



**EBPU** Evidence Based  
Practice Unit

A partnership of



**HeadStart Qualitative Evidence Briefing #6**  
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# **Shining a light on risk and protective factors: Young people's experiences**

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# The HeadStart Programme

Started in 2016, 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.

HeadStart 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. To do this, six local authority-led HeadStart partnerships are working with local young people, schools, families, charities, community and public services to design and try out new interventions that will make a difference to young people's mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

The HeadStart partnerships are in the following locations in England:  
Blackpool; Cornwall; Hull; Kent; Newham;  
Wolverhampton.

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



# HeadStart Qualitative Evidence Briefing #6

## Executive summary

This briefing reports the findings from two qualitative studies conducted as part of the HeadStart Learning Programme (national evaluation). The first study describes findings from the first year of HeadStart. It explores 63 young people's experiences of protective factors in relation to risk factors and wellbeing. 'Protective factors' are aspects of life that may either increase wellbeing or reduce threats to wellbeing. 'Risk factors' are aspects of life that may increase the likelihood of a negative outcome, such as poor wellbeing.

The first study found clear variety in the types and extent of support drawn on by or available to young people. It identified three groups of young people with different experiences of risk and protective factors:

1. Those with multiple sources of support who, in the face of risk or difficult times, were able to access positive support from a range of sources including friends, family, and HeadStart interventions.
2. Those with uncertain sources of support who were relying on limited or unreliable support that did not fully meet their needs.
3. Those primarily relying on their own internal capacity to cope through self-initiated forms of support, rather than drawing on wider networks.

The second study looks across the first and second years of HeadStart, focusing on how the experience of difficulties and support for 78 young people (including those young people from the first study) has changed over that period. The second study found that:

- young people who had experienced more difficulty in their lives over time were more likely to have uncertain sources of support;
- young people who had experienced less difficulty over time, or who had experienced improvement, were more likely to have multiple sources of support.

Many young people in the second study had been supported by HeadStart, often as a result of local identification processes to highlight those in need of support. Many of these young people also gave examples to indicate ways in which the HeadStart support they had received had been effective. However, this was not the case for all young people interviewed. Some young people indicated that the HeadStart support they had received did not meet all of their needs, and some young people in need may not yet have been identified for HeadStart support.

Together, the findings of these two studies suggest the following key recommendations for support providers working with young people in school or community settings:

- When identifying young people in need of early intervention to support their mental health and wellbeing, targeting those with few protective factors and/or limited support systems may be as important as targeting those exposed to risks.
- Support providers should work with young people to identify the areas of their lives that they are struggling with and to map the ways of coping or support systems that they already have access to. This could help practitioners and young people to understand which types of support (if necessary) would best meet their individual needs.
- Evidence presented here indicates that even when young people have received help, sometimes difficulties remain, and continued/additional support may be required. Building in a review process at the end of an intervention could help support providers to ascertain whether a young person requires any further help and then signpost them accordingly.

## About this briefing

This briefing reports the findings from two qualitative studies conducted as part of the HeadStart Learning Programme's national qualitative evaluation; the aim of which is to examine change in young people's experiences of difficulties, coping, and support over the five-year period of HeadStart.

Tracking the same group of young people longitudinally over time enables the Learning Team to explore young people's experiences and opinions on the full range of HeadStart support (and other types of support) that they might encounter from ages 10 to 16.

This also allows the Learning Team to examine changes in young people's experiences of difficulties and positive wellbeing over time, and the possible drivers behind this.

The first study in this briefing describes findings from the first year of HeadStart about young people's experiences of factors that protect their wellbeing in the context of risk. This study was led by Mia Eisenstadt, as part of her PhD research. The second study describes findings looking across the first and second years of HeadStart, focusing on change over time in young people's experiences of difficulties and support. This study was led by Dr Emily Stapley, the Learning Team's Qualitative Research Lead.

# Study 1: Factors that protect young people's wellbeing in the context of risk

Mia Eisenstadt, Emily Stapley & Jessica Deighton<sup>1</sup>

(see citation for this study on the final page of this briefing)

## Aims and methodology

We conducted interviews<sup>2</sup> with 63 young people (aged 9 to 12) across five of the HeadStart areas in year one (2017) of the HeadStart programme. The aim of this study was to qualitatively explore young people's lived experiences of risk and protective factors. 'Risk factors' are aspects of life that may increase the likelihood of a negative outcome, such as poor wellbeing. For example, having low self-esteem, having difficult relationships with parents, or being bullied. 'Protective factors' are aspects of life that may either increase wellbeing or reduce threats to wellbeing. For example, having a positive outlook on one's self and life, having close relationships with appropriate adults, and having good connections with peers.

