



HeadStart Programme

Qualitative Insight Report

Year 2 - Early Help & Preventative Services
Implementation Interviews

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Executive Summary

This report is the output of the second wave of interviews conducted with Early Help and Preventative Services (EHPS) staff involved in the delivery of the HeadStart Kent (HSK) programme. The interviews were conducted primarily to discuss implementation of HSK and to explore certain elements of the programme, with the view to learn what is working and identify any opportunities for change.

Findings are based on eleven in-depth interviews conducted between November and December 2018. Thematic analysis was applied across six key themes with the related issues identified below.

Working within the HSK team

Staff were confident explaining how their role contributes to what HSK is trying to achieve. When detailing their deliverables, the overall themes mentioned by most staff either related to partnership working or facilitating the voice of young people.

A number of staff explained that sometimes they felt deliverables, deadlines and communication were ambiguous. Potential future developments which may alleviate these challenges were suggested and one staff member commented that work was underway to ensure roles were more clearly defined, with focussed responsibilities.

These challenges aside, the way the HSK team work together to support each other and partners was considered a success by most staff, with some staff explaining how shadowing colleagues in similar roles had helped them to understand and achieve their own deliverables.

Awareness and reach

Staff explained how awareness of HSK had improved over the past year, and that the positive engagement from stakeholders during roll out in the new areas was an achievement. Although overall awareness has improved, a number of staff were of the opinion that some stakeholders still perceive HSK as a service and that future development around communication is needed to ensure there is an understanding of the what the programme is trying to achieve.

A number of staff mentioned that due to the breadth of community organisations in Kent it was likely that reach could be further expanded to others in the VCS. Some staff were of the opinion that taking time to engage volunteers who work with young people consistently over a number of years may contribute to future sustainability of HSK.

Several staff mentioned the gap in reach to parents and carers and there was recognition that the offer still needs some development. Staff detailed a range of young people in hard to reach or vulnerable groups where they felt reach of the programme could be improved.

Integration and working in partnership

Staff explained how implementation in the new areas was more efficient and how improved confidence among the HSK team, coupled with having the commissioned services in place had aided implementation.

Several staff explained how there was varied levels of engagement across the schools. Staff mentioned how busy staff in schools appeared and explained how the HSK Participation Workers were being used as an additional resource to deliver elements of the programme. Several staff suggested that in order for elements of the programme to be embedded within schools and sustained going forward, there is a need for a team of staff within the school to work on HSK. Staff turnover in schools and the inconsistency of those working on HSK within the school was highlighted as a challenge.

There was appreciation from a number of staff that culture change in schools takes time and recognition that some schools may need extended support from the HSK team, beyond what was initially anticipated, to ensure a whole school approach is embedded.

A number of staff considered working in collaboration and alongside staff in Early Help, especially the District Managers, as pivotal to the development of HSK in the districts and explained how in the new areas the programme is embedded and part of the district offer.

Several staff were of the opinion that the programme is embedded within parts of Early Help as staff are using the learning from training, tools and services available. However, they voiced that the information recorded, especially in relation Resilience Conversations, was not reflecting the activity and explained the administrative challenges around this, as the process sits outside of the existing recording system routinely used by staff.

Young people benefitting from HSK

The importance of the work carried out by the HSK Participation Workers in facilitating the involvement of young people was remarked upon by staff. Most staff considered the participation of young people in the programme a success that should be celebrated, with staff describing how young people were involved in various elements of HSK.

The engagement of young people in the local and central SpeakOut groups and Kent Youth County Council was mentioned most often, with staff detailing how young people had grown as a result of being involved with HSK. However, several staff did state that at times there were difficulties regarding co-production, particularly that the principles of co-production were sometimes misunderstood and that the investment of time and planning is needed to ensure the involvement of young people is not tokenistic.

Staff also described how young people were benefitting from the programme through access to interventions and grant funding, with Safe Spaces, Talents and Interests and Pay It Forward grants most often mentioned by staff. A number of staff mentioned that in order for an increased volume of young people to benefit from the programme, future development of the Resilience Hub as a resource was imperative.

HSK influence, training and tools

Nearly all staff commented how well they thought the training had been received by participants and how they considered this a success of the programme as it was improving the confidence of staff working with young people.

