

# Responding to emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people: learning from HeadStart partnerships



## Introduction

On 21st October 2021, The National Children's Bureau hosted a national learning [event](#), *Responding to emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people: learning from HeadStart partnerships*.

The purpose of the event was to:

- Provide updates on national strategic developments around supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, including implementation programmes
- To provide space for the HeadStart partnerships to share key learning and insight into their own local systems responses and interventions
- To enable learning and resources to be shared on a national stage.

Keynote speakers from [The National Lottery Community Fund \(TNLCF\)](#), [NHS England](#) and the [Department for Education](#) presented on the [HeadStart](#) programme, developments in child and adolescent mental healthcare through the NHS, and the Department for Education's response to the mental health crisis exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The six HeadStart partnerships then each delivered a workshop on a chosen area of their programme from across their, then, five years of delivery. These workshops brought life to the programme strategy developed by The National Lottery Community Fund, and demonstrated the importance of programmes like HeadStart in improving the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people locally and nationally.

## The National Lottery Community Fund

The event began with a thirty-minute introduction/presentation from Scott Hignett, Head of Funding at The National Lottery Community Fund. This highlighted the success of the HeadStart partnerships who have worked with over 430 schools and over 250,000 young people, in collaboration parents, carers, schools, community organisations and other services.

Scott explained where HeadStart sits within The National Lottery Community Fund's strategic programmes interventions, and its place within five long-term programmes designed to support people from birth through to later life. The other four programmes are:

[A Better Start](#), which aims to improve the life chances of babies and very young children by changing the way services are commissioned and delivered, involving parents as equal partners.

[Talent Match](#), which boosted the employment opportunities of 26,000 young people aged 18–24 who needed extra support to help them along the path to sustainable employment, providing them with the skills and resilience required to navigate a fulfilling career.

[Fulfilling Lives](#), which aims to improve the support available for people who experience multiple disadvantage, so that they are better able to manage their lives.

[Ageing Better](#), which aims to support people 50 and over who are experiencing or are at risk of social isolation and loneliness, so that they can lead more fulfilling lives and are better connected to their communities.

Each of these programmes focus on cross-sector, collaborative working and demonstrate test and learn approaches to supporting people facing serious social issues, with co-production at their core.

## Goal of HeadStart Programme

The HeadStart programme aimed to apply the principles of this approach to improve the mental health and wellbeing of at-risk young people, improve engagement in school and academic achievement and promote factors that protect young people's wellbeing in the context of risk ([TNLCF, 2020](#)). HeadStart is underpinned by proportionate universalism – 'the resourcing and delivering of universal services at a scale and intensity proportionate to the degree of need' ([NHS, 2014](#)), which Scott described as '*everybody gets something, but some people get more than others*'. This ethos underpins The National Lottery Community Fund's approach with HeadStart, which aims to demonstrate impact by targeting funding at young people who need it the most without disadvantaging those seeking support or wanting to engage in HeadStart's universal programmes.

## Importance of Learning and Development

In the early stages of programme development, The National Lottery Community Fund embedded principles of test and learn to enable partners to explore and be creative in their solutions to supporting young people to improve their mental health. Over the last 18 months of the HeadStart programme, partnerships have shifted into test and embed models to ensure that the learning and interventions practiced since 2016 can be adapted and used more widely on both local and national scales. TNLCF's goal is that this approach will leave a learning legacy behind that will enable organisations to make decisions informed by what the partnerships created and implemented, with the recognition that important innovations are continuing to be improved through the learning that has been built across the years.

## Emerging Principles from the Programme Learning:

- New evidence shows that young adolescent girls between ages 11 and 14 are at an increased risk of developing mental health problems, which is much younger than previous evidence proposed. This suggests that interventions for girls need to start before they reach secondary school ([HeadStart Evidence Briefing, February 2020](#)).
- The risk of boys developing mental and emotional difficulties are found to be constant between the ages of 11 and 14, as in the later years of adolescence ([ibid](#)).
- Behavioural difficulties in girls are found to increase to almost the same levels as boys as they get older, without intervention and support ([ibid](#)).
- Genuine co-production is vital in the development and continuation of interventions like those of the six partnerships.
- Young people with complex and chaotic lives need a trusted place and a trusted person to truly engage in the programme and thrive.