## Key messages and implications

**Key message 1: There is clear variety at the outset of HeadStart in the types and extent of support drawn on or available to young people from various sources.**

24 young people who were interviewed had **multiple forms of support**. These young people reported having positive experiences of support, such as from parents, school, HeadStart interventions, friends, and extracurricular activities. They often described having high levels of wellbeing (such as enjoying life or feeling

problem-free) and having positive self-perceptions.

29 young people had **uncertain sources of support**. These young people reported having a lack of support or ambiguous sources of support, such as a peer group who were at times supportive, but who also had a negative influence on the young person. These young people often reported experiencing difficulties at home and/or at school.

10 young people described having **self-initiated forms of support**. These young people typically reported managing their problems on their own or with their friends, rather than seeking support from their parents, professionals, or school staff. They varied in their reported levels of positive wellbeing, positive self-perception, and in the difficulties they had experienced at home and/or at school.

The three groups are illustrated in the infographic in **Figure 1**.

**Implications.** The findings bring attention to the kinds of support systems that a young person may have contact with and the strength of their links with those systems. Young people with multiple sources of support had strong links with many systems, whereas young people with uncertain or self-initiated sources of support had less reliable links with systems.

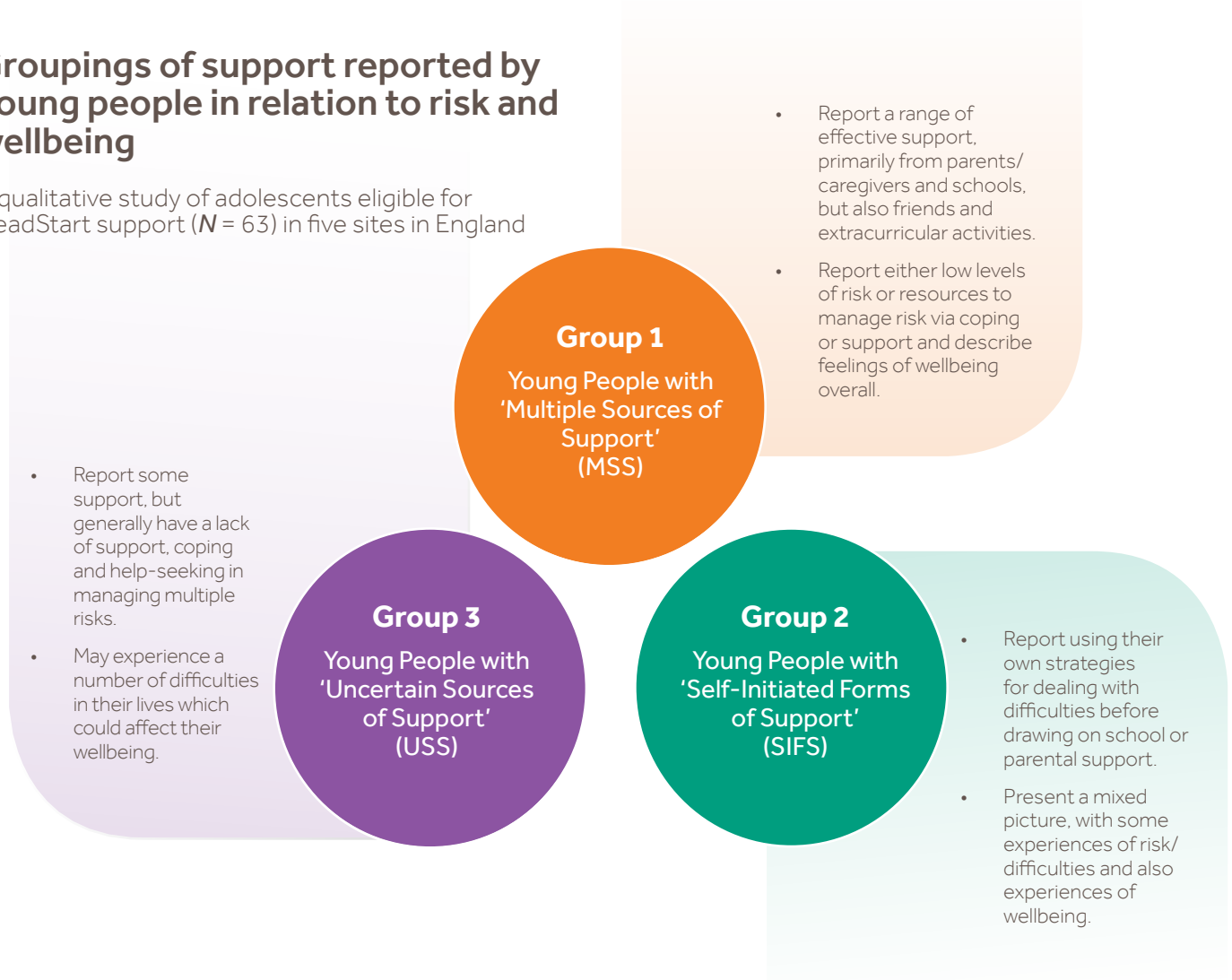
The three groups described here may provide useful ways of entering into discussions with young people about what support they feel that they can draw on, and their understanding of how this helps to reduce their difficulties. Mapping of support networks is not new and has been proposed by Michael Ungar (2015), who suggests that assessment of a young person's resilience needs to involve detailed inquiry into their experiences of risk and protective factors<sup>3</sup>.

