

Co-production in action

Kaitlyn's story – Headstart Hull.¹

Kaitlyn signed up to become a HeadStart peer mentor when she was in Year 8 at school. She was a mentor for three years and she helped 14 young people to overcome mental health and wellbeing issues. Kaitlyn says that being a mentor helped her to gain a lot of confidence in talking to people and helped her to develop skills to support people during difficult times.

“I now know the right thing to say and do if someone who I know is feeling bad. It gave me a lot of life skills.”

Kaitlyn thinks that being a peer mentor meant she was trusted by the school, which led to extra opportunities, such as a first aid courses for both mental and physical health, and attending Hull young people's parliament for the first time. She continued attending the parliament for a year, then decided to put herself forward for the elections to be a Member. With the support of her school and the coordinator of the peer mentoring project, Kaitlyn read her speech on election day and was voted in. On the same day, Kaitlyn was approached by HeadStart Hull's Participation & Co-production Officer, who asked if she wanted to volunteer for HeadStart, working on campaigns.

“From being a peer mentor I knew the difference that HeadStart Hull can make and I said yes.”

As a volunteer, Kaitlyn has been involved in a range of activities, including:

- helping to facilitate sessions to recruit more volunteers
- campaigning
- working as a consultant at Hull Young People's Parliament
- taking part in funding panels
- sitting on an interview panel for Barnardo's, helping them to recruit staff to deliver HeadStart in schools
- representing young HeadStart volunteers at strategic meetings to plan the campaigns for 2018/19
- acting as a critic for some city of culture events.

When Kaitlyn was having a difficult time at home, she talked about her problems with the HeadStart Participation & Co-production Officer, who suggested she try HeadStart's emotional resilience coaching.

“It was great. We made a plan together about how to tackle the things I was struggling with. We did some drama and explored my emotions in a very creative way. As someone who doesn't enjoy counselling I found it very helpful and it helped me to figure things out and make some important changes in my life. Now I can confidently promote the service and the difference it makes.”

Kaitlyn is now on an extended work placement with HeadStart Hull, supporting the co-production work.

Endnotes

1 Headstart Hull. (2018). My HeadStart Hull Journey [unpublished]