HeadStart partnerships recognise that young people bring a range of skills to the programme, just as adults do, and can offer insights and perspectives that adults may not have considered when

designing and setting up services. Different ways to co-produce with young people were shown by the partnerships through:

- HeadStart school champions/ambassadors
- Local groups in schools and community youth hubs
- Youth boards/panels
- Young researchers and evaluators
- Work experience opportunities
- Young apprentices



## Importance of Co-Production

Co-production through HeadStart has to be system-wide, to not only include the young people and their parents/carers but the other areas, services and people they interact with. Co-production through HeadStart provides the opportunity for children and young people to develop skills, boost confidence and self-esteem, and genuine co-production is reached through these three principles:

- The transfer of power from organisations and adults and onto young people, enabling young people to do something they couldn't do before
- Young people being listened to, with evidence that they have been heard
- Co-production of outcomes that are relevant to all people involved

## Trusted Place and Trusted Person

Young people with complex and chaotic lives often don't have a trusted person or place in their lives, which reduces their ability to cope and create an escape/outlet for difficulties. A locally trusted organisation will have a greater impact on success, enabling the young person to build a trusted connection. The concept of mentoring has been shown to have positive impacts on a young person as they develop into a trusted person. This creates stability, support and encouragement – key factors that are often missing. The [PACE approach](#) – Play, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy – is important for young people that come from troubled lives and pasts.

## NHS England

David Lockwood, Deputy Head of Perinatal and Children's Mental Health at NHS England, gave a presentation on the progress in child and adolescent mental healthcare that were made in the NHS in the year 2020–21. The main aim of the NHS during this period was to increase access to support for children, young people and families who need it, and there continued to be good progress in this area. More children and young people than ever are receiving mental health support through the NHS than before, with over 420,000 receiving support through the NHS in 2020/21, an increase of over 120,000 in the last 2 years. 183 [MHSTs](#) now cover around 3,000 schools, and a further 216 are currently being trained or starting up. MHSTs are designed to deliver evidence-based interventions for mild-to-moderate mental health issues to individual and groups of school pupils, and to provide additional whole-school and college mental health support.

In addition to increasing availability of service provision, NHS England and Improvement also consulted on [new access and waiting time standards](#), which has led to a number of pledges, including that children, young people and their families/carers presenting to community-based mental health services should start to receive help within four weeks from their request for support from the service.

However, some challenges still remain as long-term trends are exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. The prevalence of mental health problems in children and young people aged 6 to 16 has increased from one in nine in 2017 to one in six in 2021 ([NHS, 2021](#)). Despite the expansion of the NHS mental health services for children and a growing workforce, due to the length of time it takes for professionals to train, the level of staffing within the NHS is still lagging behind need.



## Department for Education

Daniela D'Urso, Children and Young People's Team Leader at the Department for Education (DfE), gave the third presentation on Covid-19 recovery and supporting educational recovery. She explained that in response to the impact of the pandemic on the mental health of children and young people, the Department has focused on immediate and frontline support rather than strategic approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

DfE activity in this period has focused on signposting to existing support and providing information, developing lesson packs and plans for the new Relationships and Sex education and Health Education (RHSE) curriculum to help educational provisions to think about how they could introduce some of the issues that their pupils were concerned about through the curriculum. In addition, they produced videos with Dr Alex George on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic and provide teaching packs and materials to feed into the wellbeing for education recovery programme. These materials were provided to local authorities to disseminate to schools and colleges in their area. One very important factor that came out of this work was understanding the role of local community-based support, and schools and colleges knowing what support was available to their pupils and how they could access it.

Daniela explained that longer term actions that present some challenges for the Department are:

- Updating counselling guidance, as digital counselling proved helpful for some people during this year.
- Helping settings make the best use of the funding available to them, which is about understanding the needs of their pupils and teaching them what kinds of support works.
- Embedding children and young people's voice in mental health provision open to them in communities and schools.

