

From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

To: Sarah Hammond, Interim Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

Decision No: N/A

Subject: Review of the HeadStart Kent Programme

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: County Council – 14 July 2022

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

HeadStart Kent (HSK) has been an ambitious, Kent-wide programme which has influenced local and national learning about children and young people's emotional wellbeing. This report describes what has worked well, what impact has been made, and how learning will have secured the programme's legacy.

Fully funded by the National Lottery, Communities Fund, the programme has taken strategic steps in facilitating system change in schools and through community approaches to young people's mental health. This has been demonstrated by HSK providing tools, training, and resources to develop the workforce who support young people, and by ensuring a partnership approach and that coproduction with children and young people is embedded and championed throughout the system.

Building collaborative relationships whilst competently and efficiently delivering the programme has enabled HSK to succeed. Local and countywide sustainability planning and the sharing of evidence around 'what works' has enabled key elements of the programme to continue. Finally, the report identifies those elements of the programme where further support is required.

Recommendation(s):

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report, and:

- Consider whether the learning from adult mentoring support which HSK provided could be included in any future commissioning arrangements.
- To note the success of the Headstart programme and the legacy and sustainability of continued support for the mental well being of children and young people in Kent
- Endorse a 'Thrive Approach' as the framework to describe the range of emotional and mental health provision available, whilst emphasising the active involvement of children, young people and families.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. HeadStart Kent was a six-year, £11.25 million programme, set up and funded by The National Lottery Community Fund to develop approaches which would support young people to build their resilience so they can cope with the everyday pressures they may face throughout their lives.
- 1.2. The mission of HeadStart Kent was that *“by 2020 (amended to 2022 as a result of Covid) Kent’s young people and their families will have improved resilience, by developing their knowledge and lifelong skills to maximise their own and their peers’ emotional health and wellbeing; so, to navigate their way to support when needed in ways which work for them.”*
- 1.3. HeadStart Kent has focused on building a sustainable system with 3 goals which every young person in Kent should be able to say with confidence:
 - *People around me understand wellbeing and how to promote it.*
 - *My overall wellbeing is not impacted by the pressure to achieve and to ‘be perfect’.*
 - *There is always someone for me to talk to.*
- 1.4. The programme has been underpinned by a detailed Theory of Change, which operated at three levels. There were different activities at each level, but they worked together to create a whole system-wide approach to improve the resilience and emotional wellbeing of young people.

Everyone gets something, but some more than others’



2. Context

- 2.1. Children and young people's mental health needs have increased. Data shows that in 2021 one in six children aged 6 to 16 years old had a probable mental disorder, an increase from one in nine children in 2017.¹
- 2.2. Research commissioned by the Department of Education DfE² in January 2022 showed that half of secondary school staff felt that pupil mental health was their biggest challenge. In interviews, school leaders explained that social and wellbeing concerns were an even bigger issue than 'lost learning', with wellbeing seen as a priority to address before academic interventions could be used effectively.
- 2.3. The pioneering national Wellbeing Measurement Framework survey of over 30,000 young people (aged 11 to 16) collected as part of the national HeadStart programme by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families and University College London (UCL) Evidence Based Practice Unit³ is informing the national discussion around young people's emotional wellbeing. The research has highlighted the link between mental health difficulties, lower academic attainment, and persistent absence from school. It also finds that pupils excluded from school consistently have higher levels of behavioural problems, difficulties with peers and attention difficulties than their peers. The survey has been administered online by school staff. Kent's young people totalled between 30-70% of those nationally surveyed annually.
- 2.4. The profile of young people who took up HSK support were:
 - average age was 13.5 years old
 - 57% were female and 43% were male
 - 11% were ethnic minorities⁴ vs 9% in Kent's population
 - 30% had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities vs 15% in Kent's population
 - 31% were eligible for Free School Meals vs 20% in Kent's population
 - 33% lived in the most deprived areas in Kent⁵
 - 8% experienced domestic abuse⁶

3. What has worked well

- 3.1. HeadStart was a 'test and learn' research programme, so learning about what was and was not working was very important to the development of programme.

¹ [Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2021: Wave 2 follow up to the 2017 survey](#), Mental Health of Children and Young People Surveys, NHS Digital

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1045471/School_Recovery_Strategies_year_1_findings.pdf

³ [About HeadStart and the Learning Team | Evidence Based Practice Unit - UCL – University College London](#)

⁴ 5% unknown ethnicity

⁵ Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Kent & Medway top 20% of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)

⁶ www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019

⁶ A domestic abuse incident was received from the police by HeadStart and sent to the young person's school

3.2. Appendix 1 HeadStart Kent Learning from the Local Evaluation⁷ is a summary of the key learning from the local research over the past six years. All evaluation reports are available on the [Kent Resilience Hub Research and Evaluation pages](#).