Our findings also suggest that these conversations should include discussion of young people's experiences of support so far (positive or negative), as well as young people's experiences of difficulty, coping strategies, and help-seeking attitudes. An example of this type of approach in HeadStart can be seen in HeadStart Kent's Resilience Conversations (described in **Practice Example 1**).

## Figure 1

### Groupings of support reported by young people in relation to risk and wellbeing

A qualitative study of adolescents eligible for HeadStart support ( $N = 63$ ) in five sites in England





## Practice Example 1: Resilience Conversations (HeadStart Kent)

A Resilience Conversation is a tool to enable young people to talk with an adult to explore different aspects of their lives and discuss how they are supported by the different relationships that they have within their family and community. The young person may choose to use a RAG rating system (red, amber, green) to aid their discussion of such areas as feeling secure, health, emotions and behaviours, education, friendships, and talents and interests.

Together, young people with their supporting adult explore what support is available to the young person every day, as well as what tailored support they could access through HeadStart Kent, such as peer mentoring or a grant to support their talents and interests. Support is then provided to the young person based on their responses during this conversation.

Further resources on HeadStart Kent's Resilience Conversations can be found on [HeadStart Kent's website<sup>4</sup>](#) and [in this video<sup>5</sup>](#).

### Key message 2: Young people with multiple forms of support experience more positive wellbeing and the ability to better manage in the context of risk.

While exposure to risk varied across the three groups, most young people in Study 1 had experienced at least some level of risk to their wellbeing. Types of risks reported included:

- bullying;
- peer conflict;
- problems at home, such as interparental conflict or parental physical or mental health issues;
- sibling conflict;
- behaviour difficulties;
- difficulties with schoolwork;
- difficulties with worries, anger, and other aspects of mental health.

Of the three groups identified, young people with multiple forms of support tended to have experienced fewer and less severe risks, as compared to young people with uncertain sources of support. Moreover, even when they had experienced risks, young people with multiple forms of support often described experiences of positive wellbeing and the ability to better manage in the context of risk.

Coping strategies reported by these young people included drawing, going to a teacher, sibling or parent for help, playing video games to relax, or writing down thoughts and emotions in a journal.



*I'd just speak to my sister and like, she would help me and just be like, I'll be there for you and stuff.*

### Key message 3: Young people with self-initiated forms of support adopt strategies that enable them to cope, at least in the short-term.

Young people who tended to use self-initiated forms of support gave various reasons for doing so, which included: personal preference (such as not wishing to show others how they were feeling), drawing on inner resources (such as perceived maturity and perseverance), or struggling to find suitable support.



*I have been able to like, keep myself together, when anything is hard. So, like, I just keep it to myself, and it won't affect me either.*

**Implications.** This group may be less likely to seek support from professionals, parents, or school staff in future, as compared to the other two groups. It is unclear at this stage of the research whether, as a result of this, the young people in this group could potentially be at greater risk if exposed to more challenging situations in future, or whether perhaps these young people are equipped to manage their difficulties independently. Support providers may need to actively seek out young people with self-initiated forms of support, working with them to identify ways of coping that they already have, and to help them find additional resolutions to and appropriate support for the issues/needs they identify, should they require it.

### Key message 4: Young people with uncertain sources of support seem least able to manage the multiple risks that they encounter.