The Department have encouraged schools and colleges to book onto the senior mental health leads training, of which 4,700 had already taken up the offer for the grants. They are now thinking about how they can support senior leads once they have done their training,



# HeadStart Partnerships' Presentations

## Blackpool

Dr Buket Kara from The Centre of Resilience at the University of Brighton presented on HeadStart Blackpool's Resilience Revolution, beginning with a description of the approach and ethos of HeadStart Blackpool programme as a whole. HeadStart Blackpool has embedded the voices of young people, parents and carers throughout their Resilience Revolution campaigns, projects and targeted and universal services. They have aimed to promote social change and transformation for all children and young people in Blackpool by upskilling the whole Blackpool community and tackling inequality through both individual and systems approaches. Blackpool is a seaside town known for its Pleasure Beach and amusement park, and is a popular holiday destination for families. However, it is also one of the most socio-economically deprived areas in the country, with high rates of poverty and unemployment and low educational outcomes, creating a challenging environment for young people to thrive within and reach their potential. HeadStart Blackpool strove to spread the word that HeadStart was not only a new mental health project for children and young people, but a way to revolutionise approaches to mental health and wellbeing on a town-wide scale, prompting social changes through its programmes and co-production groups and campaigns.

HeadStart Blackpool co-produced a manifesto for individuals and organisations to commit to taking action as a part of a social movement, which young people called the Resilience Revolution. The Resilience Revolution was created with the aim to affect change at local community and local authority levels, and has been co-led by HeadStart Blackpool, young people, parents, carers, academics, clinicians, practitioners and youth workers, and the work is done by and with disadvantaged communities. The Resilience Revolution has worked towards making Blackpool a resilient town, '*beating the odds by changing the odds*', with seven fundamental principles underpinning its approach:

- Co-production: working alongside young people, parents and carers to campaign for change and deliver programmes
- Assets-based: focusing on positives and building on strengths within a person, family and every situation
- Brave and innovative: working in new and exciting ways to solve the most difficult challenges
- Systems change: Working to change and improve systems that create persistent barriers for young people and families within them
- Social justice: Addressing inequalities and levelling the playing field so that everybody has the same life opportunities
- Whole town approach: Working across the whole town to build the Resilience Revolution
- Research: A learning programme, aiming to reflect and critique constantly, to discover what works best for children and families.



Projects delivered in the Resilience Revolution are based on the Resilience Framework, which includes 42 resilience moves belonging to one of five categories: 'basics', 'belonging', 'learning', 'coping' and 'core self'. HeadStart Blackpool run co-production groups for young people, parents and carers, and a number of campaigns and groups have grown from these groups, such as Empowering Young People and Families, Blackpool Beating Bullying and Inclusion not Exclusion. Young people, parents and carers also co-design and develop targeted and universal intervention projects, shown in the workshop through the image below.



The workshop concluded with ways to evaluate complex interventions like the Resilience Revolution. This entails gaining and providing a clear picture of the context surrounding the intervention that can influence its delivery and impact. This includes the physical environment, social issues faced by the people and groups concerned, and other interventions which exist in that context. Outcomes of the intervention must then be explored and discussed, including how outcomes differed for different groups of people, and whether the outcomes were predicted or similar to the aims of the intervention in question. Any unexpected outcomes should be recorded and explored further, and long-term impacts following the intervention should be assessed on an ongoing basis.

## Cornwall

Charlotte Hill, Strategic Lead, and Kate Pordage, Schools and Young People Co-Production Theme Lead, for HeadStart Kernow, delivered their workshop on co-production, and explored how they have taken system and workforce-based approaches to promoting the mental health of children and young people across Cornwall, through the training of schools and organisations, and cross-sector collaborations for mental health support assessment and allocation. They introduced Cornwall as a beautiful place to live but a county with high levels of deprivation, very high levels of unemployment and a relatively low-skill economy. For many children and young people, difficulties for their families in accessing a secure and affordable home, affordable transport and a culture of limited aspiration, often become barriers to developing resilience and positive mental wellbeing. During the development phase of HeadStart Kernow, young people stated that they felt that the educational and mental health systems surrounding them, and the adults working to support them, were having detrimental impacts on their mental health and wellbeing.



Charlotte explained that, following young people's feedback, they developed their HeadStart programme based upon Urie Brennan's ecological systems theory, which views individual mental health (as well as other elements, including physical health) in the context of the systems in which they live, starting from microsystems and working outwards to macrosystems. HeadStart Kernow subscribed to the iThrive framework which has helped them to move away from a tiered model of mental health with overreliance on CAMHS, to a [whole-system approach](#) to that considers how the whole systems and organisations surrounding children and young people can contribute to improving their mental health and wellbeing. [Bloom](#) is also facilitated by the HeadStart team who bring together all different services, makes best use of resources across the system and provides young people with the best, joined-up support.

