

HeadStart Hull - Turn to Us

[HeadStart Hull](#)'s aim to make young people's mental health 'everybody's business' relies on strong partnership working. Since the programme launched in 2016, HeadStart services have worked across primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units, and in partnership with schools, youth centres, community organisations, young people and parents, to promote a city-wide approach to children and young people's mental health in universal and targeted approaches.

[Turn 2 Us](#) is a universal youth work service, delivered by the Hull City Council Youth Development Service as part of the Headstart Hull offer from 2018. Turn 2 Us provides support in all secondary schools in Hull and outreach community-based youth work-support to young people. The numbers of young people engaging with Turn 2 Us have increased year on year, with 2,856 individual meetings between young people and youth workers in 2018/19, 3,385 in 2019/20 and 4,189 in 2020/21.

'It gives young people who are too scared to talk a chance to, and that's appreciated' – young person

'I don't like to talk to many people, but I can talk to you' – young person

'I can't talk to other adults, but I can talk to you' – young person

Turn 2 Us was originally designed as a secondary school-based youth work service that offered young people drop-in lunch time sessions in school with a youth worker, who they could talk to about emotional problems such as stress, anxiety and loneliness. HeadStart served as a catalyst for the service, enabling it to expand its existing model and support increasing numbers of young people year on year with three additional HeadStart-trained youth workers. Youth workers provide a listening ear and support for emotional well-being issues and offer help to young people and signpost them to other services and opportunities if appropriate. Turn 2 Us worked in schools and community based outreach during the holiday periods from the beginning of its partnership with HeadStart up until 2020, when its practice was adapted due to school closures amidst the Covid pandemic national lockdowns.

Building friendships and tackling isolation¹

A young person was signposted to Turn 2 Us by his school teacher, who knew of recent and ongoing difficulties at the young person's home. The young person lives with his mother and has caring responsibilities for her, and his maternal grandfather, who was a supportive person in his life, had recently passed away. The young person was not mixing with other pupils in his classes and became increasingly withdrawn and anxious at school. His class teacher suggested that he have a chat with a Turn 2 Us worker who she had already signposted other pupils to. She suggested that the male youth worker might be able to encourage the young person to talk if he gently approached him during the school lunch break.

A Turn 2 Us youth worker had a quick chat with the young person, and suggested that it would be nice to catch up again next week. Initially, the young person was quite shy and nervous but after a few chats he gained confidence and began to open up. He spoke about the challenges he experienced in making friends and how his confidence had been impacted by bullying in his previous year at school, as well as experiencing stress and worry about his mum at home and feeling lonely and isolated without his grandfather.

The youth worker suggested that the young person might like to meet and make friends with some other young people with caring responsibilities at a local support group. The young person was initially apprehensive, but when he learned that the Turn 2 Us youth worker hosted the sessions at the youth centre, he agreed to come along. The youth worker met the young person after school the following week and walked to the centre with him, which, the young person said, helped him feel more confident and relaxed about attending.

By attending the group and feeling more able to talk about his worries and pressures with other young people, the young person has really grown in confidence and states that he is no longer feeling withdrawn and lonely. Youth workers at the centre also sought consent from the young person's mother for him to participate in a day trip

¹ The following case-study is a real example of a young person's engagement with Turn 2 Us. Identifiable information and details have been changed to preserve anonymity.

during the summer holidays, and used this opportunity to introduce themselves and discuss some wider family support on offer through the Early Help Services. The young person's mother was keen to talk about what the family had gone through, and was very happy with the support that her son had received and the positive changes she had seen in him at home.

'Having someone to talk to was a weight off my shoulders' – young person

'Having spoken to all the Heads of Year, they are really pleased with the work that Turn 2 Us do for the school and the students. We are not always able to see every student whose needs are greater than others, this is where the Turn 2 Us team step in. They do a fantastic job' – school staff member

Adapted delivery

School closures prompted Turn 2 Us to deliver its services in the community, which was adapted in line with changing government guidelines and restrictions. Initially, at the start of the first lockdown Turn 2 Us offered telephone support to known young people, followed by an open online system which was created to allow young people to book a slot with a youth worker at their chosen time. Once restrictions began to lift, they were able to meet a youth worker for a one-to-one social distanced walk outside or meet up with youth workers in open spaces in their local communities through the Turn 2 Us outreach delivery. This was followed by the re-opening of youth centres to work with vulnerable young people where young people could meet a Turn 2 Us youth worker for one-to-one support in a local youth centre within Covid-19 regulations. Due to the success of the one-to-one-booking system, this has remained in place ever since and gives young people a sense of agency and control for who and when they want to arrange to see a youth worker without the need for referral.

Reaching young people in the community²

When out in the community delivering a session, Turn 2 Us youth workers were approached by an adult resident who said that they were concerned about a small girl who they had seen spending a lot of time alone in the park during daytimes. The youth workers acted upon this by introducing themselves to the young person, who told them that she was scared to return home due to domestic violence occurring between her

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parents. The youth workers could tell that she was cold and hungry and appeared prepared to stay out all night, so got her some food and gently persuaded her to let them take her to the nearest domestic violence refuge where they could support her. On arrival, she was interviewed with the youth worker present. The other youth worker contacted the police, who reached her parents and explained the situation, and escorted the young person's mother to the refuge.

Post-lockdown delivery

As schools have reopened, Turn 2 Us have continued supporting young people in the community as well as returning to lunch time drop-in sessions in secondary schools. This means that they have been able to widen their scope to include young people that are unlikely or unable to be signposted to the service by school staff – such as those not in education or who are educated at home. There are 5 youth centres operating across Hull where Turn 2 Us youth workers are based, and young people are able to book to see a youth worker in a centre of their choice. Young people have fed back that they have had enough of virtual delivery and want to engage in face-to-face support, highlighting that there are a number of other forms of support in Hull that are virtual, such as on line counselling . They have said that the face-to-face contact helps them cope with the 'real' rather than virtual world, and that without in-person support they can feel very isolated.

'Young people attending face-to-face sessions within youth centres can also benefit from the wider offer available and when they feel more comfortable and confident can engage in group work activities and interest groups which encourage positive peer networks and supportive friendships' - Liz Woolmington -Youth Work Manager - Youth Development Service