Support available was often seen as limited, unreliable, or unhelpful by the young people in the uncertain sources of support group. Some young people in this group reported having effective support in one area of their life, but it was not enough to manage the multiple risks or severe difficulties that they were experiencing.



*Me and my brother did have counselling, because we was going through a time. But it didn't really help us.*

**Implications.** These young people may be most in need of support that helps them to manage their experiences of risk and reduce the potential for negative outcomes, such as poor wellbeing or increasing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The findings also suggest that when identifying those in need of early intervention (such as support from HeadStart) to support their mental health and wellbeing, targeting young people with few protective factors and/or support systems may be as important as targeting those exposed to risks. An example of a tool that could facilitate such an approach is the HeadStart Hull Checklist for Additional Support (described in **Practice Example 2**).

## **Practice Example 2: Checklist for Additional Support (HeadStart Hull)**

A Checklist for Additional Support has been developed for use in the HeadStart Hull programme. The checklist can be completed by school staff and other referrers (e.g. youth workers, social workers etc.) to identify challenges and risk factors that the young person has been exposed to, as well as protective factors and resources that the young person already has to help them. This information can then be used by the referrer to decide which type of targeted support from HeadStart Hull to refer the young person to, based on their needs.

An example of this kind of support is the Barnardo's WRAP (Wellness Resilience Action Planning) Programme, whereby support is delivered to young people in small groups.

Support provided as part of the WRAP Programme relates to areas such as increasing understanding about what affects mental health, preventing or decreasing troubling feelings and behaviours, and increasing coping strategies. Should the young person (and/or their family) decide at any point that they need to access a different type of support, then the checklist can also be shared between services/providers, with the young person's consent, to facilitate joined-up working around the young person.

Further information about [HeadStart Hull's Checklist for Additional Support and the Barnardo's WRAP Programme](#) can be found [online](#)<sup>6</sup>.





# Study 2: Change over time in young people's experiences of difficulties and support

Emily Stapley, Mia Eisenstadt, Ola Demkowicz, Sarah Stock & Jessica Deighton<sup>7</sup>

(see citation for this study on the final page of this briefing)

## Aims and methodology

We conducted interviews<sup>8</sup> with 78 young people across the six HeadStart areas in year one (2017) and year two (2018) of the HeadStart programme<sup>9</sup>. The aim of Study 2 was to qualitatively examine change over time, from year one to two, in young people's experiences of difficult situations and feelings, and support or services received.

## Key messages and implications

**Key message 1: There is clear variability in young people's experiences of life and support over the first two years of HeadStart.**

29 young people who were interviewed had had broadly positive experiences over time, which had either remained consistently positive or had recently improved (**Group 1**). These young people often referred to having supportive, relatively unproblematic situations and relationships with their family, friends, and/or school. A higher proportion of young people in this group had been classified in Study 1 as having multiple sources of support in the first year of HeadStart, perhaps indicating relative stability in support over time in some cases<sup>10</sup>.

For 36 young people in Study 2, the picture was mixed (**Group 2**). By the second year of HeadStart, these young people had experienced improvement in some areas

of their lives and deterioration or difficulty in others.

The remaining 13 young people in Study 2 appeared to be experiencing real challenges, which had either sustained over the two-year period or had recently increased (**Group 3**).

Young people across the latter two groups, as compared to young people in the first group, often talked about the problems they had been experiencing with their family, friends, school, and/or feelings and emotions. A higher proportion of young people in these two groups had been classified in Study 1 as having uncertain sources of support in the first year of HeadStart, perhaps indicating relative instability in support over time in some cases.

Similar proportions of participants across the three groups in Study 2 were classified as having self-initiated forms of support in Study 1.

**Implications.** The findings suggest that:

- The young people in Group 1 have the lowest need for additional support by the second year of HeadStart, as these young people have most access to existing sources of support and have been able to get what they need from previous or current sources of support (including HeadStart, family, friends, school staff, and/or other professionals).

- The young people in Group 2 have a possible need for additional support by this point, such as from HeadStart and/or other sources (e.g. family, friends, school staff, other professionals), in relation to particular areas of their lives. These young people vary in the extent to which they are already receiving such support, and in the extent to which they have been able to get what they need from previous or current sources of support. Periodic check-ins to monitor wellbeing and coping strategies, and to signpost to specific sources of support if necessary, could be helpful for young people with these experiences.

