



Emotional wellbeing and return to school

An online conference of shared learning presented by NCB, Headstart Partnerships and The National Lottery Community Fund

Wednesday 21st October 2020



Introduction

We know that schools play a vital role in promoting good emotional wellbeing, as well as having responsibility to identify students facing mental health challenges and helping to access the right support for those in need. As the Covid-19 pandemic developed in England and lockdown ensued, schools were closed to most children in March 2020 and the sector was forced to rapidly adapt learning delivery and support approaches for the following months.

This disruption to normality meant that young people were left without their usual support systems, limited access to other services and facing challenges as the Covid-19 pandemic worsened living circumstances for many. Nationally there were concerns around the wellbeing of vulnerable young people who were spending more time in challenging family environments living with domestic abuse, substance misuse and parental mental health.

Emerging evidence from The Children's Society¹ suggests that many more children

now feel unhappy compared to last year, while a Lancet study² revealed that young people's mental health has declined more steeply during the pandemic than any other age group. For those with pre-existing mental health conditions, 80% said that the pandemic has made their mental health worse or much worse.

Against this backdrop of universal concerns about children's wellbeing and a need to ensure targeted support to the young people most affected, it is more important than ever for schools to prioritise the wellbeing and mental health of the whole school community.

The planned reopening of education settings in September 2020 was welcomed by many, alongside a national dialogue around how school communities, mental health support networks, local authorities and government implementation can identify and respond to a potential wave of young people with declining emotional wellbeing and mental health.

The HeadStart partnerships

We are delighted to collaborate with the six HeadStart partnerships, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, to present this conference on emotional wellbeing and the return to school. These partnerships are well placed to provide key learning and insight into their own local system responses and interventions in relation to emotional wellbeing and schools.

These local-authority led partnerships include schools, children's services, public health, specialist health and voluntary and community organisations, as well as close involvement of young people and parents. They are part of a six-year, £67.4 million programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund from 2016–2022 to test and learn new ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 10 to 16. The HeadStart partnerships were recently awarded a share of £8.7 million in National Lottery funding to deliver their existing work but with a revised focus on supporting marginalised young people to access the help they need as they respond to the increased demand due to Covid-19.

Each of the programmes have adopted different approaches but all focus on improving resilience, preventing mental health issues from worsening and reducing the need for specialist services. These wide-ranging approaches adopted, at both universal and targeted levels, include whole school approaches, parenting support, workforce development, digital engagement, community and voluntary groups, peer mentoring, whole town/city approaches and whole organisation approaches enabling the partnerships to respond to the initial challenges of Covid-19 lockdown and subsequently supporting an emotional wellbeing agenda locally around reopening of schools.

The conference will showcase the ways that the partnerships support schools and local systems to prioritise children's emotional wellbeing amidst the return of education settings in the context of Covid-19, highlighting key learning and good practice through a range of workshops.

The workshops

HEADSTART NEWHAM

YOUR TIME

At the start of Covid-19 lockdown, HeadStart were already positioned in schools, delivering interventions to some of their most vulnerable young people and had long-serving established relationships with school staff, community provisions, families and specialist services (e.g CAMHS) locally. They were already providing targeted support in schools to children and young people who were at risk of developing mental health difficulties and had begun placing weekly calls to children and young people classed as vulnerable by schools at the start of lockdown.

Headstart Newham will be talking about the Your Time befriending service, which was developed rapidly at the height of the pandemic via collaborative working between HeadStart, Youth Empowerment Service & CYP Commissioning as part of the #HelpNewham offer. Their workshop reflects on the work of one Youth Practitioner and one special young person who experienced the journey through lockdown together and describes the challenges they faced, the learning they discovered and their joint navigation of returning to school.

HEADSTART BLACKPOOL

CO-PRODUCTION DURING LOCKDOWN

When the numbers of people attending school was restricted in March 2020, schools had to adapt and respond. The Resilience Revolution in Blackpool galvanised a movement of young people, parents, carers, researchers, practitioners and school staff to: join in, share insights, and co-design recommendations for good practice.

HeadStart Blackpool's workshop will describe how their co-production activities brought together the different voices of their schools' community, what they learned, the impact for those involved, and will also showcase their co-created recommendations for a safe, wider opening of schools.

HEADSTART HULL

DELIVERING SYSTEMS CHANGE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

Over the course of the programme, HeadStart Hull has worked to deliver a city wide approach to improving mental health for children, young people and families. This has included working with schools, voluntary and community services, Early Help services, youth services, health services and young people and parents to change the culture of mental health support. This is to ensure it is seen as 'everybody's business' as part of the implementation of the Thrive approach and has included:

- Citywide approach to PSHE
- Implementing and embedding a whole organisation approach
- Multi agency workforce development
- Coproducing service design with young people/parents to deliver early intervention/targeted interventions to reduce the need for specialist services (CAMHS)

The workshop will look at how they achieved their city-wide approach including challenges and successes and their plans moving forward during Covid-19.

HEADSTART CORNWALL

Building on the work of the programme, the HeadStart Kernow team were able to utilise their networks and connections with schools, young people, parents and the wider system to maintain a focus on emotional resilience and mental wellbeing during Covid-19 lockdown. You will hear how the team adapted quickly to meet the needs of schools, young people and families and see examples of some of the resources that were developed in direct response to emerging need.

HEADSTART KENT

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO EMOTIONAL WELLBEING IN A COVID WORLD

HeadStart Kent will explore Public Health England's whole school approach principles to emotional wellbeing across a school community, addressing its links with the Mental Health Support Teams in Kent and the current Ofsted inspection framework. They will share how they have supported schools to sustain such an approach during these unprecedented times by delving into concerns around staff wellbeing and sharing Kent's Return to School Guidance, which signposts school staff to critical support for their vulnerable students, parents/carers, staff and governors at this time.

HEADSTART WOLVERHAMPTON

THE ROLE AND RESPONSES OF LOCAL SYSTEMS IN SUPPORTING SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES TO BUILD ON THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

One of the strategic aims within the City of Wolverhampton is to ensure that children and young people get the best possible start in life, so that they can fulfil their potential. Supporting children's emotional wellbeing and mental health is a key part of working towards this aim.

HeadStart has been a catalyst for sustainable system change to create a system that more effectively promotes children and young people's emotional wellbeing and reduces demand on more specialist mental health services.

This workshop will look at the different strands of the HeadStart programme that are key to achieving system change, involving a wide range of agencies with the necessary skills and knowledge working with children and young people around mental health and emotional wellbeing and will highlight the important work that is being done to support schools during Covid-19.

Other updates

We look forward to welcoming you on Wednesday 21st October 2020 1.30–4.00 to hear updates from the Department for Education and Public Health England on programmes around emotional wellbeing and mental health in schools, and to hear key learning from the six HeadStart sites.

Endnotes

- 1 https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/Ples/2020-10/life-on-hold-childrens-well-being-and-covid-19.pdf?mc_cid=989e5ed417&mc_eid=174726a716
- 2 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(20\)30308-4/full-text#%20](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(20)30308-4/full-text#%20)

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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