Staff reflected on the improvements made to the Resilience Conversations and the introduction of the Self-Reflection tool following feedback from stakeholders using the tool, particularly schools. Although staff commented they thought the tools were being used, some staff did mention that they were possibly not being used in their truest form. However, the principles supporting the tools were being adopted to assist staff in having conversations with young people.

Some staff illustrated how HSK had influenced thinking by working in collaboration with partners. They explained how working in partnership had raised the profile of the emotional health and wellbeing agenda and adjustments were being made to the way people were operating.

Sustainability

Most staff were of the opinion that schools and colleagues in Early Help were likely to want to sustain the commissioned services and grants, in particular Kooth and the mentoring services. However, they recognised there would be difficulties in sustaining these interventions due to funding.

Several staff expressed hope that the universal elements of the programme, such as Safe Spaces and Peer Mentoring, would be sustained by schools and communities going forward. They also had the view that equipping staff with the tools and knowledge needed to support young people, providing resources to young people to help themselves and changing the overall attitudes towards emotional health and wellbeing were mechanisms that would ensure sustainability.

Some staff did express concern regarding the reach of HSK training and explained how limited reach or high staff turnover in schools and the community may impact on future sustainability. However, this had been previously noted by staff and they explained how they were looking to secure future funding to expand the reach.

Conclusion

Despite various challenges relating to workload and deliverables, the HSK team continue to work together to support each other and partners to advance the programme and achieve key deliverables.

Overall, awareness of the programme has improved, and stakeholder engagement has been positive during rollout to the new areas. However, some stakeholders may still perceive HSK as a service and future development is needed around communication of key messages and publicity to ensure they understand the programme aims.

Staff are working in partnership with schools and the community to deliver and embed the programme and further expand reach. There has been varied levels of engagement from schools and school staff have been described as busy. However, staff suggested that in order for

elements of HSK to be embedded and sustained going forward there is the need for a team of staff in school to have this responsibility. The programme is embedded within parts of Early Help, however, the information recorded is not reflecting the activity due to administrative challenges.

Staff consider the participation of young people in the programme a success, however, they also stated that at times there were difficulties in ensuring the involvement of young people in co-production is not tokenistic. Young people are benefitting from access to interventions and grant funding and staff commented that more young people will benefit from HSK through development of the Resilience Hub as a resource.

Training has been well received and has improved the confidence of staff, however, reach may need to be expanded to ensure sustainability; and tools such as the Resilience Conversations are assisting staff to have conversations with young people. By working in collaboration with internal and external partners, HSK is influencing thinking around the emotional health and wellbeing agenda.

There is hope that the universal elements of the programme will be sustained and recognition that although it is likely partners would like to continue with the HSK commissioned services, funding would need to be secured from elsewhere.

Context

This report forms an agreed deliverable of the internal evaluation of HSK. It is intended to outline the findings from qualitative data collection, in the form of interviews, around EHPS staff experiences of the programme's implementation during the second year.

Findings from the interviews will be used as evidence to answer evaluation questions which support the evaluation objectives (see Appendix 1).

Views will be collated at various stages throughout the phased rollout of the programme to identify any gaps or opportunities for development in future areas. Themes identified will also be examined alongside previously recorded experiences, such as the first round of implementation interviews, to qualitatively assess changes in the programme.

This report aims to reflect the wide variety of engaged and enthusiastic voices encountered during these interviews, and where possible, contains anonymous direct quotes and extracts from the interviews for each point made.

Methodology

Due to the phased rollout of HSK across different areas over five years, the local evaluation team identified the need to explore staff experiences of the programme's implementation in the initial areas, with the aim being to learn what has worked and identify any potential opportunities for development in future areas. This process was repeated with staff in the second wave of areas where work started in September 2017.

In October 2018 a topic guide was developed and nine staff from the HSK team were invited to participate in interviews. To ensure views from EHPS staff involved in delivery of the programme but outside of the HSK team were captured, an additional topic guide was developed, and two staff members were invited to participate in interviews. All interviews took place between November and December 2018.

Staff were selected to take part based on their job role and where relevant, the district they worked. This was to ensure perspectives across the broad variety of job roles were captured from staff directly involved in implementation of the programme in the second year.