3.3. The key successful elements of the programme were:

- The Kent Resilience Hub and MoodSpark websites
- Work with schools; particularly through whole school approaches and the Kent Award for Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing
- Workforce development through staff training
- The establishment of safe spaces in schools and the community
- Coproduction and Participation with young people and families
- Pay It Forward and Talents and Interests grants
- Kooth online support and counselling
- Mentoring support

3.4. The successful approaches were:

- The HeadStart Team and their approach
- The multi-level partnerships which were developed
- The programme adaptations and responsiveness to changing need.

4. **Reach and sustainability**

4.1. The universal elements of the programme will be sustained through the [Kent Resilience Hub](#) and [Moodspark](#) websites which provide information, knowledge, useful tools, resources, advice for schools, communities, practitioners, parents and young people and promote a shared language across the system. To date there have been 105,071 Moodspark webpage views and 217,990 Kent Resilience Hub views.

4.2. 52,532 young people have benefitted from support in HSK schools. The school resilience toolkit and Award for Resilience and Emotional Wellbeing enables a whole school approach to be embedded in schools. 86% of Kent Schools are signed up to the toolkit and 53 schools have received the Award so far. The responsibility of the school toolkit is now with Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) Public Health School Nursing Service. This toolkit, alongside HeadStart support through training, development of participation, safe spaces, peer mentoring and having resilience conversations with young people enables a school to ensure young people are kept emotionally well, and to be able to respond early when there is an emerging need.

4.3. 6,721 school staff and professionals have accessed the HSK training offer. The demand for training both for school and community staff beyond districts has remained consistent during the lifetime of the programme.

“When talking to a young person and their family that was struggling with the difficulties that mental health brings. I felt able to effectively support and offer strategies to help further.” – School staff member

⁷ <https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/headstart-kent-learning-from-local-evaluation>

- 4.4. Participation, coproduction, and engagement of young people has been a key success of the programme, and this has underpinned all activities. 2,785 young people participated in activities and helped coproduce and lead elements of the programme.
- 4.5. Providing young people with the opportunity to lead empowers them and improves their confidence, which better equips them for adult life. Increasing the emphasis on coproduction in policy and decision making ensures that intervention design and delivery meets the needs of young people. This has been demonstrated by the steps HSK have taken to ensure coproduction is embedded and championed throughout the system.
- “To be honest, at the beginning it was just something to do. I thought I may as well go and try it. But what made me want to stay was actually being part of something that mattered [...] At HeadStart the things you do actually matters and makes a difference.”* – Young person aged 16
- 4.6. ICS will retain the HSK participation workers. They will continue to support Kent Youth County Council (KYCC), Kent Youth Voice, local SpeakOut groups, UK Youth Parliament, Try Angle Awards, Youth Charter implementation, Coproduction training, as well as supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in delivering Emotional Wellbeing programmes. This team will work alongside Virtual Schools Kent, the Violence Reduction programme and the SEND Improvement programme. Appendix 2 Sustainability Summarises details these.
- 4.7 The HSK programme legacy continues to secure funding for two additional participation workers from the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) whose focus is developing the voice of young people, parents, and carers with lived experience of the mental health system.
- 4.8 Pay It Forward grants enable young people to help others, in turn helping to improve their own wellbeing. 225 grants of up to £1,000 each have funded wellbeing, environmental and intergenerational projects. The grant applications are assessed by groups of young people on their potential to improve the wellbeing of others. If the grant continues to be available beyond HSK the participation team will continue to lead this.
- 4.9 Young people requiring additional support were identified by practitioners who worked alongside young people using a resilience conversation tool. This was based on an evidence-based resilience framework and was adapted throughout the lifetime of the programme to meet young people’s and practitioners’ needs. Schools feel this is one part of the programme they want to continue to use.
- 4.10 Much of the activity for the additional support for young people has involved the HSK participation workers, HSK Senior Early Help workers and through additional funding to commission partners. There was a significant improvement⁸ in the wellbeing of the young people that successfully completed the support.

