skills and they will move on. So we hope that some of those young people who get to a team and become volunteers on the programme can stay involved. And that means we'll train up or help develop the younger people on SpeakOut in order to take the places of those older young people that left.”

² Stapley, E & Deighton, J (2018). *HeadStart Year 1: Qualitative Evaluation Findings – Young People's Perspectives* p21. London: CAMHS Press

³ KCC SBDI (2018). *HeadStart Programme Qualitative Insight Report – School Implementation Interviews* p11.

Awareness and reach

When explaining the extent to which young people may have been reached through the programme, a number of staff described the **involvement of young people in the implementation and development of HSK**, as detailed in the previous section.

The **direct work with young people carried out by Participation Workers** on either a one to one or group basis in schools and the community, was an area associated by staff with the **engagement of young people who would benefit from the programme**.

“Our coproduction and direct work I think has [reached young people]. So the work participation workers have done I think is directly [benefitting young people].”

When discussing awareness of the programme among young people, one staff member described how **young people were aware of HSK through direct engagement** but explained that **young people outside of that cohort may not be reached**.

“So for example you walk into the street and you speak to a young person, have you heard of HeadStart? You don’t know if you’re going to get a yes or a no. Obviously the groups we’re working with [are aware...] They’re not going to know quite as much as they would if they come to SpeakOut but you want them to still know [...]”

All staff identified young people aged 10 to 16 as the population predominantly reached through the programme, although there was **recognition by some staff that slightly older young people were also engaged with HSK and benefitting from the programme**.

“I think we probably are reaching out to older than [10 to 16 year-olds] as well, because I’ve had some that have joined the group at 16 and they’re still doing stuff at 17, 18.”

One staff member explained there could potentially be **additional work to improve the reach of the programme to young carers and young people living in a refuge**. Although this could be localised as another staff member detailed the support they had provided young people at a refuge and noted the differences in support needed by that cohort.

“I’d say I’ve been working with a couple of young men at the refuge where there are slightly different needs in terms of reassurance about the world in general.”

Several staff explained the **various methods of communication adopted to raise awareness and understanding of the programme**. Activities that were mentioned included countywide and local stakeholder workshops, newsletter circulation, the HSK Twitter account and engagement through existing corporate meetings or one to one meetings with individuals.

“We’ve got a newsletter that goes out regularly [...] that goes out to thousands of VCS organisations [...] We’ve also got Twitter accounts which has been quite successful [...]”

When explaining awareness of HSK within their local area, one staff member spoke with a **degree of confidence especially in relation to the endeavour to disseminate information about the programme.**

“I think everybody now knows in [this area], roughly, what HeadStart is. They’ve all definitely heard of it. If they haven’t, they’ve been asleep [...].”

One staff member spoke of the **difficulties in communicating to such a wide and varied audience** and stated the **prioritisation of stakeholders was necessary.** They also recognised that **continual communication was essential** to reach stakeholders during the phased rollout of the programme.

“It was no point having a programme if only a few people knew about it. And yet our stakeholders, being the whole of people in Kent, it’s almost impossible to do in an easy way. So we had a whole number of communication activities during that first year that we prioritised which stakeholders we were going to engage mostly. [Communication of the programme] can be something we have to do again and again and again over the next five years.”

A number of staff attributed the **increased awareness of the programme to the launch of the Resilience Hub.**

“I noticed [...] a really big increase in numbers of parents and practitioners and schools that were emailing [HSK] as a result of the Resilience Hub.”

Some staff also recognised that although there was awareness of the programme among stakeholders, the **social insight work with young people and parents and carers was likely to identify potential gaps which would inform future campaigns.**

“Early next year we’ll be launching campaigns because the insight work with young people [...] That will then define where are the gaps in terms of knowledge and understanding about HeadStart resilience, emotional wellbeing.”

A number of staff explained their **involvement in the engagement of secondary and primary schools** and described how the **schools were now delivering elements of the programme.**

“[The schools are] delivering rather than just saying they’re part of the programme. They’re actually delivering on what we were asking them to do.”

