



EBPU Evidence Based Practice Unit

A partnership of



Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

Case Study 3

Using data to inform system and cultural change

Informing system and cultural change in emotional and mental health using the Wellbeing Measurement Framework survey results

Summary

HeadStart Kernow provides school and community based interventions in Cornwall for young people with emerging mental health needs. Like all HeadStart partnerships, HeadStart Kernow carries out an annual survey of children and young people in participating schools using the Wellbeing Measurement Framework (WMF). The national HeadStart Learning Team gives detailed feedback about these survey data via aggregated online summaries, offering an insight into pupil mental health and wellbeing.

This case study looks at how HeadStart Kernow raised awareness of the WMF and began to embed the use of WMF data across the system. Challenges they encountered include limited awareness of WMF and its potential locally, and issues around the accessibility of the data.

Several lessons emerged from this work: the value of engaging those at a senior level with WMF data; the importance of making the data as accessible as possible, the need to embed the data in strategic decision-making around support for young people, and the value of linking the WMF with other local data.

About HeadStart

HeadStart is a five-year, £58.7 million National Lottery funded programme set-up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. It aims to explore and test new ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10 to 16 and prevent serious mental-health issues from developing.

The Evidence Based Practice Unit at the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families and UCL is working with The National Lottery Community Fund and the HeadStart partnerships to collect and evaluate evidence about what does and doesn't work locally to benefit young people now and in the future. Partners working with the Evidence Based Practice Unit on this evaluation include the Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC), Common Room, London School of Economics and the University of Manchester.

HeadStart and the Wellbeing Measurement Framework

The [Wellbeing Measurement Framework \(WMF\)](#) survey is part of the national evaluation of HeadStart. It is a set of validated questionnaires that assess positive wellbeing, behavioural and emotional difficulties, the presence and strength of protective factors such as perceived support at school, home and in the community, and ability to deal with stress and manage emotions.

Each year, pupils in participating schools across all six HeadStart areas are invited to take part in the survey. The survey is completed online and pupil responses are anonymous. The response rates to the survey are very high with over 85% of pupils in target year groups responding. In total, over 30,000 pupils respond each year.

Each school is provided with an online report which shows how the mental wellbeing of children and young people in their school compare to others in the HeadStart programme.

Additionally, each HeadStart Partnership receives pupil level responses for all the pupils in their area. This enables them to link WMF data with locally available data, such as school attendance and achievement data.

This case study shows how one partnership has worked to maximise the use of the WMF data.

Introduction

The annual survey data collected in schools throughout Cornwall using the WMF provide a unique insight into the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Cornwall. HeadStart Kernow wanted the data to be widely used to inform system and cultural change in emotional and mental health, beyond HeadStart, to benefit the young people of Cornwall.

The aim is to embed the WMF as a routine source of insight, in order to make a sustainable change for young people. By prioritising early engagement with stakeholders, awareness of the prevalence of emotional and mental health issues will be raised. This would open up opportunities to link the WMF data with locally available data and to embed the results in strategic decision-making and key strategic documents.

What are the challenges to achieving this?

- **Awareness** - practitioners, policymakers and commissioners beyond HeadStart may not be aware of the WMF data. Even those who are aware may not fully understand the breadth of information it can provide.
- **Accessibility** - important findings may not be evident to all stakeholders and they may need support to identify what is relevant to their service.

- **Data linkage** – linking the WMF with other available data could further increase the usefulness of the data to stakeholders. However, this presents challenges around data-sharing.
- **Embedding WMF within strategic planning** – the importance of the responses from children and young people may not be fully appreciated. Strategic decision-makers may not understand the full potential of these data as performance indicators.

This case study will look at how HeadStart Kernow raised awareness of the WMF and began to embed the use of WMF data across the system.

What did we learn about best practice?

Lesson 1: engage at a senior level

HeadStart Kernow presented the WMF findings and the online tool to the Council's Senior Leadership Team covering education, early years, children and family services.

Senior leads at Virtual School (children in care) saw the immediate value of the WMF data:

- Data about the wellbeing of young people is not routinely collected. The data collected through the WMF allows practitioners, policymakers and commissioners to really understand how young people are feeling and how this changes over time. There is real value in using the WMF data to inform and enhance strategic documents and statutory reporting.
- The WMF provides insight into local young people's emotional health and wellbeing and how different factors potentially influence this.
- The WMF aligns with a significant number of the aims and priorities of the Council.

Senior leads encouraged the HeadStart Kernow team to work across departments, services, and organisations to open up further opportunities to ensure the WMF results were used to the benefit of a range of stakeholders. This included data-linking the WMF with locally available data. Based on questions at a senior level, data-linkage began with specific populations including looked-after children and service families.

Lesson 2: make the data as accessible as possible

Presentations on the WMF were made to the School Effectiveness Team, County Educational Psychologists, CAMHS i-THRIVE Group, and to primary and secondary heads at Cornwall's Head Teacher's conference, headteachers sessions and the Cornwall Governor Conference. The focus of these was to share the content of the survey and also how comprehensive the data was, covering 85% of young people in the relevant year groups across Cornwall.

