

HeadStart Kernow - Community and Youth Facilitators

HeadStart Kernow's Community and Youth Facilitators aim to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing by providing direct, face-to-face support to individual and groups of young people aged between 10 and 16, and by linking young people, families and community organisations together across the county. Community and Youth Facilitators have different roles, but work collaboratively to achieve the same aims, which are to help young people, through early and joined-up intervention, to:

- Manage their feelings effectively
- Form positive, healthy relationships
- Form positive peer group relationships and social connections
- Develop effective planning and problem-solving skills
- Develop effective life and organisational skills
- Develop effective decision-making skills

The combined work of the Community and Youth Facilitators helps to create a supportive net around young people, where they are helped directly through delivery of mental health support and more broadly by a county-wide support network. Both Community and Youth Facilitators conduct group work, but offer different types of intervention, for different groups of people and across different time frames.

Youth Facilitators

Youth Facilitators provide longer-term mental health support via interventions delivered to young people in groups or individually, running sessions weekly, usually for 12 weeks but with flexibility to extend or shorten depending on a young person's preferences and needs, in either a school or community setting. These sessions aim to teach young people about resilience and provide them with the tools to look after their own emotional wellbeing.

Community Facilitators

Community Facilitators offer shorter-term mental health group support to young people in school or community settings, as well as to parents and carers, with the aim to spread awareness of mental health and reduce mental health stigma. Community

Facilitators also provide training and workshops to professionals across Cornwall and support young people and organisations by identifying community services and resources that young people and families can be referred to.

Community and Youth Facilitators have worked together to provide targeted group interventions to young people transitioning between school years 6 and 7, and from secondary school to college. The intervention came about as these young people are identified as being potentially in need of intervention during this period, which presents increased vulnerability to stress and anxiety. Between January 2018 and August 2020, the Facilitators identified 457 young people as potentially benefitting from the targeted group work. 296 young people completed the programme in a planned way, with the remainder either finishing the programme before its intended end, or still receiving support after the summer of 2020.

Working with parents

Community Facilitators' work with parents aims to connect parents with their communities and teach them resilience-building strategies that support the implementation of healthy boundaries at home, with the overall aim of helping parents to:

- Make sense of services on offer within their localities and in Cornwall more widely, where appropriate
- Break down any fears or concerns about themselves and their children
- Complete referrals for services and apply for any relevant funding

To do all of this work, Community and Youth Facilitators are trained in trauma-informed approaches and the [PACE](#) (Play, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy) model developed by [Dr Dan Hughes](#) to support them to be calm, containing and emotionally regulated for the young people and parents that they work with.

Community Work

A central component of the Community Facilitators' work has been to improve and build connections between young people, families, schools and community organisations. This has involved upskilling existing community organisations through

training delivery and supporting collaboration with other organisations and services, such as:

- [St Stephen's Boxing Club](#) received Mental Health Awareness training and support from a Community Facilitator, who then supported the development of a new boxing group and offered a 12-week mental health support programme in the community setting.
- [Bodmin's Kick Back Street Kidz](#) worked with a Community Facilitator to help safeguard their young people, including one young person who presented with a significant safeguarding concern.
- [Coastal Crusaders](#) worked with a Community Facilitator to learn about and develop links with local organisations and services to help promote and protect their young people's mental health and wellbeing. The Community and Youth Facilitators and Coastal Crusaders then worked in collaboration, hosting wellbeing sessions on the beach to help vulnerable young people as part of the Facilitators' targeted group work programmes with children facing school transitions.

The presence of Community Facilitators in [Bloom](#) meetings has also led to improved partnership working and better outcomes for children, young people and services across Cornwall. The comprehensive Bloom evaluation undertaken during 2021 demonstrated the value of the participation of the Community Facilitators, with professionals describing Bloom as a helpful, creative and productive space, such as one that *'makes it much easier to get lots of ideas and suggestions in one place'* (Bloom Evaluation Report: Bloom Professionals Strand). Bloom is a professional consultation model that brings cross-sector professionals together to discuss referrals made for young people in potential need of some mental health and wellbeing support. The meetings are attended by a range of professionals, but a HeadStart Kernow Community Facilitator attends each meeting alongside a HeadStart Kernow chair, CAMHS Clinical Psychologist and Primary Mental Health Worker.