“The Gravesham and Swale schools have all done their action plans of the Resilience Toolkit and are delivering them [...].”

“I think most of our HeadStart schools they know what HeadStart is, they’ve got their safe space, they’ve got their peer mentoring [...] You know, their staff will be going to mindfulness training, first aid training, so they should be impacted by now.”

Most staff mentioned how **awareness of the programme had reached colleagues within EHPS**. Although one staff member explained how the **programme may have been previously misunderstood within EHPS** but recognised **an improvement in support from senior management**.

"I think that's what we've probably done well, is we've been able to put that message across [in Early Help], what we're trying to achieve and what HeadStart is there to do."

"And I think it's a lot better supported now from senior management as well [...] but now it's a lot more involved and people are really keen. And people see the benefit of it which is really good."

Having the **HSK team located within the areas they work disseminating information about the programme was described as a benefit** by some members of staff.

"It's really useful having the team being based within areas that there are a lot of other practitioners, like youth hubs, as well as coming into county hall and having that as well. And members of the team who sit within the unit as well, like the Early Help workers have been really useful to get the message out there."

A number of staff described how they were **working with community organisations to promote HSK and supporting them to access elements of the programme**, such as Pay It Forward and Talents and Interests grants. Although it was recognised that the **anticipated reach was yet to be met due to the breadth of community organisations**.

"You've got [the] participation workers who go out and do a lot of promoting. When we're talking to young people, we promote it. I believe that different clubs and voluntary sectors have been promoted to, and spoken to, and involved in."

"I think we've kind of now realised that we're a bit behind on the community [...] There's lots of small organisations and pieces of work to do and there's still some work to be done on that I think, huge piece of work on that really [...]"

When reflecting on gaps in reach of the programme **parents and carers were described by several staff as an element that could be improved**. Although staff did explain that their initial focus was on other elements of the programme, such as engaging schools and effort was being made to work with parents and carers to improve the offer.

"And I think in some ways, with the parents we've definitely not given... We've not got an offer really for parents, if I'm honest, we're still looking at that [...] We didn't really design in the bid what that looked like for parents. So I think that is our weakest because it hasn't been given enough thought and time really, but that's something we're trying to rectify now."

Integration and working in partnership

When discussing the involvement of schools with HSK **several staff praised their continued engagement in the development of the programme, particularly as there were delays to elements of programme**, such as the award of grant funding.

“[The] schools have been brilliant, they've coproduced most of the stuff with us, so the school's pathway, the domains based conversations, we share the domestic incidents, I mean, they've been really, for about a year of it not being, getting the money or other things happening, as things take such a long time, they've been very patient.”

The **differences between schools in terms of their structure and engagement with HSK was a challenge** communicated by several staff. Although this challenge was most frequently mentioned by staff across the HSK partnerships nationally⁴.

“Schools are quite complicated organisations and schools work all quite differently.”

“Some schools seem a bit more hit or miss in terms of maybe [HeadStart is] not their priority possibly.”

The need for the school **Senior Leadership Team to be invested in the programme and embed the ethos across the school** was expressed by a number of staff. Although there was recognition that the **HSK agenda was competing with other priorities**, which could hinder progress.

“They're always going to prioritise attainment and Ofsted.”

“I think that's the key obviously to HeadStart, those at the top [in schools] have got to be behind it and understand a bit more about it, so that when people are having their supervision it's one of those things that's built in [...] I just think that should be built in and if that is then things like cracking the schools possibly could be a bit easier.”

Some staff mentioned they were **identifying programme priorities for schools to ensure they remain engaged** and were not *“put off by information overload”*.

“We've had to [...] very much be clear and protect schools to some extent, about what they can deliver on and what they can't. So they're not being bombarded. And it's about us identifying what is their priority at that moment in time [...]”

One member of staff did reflect that the **programme had tried to integrate into existing systems and processes**, especially in relation to the school's pathway, to **ensure sustainability was achieved** as the onus was on the school to deliver.