- The young people in Group 3 have the highest need for additional support by this point, such as from HeadStart and/or other sources (e.g. family, friends, school staff, other professionals). These young people vary in the extent to which they are already receiving such support, and have not yet necessarily been able to get what they need from previous or current sources of support. Closer monitoring of wellbeing and coping strategies, and signposting to more long-term, intensive sources of support if necessary, could be helpful for young people with these experiences.

Consequently, the findings of this study invite reflection on the extent to which young people in need are being identified for support, are receiving or engaging with support, and are getting what they need from support. This includes both formal sources of support, like HeadStart, and informal sources of support, like family and friends.

### **Key message 2: In many cases, the HeadStart partnerships' strategies for identifying young people who could benefit from support have been effective.**

Many young people across the three groups in Study 2 reported receiving support from HeadStart by the second year of the programme. This support included:

- peer mentoring, which involved being mentored by an older student at school;
- coproduction activities, for instance advising on the HeadStart Programme's design in their area;
- creative, sports, and other recreational activities, such as attending a youth club or a theatre group;
- group programmes with a focus on learning about and managing mental health and relationships, such as lessons in whole classes or small groups about different emotions and coping strategies;
- one-to-one support from an adult, such as counselling.



***My HeadStart counsellor is someone to talk to, and, kind of like a diary in a way. But, one that talks back and makes you feel better.***



### Key message 3: However, there are some young people facing real challenges who may not yet have been identified for HeadStart support.

15% of the young people in Study 2, all of whom described experiencing relatively high levels of difficulty, did not describe receiving support from HeadStart. We offer some possible reasons for this that warrant consideration:

- some of these young people may not have been identified for HeadStart support;
- some may have chosen not to engage with the support;
- some may not have reported their involvement in HeadStart in their interviews because they had forgotten it, decided not to discuss it, or did not recognise the support they had received as being from HeadStart or an associated organisation.

**Implications.** Strategies for identifying young people in need of support may not pick up every child in need. Therefore, reflection on how to improve identification should be considered as part of continued development of practice. To facilitate identification, schools could measure students' wellbeing using self-report questionnaires, to encourage conversations about wellbeing and direct students to support where necessary<sup>11</sup>.

Feedback should also be sought from young people about their reasons for choosing not to engage with support, in order to improve support offers. Young people who are struggling but who do not engage with support could be signposted towards alternative forms of support, if deemed preferable by the young person, or to resources and information about self-care strategies<sup>12</sup>.

### Key message 4: There are many examples of the range of ways in which HeadStart has helped young people.

Many young people in Study 2 described how the HeadStart support they had received had had a positive impact on them and their lives in a range of ways, including:

- boosting their confidence and self-esteem;
- feeling less angry, sad, worried, or stressed;
- having fun and enjoying HeadStart;
- having a time-out;
- receiving helpful advice from peers and adults involved in HeadStart;
- gaining more knowledge about emotions, coping strategies, and ways of managing problems or difficult situations and feelings;
- expanding their friendship groups;
- expanding their engagement in extracurricular activities;
- feeling more able to express feelings or share problems with others;
- feeling that they had someone to talk to if they needed to.

These outcomes were common across the range of HeadStart interventions received by the young people, with few intervention-specific differences identified.



*HeadStart takes my mind off things. And it gets me away, from my, like because my house is always busy, and just hectic, it sort of just lets me lift that weight off my shoulders to just chill for a bit.*

**Implications.** There is a continued need to understand the impact of the HeadStart Programme across the six HeadStart partnerships, as well as for local areas and practitioners to evaluate the impact of different interventions, in order to support ongoing investment in those interventions that show continued promise.

**Key message 5: However, for some young people, the HeadStart support they have received may not meet all of their needs.**

Some young people in Study 2 alluded to limitations in the efficacy of the HeadStart support they had received. For example, while the support may have helped them to manage some difficult feelings and situations, they were still experiencing significant problems in other areas of their lives. They also mentioned specific problems that were still present, to a greater or lesser extent, following HeadStart support. Young people did not always know how to access additional support from HeadStart if they felt that they needed it.



*I feel like I still need HeadStart because it's like, it helped. But then like I got all the worries back again. So, like going there just helped like it all go away.*

Such limitations were not necessarily specific to the type of HeadStart support received, but rather often appeared to reflect the relatively high level of need that some young people had. Indeed, some young people may experience systemic or wider contextual issues, such as extreme difficulties within their family, which could affect their engagement with and potentially limit the positive impact of HeadStart support. Others may experience difficulties that are beyond the remit of early intervention programmes like HeadStart. In these cases, more intensive forms of support, for example statutory mental health services, might be better suited to meeting a young person's needs.