This report contains themes gathered from eleven interviews. Interviews were held face to face with a trained interviewer following a semi-structured format, lasting roughly 30 minutes to 1 hour 15 minutes each. This allowed for full exploration of the topic guide, which included but was not limited to:

- Explanation of the interview focus and approach
- Explanation of how data would be used
- Informed and signed consent process
- Introductory questions around their role and length of time involved with the programme
- An exploration of their first experience of HSK, their understanding of what the programme is trying to achieve and their expectations
- An exploration of deliverables, support in place to achieve deliverables and what may have aided implementation in the new areas
- An exploration of any changes made to the programme and their opportunities to shape change
- An exploration around integration of HSK within EHPS and any training, tools or services utilised
- An exploration of the involvement of young people
- An exploration around the understanding of who will benefit from HSK and the extent to which the target population have been reached and engaged with
- An exploration around stakeholder awareness and understanding of the programme
- An exploration of barriers or challenges during implementation and any successes
- An exploration of potential future changes to the programme and sustainability

Interviews were recorded and transcribed in full for thematic analysis using the MAXqda software package. This analysis was performed following stages of data familiarisation, initial coding and development of a thematic framework for structured analysis. This framework allowed for themes to be contrasted across interviews to find overarching patterns and disparities.

Key findings

Working within the HSK team

A number of staff interviewed were either aware or involved in HSK prior to Phase 3 of the programme. However, newer members of the HSK team commented they had little awareness of the programme until they did further investigation online when applying for their role.

As with the last year's interviews¹, when explaining what HSK is trying to achieve, most staff spoke of the ambition to build the resilience of young people and to assist them in improving their emotional wellbeing. A number of staff also mentioned how HSK is a research programme which aims to provide an evidence base around what is effective.

“HeadStart is a research project that is trying to look at testing different ways of working with young people around resilience and emotional health and wellbeing.”

When explaining their expectations of the programme, one staff member recalled how they hoped HSK would provide the tools and training to support workforce change to improve the outcomes for young people.

“I was hoping that it would give practical tools and resources [...] And to challenge people. To say, do you know, there are things that you could be doing differently. And if, as adults and organisations, we thought and behaved differently, then we would have better outcomes in terms of supporting young people...”

Staff were confident explaining how their role contributed to what HSK was trying to achieve. Some staff described how they were directly supporting young people to improve their resilience or assisting them to co-produce the programme. While others described how they were working with schools to implement HSK and supporting them to make longer term changes around their approach to emotional wellbeing within their schools.

The variety of operational and strategic deliverables detailed reflected the broad range of staff role types interviewed, however, the overall themes mentioned by most staff either related to partnership working or facilitating the voice of young people.

“I think it is quite a partnership-based job. Speaking to lots of different people all the time.”

¹ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews* p12

When discussing their workload and deliverables, a number of staff voiced similar challenges to those documented in last year's interviews². Staff explained that sometimes they felt deliverables and deadlines were ambiguous and not always communicated clearly. Some staff also had the opinion that at times they were delivering work outside of their role and back filling gaps within the HSK team, which was mentioned as a particular challenge.

"[Some deliverables are] very clear but others, I don't know if I have to do them, I just do them."

A potential future development some staff mentioned, which may alleviate the challenges voiced above, related to role specific inductions into the HSK team and also the creation of a timeline of deliverables for each member of staff.

"I'd rather probably more targets to meet, then you would know what you're working [towards] and you can maybe prepare for it that way [...] Just like a checklist, say I have to do a certain number of things before the end of the year [...] I would like just to know what I need to achieve."

One staff member did recognise that the work taken on by staff in certain roles had unintentionally expanded as the programme had developed due to the different work styles of some staff. However, work was underway to ensure roles were more clearly defined and there were focussed responsibilities.

"...this year [we are] doing what needs to be done rather than what we thought needed to be done [...] it's just taken a while for everyone to get on the same page."

These challenges aside, the way the HSK team work together to support each other and partners was considered a success by most staff, with some staff explaining how shadowing colleagues in similar roles had helped them to understand and achieve their own deliverables.

"I think that cohesion as a team is really important [...] If you get on as a team you perhaps feel appreciated and motivated to then continue what you're trying to achieve."

² KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p14*

Awareness and reach

Most staff explained how awareness of HSK had improved over the past year, and that the positive engagement from stakeholders during roll out in the new areas was an achievement. Staff described how they were working in partnership, and networking with colleagues internally and externally, to further expand the reach of the programme. Some staff also recalled how stakeholders, particularly those in the community, were now proactive in contacting HSK to find out more about the programme.

“...a whole section of community partners want to know generally about HeadStart and other things around it, so I think they're keen for information and kind of knowledge and confidence [...] we had quite small organisations hearing through word of mouth.”

