

Monday 1 April 2019

HeadStart Heads Up

What are HeadStart interventions focusing on to improve mental health in 10 to 16-year-olds?

Key Policy Findings

In this first briefing, we look at data on which protective factors and outcomes the six HeadStart partnerships are focusing on. We found:

- 1. Outcomes: Partnerships are more focused on interventions that seek to increase wellbeing and less on those that seek to reduce 'mental health difficulties', 'risky behaviour' or 'school engagement'.**
- 2. Protective factors: Partnerships are more focused on interventions to promote individual characteristics such as coping skills, as opposed to community attributes such as community relationships.**

Future work will include exploration of the change in outcomes and how these relate to protective factors over the course of the programme.



What is this briefing?

Heads Up is a new briefing for policy makers based on learning from the evaluation of HeadStart, one of the biggest ongoing interventions and studies of young people's resilience in the world.

It aims to provide you with up-to-date policy implications emerging from this pioneering evaluation at the forefront of child mental health research.

Heads Up will be emailed to those signed up on the first Monday of every other month.

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. 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.
- 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:

1. Blackpool
2. Cornwall
3. Hull
4. Kent
5. Newham
6. Wolverhampton.

Partnership interventions are taking place in schools, in communities and with families. Examples include peer support training, mindfulness sessions, one-to-one counselling and equine therapy. To make sure support works, the HeadStart partnerships involve young people in the co-design, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of services.

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 changes in young people's mental health over time and whether the interventions being put in place are making a difference.

Partners working with the Evidence Based Practice Unit on this evaluation include the Child Outcomes Research Consortium (CORC), Common Room and the University of Manchester.

Background to this briefing

There are 62 mental health, wellbeing and resilience interventions taking place across the six partnerships.

This briefing covers:

1. Which primary outcomes the partnerships have decided are the most important focus for potential immediate and long term change as a result of their HeadStart interventions.
2. Which potential protective factors for young people's mental health, wellbeing and resilience the partnerships have chosen to focus on when designing their interventions to address local need.

Primary Outcomes

The primary outcomes that partnerships chose from and the number of interventions focusing on them are:



Potential Protective Factors

The six HeadStart partnerships decided which interventions to design and offer to their young people based on local need and young people's voices.

The impact of these interventions is being considered in relation to 11 different potential protective factors of a young person's life, which are thought to relate to long term mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

These can be grouped into two main categories:

1. Individual characteristics

Coping with stress (26)



Problem solving skills (26)



Self-regulation (26)



Having goals and aspiration (12)



Empathy (10)



2. Relationship and community factors

Peer relationships (18)



School support (15)



Participation at home and school (13)



Family relationships (10)



Participation in community life (7)



Relationships within the community (5)



Future learning

HeadStart will be a source of rich information on the impact of potential protective factors for children's mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

In this first briefing, we shared data on which protective factors and outcomes the six HeadStart partnerships are focusing on.

Data about the outcomes and the protective factors are being captured by the Learning Team and the HeadStart partnerships in a variety of ways. One key way is through the Wellbeing Measurement Framework whereby over 30,000 children and young people fill in an annual online survey with questions that relate both protective factors and outcomes.

Future work will include exploration of the change in outcomes and how these relate to protective factors over the course of the HeadStart programme.

