

HeadStart Newham



BounceBack Newham

a review of Year 1 HeadStart Newham intervention delivery
from the perspective of pupils, school and delivery staff

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HeadStart

This report focuses on HeadStart Newham. HeadStart is a National Lottery funded programme developed by the Big Lottery Fund. It aims to understand how to equip young people to cope better with difficult circumstances, preventing them from experiencing common mental health problems before they become serious issues.

The programme supports a broad range of initiatives for building resilience and emotional wellbeing in 10 to 16 year olds in order to:

- improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people
- reduce the onset of mental health conditions
- improve young people's engagement in school and their employability
- reduce the risk of young people taking part in criminal or risky behaviour.

The programme is being delivered in six local authority areas between 2016 and 2021: Blackpool, Cornwall, Hull, Kent, Newham and Wolverhampton. HeadStart Newham is delivered in partnership with the London Borough of Newham.

The Big Lottery Fund

The Big Lottery Fund is the largest distributor of money from the National Lottery. Every year it distributes around £600 million pounds for good causes, all thanks to the players of The National Lottery. A significant proportion of this funding goes on strategic programmes. HeadStart is one of those programmes.

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Summary

Introduction and study aims

HeadStart Newham¹ is an early help service for 10-16 year olds with emerging mental health difficulties. BounceBack Newham is a targeted intervention delivered by a HeadStart Youth Practitioner in primary school. Pupils are supported by a Youth Practitioner to explore different life areas linked to building resilience and wellbeing, using a workbook. The aim of this qualitative study was to assess BounceBack delivery as perceived by pupils, school staff, and Youth Practitioners, in year 1 delivery.

Methodology

A qualitative research design included focus groups with pupils that had completed BounceBack; a focus group and interviews with the HeadStart Youth Practitioner team and a member of school staff. Fieldwork took place in summer 2017. Research encounters were audio recorded and analysed using a thematic approach.

Summary of findings

Recommendation to BounceBack. Pupils had little understanding about why they had been recommended to take part. Before it started, they were not sure what the intervention would involve. Schools took different approaches to informing and consulting parents and pupils about recommendation to BounceBack. Youth Practitioners also took different approaches in 1:1s with pupils. Pupils did not always feel they had a choice in participating and could feel apprehensive about the prospect of taking part.

First impressions count. The initial intervention sessions were pivotal to informing a pupil's decision about whether they wanted to continue. A "fun" initial session could secure pupil interest.

Informal education. Pupils noted that BounceBack felt distinctly different to regular school lessons due to facilitation by an external Youth Practitioner; learning felt directly applicable to their life now and in the future; working with different peers; a focus on group work; starting with games before the core work; and, permission to talk and for self-expression during the sessions. Pupils stated a preference for activities that involved the whole group, creative activities, required movement or made use of video media.

Plan, Do, Review: weekly challenges. The 'plan- do-review' model supported pupil learning; in particular, small behaviour changes could be facilitated through weekly resilience challenges. Pupils valued the opportunity to discuss and share personal reflections about the weekly challenge as well as their individual wellbeing. Use of the BounceBack workbook was inconsistent across groups, however where it was used, pupils reported that it supported their learning about resilience.

Team work. The group dynamic was central to pupil's BounceBack experience. Group activities and the emphasis on helping others to build their resilience supported formation of the group as well as individual peer relationships.

Working with a Youth Practitioner. Facilitation by an external service was valued by schools and pupils alike. Pupils perceived Youth Practitioners to be different to school staff, noting their emotional control (e.g. calm approach and not shouting or showing anger), compared with school staff. Pupils were comfortable discussing their emotional health with their Practitioner and felt they may not be as comfortable with a teacher. However, pupils felt that Practitioner's pupil behaviour management could be lacking.

¹ <https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/>

Consistent delivery. The core format of the intervention was largely consistent across groups, with some variability in weekly content and activities based on Practitioner's assessment of the group. Although pupils generally liked the full range of BounceBack activities, it was unclear how they all linked to building resilience. When Youth Practitioners cancelled a planned session, it could be disappointing and disruptive for pupils.

Enlisting parents/carers engagement. Parent/carer engagement varied by school and individual parent-child relationship. Where parents were engaged, they could support their child in making small behaviour changes and reinforce learning from the intervention.

Pupil outcomes. Pupils attributed participation in BounceBack to a range of benefits including an improved understanding of resilience; peer relationships; self-confidence; and/or connections at family/home. Pupils believed that BounceBack may have long term benefits, for transition to secondary school. There were also pupils who did not feel any additional benefits of the intervention beyond enjoyment. The school lead suggested a need for pupil progress and outcomes.

Making use of the findings

The findings identify areas of delivery that HeadStart Newham may wish to review:

- Recruitment and communication of the intervention by schools and Youth Practitioner; including information provided about the intervention (beyond having fun) and an opportunity for pupils to opt-out.
- Making a good first impression: ensuring initial sessions are engaging.
- Pupil behaviour management, specifically, disruptive behaviour and drawing quieter pupils into the group.