Although overall awareness has improved, a number of staff were of the opinion that some stakeholders still perceive HSK as a service, as opposed to a programme which aims to provide tools and training to influence wider system change.

They expressed that in order for different stakeholders to understand what HSK is trying to achieve, key messages need to be simplified and tailored to various audiences, while keeping the overall themes in the communications consistent and clear. The concern that the ambition and purpose of the programme may be misunderstood by stakeholders, and the need for clear and consistent messages was also expressed by staff in last year's interviews³ and was also noted as a future development that was needed at the time⁴.

The absence of an assortment of communications to stakeholders about HSK was described by some staff as a barrier, however, it was recognised that work was underway to make improvements. A future development mentioned by several staff related to enhancement of the HSK brand and an increase in general communications and publicity to raise awareness and understanding of the programme's aims.

“I just think there needs to be some sort of clear, consistent message [about] what the purpose is, so everybody understands it and what their role is. I think that's from the Hub and I think that's from communication internally and externally.”

When discussing stakeholders that are potentially yet to be reached, as with last year's interviews⁵, a number of staff mentioned that due to the breadth of community organisations in Kent it was likely that reach could be further expanded to others in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). Some staff explained the main focus is to engage secondary schools and that at times it was difficult finding additional time to try and engage a range of community organisations.

³ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p13*

⁴ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p30*

⁵ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p22*

Some staff were of the opinion that by taking time now to engage certain groups within the VCS, especially volunteers who work with young people consistently over a number of years, this could contribute to the sustainability of the programme.

“...you haven’t got that driving force contacting [the VCS] constantly, I think maybe a bit of work could be done to just remind them periodically that we’re here and what we do [...] because the secondary [schools] are the bread and butter your focus is on them most of the time.”

As with last year’s interviews⁶, the gap in reach to parents and carers was also mentioned by several staff and there was recognition that the offer still needs some development.

Staff detailed a range of young people where they felt the reach of the programme could be improved. The types of young people mentioned varied depending on the staff member interviewed but overall, they were those in hard to reach or vulnerable groups, such as those home educated, the LGBTQ community, asylum seekers, the BME community and PRU students.

⁶ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p22*

Integration and working in partnership

When staff reflected on implementation in the new areas, they explained how it had been more efficient as a result of learning from the first areas, which staff interviewed last year had anticipated⁷. A number of staff considered mobilisation in the new areas a particular success. Several staff mentioned how improved confidence in the programme among the HSK team had aided implementation, along with having the commissioned services in place ready for roll out.

“[The new areas were] so much quicker to mobilise [...] actually having the commissioning services in place, it was sharp, there was no hanging around [...] And I think just more confidence in the programme because actually you know what it is now rather than in [the previous areas] we were still learning and shaping it a bit.”

Some staff also described how schools in the previous areas had shared with other schools how being involved in HSK had been beneficial to them, which had encouraged engagement and aided implementation in the new areas.

“...people are getting on board with it more [...] because people see the benefit [...] that didn't happen in the beginning because people weren't sure what HeadStart was and what the benefit was, whereas now, people are finding out from other schools that actually there is a benefit...”

Several staff explained how there was varied levels of engagement across the schools, with some embracing the training and tools provided by the programme and embedding the HSK ethos, and others being described as difficult to initially engage, which staff stated was a barrier at times.

Clearly communicating to schools what needs to be achieved and breaking deliverables down into a manageable timeline were improvements several staff explained may have aided implementation in the new areas. Some staff members also explained that recognising and appreciating the differences in school culture and adapting to be more flexible to fit with the culture may have also assisted.

“I have had some really powerful feedback from schools, saying, do you know, we were a bit sceptical about HeadStart when it came in. We thought, here we go, it's another programme, but it's really making a difference.”

A number of staff mentioned how there had been increased interest in the programme from non-HSK schools. Some staff described how, at times, it had been challenging to manage the expectations of these schools, especially when the schools were unclear as to why they were not directly involved in HSK and wanted access to the funding and training.

⁷ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews* p14

“...people see the benefit of [HSK] and word is getting out, we’re getting [non-HSK] schools contacting us and saying actually we want to be part of this, how do we do it?”

Several staff mentioned how busy staff in schools appeared and explained how the HSK Participation Workers were being used as an additional resource to deliver elements of the programme, such as carrying out Resilience Conversations (RCs) with students. This was also recognised by school staff when interviewed⁸.