“What we've tried to do is integrate HeadStart into what [the schools are] already doing [...] we're there to improve and enhance and transform what people are already doing, not to do something separately.”

⁴ Stapley, E (2017). *HeadStart Year 1: Qualitative Evaluation Findings – Staff Member Perspectives p4.*

A number of staff commented that **schools acknowledged that cultural change was needed to support young people with emotional wellbeing issues at an early stage and welcomed assistance in doing this** through the training provided.

“Most of them want to help but don’t know how to help, so they all really get that they want to do the training [...] they want that support for the young people. Most people have a genuine passion for helping young people, that’s why they’re in that profession.”

One staff member remarked that during the **meetings between HSK and schools in the new areas the focus was on school deliverables, rather than the overarching aims and benefits of being involved in the programme** and alluded this could **hinder implementation or potentially discourage school involvement**.

“There’s quite a lot of hurdles for schools [...] when we were presenting the information to get the buy-in [from schools it] was very focussed on contracts, paperwork, money [...] I think it took the focus off the bigger picture. It was a bit too ‘what you need to do for us’ rather than ‘what the programme can do for you and for your community’.”

When discussing how **EHPS staff outside of the immediate HSK team were involved in the programme most staff spoke of DBCs**. Some staff explained how **DBC were utilised by practitioners as a tool to capture the voice of the older children in assessments**, although some did comment that there were **initial misunderstandings around the potential use of DBCs in assessments**.

“I think a better understanding of how [DBC] can be used because I think it did take a good nine months here before people really understood, actually, you use it as the voice of a child tool, it’s not instead of... Or as well as. It’s not an additional thing, it’s you use it as the Voice of the Child, it’s not a separate assessment as such.”

Some staff explained how there was a **variation in confidence levels among staff in using the DBCs**, although it was recognised that **all new tools or changes in practice took time to embed and promotion and support within the units would assist**.

“So, the people that have worked with the older age range are more confident in doing that. So, I think that’s part of it. But again, confidence. I mean, people weren’t confident in giving the Signs of Safety, and it took a long time and I suppose that’s what I was trying to say, I think we need to embed it more and use it as part of a tool, from the beginning.”

Several staff did explain that **DBC were viewed by some Early Help workers as an additional piece of work** and described how the **HSK Senior Early Help Worker (HSK SEHW) role was important in dispelling that belief among peers**.

The **support and understanding of the District Manager was also described as being beneficial to the promotion of DBCs**.

“Some Early Help workers [see it as an additional piece of work], that's around the domains conversation which, you know, I can get. But [the HSK SEHW] work in that has been really important because actually [they have] been telling them it's not. And I think [as they have] actually been doing the job and then talking to colleagues at the same level, I'm doing the same as you, is different than if it had been me saying, no it's not another piece of work. I think, you know, that's quite important. [The District Manager] totally got it and thought it was really useful, [they have] been extremely positive.”

Although elements of the HSK SEHW role, such as training staff, were viewed by several staff as useful in embedding DBCs within the units, one staff member did express the **challenge in balancing casework with these other responsibilities**.

“Within a month of working for HeadStart [the staff member] was late on cases [...] it wasn't a greatly efficient use of time [...] the staff member was being taken away from casework [...] I don't think they had real clarity on the stress [...] of managing someone who does one-to-one caseload as an Early Help worker, versus somebody who goes and does pieces of work with the [HSK] coordinator.”

Some staff commented that **senior management endorsement of DBCs could be beneficial to the programme**. With one staff member expressing optimism that **evaluation findings may assist in demonstrating benefits** to others and encourage take up of the tool.