Kate explained that workforce development has been a focus of HeadStart Kernow's programmes throughout. They commissioned an organisation called Trauma Informed Schools UK (TISUK) which has transformed the way schools and organisations across Cornwall approach and support young people's mental health. It has been very positively received by all those who have taken the training, from a 10-day diploma to participating in webinars, which continued throughout the pandemic. The TISUK training continues to be very popular, and over 1,000 practitioners have been reached across various settings including youth clubs, social care, CAMHS and school nursing teams.

Young people co-producing with HeadStart Kernow created the abbreviation IMPACTS to stand for Important Actions Stick, which became the name for their call to action for schools. The [call to action](#) contained 10 points, including:

- Early support and intervention will have the greatest impact
- A whole school approach is needed
- Making wellbeing visible and tackling stigma in school will make an impact.

Young people created an online training session about their call to action, explaining why it is important and how schools can implement it. Young people also worked with HeadStart to create the [Wellbeing Resilience Action Plan \(WRAP\)](#), which has been published online for all young people to download and use, and has been featured on an app for young people to access through their phone. They also formulated the idea and created the designs for the Connect Card, which is a plastic card containing a QR code which young people can scan to take them directly to mental health and wellbeing support, on a page also designed and curated by them.



## Hull

Gail Teasdale, Integrated Services Manager for Children and Young People's Health at Hull City Council, delivered HeadStart Hull's workshop on their [Thrive training and workforce development for multi-agency staff](#). The Thrive model is about trying to use clear language for people working outside of health who may not understand what is meant by tiers 1,2,3 and 4. The Thrive model instead refers to four different levels of need: getting advice, getting help, getting risk support and getting more help. HeadStart Hull aimed to upskill a broad workforce working with children and young people so that more professionals and adults surrounding them would be able to provide advice and signpost to the correct help at the earliest opportunity. This strategy aimed to:

- Improve awareness of children and young people's mental health across a range of organisations working with children, young people and families
- Improve understanding of risk and protective factors which can have a positive impact on a young person's mental health, and the benefits of support from a trusted adult
- An improved offer for children and young people most vulnerable to poor mental health, making it easier for them to access support when and where they need it.

The training plan has been delivered through a range of different methods, including face-to-face and virtual facilitated training courses, non-facilitated online courses, access to short training films, webinars, thematic events and regular networks and forums. The training framework has had four levels:

**Respond:** Identifying workers who just needed enough knowledge, skills and experience to respond if a young person had asked a question. This level of training was aimed towards any staff member who works with children and young people but doesn't have a pastoral role, such as a caretaker, administrator or school lunchtime supervisor. These staff were not expected to need an in-depth understanding of mental health but the training was designed to enable them to respond appropriately and with confidence if a young person asked a question, displayed any signs of mental distress or raised an issue or disclosure. Training courses at this level included 'conversations about mental health', 'supporting family wellbeing' and 'introduction to mindfulness'.

**Initiate:** This training was designed for workers who work more closely with children individually or in groups and who may be more likely to initiate conversations with young people rather than respond to issues raised by them. These staff will have had pre-established relationships with young people but would not be required to have an in-depth understanding of mental health. The aim of the training for these staff members is to equip them with the skills to select and use brief intervention techniques to help young people take positive action for their mental health, which may include starting, stopping, increasing or decreasing specific behaviours or activities. Examples of training of this level are Youth Mental Health First Aid, self-harm awareness and attachment awareness.

**Intervene:** This training is aimed at staff whose roles relate to mental health and wellbeing and who deliver low-level interventions to children and young people individually and/or in small groups. These staff members require a more detailed understanding of key mental health issues. They will learn to select and use appropriate techniques to help young people make changes in their lives that they can sustain over time, and have the knowledge to signpost young people to appropriate services as needed. Examples of training at this level include a 2 day Youth Mental Health First Aid course, applied suicide intervention skills and self-harm response.

**Influence:** This training is designed for staff who work in management roles, such as school Senior Leadership Teams, mental health leads, governors, and those who can influence policy and practice in schools and organisations. They may be involved in identifying and discussing new approaches, sharing good practice, and networking with other organisations. These people need a detailed understanding of issues relating to the mental health of children, young people and families, and what the implications of these are for practice. They are taught the knowledge and skills to analyse and evaluate effective support packages and request additional support where necessary. Training at this level includes Leading Mental Health from the Middle, Developing your School Mental Health Policy and Development Programme for School Mental Health Need.