While practitioners, policymakers and commissioners valued the online tool and the opportunity to look at the data in an interactive way, they identified that all stakeholders may not yet have the necessary understanding of emotional health data to access the data in this way.

To develop understanding and ensure that data was accessible, HeadStart Kernow produced 'key findings' that explain the WMF. To complement the online tool, a Cornwall-level report and bespoke reports for each school were created.

These hard-copy reports are high quality, bound documents that reflect investment made in the production of the data they contain. By receiving attractive reports, it was felt that readers would be encouraged to engage with the subject matter.

Feedback from practitioners, policymakers and commissioners beyond HeadStart supported this view and those receiving the report commented on how the hard-copy reports with clear summary sheets and key messages were useful tools for sharing with colleagues, governors and other interested parties. The reports were identified as a robust source of evidence for schools during an Ofsted inspection. The reports enable important information to be easily shared with inspectors.

A hard-copy pack of all the school summaries was produced for school-facing staff, pulling the key information together in one place. Colleagues reported that these were useful in supporting conversations with individual schools.

Lesson 3: data-linking and analysis

The WMF provides a wealth of information about young people's emotional and mental health and the support they receive. Combining this data with other data provides even more insight.

The challenge was in deciding where to focus immediate efforts! Stakeholder engagement directed linking of the WMF with locally-available education data in order to demonstrate the level of need among the most vulnerable young people to help shape key strategic documents that identify priorities for service improvement and commissioning.



Lesson 4: embed in strategic decision-making around support to young people

By including WMF data as a source of evidence for strategic decision making, services can ensure that the needs of young people, as identified within these data, are central to the planning process.

School-facing teams (including the Virtual School for Children in Care and Post-Looked After) have used the WMF results during monitoring visits and to challenge school approaches to behaviour management. Data analysts and researchers in the council are encouraged to work with HeadStart Kernow to embed the WMF in their key strategic documents.

Cornwall promotes the WMF results as young people's voice on emotional health and wellbeing. Measures of the WMF are Key Performance Indicators in the Council's Business Plan to ensure effective support for young people and particularly vulnerable children remains a priority.

The HeadStart Schools Lead has embedded the WMF in her discussions with 32 schools as a key marker of how they are changing the culture around emotional health and wellbeing.

Schools use the WMF in their 'Action Planning' to help target the money schools receive from HeadStart for Emotional Health and Wellbeing activity.

Through working with Public Health, the WMF is now embedded in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for mental wellbeing, which is a strategic intelligence document used by partners and stakeholders across Cornwall to inform service delivery.

Looking ahead

The Council's HeadStart Kernow Team are now working on data-linking the WMF with other types of sensitive data. The aim of this is to establish a fuller picture of local need, so that service provision can be modified to address this need. To do this, they are putting internal data sharing agreements in place to allow data analysts to undertake the analysis and return aggregated data and headline statistics.

An important next step is to communicate the WMF findings to a wider audience including young people and NHS partners. HeadStart Kernow are investigating the use of social media, infographics and the radio to achieve this.

As key strategies are refreshed the WMF will be an important source of information and further work is being done to distill key measures for local needs assessments for the future beyond the life of the HeadStart programme. It is hoped that the needs of young people will be considered and met in these strategies.

How did the HeadStart Learning Team help?

The Council's HeadStart Kernow Team has been an active contributor to the design of the WMF from its inception and has a standing place on the National Steering group. The HeadStart Learning team are a responsive and supportive team offering guidance and critical analysis of the HeadStart Kernow approach.

The decision to prioritise the local analysis of the WMF as one of the three strands of the local evaluation of HeadStart Kernow was made in a partnership workshop in Cornwall, supported by Lee Atkins from CORC. This formal recognition of the importance of the WMF to Cornwall supported the development of the approach. Lee supported Natalie Russell and the wider HeadStart Kernow Team to focus on identifying audiences and considering their needs and is supporting HeadStart Kernow to develop and produce high quality reports targeted at particular stakeholders.



The Virtual School (for Children in Care) has used the WMF as part of their toolkit as a helpful indicator and to trigger discussion on how Children in Care are finding school life.

Recommendations

- **Start at the top** - getting engagement at a senior level helps to get (and keep) things moving.
- **Know your audience** - identify your stakeholders and understand their needs and interests and present the data in a way they'll easily understand.
- **Engage data colleagues** - and identify priorities for data linkage based on interests of stakeholders.
- **Embed in strategic decision making across the system** - by promoting the benefits of the data and including data from the WMF as performance indicators within key strategic documents.

We would like to thank:



- HeadStart Kernow Learning Sub-Group
- HeadStart Kernow Partnership Delivery Group
- Cornwall Council Senior Leadership Team (Together For Families)
- Young people and staff of HeadStart Kernow Schools in Cornwall
- Cornwall Association of Secondary Heads, Public Health, Performance Data Team
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- Evidence Based Practice Unit
- University of Manchester
- Child Outcomes Research Consortium

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