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# Independent Local Evaluation of HeadStart Hull:

## Executive Summary

August 2021

A copy of the full HeadStart Hull  
Independent Evaluation Report can be found at:  
<https://hull-repository.worktribe.com/output/3877725>

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# Foreword

Poor mental health is something that most people will experience in their lifetime, whether it is only a couple of stressful days or a diagnosis of a disorder, however I believe that everyone deserves the help, regardless of how healthy they seem to be, without there being so much stigma surrounding accessing the support. HeadStart Hull, for the past five years has been using their services and interventions to support young people with their emotional health and wellbeing, as well as encouraging schools and parents/carers to help their children and themselves. This has been done through various young person led campaigns (like the YANA campaign), support systems (like the parent/student peer mentoring system) and the Mark of Excellence award. All of these support systems have been designed to support and educate young people, parents, carers, youth workers and teachers on how to help themselves and everyone around them.

Mental health in teenagers and children is often ridiculed and explained by the young person being shy or nervous in school. It's seen as something that will pass as the young person gets older, however that is frequently not the case. Fifty percent of mental health cases start by age 14, and three quarters start by 24, which shows that early intervention is vital to preventing the development of mental health issues or reducing the effect that it has on the young person. There are many factors that can contribute to being in a state of poor mental health, however concerns regarding Covid and the lockdown causing people to be in isolation is seen as the biggest factor right now. This means that now more than ever access to the necessary help is harder than before, meaning that organisations like HeadStart Hull are more essential than ever before.

As a young person, I strongly encourage and invite you to read this report as its findings show how vital not only HeadStart Hull, but other mental health support systems are in endorsing positive behaviours that encourage better emotional wellbeing for not only young people but for parents and carers too. By reading about things that work and the limitations that arise, we can improve our services and help even more people with their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

*Gabriela Surdyk*

**Gabriela Surdyk**  
(Previous Young Mayor and HeadStart Hull Volunteer)



# Introduction

HeadStart is a five-year national strategic programme funded by the The National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) which aims to take an asset-based approach to improving the mental health of young people aged 10-16 years in England. HeadStart Hull is one of six programmes in the country. The University of Hull was commissioned to carry out the independent local evaluation of HeadStart Hull (Phase Three) delivered during the period 1st August 2016 until October 2020.

# Methods

Methods included an appraisal of published literature, analysis of (secondary) data provided by HeadStart Hull and analysis of (primary) data collected by the Independent Evaluation Team at the University using a 'feedback' website and online surveys, examination of the minutes of HeadStart Hull strategic and operational meetings, an examination of information and resources provided by HeadStart Hull for children and young people and interviews with HeadStart Hull service coordinators and managers. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Hull Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 28th June 2018 (REF FHS53).



# Main findings

Hull is the fourth most deprived local authority in England. There was an increase of happiness and life satisfaction during the time leading up to Hull's tenure as the 2017 UK City of Culture, but this returned to the levels recorded in 2015 by the end of 2017. The number of people aged 16 to 17 years in Hull making out of work claims recorded in March 2020 was 1% compared to 0.2% in August 2016. There is emerging evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a further multiplier of inequality in the city. For example, FareShare Hull and Humber who redistribute surplus food from the food industry report feeding more than 10,500 people every week who are directly affected by food poverty.

Some areas of the health and wellbeing of children in Kingston upon Hull are worse than England, including more teenage pregnancy, more smoking in pregnancy, low breastfeeding rates, low MMR immunisation level, poorer dental health, and higher obesity rates. Conceptions in young women under the age of 16 years in Hull fell from 61 in 1000 in that age group in the period 2015 to 2017, to 58 in the period 2016 to 2018.

In 2017/18, there were 37 admissions of children and young people aged under 18 to hospital in Hull because of a mental health disorder, a rate of 65.5 per 100,000 population aged under 18, compared to 84.7 in England. This is an increase locally from the previous year (53.6 per 100,000), but a decrease from the years 2015/16. The rate of hospital admissions of children and young people for conditions wholly related to alcohol is increasing in Hull despite it decreasing nationally. Ofsted reported in 2020 the progress and experiences of children in care in Hull have deteriorated and many children have not received acceptable responses to their needs. The number of young people in the youth justice system in Hull from April 2015 to March 2016, was 30 aged 10 to 14 years and 107 aged 15 to 17 years, compared to 36 aged 10 to 14 years and 90 aged 15 to 17 years from April 2018 to March 2019.

