

## **HeadStart Blackpool – Co-production**

HeadStart Blackpool's Resilience Revolution is an ambitious and innovative collaboration to build a resilient city to grow up, live, work and thrive in. It adopts a whole town approach to addressing the mental health needs of children and young people in Blackpool, where they 'see the difference, feel the difference, and are the difference'. Based upon [resilience research](#) conducted by BoingBoing and the Centre of Resilience for Social Justice, the project brings together young people, parents, carers, community groups, senior leaders, practitioners, and more, to effect lasting change for Blackpool's young people. The [Resilience Framework](#) provides the set of principles for the different agencies to promote resilience in Blackpool's young people, with additional adapted frameworks for other ages and groups, such as the [Resilience Framework for Primary School Children](#) and the [Family Resilience Framework](#).

Co-production sits at the heart of the Revolution, and is embedded throughout services, groups and systems designed to support the mental and emotional wellbeing of children, young people and families. Its vision for a 'loving, fun and fair' world where people come together to overcome challenges, is supported with the objective to 'model and promote the benefits and practice of meaningful coproduction'. Young people and parents have both been involved in co-production: initially they were consulted on separate issues and later brought together as a group to contribute their views on topics, including CAMHS waiting times and changing social care application processes. This work has changed the way local services run to make them more accessible and supportive for both young people and parents using them. For instance, these groups have each created support leaflets for other parents and young people waiting for specialist mental health support through CAMHS. For parents, this information includes tips on how to support their child whilst they are waiting

for this support, and for young people it includes advice on how to speak to parents about their feelings. The leaflets are given to children and young people and their parents by CAMHS. Through this work, co-production groups have grown organically: parents and young people have engaged with and benefitted from shaping schools' responses to pupils and families during the Covid-19 pandemic, co-producing a new social care model and information leaflets for parents and young people waiting for CAMHS support, and others have joined them.

**Parents of the Revolution Take a Stand** is a parent peer support group which meets monthly and was set up to support parents of young people receiving support through HeadStart services. As parents come from all areas of Blackpool and have children attending all 8 different secondary schools in the city, they have been able to share experiences and best practice examples from across schools during the pandemic. They identified the need for a Covid-19 fund, which was set up to help parents access groups, meetings and events by providing them with access to the internet at home. Other activities of the group include the creation and delivery of 530 activity packs to families across Blackpool, creating an activist group to collectively identify and lead change in local systems, and production of a series of [newsletters](#) offering support and solidarity to parents and families during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Structural changes have also been made to the way that people refer for help.

**Blackpool Families Rock** model of practice was co-produced with children, young people, families and foster carers who have had experience of using Blackpool's social services. They produced a set of Practice Principles entitled *Head, Heart and Hands*, which describes how they want agencies to work with them in terms of core beliefs (head), values (heart) and practice (hands). These principles are now embedded in layers of the system, including through an auditing process ensuring that the young person's voice is interwoven throughout their involvement with social care. A new and redesigned referral

form asks for a person-centred account of the young person's 'story', ensuring that their perspective is heard and recorded from the offset. Parents now also interview all new social workers in Blackpool and have devised their own sets of interview questions drawn from their own experiences with social services.

**Resilience Revolution Education Voices** is a group designed to raise awareness, share tips and offer advice to pupils, parents and schools across the town on a wide range of issues affecting young people. They have produced an infographic to show the prevalence of exclusion, raise awareness and provide tips on what children, young people and families would want teachers to do to support them before they got to the point of exclusion. They have also disseminated advice to schools during lockdown, including on the best ways to communicate with families during home learning and signposting to support for items such as food parcels. They have created and published a report called the Trust document, including a [survey](#) from pupils in years 6,7,8 and 9 on their lockdown coping strategies. Responses from the report were used to inform recommendations on what pupils needed upon their returns to school, such as requesting extensions for work and queries and concerns about support bubbles. Resilience Revolution Education Voices also took part in a focus group with OFQUAL, completing a survey across Blackpool to gather young people's opinions on exam gradings, separation of support bubbles and different practices across schools during lockdown.

Finally, **Blackpool Beating Bullying** young people's group, worked together to create a charter mark for schools to evidence and achieve gold, silver and bronze anti-bullying status. A resilience approach is reflected in the charter mark, helping schools to promote positive mental health through some of the approaches in the Resilience Framework, including making school life work as well as possible, understanding boundaries and instilling a sense of hope. The auditing documents and processes were written and designed by young people, and schools are required to evidence how they meet the criteria in order to

prove their provision's success in embedding an anti-bullying culture. The first school in Blackpool to win anti-bullying status showcased their success through a published [video](#), featuring their Stonewall 'inspiration board' to celebrate and inspire LGBTQ+ identity, the redesigning and publishing of an anti-bullying [booklet](#) for pupils and parents, and the setting up of an in-school anti-bullying hub where students can go to seek advice or talk about concerns about bullying for themselves or others.

All HeadStart training content is co-produced by peer-sessional workers who, having used HeadStart services before, are now staff. They may include their own stories and experiences-when writing materials and scenarios for professionals to use in their training. They review materials used in conferences, and all training seeks to incorporate young people's voices in content and delivery as much as possible. Young people report increased confidence from their involvement, and state that the opportunities given to them through HeadStart have allowed them to access new opportunities that they previously wouldn't have considered or had the confidence to do.