

## **HeadStart Newham – Being a Parent**

HeadStart Newham's [Being a Parent](#) service evolved from the Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) course, adapted during HeadStart's piloting phase for parents of children aged 9-16. It is run by parent-peer facilitators who attended the course in its first year and were later awarded an OCN level 2 qualification from HeadStart to facilitate the courses for other Newham parents. The course, developed by the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and Centre for Parent and Child Support, runs in two-hour sessions across nine weeks and provides a manualised, evidence-based model with pre and post measures to help parents bring up 'confident, happy and co-operative children'. Mixed-methods evaluation of the programme finds significant improvement in parents' wellbeing and parenting styles scores, increased parent-child praise – as reported by children, and improved wider family communication described by parents and programme facilitators.<sup>1</sup> Parents also voiced appreciation for the peer-led model and stated that they attended to receive tips and advice from facilitators with relatable experiences to them.<sup>2</sup> One parent reflected:

***'I found it all very useful and informative, especially the topics around reflective listening, child behaviour – the need behind the behaviour and quality time. I also think that it was key that the facilitators were parents themselves as they could truly empathise and relate with the needs and experiences of the parents'***

Another parent stated that Being a Parent is 'a very valuable course that I think caters for community needs, especially for working class and BAME parents', and another said that they

***'Really enjoyed the group, even when I was so tired from work and being a mum it became 'me time', investing in myself for the benefit of the children. The leaders were great, funny and supportive and the other parents really made it a safe and open space'***

Different topics are covered each week, and these include:

- Resilience
- Being a 'good enough' parent

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<sup>1</sup> Poole, L., Ville, E. (2020). HeadStart Newham Being a Parent 9-16 Peer Led Parenting, pp.11-24. Retrieved from: <https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/resources/research/>.

<sup>2</sup> Poole, L., Ville, E. (2020). HeadStart Newham Being a Parent 9-16 Peer Led Parenting, pp.11-24. Retrieved from: <https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/resources/research/>.

- Strengths based views of self and child
- Acknowledging and validating feelings
- Quality time
- Understanding needs behind behaviour
- Negotiation skills
- Active and reflective listening

Sessions typically take place in the mid-morning, after the school run, or in the evening. Towards the beginning of the course sessions were also held in schools so that parents could remain at the school after dropping off their child to attend the groups, and this worked especially well for parents of primary school pupils. As the courses evolved, facilitators responded to topics and concerns raised by parents in their groups and have set up separate workshops that address these issues. These have included mental health and wellbeing, transitioning into teenage years and online safety. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, facilitators became involved in co-production work between parents and Newham's Local Authority around racism, inequality and disproportionality (priorities established by the LA during the period). Parents co-facilitated sessions alongside professionals in LA departments from which feedback was positive, particularly around the parents' expertise of delivering to parents and the knowledge of their experiences.

The materials and resources of the Being a Parent course were adapted into a framework for use in 1-1 befriending sessions. Due to increased pressures resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, HeadStart Newham merged with a children's centre to offer a parent-to-parent befriending programme of 6-8 telephone sessions. This service continues to offer practical and emotional support to parents, by parents, and the need for a programme of support of this kind has been evidenced for the sustained levels of parents self-referring during the pandemic, and the increases in referrals during time of increased pressure and social restriction.

For both services, parents have been able to self-refer and are also referred through other services, including CAMHS, early help and social care. The majority of parents



were reported to have self-referred, and taster sessions, coffee mornings and parents' evenings were established as the programme's most effective recruitment strategies.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Poole, L., Ville, E. (2020). HeadStart Newham Being a Parent 9-16 Peer Led Parenting, p.9. Retrieved from: <https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/resources/research/>.