The feedback from the training has been positive, with staff feeding back that they feel much more confident in understanding the range of issues addressed through the training and recognising the importance of children and young people having a trusted adult. HeadStart Hull have seen a lot of joined up working across the system, with shared language being used across organisations and evidence of improved knowledge through an increase in appropriate referrals being made to relevant services. Organisations have also embedded training into staff inductions and numerous schools and youth organisations have achieved whole school/organisational approaches to mental health.

The workshop concluded with an explanation of HeadStart Hull's next steps, including a training audit designed to identify and support teams who would benefit from training, developing future models in response to identified needs, and implementing a city-wide approach to trauma-informed practice.



## Kent

Hannah Patton, Participation Coordinator, and Zoe Burns, Emotional Wellbeing Participation Worker, delivered their workshop on HeadStart Kent's [approach to co-production](#), beginning with an explanation of how co-production was an essential component of HeadStart in Kent from its earliest planning stages in 2016. Young people emphasised that co-production was important to them, and that not only should all staff be trained in co-production, but young people should co-design and co-deliver training with adult HeadStart staff. The co-production training package was subsequently designed and delivered with and by young people, for which young people created icebreakers, produced a quiz about young people living in Kent, created activities based on the participation ladder and designed evaluation forms. HeadStart Kent engaged the workshop audience with one of the activities created and delivered by the young people. They presented the participation ladder, where each rung on the ladder presents a different level of participation and involvement, ranging from 'manipulation' at the bottom, and 'young people initiated and shared decisions with adults' at the top. In real-life training events, the activity normally takes place in a group, who are given a large laminated cut out of the ladder and different envelopes, each containing a scenario. Attendees of the workshop were presented with two scenarios describing a young person sitting on an interview panel as part of a group of young people interviewing three candidates for a new participation worker. These were:

**Scenario one:** 'You were first asked to be involved in the interview panel a few weeks back and had to take part in a full day's training course on recruitment and selection. You spent time going through the job description and person specification and agreed 4 questions to ask the candidates and set a task for candidates to come prepared with'.

**Scenario two:** 'You got a text from a worker yesterday inviting you to take part. When you arrived, you were given a list of questions to ask and told the names of the candidates'.

The second half of the workshop covered some specific co-production groups that HeadStart Kent created and have been involved in over the years. SpeakOut is a co-production group of young people aged 10–16 who may be interested in building their resilience or had been identified in youth hubs as benefitting from building their confidence and developing new skills through co-production. The group decided on the name 'SpeakOuts' to describe their meetings, and SpeakOuts are hosted on fortnightly bases, beginning as face-to-face and migrating to online after March 2020. The group also meet monthly with Kent Youth Voice, which is an elected body of young people who work to ensure that the views of young people are listened to across Kent and involved in decisions that affect their lives by working with Kent County Council. Virtual Schools Kent (VSK) is a separate co-production body in Kent that facilitates young people's youth councils across the county, including The Super Council for young people aged 7–11 in care, the Children and Young People's Council for young people aged 11–16, and a 16+ Young Adults' Council. HeadStart Kent brought these three groups together for a training day, where over 80 staff were trained by young people from HeadStart and these three groups. To do this, young people received train the trainer training through HeadStart, and delivered co-production training to the divisional management team who completed pledges describing what they would do to meaningfully involve young people in their work beyond the training.

During lockdown, young people worked on adapting the face-to-face training into co-production eLearning for staff, which is now a mandatory requirement for all staff working with children and young people in Kent.

## Newham

Becky Dawson, Secondary Specialist Resilience Training Lead, and Jelani Kelchure, Youth Practitioner, delivered HeadStart Newham's workshop focused on Whole School Approaches and their [Bounce Back](#) intervention. BounceBack supports children and young people in schools to develop resilience and build confidence through one-to-one and group support with a Youth Practitioner. The workshop introduced the Resilience Framework that underpins the structure of BounceBack, shown below, which breaks resilience down into five domains: basics, belonging, learning, coping and core self. HeadStart Newham recognise that resilience is a learnt and practiced trait and not something that is innate or inherited, and that, therefore, programmes such as BounceBack have the potential to help young people practice resilience to become better able to face life's challenges. Likewise, whole school approaches have the potential to build young people's resilience through a whole-system change, where the mental health and wellbeing of pupils is a responsibility shared by everyone working in and with the school.