⁸ Appendix 1 **HeadStart Kent Learning from the Local Evaluation**

- 4.11 The iCan service supported 242 young men aged 13-16 who had witnessed, or experienced domestic violence. The service applies a trauma informed approach and aims to develop a greater capacity to defend against the adversity associated with domestic violence in childhood. The iCan programme materials⁹ will remain freely available for practitioners.
- 4.12 Intensive Mentoring support, which was taken up by 1,120 young people, adopts evidenced strengths-based approaches to supporting vulnerable children, young people, and their families. Additional funding from Reconnect has extended the service across the county until October 2022.
- 4.13 A Volunteer Mentor is a positive role model who is there to guide and advise, striving to meet set goals to help young people achieve their potential. Trained adult volunteers from the community have worked with 748 young people for a period of up to 6 months. Additional funding from Reconnect has extended the service across the county until October 2022.
- 4.14 826 young people have benefited from Talents and Interest grants, which aim to improve and sustain young people's emotional wellbeing by promoting and enabling them to have access to enjoyable, creative and purposeful opportunities. It aims to promote community engagement, a sense of belonging and self-worth. Additional funding from Reconnect has extended the service across the county until October 2022 and has enabled a wider age range of children and young people to access these opportunities.
- 4.15 Young people, families, schools and community staff highly value the support they received through Mentoring and through Talents and interest grants as they have been tailored to their interests and needs, with the offer of choice and flexibility in how they were supported.

"Having that money still there to give these young people something that they need is really important." – Community Worker

5. HeadStart System Influence

- 5.1 HeadStart Kent has helped strategic leaders to recognise the importance of good emotional and mental health for our children. The Kent and Medway Local Transformation Plan (LTP), which is a partnership plan led by Kent and Medway, has adopted the national Thrive Framework¹⁰ which describes the range of emotional and mental health provision available. The model places an emphasis on children, young people and their families being empowered through active involvement in decisions about their support.
- 5.2 The priorities outlined in the LTP for 2021/22 aim to further develop an integrated system of support which will enable the transition from HeadStart to Thrive activity. HSK has contributed to the 'Getting Advice and Getting Help' Quadrants.

⁹ <https://kentresiliencehub.org.uk/resources/ican-programme/>

¹⁰ <http://implementingthrive.org/>

- 5.3 Mental health support teams were established through the 2017 Green Paper for transforming children and young people's mental health to provide extra capacity for early intervention and ongoing help for mild to moderate mental health needs. Kent and Medway have successfully applied to deliver 21 teams focusing on areas and schools with the greatest need. Each team is to reach a population of 7,000 5-19 olds. HSK will continue to lead the recruitment and engagement of Kent schools as well as project managing the implementation of the service in partnership with the CCGs and NELFT. The introduction of Designated Senior Mental Health Leads in Schools is a national initiative and training is available.
- 5.4 Further to this initiative and a response to a request from HSK schools, the HSK community of practice legacy is that it will be sustained and extended across the county and will be resourced by the CCGs and co-delivered with partners.
- 5.5 Over the last two years, and three lockdowns, the HeadStart programme continued to successfully integrate its learning and evaluation to support the development of a system that works together as a cohesive mental health and wellbeing offer for children, young people and their families. HSK led a collaboration to develop guidance and resources for schools in Kent and worked closely with the CCG's and commissioning to extend, at pace, the online support and counselling service across Kent and Medway. The HSK team have been agile and quick to learn and adapt.
- 5.6 The DfE 'Wellbeing for Education Return' (WER) project launched in September 2020 with the expectation that schools would engage in wellbeing training enabling them to support staff and students coming back into school during the pandemic. The programme has been led by HSK and delivered in partnership and The Education People on behalf of KCC. In total 215 schools have engaged with WER training.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The key legacy of the HSK programme is the partnerships, learning, standard setting and which supports a system wide response to mental health and wellbeing. HSK has provided the evidence of the importance of the emotional wellbeing system to continually collaborate to ensure young people and families access the right support for their needs.
- 6.2. Much of the HSK resources, tools and materials have been secured for future use. These will ensure the legacy of the programme which will continue to benefit young people's resilience and emotional wellbeing within schools, community, with their peers online.
- 6.3. Further investment would be required if the following grant schemes were to continue: Pay It Forward participation budget and the Talents and Interests Grants, which

Recommendation(s):

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- To note the success of the Headstart programme and the legacy and

sustainability of continued support for the mental wellbeing of children and young people in Kent

- Consider whether the learning from adult mentoring support which HSK provided could be included in any future commissioning arrangements.
- Endorse a Thrive Approach as the framework to describe the range of emotional and mental health provision available, whilst emphasising the active involvement of children, young people and families.

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Background Documents: None