Pupil absences (authorized and unauthorized) increased in all school types in Hull in the school year 2018/2019 when compared with the school year 2015/2016. In 2019, across Hull, the average Attainment 8 score was 43.3, which compares to 46.7 for pupils across all state-funded schools in England.



Most young people **found out about HeadStart Hull from a teacher** or another member of school staff



**Friendliness of others** was the most helpful factor for young people to attend a HeadStart Hull service



**81 out of 100 young people** found it easy to arrange to attend a HeadStart Hull service



HeadStart Hull staff have reported **young people being hungry** on arrival to sessions



Most of the young people we asked **found the HeadStart Hull service they attended enjoyable**



**Two thirds** thought they were good fun



The average length of time a young person spent attending a HeadStart Hull service was **100 days**



**80%** of the 104 young people we asked had not heard of the [www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk](http://www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk) website



**93%** of the 104 young people we asked had not heard of the mobile application Caremonkeys



Most of the parents and carers using HeadStart Hull parenting services who we asked, said they **would recommend the service to someone else**



The average time a parent spent attending a HeadStart Hull parenting service was **110 days**



The **total average progress across all star areas** for parents using the HeadStart Hull parenting services was **50%**

### Access to HeadStart Hull services

- As of May 2020, there was a total of 92 schools in Hull signed up to HeadStart Hull. Thirty-five of these schools were signed up as HeadStart Lite. This meant they could sign up to the ethos of HeadStart but with a limited offer of support.
- Most young people found out about HeadStart Hull from a teacher or another member of school staff.
- Between September 2016 and July 2019, a total of 1,039 young people accessed a HeadStart Hull service which collected data (some of these may be the same young person accessing a number of services and no data was provided for the Turn2Us and Play Rangers services).
- Out of 101 young people who were asked, 81 found it easy to arrange to attend a HeadStart Hull service.
- Friendliness of others was the most helpful factor for young people to attend a HeadStart Hull service.
- The parents and carers who were asked what they thought would make the service better for their child said making it quicker for children to be seen and making the course longer.
- HeadStart Hull staff have reported young people being hungry on arrival to sessions. They have tried to address this by making food available at the start or during sessions.

### Experience of children and young people accessing a HeadStart Hull Service

- Most of the young people we asked found the HeadStart Hull service they attended enjoyable and just under two thirds thought they were good fun. More than half of the young people thought the service was helpful and less than half said it was confidence boosting. Negative opinions about the services were low.
- The average length of time a young person spent attending a HeadStart Hull service was 100 days, with a minimum average of six days and a maximum average of 431. School based group work – SMASH had the longest average attendance and WRAP had the shortest.
- My star™ was used to measure young people's progress. The average starting score across all star areas for the six HeadStart Hull services collecting data was 3.539, which means that the young people were working on their problems themselves and with others. The average star movement was 0.676, which is a moderate increase. The average score after attendance to the services was 4.215, which meant things were mostly satisfactory.
- The total average progress across all star areas for all the six young people's HeadStart Hull services using the measure was 48%. School based group work – SMASH had the highest level of average progress across all areas, and more young people using that service progressed than stayed the same. Counselling and Young People's Peer Mentoring also had a higher percentage of young people progressing than staying the same.
- The total average deterioration across all star areas for all of the six young people's HeadStart Hull services using this measure was 5%. Counselling had the highest level of average deterioration.
- The HeadStart Hull services for young people as a whole, were most successful in improving the star areas of feelings and behaviour and confidence and self-esteem. Progress was low for the star areas, where you live, being safe and physical health.
- Eighty-seven (80%) of the 104 young people we asked had not heard of the [www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk](http://www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk) website.
- Eighty-seven (93%) of the 104 young people we asked had not heard of the mobile application Caremonkeys.