“Something like the domains conversations needs to come up-down. [Senior management] think it is a good idea [and they are] backing it, but it's like staff need to be given permission sometimes [...] Like when Signs of Safety was adopted, everybody knew that's what they had to do. There might have been some grumbles, but they had to do it and it's like it needs to be endorsed. It needs like a rubber stamp from management to say this is a tool that we give you permission to use if it's useful [...] I do think that needs to be disseminated from the top down [...] I think we still haven't got the strategic coverage. We're still working a bit locally on kind of goodwill sometimes and it's not the best way to change attitudes and ethos and behaviour [...] I think it's just by demonstrating the impact, I think hopefully some evaluation will come out in time and that just shows that there is benefits to doing these things [...]”

The **flexibility afforded to Participation Workers in their work with young people** was an area mentioned by several staff, especially in relation to the **one to one support they provide to young people with emotional wellbeing issues**.

Several staff alluded that having **additional time in comparison to colleagues within EHPS was beneficial to the outcomes of young people**, with one staff member describing the **continued support they were providing to young people following closure of cases**.

“Having the participation workers and knowing that they've got enough time to spend with young people and build up that relationship with them, because a lot of the youth workers in the youth service don't really have that anymore.”

“That flexibility to sit down with that young person, make a referral, take [them] along to meet a connections worker, start that process, and now that young person is starting a programme which possibly might not have happened.”

“I think some of it is the programme because we don’t put timeframes on things or some targets around that. So it's not like you've got to... You can only have three meetings with that young person or six meetings or you can only meet them once a week. It's actually if that young person needs something really intense at the beginning then you give it and then obviously we've all got the same ambition, is that the independence is built in in time. And that actually that young person then, when they're ready and the parent's ready, they then can walk to the centre, you know, they can independently travel. And that's what you're building towards and that's what [they] worked towards. So I think the freedom and flexibility of the programme is probably different to others, which I think makes a difference in something like that.”

One staff member explained how colleagues in **Specialist Children’s Services (SCS)** may be **misinterpreting HSK as a “standalone service”** which can be accessed via **stepdown** and recognised that **further work may be needed to develop their understanding around the purpose of the programme and their role within it.**

“[Social services] just think it's HeadStart [...] we can refer to HeadStart as it's a standalone service, so it's about educating them to realise that HeadStart isn't a standalone service, as such [...] It's about making sure they understand what that means. And, they can tap into that before they step down. It's not something they refer on to, as such [...] But, I mean, social care in general, they are very much like that, oh we will step down, and Early Help can then refer over to those agencies. So, it's not a new thing, it's just about getting them to, maybe, do it a bit sooner because they don't have to step down to tap into resources.”

Challenges and successes

When asked to detail any **barriers to implementation of the programme most staff reflected on various aspects of the process to commission HSK providers**. As previously mentioned in the 'Implementation and adaptations' section, some comments related to the perceived lack of commissioning support and length of time to award contracts to providers.

One member of staff made particular reference to the **length of time taken to gain approval for decisions through internal governance structures**, a challenge also expressed by HeadStart partnerships nationally⁵.

"I say never underestimate the time needed to get the correct approvals from boards, senior management and meetings."

Another area several staff reflected on as a potential barrier was the **delay in awarding the grant funding to schools**. Although as previously mentioned in 'Integration and working in partnership' section, this was a challenge during the implementation but as one staff member described, it *"was not detrimental"* to the programme.

"I think the funds for the schools [...] took a long time which, I think, maybe a bit of a criticism from the schools."

A range of **matters relating to the externally commissioned training were also explained as challenges** by a number of staff. One area related to the organisation of the training, with staff expressing that the **wrong people were potentially involved in making arrangements for delivery of the training which caused some confusion and issues with capacity**.

"[The Project Managers should not be] firefighting who's booking a venue and who are you putting on training. They are becoming administrators for our delivery partners that are already being paid to do it in my opinion."

Another challenge related to the **rollout of training to schools and the anticipated attendance of school staff which could not always be realised**. Not having time to attend a whole day of training was a concern previously raised by school staff when interviewed about implementation of the programme⁶.

"I think our expectations of what schools could release, for training for example, I think maybe that's been a learning curve in the sense of what they can actually release staff-wise and being realistic about who they should release as well [...] So quite a few schools have said actually we can't release more than four members of staff on any given training."

