

Young people challenging assumptions- Headstart¹

HeadStart involves young people in all aspects of the programme, including the HeadStart Learning Programme (national evaluation). Children and young people have shaped key components of the Learning Programme from data collection processes to the presentation and dissemination of findings.

Young people's engagement is facilitated by [Common Room](#), who employ young advisors to input into the evaluation and engage young people from the local HeadStart partnerships.

The evaluation team held **co-design workshops** with young advisors and representatives of the HeadStart partnerships to design the [Wellbeing Measurement Framework](#) (WMF), a tool to capture quantitative data on young people's mental health, which will help to understand the impact of the programme. The young advisors gave advice from the perspective of a young person regarding language, accessibility and content.

“ [they were concerned about] choosing measures with positively worded items, rather than problem-based. The consensus amongst adults was that positively worded items would be better. But the young people brought wise insights, [they said] ‘if you are a young person experiencing problems, it's harder to answer negatively to a positive indicator’ [so they considered] the emotional experience of filling out the survey. That would have been lacking without their insight.”²

They also worked alongside the technical team to break the survey down into manageable chunks such as discussing how many questions per page, providing an accessible introduction and layout. “They were central to challenging some of the assumptions about young people's attitudes about completing surveys”.³

The young advisors **challenged some assumptions** about young people's attitudes to completing surveys, arguing that if there were too few measures the point of the survey disappears - young people will be happy answer more questions if they know it's going to be meaningful, why it's important, and what they are contributing to. They also emphasised the importance of explaining this in the introduction. What made this process easier was that the young advisors had been involved in HeadStart from the beginning so they felt able to have genuine discussion, were ready to compromise and make a real contribution.

ucl.ac.uk/evidence-based-practice-unit/headstart-learning-team

¹ Martin, K. Common room Coproduction Lead for the Headstart Learning Team, 10 January 2019 interview.

² Martin, K. (2019).

³ Martin, K. (2019).