Some staff voiced, on behalf of schools, the challenges they faced regarding recording data to support the evaluation. Thoughts echoed by school staff when interviewed⁹.

To ensure sustainability of the programme in schools, especially in areas they are leaving, several staff suggested there is a need for team of staff within the school to work on HSK, rather than just one or two people being allocated this responsibility. Staff turnover in schools and the inconsistency of those working on HSK within the school was highlighted as a challenge.

“...[the schools] are still not very good at getting the whole team representation. It’s sometimes still that one or two people tasked which isn’t the right way of doing it.”

“For the schools, it is time and capacity. It will always be an issue [...] The biggest barrier is staff leaving.”

There was appreciation from a number of staff that culture change in schools takes time and recognition that some schools may need extended support from the HSK team, beyond what was initially anticipated, to ensure a whole school approach is embedded. As mentioned above, staff expressed that in order for the agenda to be driven forward when HSK leaves, there needs to be a team of staff in school to sustain the elements of the programme they find beneficial, such as peer mentoring.

“I still believe that we’re going to do things that we set out to do. I just think that it will take perhaps a bit longer for the impact to be realised. I think a lot of what we’re talking about is culture change and culture change takes time. You could be looking at ten years at least to really see a whole system change...”

Along with having a team in schools working to embed HSK, some staff also stated that having continued strategic backing regarding the emotional health and wellbeing agenda from senior leaders within schools and KCC would be beneficial. They also expressed hope that future modifications in the priorities and focus of organisations, such as Ofsted, may influence change.

⁸ KCC SC Analytics (2019). *Qualitative Insight Report – Year 2 School Implementation Interviews p14*

⁹ KCC SC Analytics (2019). *Qualitative Insight Report – Year 2 School Implementation Interviews p13*

“Obviously legislation and things like the Transformation Plan, things like that are an additional thing that help to forge those things forward and Ofsted and how mental health, wellbeing and resilience is now an expectation of Ofsted. So, that helps to make sure organisations have got to address those things, rather than just leaving it as a choice...”

Staff in EH explained how having HSK in their districts had been beneficial and commented how it had aided partnership working, especially with schools.

“I think it has brought added value to the district. It has brought a wider influence around what we can and can't do, and I think it has helped some of those communications with the schools in particular around the language, how we work together, partnership working.”

Taking the time to build relationships with partners in schools, the community and KCC was mentioned by several staff as being advantageous to the development of HSK. They explained how when a relationship of trust grows, it can be mutually beneficial.

“If you have a 15-minute conversation with people, you can see more the links of how that supports your work and how you support their work.”

A number of staff considered working in collaboration and alongside staff in EH, especially the District Managers, as pivotal to the development of HSK in the districts and explained how in the new areas the programme is embedded and part of the district offer.

“...building relationships with the District Manager was really key [...] the collaborative working has gone really well [...] we've been able to pool our stakeholders and work with community contacts. We've been able to promote HeadStart as part of the district offer rather than this standalone thing...”

As with last years' interviews¹⁰, the role of the HSK Senior EH Worker was also described by many staff as essential to embed the programme within the units, especially by raising awareness of tools such as RCs and access to support through grant funding or services.

Several staff were of the opinion that the programme is embedded within parts of EH as staff are using the learning from training, tools and services available.

“The vocabulary people are using. Just the reflective way that people are talking. They are more confident about having some of the conversations than they would have been before.”

¹⁰ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p24 & 25*

However, they stated that the information recorded, especially in relation to RCs, was not reflecting the level of activity. They explained the administrative challenges relating to the process of recording RCs, as this currently sits outside of the existing system routinely used by staff. They voiced that in order for RCs to be properly embedded into practice, it was likely this would need to change.

“...the barrier has overcome the benefit. Staff in particular would fall back to an easier option, and an easier option is probably by far the three houses.”

A few staff also mentioned how, at times, EH workers were using HSK services and grants as an exit strategy to stepdown when closing their cases with families.

Young people benefitting from HSK

When explaining who they think will benefit from the programme and how, as with last year's interviews¹¹, most staff spoke about building the resilience of young people and helping them to improve their capability to better understand and manage their own mental health. Several staff also expressed hope that future generations would benefit from the programme through the learned behaviours of this generation.

"The hope is that they will become more resilient and less reliant on services and more able to advocate for themselves, to be able to access services if and when they need them."