⁵ Stapley, E (2017). *HeadStart Year 1: Qualitative Evaluation Findings – Staff Member Perspectives* p7 & p10.

⁶ KCC SBDI (2018). *HeadStart Programme Qualitative Insight Report – School Implementation Interviews* p18.

One staff member voiced that the **quality of training should be discussed with providers following negative feedback from attendees** to ensure future investment in training from required attendees for sustainability of the programme. The need to establish an effective performance monitoring system to quality assure external providers was also expressed across the HeadStart partnerships⁷.

"[The providers] are being challenged [...] just because it's reputational risk [...] [the training is a] big financial investment, it's a big-time investment from our stakeholders and people that are kind of buying in. And it's our legacy, so it's really, really important that we get to grips with it [...]"

When discussing how expectations may have changed following the successful bid, the **volume of information to be recorded to support the evaluation of the programme was an area some staff felt they had underestimated** and they described the subsequent challenges faced to ensure requirements were satisfied.

"[When writing the bid] I think we completely underestimated the amount of evaluation that we would need to do and the work that takes. And obviously the expectation not just on us, but actually the schools, and that is a challenge in itself, just that level of information and data."

Another challenge expressed by some staff related to the **management of expectations around the speed of delivery and desire to see immediate results**, a challenge echoed by staff nationally across the HeadStart partnerships⁸.

"I think people expected when we first started that we had this finished article [...] they didn't quite get that it was a research and development programme. And I think that probably I don't know how you overcome that, because you can say it so many times, but people's expectation is they want a finished article, where we were still learning and building on what we had and seeing what worked."

Working on a busy, fast moving programme with demanding roles was an area some staff members described as a challenge, with the expectation of staff to "hit the ground running". The challenge of capacity within their teams was a topic also highlighted by HeadStart staff across the partnerships⁹.

"There's not really let up in terms of the work [...] We've done that thing then we're on to the next thing and then we're on to the next thing before we've finished that thing."

⁷ Stapley, E (2017). *HeadStart Year 1: Qualitative Evaluation Findings – Staff Member Perspectives* p11.

⁸ Stapley, E (2017). *HeadStart Year 1: Qualitative Evaluation Findings – Staff Member Perspectives* p13.

⁹ Stapley, E (2017). *HeadStart Year 1: Qualitative Evaluation Findings – Staff Member Perspectives* p6.

Another challenge expressed by some staff related to the **lack of capacity within the team to support the HSK apprentices**. The demand for administrative support within the programme was recognised, although one staff member explained the need for this to be balanced against the ambition to support young people.

“The whole point of apprentices is they need support, training and guidance.”

Another challenge conveyed by several staff related to **communication among the HSK team**. Staff explained a potential barrier in communication between the central and local teams, with one staff member stating they felt “*out of touch*” with changes to the programme.

“The needs of the team centrally can be very different to what's happening in the groupings in terms of communication [...] For example when it's meant to be for everybody in the whole team it's the central team who've driven that and it hasn't fed down as much to the groupings. And the groupings have got their own things that they're doing [...] There was just the communication and conflict in terms of they've got things going on locally, but then there's also things that happen centrally.”

Another challenge mentioned by one staff member was the **importance of ensuring consistent communication within the team**.

“And I still think that there's still some kind of confusion and then also there's not consistency in some of the decisions [as some staff] think very differently [...]”

When reflecting on achievements, the **launch of the Resilience Hub and its subsequent use as a stakeholder resource**, was remarked upon by several staff, with one staff member describing it as a “*game changer*”.

“In October we had the Resilience Hub launch, whereas we had been going for over a year without that. So, I think that's been a real key improvement [...] so we have got somewhere to direct schools or other partners, or young people, parents, which has been quite helpful.”

The **direct work with young people especially in relation to the one to one work with those in a refuge**, was an area mentioned by a number of staff as having gone well over the past year. With staff explaining how a relationship of trust had been built to achieve outcomes for those young people.