Initially, young people could refer themselves or be referred by an adult to the Facilitators service directly. However, due to increased demand and increasingly complex and higher levels of need in 2019 direct referrals were discontinued and instead became integrated into the Early Help referral pathway used for Bloom. This

change enabled a more holistic approach to service delivery, whereby Youth Facilitator services became available as drop-in sessions at youth centres across Cornwall, school-based group work increased and young people were able to be matched more effectively and swiftly to the right services for them. This helped make best use of the full range of services available in Cornwall, which was supported by the Community Facilitators who had the role of scoping for and engaging with available services across localities.

The Facilitators service was designed as universal-level interventions available for all young people to help them improve their confidence and overall wellbeing. The altered referral system and fixed presence in Bloom meetings meant that the Community Facilitators were able to continue to support young people and professionals through Bloom throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. They adapted their practice and devised new ways to support children and young people's mental health, such as through the setting up and manning of the Young People Cornwall online webchat offer, which provides support to young people seven days per week, and the creation of psychoeducational resources delivered through Youth Facilitators' online wellbeing sessions. They expanded their offer for parents, developing an online emotional support page, creating [blogs](#) and videos and offering advice and coping strategies based on trauma-informed approaches.

Outcomes

Community and Youth Facilitators use the [My Mind Outcome Star](#) to facilitate conversations with the young person, which adopts a '[Journey of Change](#)' approach to empower them to learn what helps to regulate emotions so that, eventually, they can manage their wellbeing independently. This framework helps professionals and young people to think about a young person's mental health through seven areas of their lives:

- 1) Feelings and emotions
- 2) Healthy lifestyle
- 3) Where you live
- 4) Friends and relationships
- 5) School, training and work
- 6) How you use your time

7) Self-esteem

'I know that I can do this now and know that I can have a future. I think I've made good progress and feel I can start meeting my friends more and get back to school' –

young person

Pre and post measures analysis of My Mind Outcome Star data are used to evaluate how helpful Facilitators' interventions with young people have been, and in which areas of their lives. An analysis of 25 young people during the pilot stage of the service found that 72% reported an improvement in their emotional wellbeing, 60% saw improvement in their relationship with school, training or work; 52% reported improvement in friends and relationships and 28% reported improvement in safety (with 56% seeing no change) (HeadStart Kernow, 2020).ⁱ Evaluation of the Transitions programme run by the Facilitators also showed positive impacts on the mental health and wellbeing of the young people participating in the intervention. A sample of 30 young people who completed the Transitions programme showed that 33% showed improvements across all seven areas of the Outcome Star. As of 2020, 296 young people had completed a 12-week intervention with a Youth Facilitator, 41 had begun but not finished the intervention, and 120 young people were receiving support as they entered 2021. Young people's feedback following engagement with the Facilitators has also been positive.

'My most significant change since starting the boxing sessions is that my attitude has changed so much, that I am not being placed back into mainstream school' – young

person

'I know that I can do this now and that I can have a future. I think I've made good progress and feel like I can start meeting my friends more, and get back into school'

– young person

'I'm getting more sleep which is better for me, and I am waking in a better mood. I have been having less panic attacks as I have been using calming techniques and visualisations to help me' – young person

ⁱ HeadStart Kernow. (2020). HeadStart Kernow Learning: Community and Youth Facilitators: Interim Report July 2020. *HeadStart Kernow*. Retrieved from <https://www.headstartkernow.org.uk/Learning/Revised%20Final%20HSK%20Learning%20Community%20and%20Youth%20Facilitators%20Interim%20Report%20July%202020.pdf>.