As with all other interviews with school and EHPS staff, the importance of the work carried out by the HSK Participation Workers in facilitating the involvement of young people was remarked upon by staff.

Most staff considered the participation of young people in the programme a success that should be celebrated. They described how young people were involved in various elements of HSK such as staff interviews, Pay It Forward assessments, the Big Conversation, residentials and the development of Social Marketing.

As with last year's interviews¹², their engagement with the local and central SpeakOut groups or Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) was mentioned most often, with staff detailing how young people had matured and grown as a result of being involved with HSK. An achievement also noted by several staff related to the co-production training delivered by young people to senior EH staff, which was well received.

"We've got individuals who we've seen really grow. I think we can be quite proud of ourselves."

Some staff explained how there was a continued high level of engagement from young people participating in the programme and they expressed concern around the sustainability of these opportunities in the areas where HSK is leaving.

"They just have so much fun and they love it and they're really onboard. They want HeadStart to work. They want young people's emotional wellbeing to be better."

Several staff did state that at times there were difficulties regarding co-production. In particular they mentioned that the principles of co-production were sometimes misunderstood and that there could be an absence of appreciation from some that in order to properly co-produce the

¹¹ KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p12*

¹² KCC SC Analytics (2018). *Qualitative Insight Report – EHPS Implementation Interviews p17*

programme an appropriate amount of time and planning needs to be invested, otherwise the involvement of young people runs the risk of being tokenistic.

Some staff also commented that the opportunities for young people to lead were sometimes tedious and potentially dull, which could be challenging at times. However, there was recognition this needs future development and going forward there needs to be a broader range of opportunities for young people to lead and hold HSK to account.

“To do coproduction properly, you need time [...] that doesn’t always fit with how organisations like KCC work.”

“I feel like there should be more opportunities but actually some of the opportunities for young people to lead and make decisions are quite boring because things like the commissioning or the making decisions like Pay It Forward, it's really hard to make that fun.”

As well as young people benefitting from the programme through participation, several staff also described how others were benefitting through access to interventions and grant funding. Those most often mentioned by staff were the Safe Spaces and Talents and Interests or Pay It Forward grants, which many considered a success.

“And she said to me [after the RC], with a tear in her eyes [...] This is going to change my life. She honestly felt that she didn’t have any support before and that she couldn’t cope.”

Several staff described the challenges initially faced with the Talents and Interests grant process, such as the application form size, the length of time for new providers to receive funds and inconsistent approval of grants. However, they explained how changes had subsequently been made to ensure the process improved.

“...people started to apply for [Talents and Interests grants] and then when they looked for the application it was just a nightmare to complete [...] We had a lot of feedback and as a result we’ve changed the application form [and] we’ve changed the process slightly [...] it didn’t work as well as it could, and we have improved it a lot. The feedback now is that it’s much better.”

A number of staff mentioned that in order for an increased volume of young people to benefit from the programme, future development of the Resilience Hub as a resource was imperative. Some staff commented how slow progress to develop the Hub had been a challenge.

“...what is the legacy going to be. If you get the Resilience Hub really good and accessible, that will be the key [...] I think that has been rather frustrating because it has taken quite a long time to develop.”

HSK influence, training and tools

Alongside young people directly benefitting from the programme, a number of staff also stated that those taking up training and using the tools provided by HSK would also benefit.

Nearly all staff commented how well they thought the training had been received by participants and how they considered this a success of the programme. They described how it had helped to improve the confidence of staff working with young people and has enabled them to have better conversations regarding emotional wellbeing.

“The training itself has allowed them to have those conversations with young people and understanding where mental health comes from and being able to listen to a young person has put that into a practical approach to say, what can we do?”

When discussing changes over the past year, most staff reflected on the improvements made to the RCs and the introduction of the Self-Reflection tool. They explained how feedback from stakeholders using the tool to assist them in having conversations with young people, particularly schools, had influenced this development.

“I think it's about our tools, obviously the resilience tool now and the self-reflection, you know, so I think actually schools are now aware that we actually reviewing things. It is a research programme, we are changing stuff on their recommendation. I think actually their engagement is that they are part of that decision making and changes and they can influence.”

Some staff did comment that although they thought the RC and Self-Reflection tools were being used, they possibly were not being used in their truest form. However, they stated the principles surrounding the tool were being adopted to assist staff in having conversations with young people. They also explained the administrative burden voiced by staff in recording the RCs both within schools and EH.