“[One of the young people has] been recommended for a Try Angle Award, is now a peer mentor and is going to peer mentor one of the other young people in the refuge. [They have] come a long way [...]”

The **reputation of the HSK programme with the Big Lottery Fund** was a topic also remarked upon by some staff as having gone well during implementation.

“Our reputation with the Lottery is very good.”

Future development

When asked for views on potential changes to the programme going forward, several staff explained that a **clearer message to stakeholders around the programme's aims and how their role contributes** could be beneficial. With one staff member stating that the development of a short video may be an effective resource.

"I think, maybe, just a clearer message as to what it is. And that it's not a standalone service. So, it's what HeadStart means to everybody. What it means to a teacher, what it means to a school, what it means to a student, a parent, an Early Help worker. How you can utilise the services and resources that are out there."

Another area of improvement mentioned by some staff related to the **communication and organisation of training**. Particularly the need for a **clear timeline and more explicit detail around expectations of attendance** by school and community staff.

"So for the new groupings, definitely, that expectation what the training looks like and then to plan how many people they can put in each term maybe around the county when the date's released, is part of where you would build in that relationship to stay on timelines for them personally as a school."

Some staff recognised the need to **improve the sharing of learning and good practice identified by HSK, to show the value of the programme and encourage participation**.

"I think one of the most important things that we're doing is the learning and the evaluation of the programme. Because we want to know within the programme what's been working well and what works best because we want to do more of it in Kent. And secondly, we want other local authorities, other schools, other communities across the whole country to learn what we're doing in HeadStart. And to prove that early intervention and prevention, the kind of things that we're doing, simple conversations can really work."

One member of staff mentioned that a more **detailed overview of Resilience Hub content could ensure it is fully utilised as a resource by staff within EHPS**, with knowledge gained by staff shared with schools.

"I think it would be really good if they went around to each district and had a guided tour around [the Resilience Hub] and how you can use it, and how you can present it to schools [...] At the launch, probably, it was too big for that and you'd have had to go around and play with it yourself, which is fine, but people don't always have that time."

Appendix 1 – HeadStart Kent Evaluation Objectives & Questions

1. Understand the level and extent of awareness of HeadStart

- 1.1 What level of awareness is there of HeadStart among stakeholders / the target population?
- 1.2 Do they understand the purpose of the programme?
- 1.3 How do stakeholders understand their own role in HeadStart?

2. Explore and evidence how the programme is being implemented

- 2.1 What was the plan for implementation of HeadStart?
- 2.2 To what extent has fidelity to the implementation plan been achieved? What adaptations have been made during the implementation?
- 2.3 What has enabled / hindered successful implementation of the HeadStart programme?

3. Evidence the extent to which HeadStart is reaching and engaging with its target population

- 3.1 What was the intended target population of HeadStart?
- 3.2 To what extent has HeadStart engaged with this target population? Has there been any change in the target population? What have been the reasons for any change?