Resilience Framework (Children & Young People) Oct 2015 – adapted from Hart & Blincow 2007 <a href="http://www.boingboing.org.uk">www.boingboing.org.uk</a>					
	BASICS	BELONGING	LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
<b>SPECIFIC APPROACHES</b>	Good enough housing	Find somewhere for the child/YP to belong	Make school/college life work as well as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
	Enough money to live	Help child/YP understand their place in the world		Engage mentors for children/YP	Being brave
		Tap into good influences	Solving problems		
	Being safe	Keep relationships going	Map out career or life plan		Putting on rose-tinted glasses
	Access & transport	The more healthy relationships the better		Fostering their interests	
		Healthy diet	Get together people the child/YP can count on	Help the child/YP to organise her/himself	Calming down & self-soothing
	Exercise and fresh air	Responsibilities & obligations	Highlight achievements		Remember tomorrow is another day
	Enough sleep	Focus on good times and places		Develop life skills	Lean on others when necessary
		Play & leisure	Predict a good experience of someone or something new		Have a laugh
	Being free from prejudice & discrimination	Make friends and mix with other children/YPs			
<b>NOBLE TRUTHS</b>					
<b>ACCEPTING</b>		<b>CONSERVING</b>	<b>COMMITMENT</b>	<b>ENLISTING</b>	

## Whole school approaches

To promote whole school approaches to building resilience, HeadStart Newham conducted targeted support interventions with pupils in schools, provided training to whole schools involving all staff members, conducted audits following trainings, worked with parents and carers, embedded resilience into the curriculum and supported schools to embed youth voice throughout the school environment. A whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing also supports pupils to get the most out of targeted in-school interventions, such as BounceBack, and HeadStart Newham recognises that one-on-one interventions can only be successful in a larger supporting context.

HeadStart Newham supported schools to audit their whole school approaches, looking at leadership and governors, teachers, policies and students to see how each area upholds a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing, which led to co-created action plans to help schools recognise what they had been doing well and which areas could benefit from making changes.

Becky and Jelani fed-back that schools appreciated having the space and continued offers of support from HeadStart, which assumed the role of a 'challenging friend' who helped them review their practice and see what changes could be made to benefit the school and the pupils. Being generous with time and resources has meant that HeadStart Newham have supported schools to improve and embed resilience practices over time, giving them the space to process the training and allow it to percolate through the school system without expecting quick solutions.

Becky described some of the benefits of a whole school approach to mental health and wellbeing and the evidence of its impact. Benefits include improved awareness of mental health and wellbeing, individual improvement in areas such as confidence and self-esteem, and the development of meaningful and representative student voice structures within the school environment. Evaluation of Wellbeing Measurement Framework data from 2016 to 2017 demonstrates that, in those schools where HeadStart Newham supported to develop whole school approaches, primary schools showed decreases being received. Attendees at the workshop felt that buy-in from all staff was essential to creating and sustaining a whole school approach, a can-do attitude, the Senior Leadership Team believing in the difference it can make, creating a culture of empathy, involving parents, and having the time to do the work. Challenges explained from Newham were staff turnover, teachers and staff already being under a lot of pressure and therefore not adding to what staff already have to do is important.





