

HeadStart Kernow - Parents and Carers

[HeadStart Kernow](#) have developed an extended offer of mental health and wellbeing support to parents and carers in Cornwall, including a [wellbeing series](#), trauma-informed Supporting Parents and Children Emotionally ([SPACE](#)) programme, and online [wellbeing courses](#), designed to promote the mental health and wellbeing of parents and families to produce long-term, sustainable outcomes. The work has developed in alignment and collaboration with children's services, early help, health, voluntary community sector organisations, to avoid duplication and add value; providing something new, creative and innovative to promote HeadStart's aims whilst making efficient use of time and resources.

The parents and carers offer is the most recently developed element of the HeadStart Kernow programme. At its heart is a desire to consider parents as a 'workforce' in and of themselves, developing their understanding of their children's mental health and how they can support it, in line with broader HeadStart aims and the PSHE and RSE curriculums. The programme has also been designed to support parents with their own mental health and wellbeing, with the view that their mental health promotes good mental health in the children too.

'Brilliant session, lots of useful information' – a parent

Wellbeing series

Headstart Kernow and Public Health Cornwall worked in collaboration to create, design and co-deliver The Parents and Carers Wellbeing series, a programme of support aimed primarily at parents and carers across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, delivered using online media platforms. HeadStart Kernow strove to promote a system that 'thinks family', and each workshop sought to equip, enable and empower parents and carers with knowledge and skills that helped them make sense of their own lived experience as well as those of their children.

The Parents and Carers Wellbeing Series presents a collection of 20 recorded multimedia workshops that were delivered virtually to parents and carers over 5 weeks

in June and July 2021, and are now [available for free](#) on the HeadStart Kernow website for new audiences and for parents to re-watch. The workshops covered a range of topics, including:

- Supporting families through change
- The role of fathers and male role models in the care of children
- Online Resilience: Staying safe in a virtual world
- Sexual health and 'what is RSE?'
- Why inclusion helps with our sense of belonging
- Promoting positive, healthy relationships during times of challenge.
- Wellbeing and the natural world: Healing power of nature
- Myth busting self-harm, thoughts of suicide and where to get help

The integration of Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) curriculum topics into the series was crucial in supporting parents to stay up-to-date on what children and young people were being taught in their Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) and RSE lessons. In this way, they felt that parents and carers would be well-equipped to speak to their children about key topics and themes if they wanted to discuss them at home. The series was designed as a trusted source for parents to receive information and aimed to consolidate and therefore reduce the overwhelming amount of information available online. Subject area experts talk through the thematic areas, such as from the Public Health team in Cornwall Council, [Safer Futures](#) domestic abuse recovery service and [We Are With You](#), a drugs and alcohol abuse service for children and adults. Sessions were introduced by HeadStart, to provide context for the series and ensure participants know where to access further information and local signposting on the subject matters and content discussed.

Timing of the workshops was chosen with parents in mind, providing time for them to finish work and collect children from school and factoring in evening and sleep routines. Workshops were designed as a trusted resource that provided all the information participants needed in one place.

'This session has changed my life' - a parent responding to a session on gender identity

Wellbeing series reach and outcomes

By using virtual delivery and collaborating with multiple professionals from Public Health and across Cornwall, HeadStart Kernow figures collected and collated from Facebook alone evidenced a reach of 46,303 individual viewers, and statistics that show the videos have been watched over 450,000 times. The most popular workshops were online resilience and safety, importance of self-care in maintaining good emotional health and wellbeing, and the role of fathers and male carers. The delivery was highly cost-effective with recordings taking place during staff time, and subject experts also giving their time during working hours, while parents and professionals were able to access content when and as many times as they wanted and could use them for a range of purposes. The extent of the reach will have been much wider than this factoring in the number of shares and uploads on to partners media platforms. Further to the success of the workshops, new content such as an early year's (First 1001 Days, in line with new [national agenda](#)) parent and carer wellbeing series and a children and young person's series (which young people will lead themselves) are being planned for early 2022.

'It's nice to know I'm not the only parent that finds this difficult' – a parent

SPACE

The Supporting Parents and Children Emotionally (SPACE) programme is delivered in partnership between HeadStart Kernow and [Rock Pool](#), a trauma-informed service supporting professionals to work with people affected by different kinds of trauma. It was created to help professionals in their work with parents and carers and to help them increase parental awareness of the impact and effects of trauma. The course is specific to Cornwall and is unique, building on current trauma-informed training that is delivered across the children and young people's workforce throughout the county. It supports in the building of knowledge and learning that promotes a good understanding of both children's and adults' mental health, wellbeing and behaviour.

The programme helps practitioners to help parents learn the benefits of a trauma-informed approach to parenting, and teaches them to use trauma-informed language with their children, which mirrors the trauma-informed language and approaches used in schools. SPACE is a universal programme designed for all parents and offers practical activities and insights into different topics, including:

- Biological stress responses
- Child development milestones
- Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma
- Attachment theories
- Managing difficult emotions

Professionals are taught, over 2 days, how to deliver the SPACE educational programme to parents across 5 weeks. The programme aims for parents and carers to: gain an understanding of the impact of early life experiences on themselves as parents and on their children, learn to see behaviour as a form of communication, and look at the causes and triggers of behaviours and develop strategies for building resilience in themselves and their children.

To date, 120 practitioners have been trained to facilitate SPACE with another 45 scheduled to commence training in March 2022, and approximately 300 parents have engaged with and attended the programme.

Wellbeing Courses

Following feedback from schools about the impact that parental wellbeing has on pupils, HeadStart Kernow has also provided free online wellbeing courses for parents and carers of children in primary or secondary school in Cornwall. The training was designed to help parents and carers help themselves and therefore be better equipped to supporting their children. The courses are delivered in partnership with the [Institute of Psychiatry at King's College London](#) and [Creative Education](#), and parents can access them on-demand. Session topics include self-harm, eating disorders and anxiety, and provide insights into caring for children and supporting them to grow up healthily and happily. The full series is free for parents, and each session lasts between 5 and 25 minutes. A sample session can be found [here](#).