### Experience of parents and carers accessing a HeadStart Hull Service

- Most of the parents and carers using HeadStart Hull parenting services who we asked, said they would recommend the service to someone else.
- The average time a parent spent attending a HeadStart Hull parenting service was 110 days. The minimum average attendance was 22 days and the longest was 357 days.
- Family star™ was used to measure parent and carer's progress. The average star starting score across all star areas for the parents using the three parenting services was 6.14; this means that parents were trying to improve with the help of services. The average star movement was 1.272, which is a large increase. The average end score for parents using the three services was 7.412, which means they are finding what works but still need support.
- The total average progress across all star areas for parents using the HeadStart Hull parenting services was 50%. Parent peer mentoring had the highest level of average progress across all areas, and more parents using that service progressed than stayed the same. Parenting Support (HCC) also had a higher percentage of parents progressing than staying the same.
- The total average deterioration across all star areas for parents using the HeadStart Hull parenting services was 5%. Parent peer mentoring had the highest level of deterioration in seven out of eight areas.
- The parenting HeadStart Hull services as a whole, were most successful in improving the star areas of boundaries and behaviour and emotional wellbeing. Progress was low for the star area home and money.
- A comparison of the outcome star results achieved by the young people who took part in HeadStart Hull with a pilot carried out in the UK during the development of My Star™ showed that less young people in Hull improved than in the pilot (48% vs 53%), but parents in Hull achieved higher Family Star™ scores than those nationally (1.272 vs 1).

### Experience of those delivering the HeadStart Hull Services

- Half the workers we asked said they feel able to raise the subject of mental health and wellbeing appropriately and sensitively because they had training, though not all of it developed their confidence or incorporated theory into practice. Some workers reported they had not had any training.
- People managing and coordinating HeadStart Hull services are proud to be part of something which is desperately needed and relied on but think there is an overlap with services provided elsewhere and this can be confusing, and the age range should not be restricted when young people of all ages need access and support.
- The top five emotions we observed when talking to managers, coordinators, and facilitators about working on the HeadStart Hull project were positivity, frustration, pride, concern and feeling challenged.
- People managing and coordinating HeadStart Hull services identified a number of ways improvements could be made, including more staff, more places to go that are under cover, appropriate counselling spaces in schools, more universal services for under 10's, better publicity to enable young people to choose what service they need for themselves, making the HeadStart checklist quicker to complete, better communication within the school network and more long-term funding to ensure sustainability.

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# Recommendations

Recognising HeadStart Hull does not exist in isolation from national and local policy drivers and the decisions of funders and commissioners our recommendations focus on building on the strengths and addressing barriers identified in our evaluation by:

- **Providing effective services for children and young people, parents, and carers by:**
  - Continuing to commission HeadStart Hull interventions that have demonstrated benefit.
  - Working with young people in years 10 and 11 of secondary school to co-design wellbeing interventions that more closely meet their needs.
  - Maintaining the HeadStart Hull brand and Mark of Excellence.
- **Working in partnership with all stakeholders and providers to continue to build capacity in communities to ensure a sustainable future for services that benefit the children and young people of Hull by:**
  - Reducing competitiveness and bureaucracy and strengthening collaboration by continuing to support communities of practice and networks to deliver a system wide approach.
  - Increasing the visibility, recognition and support for the vital work of charities and the voluntary sector, including those providing youth services.
  - Enabling a stronger collective bidding process for funds, including specialist central support to prepare bids to maximise the opportunity to utilise innovation and best practice from all providers.
- **Addressing the practical issues identified by:**
  - Collating and publishing a directory of spaces available in communities to identify where there are opportunities to meet and hold activities.
  - Identifying a coordinator and budget to maintain and promote the [www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk](http://www.howareyoufeeling.org.uk) website.
  - Reducing the burden of assessment of needs by streamlining the HeadStart Hull Checklist and testing it with end users.
- **Ensuring workers feel confident in their skills and safe and supported in their work by:**
  - Including training and development in how to support the wellbeing of children and young people in all job descriptions and workload models of staff working with children and young people in any setting.
  - Providing access to peer support networks and multidisciplinary models of supervision.
  - Offering more regular, open and transparent communication from leaders to workers in services.
- **Making space and time for the promotion of emotional wellbeing within schools by:**
  - Influencing Ofsted to include clearer wellbeing criteria in their standards.

# Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the contribution of the stakeholders who gave up their valuable time to respond to our requests for information, participate in the evaluation and openly share their opinions and views about HeadStart Hull services with us. I am particularly grateful to the core HeadStart Hull Team and all the Service Leads who worked hard to help our team gain access to children, young people, their parents and carers and promote our evaluation website to them. This became even more important during the first national lockdown from March 2020 onwards, and I am immensely grateful to those children, young people, parents, carers and workers who took the time to engage with our website at a time which was filled with so much uncertainty about the future. I am also grateful for the flexibility offered from the HeadStart Hull Programme Manager to enable us to continue to progress the evaluation during the pandemic and bring it to a successful conclusion.

Thank you

*Jacquie*





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