**Implications.** Signposting to additional forms of support may be beneficial for some young people once a support programme has finished, particularly if, despite feeling better in many ways, they continue to experience difficulties. This should include ensuring that young people are aware of sources of support that they can self-refer to, and how they can do this without needing to wait for an invitation from or identification by school staff.

**Key message 6: All young people could benefit from support with building confidence and self-esteem, and how to manage worries and stress.**

Regardless of the level of positivity or difficulty in their lives over the last two years, there were young people across the three groups in Study 2 who described experiencing ongoing issues around:

- their levels of confidence and self-esteem;
- feelings of worry, stress, and anxiety, particularly in relation to schoolwork, school grades, and exams.



**Implications.** All young people may benefit from support (e.g. in a whole class setting) to build their confidence and self-esteem, and to help them to manage worries and stress. Examples of this type of universal support in HeadStart are described in **Practice Examples 3 and 4.**



*I get worried about a lot of things and um, one in particular is that I feel that I'm not good enough.*

### **Practice Example 3: Jigsaw (HeadStart Hull)**

Jigsaw is a Personal, Social, Health Education (PSHE) programme being implemented in HeadStart Hull primary and secondary schools. It offers a mindful, interactive, and creative approach to PSHE, with the provision of lessons for every school year group. It helps children and young people to know and value who they are and understand how they relate to other people and the world. It also helps them to understand and manage their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, combat stress, and learn more effectively.

Further information about [Jigsaw in HeadStart Hull can be found online](#)<sup>13</sup>.

### **Practice Example 4: Bounce Forward (HeadStart Blackpool)**

The Resilience Revolution (HeadStart Blackpool) works with Wellbeing Coaches from Lancashire Mind to offer Bounce Forward. This is a whole class, 10-week resilience course for all young people in Year 5 in HeadStart Blackpool primary schools. Bounce Forward aims to build knowledge and develop young people's expertise in resilience practice for themselves, friends, family, and the school community. It aims to give young people practical strategies for coping in difficult times and help young people with the transition from primary to secondary school.

Further information about the [Bounce Forward course can be found online](#)<sup>14</sup>.



### Key message 7: Managing anger and coping with difficult relationships with family and peers are important areas of need for some young people.

Young people in Study 2 who had experienced higher levels of difficulty by the second year of HeadStart described:

- struggling to manage their anger, including expressing their anger physically by kicking or hitting objects or people, or through shouting, screaming, crying, or snapping at others;
- experiencing difficulties in relationships with peers, such as physical fights and ongoing arguments;
- experiencing arguments and conflict (sometimes physical and persistent) with their parents and siblings, or between their parents.



*My mum knows that if she'll go on my side in an argument, my stepdad will leave her... so she can't really say anything.*

**Implications.** Some young people could benefit from targeted support focused on handling specific challenges, including managing anger and coping with difficulties in relationships. Examples of this type of targeted support in HeadStart include:

- one-to-one support for young people in Cornwall by trained Trauma Informed Schools practitioners (described in **Practice Example 5**);

- the Stop, Understand, Move On (SUMO) specialist support programme, which is being delivered on a small-group basis to young people in Year 6 and Year 7 in HeadStart Wolverhampton schools<sup>15</sup>.

In some cases, such targeted support could also usefully involve parents to help young people and parents to manage difficulties in their relationships with each other, including arguments, conflict, and parental illness and stress, which they may be finding difficult to cope with. One example of this type of support in HeadStart is described in **Practice Example 6**.



### **Practice Example 5: Trauma Informed Schools Practitioners (HeadStart Cornwall [Kernow])**

HeadStart Kernow have been delivering training to school and community staff to become Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) practitioners. These staff members can then provide one-to-one support for young people who have been identified as being potentially in need of support. TIS practitioners receive training in Adverse Childhood Experiences and protective factors; neuroscience and attachment theory; the importance of having an emotionally available adult, listening skills and ways to show empathy. This helps young people to regulate their emotions and manage stress, trauma and anxiety. TIS training is also available to those in a school senior leadership capacity to drive change and embed a whole-setting trauma informed approach. Each HeadStart Kernow school has the opportunity of training a minimum of two staff members in the TIS approach and language.

Further information about the **TIS practitioner training in HeadStart Kernow can be found online**<sup>16</sup>.