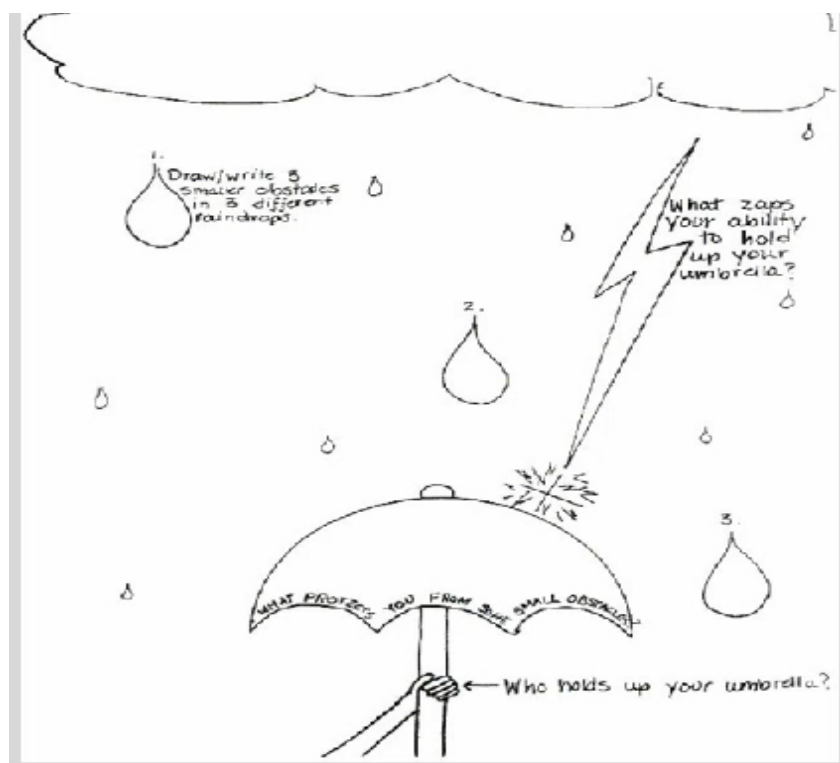
## BounceBack

During the second half of the workshop, Jelani explained the BounceBack approach; a resilience school-based intervention that began in primary schools and progressed into secondary schools. They described BounceBack as starting out on a 'deficit model', whereby pupils displaying behavioural problems were referred by school staff. This developed into a more inclusive programme that was designed to support pupils with different kinds of emotional and behavioural needs. HeadStart Newham asked workshop attendees to reflect on the following questions:

- When you were 10 or 11, how were you thinking and feeling?
- What was a looming trouble or cause for worry in your life?
- What improved your wellbeing and protected you from raindrops?

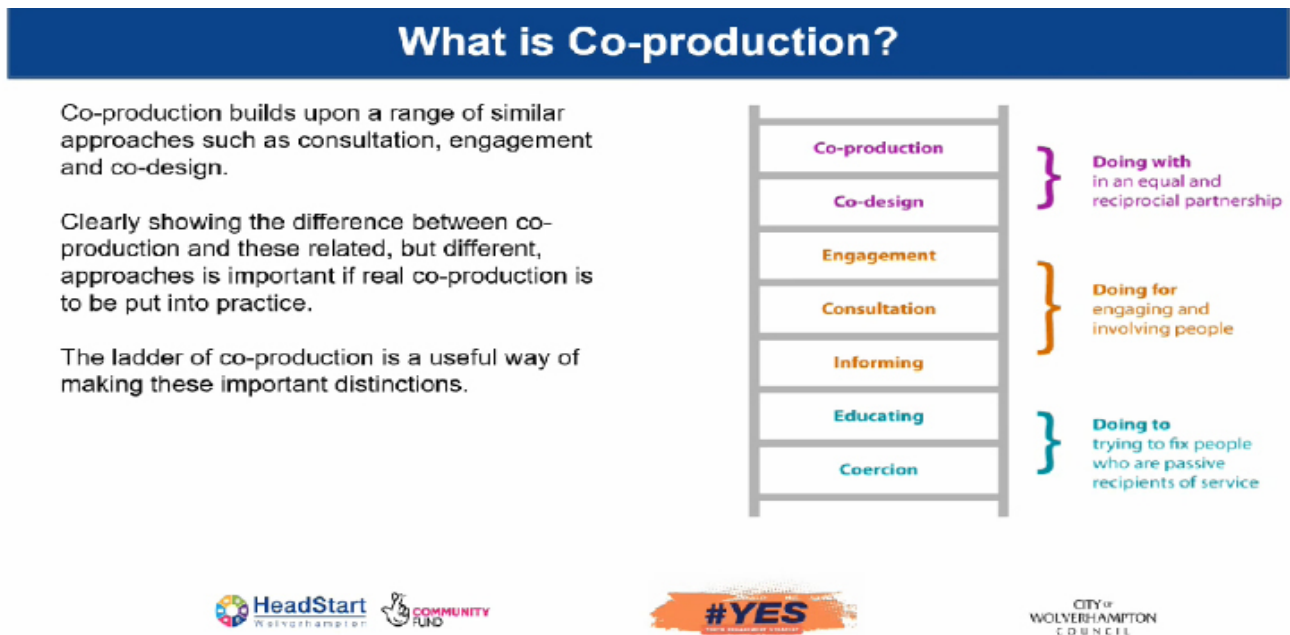
Attendees fed back that a big factor for them was transitioning from primary to secondary school, and this is something that HeadStart Newham focus on a lot through the BounceBack programme. HeadStart Newham explained that BounceBack was also adapted as a transition-specific programme for some schools, offered in the six weeks leading up to the summer holidays and adapted it for those year 6 students going up to year 7, into the summer holidays and continued into year 7. Attendees also fed back that peer relationships and friendships caused them worry as well as protecting them from 'raindrops', and HeadStart Newham explained that BounceBack is also designed to help pupils with their relationships and learning to recognise the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships, and how to be a good friend. The model also supports young people to have conversations with their parents and families about what is happening at school, encouraging them to recognise and utilise any positive support networks that they may have at home.