“It is influencing their conversations [...] but I think sometimes they might not necessarily be using the tool as it is.”

Some staff also illustrated how HSK had influenced thinking by working in collaboration with partners in EH, Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), the Local Children's Partnership Groups (LCPGs) and through the Local Transformation Plan (LTP). They explained how working in partnership had raised the profile of the emotional health and wellbeing agenda and that adjustments were being made to the way people were operating.

“...people working together, talking, taking away barriers to working together and thinking about how they can fund, finance, support young people’s mental health together.”

A success noted by several staff, as a result of learning from HSK, related to the CCG funding acquired for two additional posts to engage parents and young people in participation around development of improved services.

“[The CCGs] learnt from us that if you ask young people what helps them best you get a better, coherent plan and proposal.”

Sustainability

When discussing sustainability of certain elements of the programme, most staff were of the opinion that schools and colleagues in EH were likely to want to continue with the commissioned services and grants, in particular Kooth and the mentoring services. They explained this was as a result of partners seeing evidence of improved outcomes from young people involved with HSK interventions and also that additional sources of support from external services was continually being sought.

However, they recognised there would be difficulties in sustaining these interventions due to funding and appreciated that money would need to be secured from elsewhere.

“I think the commissioned services are something that should be considered to be funded by somebody else afterwards because it is having a big impact. Schools really value it.”

Several staff expressed hope that the universal elements of the programme, such as Safe Spaces and Peer Mentoring, would be sustained by schools and communities going forward.

They also recognised that although the commissioned services have an important role to play, what they view as making the programme sustainable is equipping staff with the tools and knowledge needed to support young people, providing resources to young people to help themselves and changing the overall attitudes towards emotional health and wellbeing.

“I’m not saying [the commissioned services] aren’t important but they’re not going to enable sustainability, it’s the people, the culture, the things around young people. The support, the mechanisms, the websites and all that sort of stuff which enable that support.”

Some staff did express concern regarding the reach of HSK training and explained how limited reach or high staff turnover in schools and the community of those trained may impact on future sustainability around retention and sharing of this knowledge. However, this had been previously noted by staff and it was explained how they were looking to secure future funding to expand the reach.

“If you’ve only got one person in the school or one person in the community, that’s not really enough because that person can leave or move and then a lot of the benefits and knowledge will be lost.”

“I think just in terms of if we’re talking about impact and like long-term, it’s difficult to put all your eggs in one basket or two baskets.”

Appendix 1 – HeadStart Kent Evaluation Objectives & Questions

1. Understand the level and extent of awareness of HeadStart

- 1.1 What level of awareness is there of HeadStart among stakeholders / the target population?
- 1.2 Do they understand the purpose of the programme?
- 1.3 How do stakeholders understand their own role in HeadStart?

2. Explore and evidence how the programme is being implemented

- 2.1 What was the plan for implementation of HeadStart?
- 2.2 To what extent has fidelity to the implementation plan been achieved? What adaptations have been made during the implementation?
- 2.3 What has enabled / hindered successful implementation of the HeadStart programme?

3. Evidence the extent to which HeadStart is reaching and engaging with its target population

- 3.1 What was the intended target population of HeadStart?
- 3.2 To what extent has HeadStart engaged with this target population? Has there been any change in the target population? What have been the reasons for any change?

4. Describe and measure the effect HeadStart has on young people and their outcomes

- 4.1 What has been the effect of HeadStart as a programme on young people's outcomes?
- 4.2 What have been the effects of individual HeadStart interventions on young people's outcomes? How do interventions interact together?
- 4.3 What are the elements that make HeadStart interventions successful? How is this learning disseminated?

5. Describe whether, and in what ways, HeadStart is facilitating system change in school and community approaches to young people's mental health

- 5.1 In what ways is HeadStart intended to contribute to systems change?
- 5.2 To what extent has the intended systems change been realised?
- 5.3 What have been the obstacles / enablers to the intended systems change?
- 5.4 Is any system change created by HeadStart sustained?

The Strategic Commissioning Analytics team lead the authority on the process of gathering and analysing information regarding customers, in order to build deeper and more effective customer relationships and improve strategic decision making. We deliver high quality reports which combine data and analysis from relevant sources, using a wide range of professional methodologies, probing issues of interest, and drawing out valid and robust findings.

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