### **Practice Example 6: 'Being a Parent' Courses (HeadStart Newham)**

HeadStart Newham's 'Being a Parent' courses are led by parents for parents. They provide a safe space in which parents can share their experiences with each other and work through their concerns in a non-judgmental setting. The courses help parents in the development of emotional resilience in themselves and their children by exploring the following themes: understanding feelings, managing behaviour, developing skills in listening, setting boundaries, and building in family quality time.

Further information on **HeadStart Newham's 'Being a Parent' courses is available online**<sup>17</sup>.

# Conclusions from Studies 1 and 2

## Summary of findings

This briefing presents the findings from two qualitative studies conducted as part of the HeadStart Learning Programme. Study 1 found that, in the first year of HeadStart, there was clear variety in the types and extent of support drawn on or available to young people from a range of sources. Some young people described having multiple forms of support, others had comparatively uncertain forms of support, and some drew on self-initiated forms of support.

Study 2 focused on how young people's experiences of difficulties and support had changed over the first two years of HeadStart. Study 2 found that young people who had had more difficult experiences over time were more likely to have uncertain sources of support. On the other hand, young people who had experienced less difficulty, or improvement, over time were more likely to have multiple sources of support.

Many young people in Study 2 gave examples to indicate ways in which HeadStart support, and associated strategies for identifying young people in need of support, had been effective.

However, this was not the case for all young people interviewed. Some young people indicated that the HeadStart support they had received did not meet all of their needs, and some young people in need may not yet have been identified for HeadStart support.

Together, the findings from Studies 1 and 2 reflect the results of previous research in this area, which has likewise identified support networks and relationship quality as being key factors influencing young people's wellbeing<sup>18, 19</sup>.

## Key implications for practice

The findings of Studies 1 and 2 suggest the following key recommendations for staff, practitioners, and professionals working with young people in school or community settings:

● When identifying young people in need of early intervention in relation to their mental health and wellbeing, targeting those with few protective factors and limited access to support systems may be as important as targeting those exposed to risks.

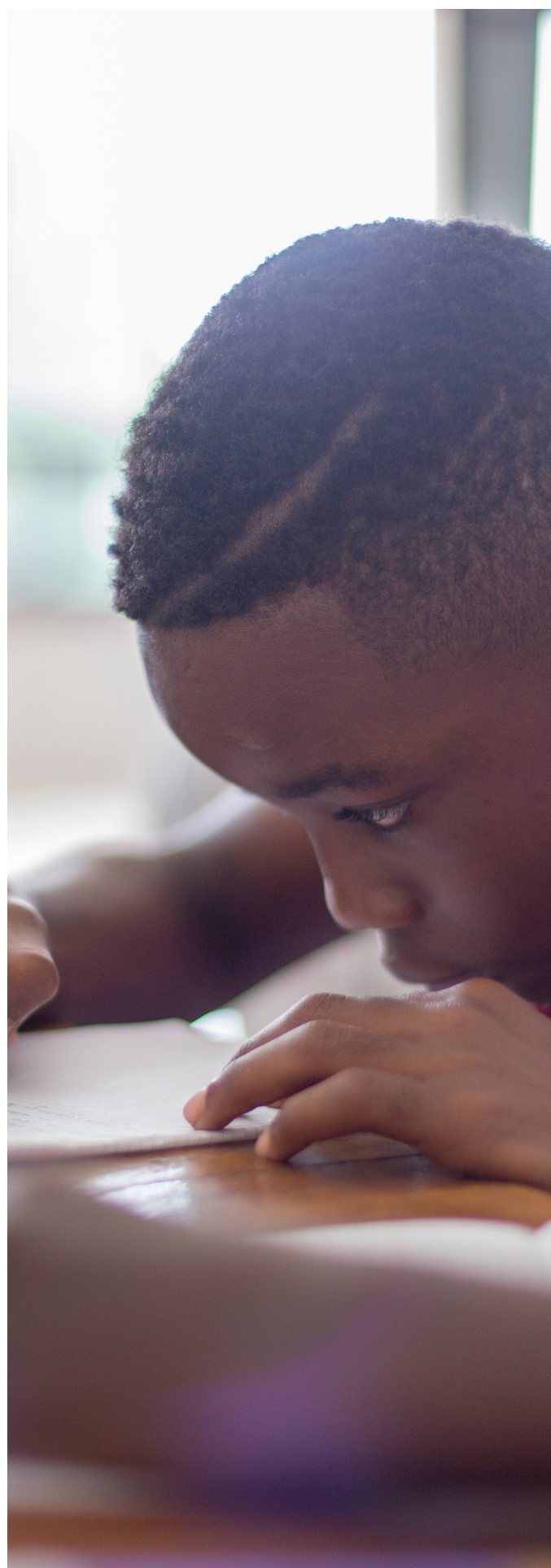
● Support providers should work with young people to identify the areas of their lives that they are struggling with and to map the ways of coping or support systems that they already have access to. This could help practitioners and young people to understand which types of support (if necessary) would best meet their individual needs.