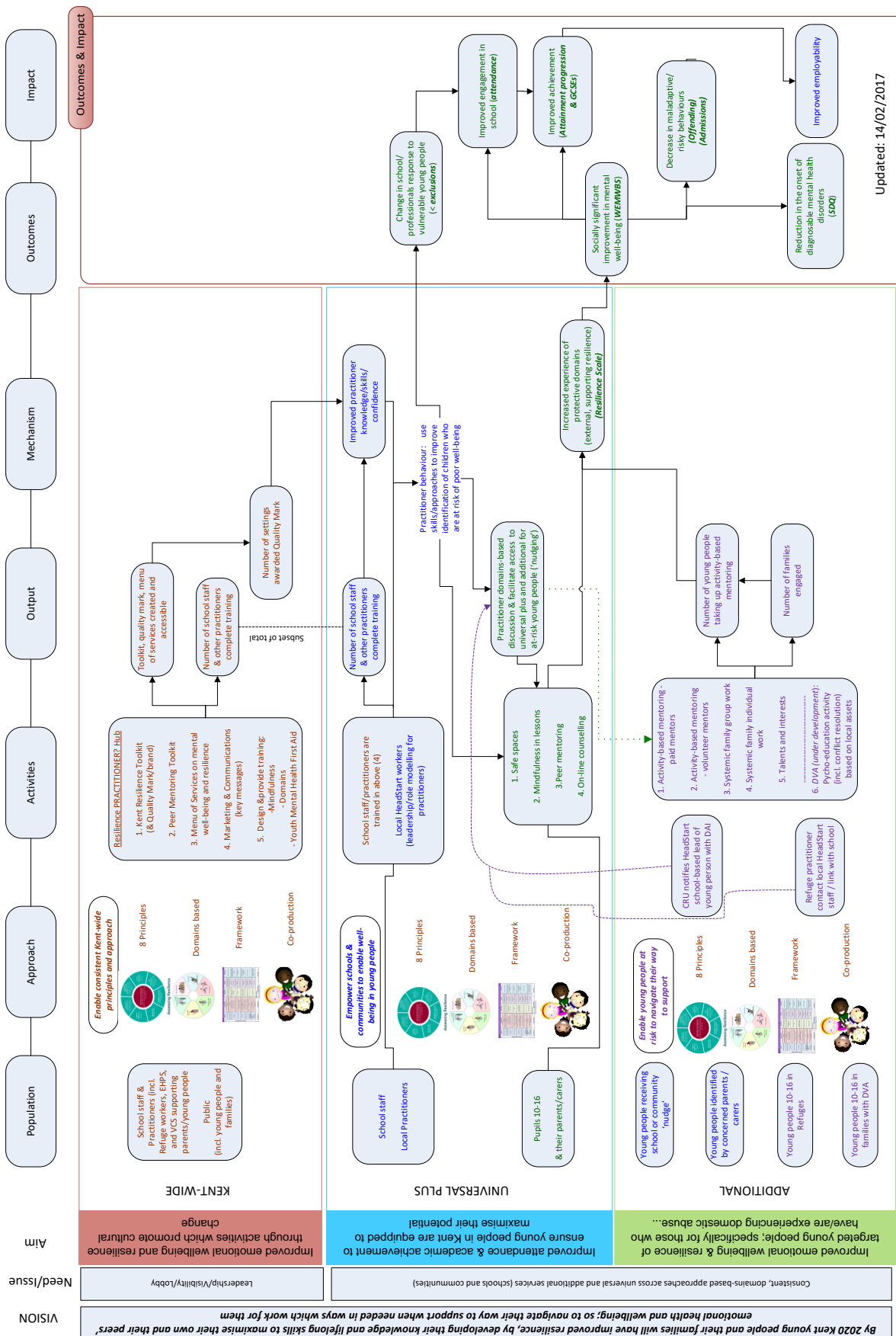
4. Describe and measure the effect HeadStart has on young people and their outcomes

- 4.1 What has been the effect of HeadStart as a programme on young people's outcomes?
- 4.2 What have been the effects of individual HeadStart interventions on young people's outcomes? How do interventions interact together?
- 4.3 What are the elements that make HeadStart interventions successful? How is this learning disseminated?

5. Describe whether, and in what ways, HeadStart is facilitating system change in school and community approaches to young people's mental health

- 5.1 In what ways is HeadStart intended to contribute to systems change?
- 5.2 To what extent has the intended systems change been realised?
- 5.3 What have been the obstacles / enablers to the intended systems change?
- 5.4 Is any system change created by HeadStart sustained?

Appendix 2 – HeadStart Kent Theory of Change



Strategic Business Development and Intelligence lead the authority on the process of gathering and analysing information regarding customers, to build deeper and more effective customer relationships and improve strategic decision making. We deliver high quality reports which combine data and analysis from relevant sources, using a wide range of sophisticated and professional methodologies, probing issues of interest, and drawing out valid, robust and conclusive findings.

Contact research@kent.gov.uk for more information