The workshop ended with a slide on workforce development, and Becky described how they have been continuing to work with schools to see how they can run BounceBack internally, beyond the end of HeadStart. In response to a question asking if school staff will be delivering the intervention HeadStart Newham explained that, as BounceBack is a dynamic programme that can be used one-to-one, in small groups, in tutor groups, and can be used for free online, it is available for anyone working within a school environment to deliver it.



## Wolverhampton

Kush Patel, HeadStart Strategic Lead, delivered HeadStart Wolverhampton's workshop focused on [co-production](#), and they began by showing and explaining the co-production ladder shown below.



Kush explained that co-production is about identifying problems from the perspective of young people, who are able to offer important perspectives on what they need in their lives, and should therefore also voice their views on what the solutions could be. Wolverhampton aimed to embed co-production throughout the city, and stated in the workshop that must be embedded strategically throughout councils and organisations. The following factors were listed as essential in effective co-production practice on a city-wide scale:

- Strategic buy-in
- Training
- Resources
- Time
- Evidence

Kush explained that they did not have a tier 2 mental health service during the planning stages of HeadStart, relying on universal services to support young people with lower levels of need which would frequently escalate to the point of needing specialist CAMHS intervention. To reduce the need for specialist intervention, HeadStart Wolverhampton developed offers for children and young people in schools and communities, as well as supporting their Children and Families Co-Production Charter, which went live in 2020. The charter was designed as a co-production guide for services and organisations to support them to strategically embed co-production throughout their services and structures, and its wider aim was to embed co-production throughout the city.

HeadStart Wolverhampton's Youth Engagement Strategy – #YES – was launched at the same time as the charter. Young people across Wolverhampton participated in a survey designed by HeadStart to gather their views on what was important to them. They decided on three areas:

- Being health – which refers to both physical and mental health
- Being connected – which means feeling connected to something, such as to family, friends, their school or local community
- Being you – which refers to young people having their voices heard and validated by adults and the people around them



**Being Healthy:** understanding what keeps young people happy and well.

**Being Connected:** Staying connected with their friends, family and the community.

**Being You:-** ensuring young people have the chance to be their best version.

[wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://wolverhampton.gov.uk)

HeadStart Wolverhampton learned that co-production benefits young people's lives in ways beyond emotional wellbeing in mental health, such as impacting on youth employment and safeguarding and reducing the impacts of substance misuse and poverty. They are working with a range of organisations and services across Wolverhampton, such as Children's Social Care, Public Health and employment and skills teams, to embed co-production in a way that benefits young people in a variety of ways as well as society as a whole.

## Conclusion

The workshops of the six partnerships demonstrated the ways that the HeadStart programme has placed emphasis on the importance of co-production for the empowerment and improved mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. They have demonstrated some of the benefits of co-production, such improved design and evaluation of programmes for young people, improved policy and more powerful social campaigns, and the recruitment of a workforce that can best represent and meet the needs of the children and young people they work with and for, through young person-led recruitment. All partnerships have demonstrated effective and ongoing partnership working, and have adopted flexible approaches to learning and evaluation which has enabled them to continually improve and refine their work and approaches, and think about broader issues impacting their programme outcomes. Lastly, the partnerships have demonstrated that there are a range of different models that effectively support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. They have shown how creative approaches, based upon co-production and partnership working, can produce new and strong evidence-bases to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing on local and national scales.

## United for a better childhood

The National Children's Bureau brings people and organisations together to drive change in society and deliver a better childhood for the UK. We interrogate policy, uncover evidence and develop better ways of supporting children and families.

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