- Evidence presented here indicates that even when young people have received help, sometimes difficulties remain, and continued/additional support may be required. Building in a review process at the end of an intervention could help support providers to ascertain whether a young person requires any further help and then signpost them accordingly.

### Next steps for the qualitative evaluation of HeadStart

All three groups identified in the first study in this briefing warrant further long-term follow-up, as different coping strategies, experiences of support, and types of risk could have a range of long-term implications for young people, which we cannot fully understand with the current data. A follow-up study is currently underway to examine whether the young people in this study describe having similar forms of support (i.e. multiple, uncertain, or self-initiated) a year later, as the HeadStart programme progresses and develops in its delivery.

Likewise, building on the second study in this briefing, a next step will also be to examine change over time in young people's lives from year two to year three of HeadStart, including changes in the support they have accessed, the perceived impact of such support, and any changes in the ways in which they manage problems (and why). With three years of qualitative longitudinal data collected, the Learning Team will also be able to begin to examine, in depth, the mechanisms behind how and why HeadStart works, in both the short- and long-term, to support young people's mental health and wellbeing.



# References

1. To cite this study: Eisenstadt, M., Stapley, E., & Deighton, J. (2020). Learning From Young People in HeadStart: A Study of Young People's Reported Protective Factors in Relation to Risk Factors and Wellbeing. London: EBPU.
2. The interviews were conducted by the Learning Team on a one-to-one basis with the young people in a private room at their school. School staff invited young people to take part in the study if they had recently used a HeadStart service or if they may use one in future. The interviews explored young people's experiences of problems, coping, and support. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted using ideal-type analysis – a method for forming typologies (groupings) from qualitative data.
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5. <https://vimeo.com/237752543>
6. <https://www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk/professionals>
7. To cite this study: Stapley, E. Eisenstadt, M., Demkowicz, O., Stock, S., & Deighton, J. (2020). Learning From Young People in HeadStart: A Study of Change Over Time in Young People's Experiences of Difficulties and Support. London: EBPU.
8. Further details about the methodology were provided in Study 1.
9. The sample size in Study 2 includes those participants from Study 1, but is slightly larger because additional participants were recruited for the evaluation after Study 1. These participants' year one and year two interviews were conducted in 2018 and 2019 respectively.
10. Proportions reported here do not reflect the full sample of 78 young people in Study 2, as Study 1 was based on a smaller sample ( $N = 63$ ).
11. <https://www.annafreud.org/media/4612/mwb-toolkit-final-draft-4.pdf>
12. For example: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/>
13. [Jigsaw Guide \(HeadStart Hull\)](#)
14. <https://sites.google.com/seaside.blackpool.org.uk/mock/news/lancashire-mind-bouncing-forward>
15. <http://curriculum.headstartonline.co.uk/>
16. <https://www.headstartkernow.org.uk/HSK%20uploads/Practitioner%20flier.pdf>
17. <https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/activities/peer-parenting-course/>
18. Navarro, D., Montserrat, C., Malo, S., González, M., Casas, F., & Crous, G. (2017). Subjective wellbeing: What do adolescents say? *Child and Family Social Work*, 22, 175-184.
19. González-Carrasco, M., Vaqué, C., Malo, S., Crous, G., Casas, F., & Figuer, C. (2019). A qualitative longitudinal study on the wellbeing of children and adolescents. *Child Indicators Research*, 12, 479-499.

# About the HeadStart Learning Team

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, evaluate and share 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**.

For more information visit:  
[ucl.ac.uk/ebpu](http://ucl.ac.uk/ebpu)

## **Citation for Study 1:**

Eisenstadt, M., Stapley, E., & Deighton, J. (2020). Learning From Young People in HeadStart: A Study of Young People's Reported Protective Factors in Relation to Risk Factors and Wellbeing. London: EBPU.

## **Citation for Study 2:**

Stapley, E. Eisenstadt, M., Demkowicz, O., Stock, S., & Deighton, J. (2020). Learning From Young People in HeadStart: A Study of Change Over Time in Young People's Experiences of Difficulties and Support. London: EBPU.

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