- A review of session activities and ensuring they help pupils to make the link between the activity and how it relates to building resilience or other intended outcomes.
- How to ensure consistent delivery across Youth Practitioners.
- Supporting school and parent/carer engagement to support pupil learning and outcomes.
- Ensuring a supported ending and using exit 1:1s as an opportunity to discuss and refer on to wider HeadStart intervention.

Our learning

The research suggested areas for learning and improving how BounceBack is delivered. Headstart Newham is committed to learn and refine the BounceBack intervention so that it works for young people and schools; and is delivered consistently well. The table below sets out how HeadStart has responded to the research findings.

Our learning	HeadStart Newham's response
<p>Recruiting pupils to the intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and early communication of the intervention varied by school and Youth Practitioner. 1:1s were not seen as an opportunity to opt-out nor did they provide detailed information about what the intervention would include, beyond having fun. 	<p>Explaining BounceBack</p> <p>We've learnt that we need to help all stakeholders understand the intervention. We now have a range of promotional material for schools, parents and young people to help explain BounceBack, and this is consistently shared e.g. all schools receive a factsheet about BounceBack.</p> <p>Pupil choice is non-negotiable</p> <p>We've realised that we need to be clearer with schools that taking part in BounceBack must be the pupil's choice. We will explicitly discuss pupil choice at 1:1 or first session.</p> <p>1:1s</p> <p>Our 1:1 process is being reviewed. We are considering the ways to make sure these are useful or whether a different approach may be needed to help inform HeadStart and the young person about whether BounceBack is the right intervention for them.</p>
<p>Pupil behaviour management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupil behaviour management in sessions, specifically, disruptive behaviour and drawing quieter pupils into the group. Pupils suggested a need to have more than one facilitator to support behaviour management. 	<p>Our approach is different</p> <p>Our approach to learning and managing the range of pupil behaviour may be different to the school's usual approach. That said, we do want all pupils to feel safe, happy and included in our interventions. To address young people's concerns about behaviour management, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our resilience training leads have run training on behaviour management in a primary school context. The aim of this training is to provide Practitioners with a toolkit of techniques to use and increase their confidence to manage the behaviours, e.g. a HeadStart top tips approach to running primary school intervention In some schools we have co-facilitated BounceBack with a member of school staff. This meant that the schools behaviour policy was used, and the chance to share good practise between school staff and practitioner We've realised the importance of including Practitioners with expertise in primary education

Our learning	HeadStart Newham's response
<p>Linking activities back to resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A review of the range of session activities and ensuring they help pupils to make the link between the activity and how it relates to building resilience or other intended intervention outcomes. 	<p>Standardising delivery while leaving room for Practitioners to be themselves</p> <p>We want to ensure consistent interventions and allow space for each Practitioner to put their stamp on it. This year we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run Practitioner training on how to implement BounceBack Protected time each week for Practitioners to plan and prepare for upcoming intervention sessions Introduced a new pupil workbook and session-by-session guidance for Practitioners Set up a bank of resources for Practitioners to use Run termly best practice workshops for Practitioners to share what works Collect young person feedback about their experience of the intervention <p>We are also working towards...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a model for a good first session Developing our quality assurance approach.
<p>Consistent delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to ensure consistent delivery across Youth Practitioners. 	
<p>Engaging schools and parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting school and parent/carer engagement with the intervention, and ways in which they can further support and reinforce pupil learning. 	<p>Engaging schools</p> <p>We plan to offer training to school support staff, so they feel confident in engaging with BounceBack.</p> <p>Measuring pupil outcomes</p> <p>We have introduced a pre and post intervention survey to measure progress of pupils across key measures. This information is reported back to schools.</p> <p>Engaging parents</p> <p>We are keen to engage Parents and carers in supporting their young people on their BounceBack journey. We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produced materials and accessible information about the intervention on our website, including a video showing a typical BounceBack journey for a young person A parent pack provides information about the intervention alongside a fridge magnet as a reminder about the young person's weekly challenge Youth Practitioners have piloted sending feedback to parents on their child's progress via HeadStart postcards
<p>Onward support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exit 1:1s as an opportunity to discuss and refer on to wider HeadStart interventions. 	<p>A good goodbye</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having a celebratory final session This year exit 1:1s are standard practice, allowing time for the Practitioner and young person to meet at the end of the intervention to discuss their experience and discuss possible ongoing support.

Main report

Background

HeadStart Newham is a preventative early help service that promotes the resilience and wellbeing of 10-16 year olds with emerging mental health difficulties. BounceBack Newham is a targeted intervention delivered by a HeadStart Youth Practitioner in primary schools. This qualitative research study was commissioned to seek feedback from key stakeholders about BounceBack at the end of year 1 programme delivery.

BounceBack Newham

BounceBack is a targeted intervention delivered as part of the HeadStart Newham programme. Pupils are supported by a HeadStart Youth Practitioner to explore different life areas linked to building resilience and wellbeing, using a workbook. It is a novel intervention developed by HeadStart Newham with the support of the Young Foundation and co-produced with young people in Newham. It is based on the Academic Resilience approach².

Recruitment to intervention

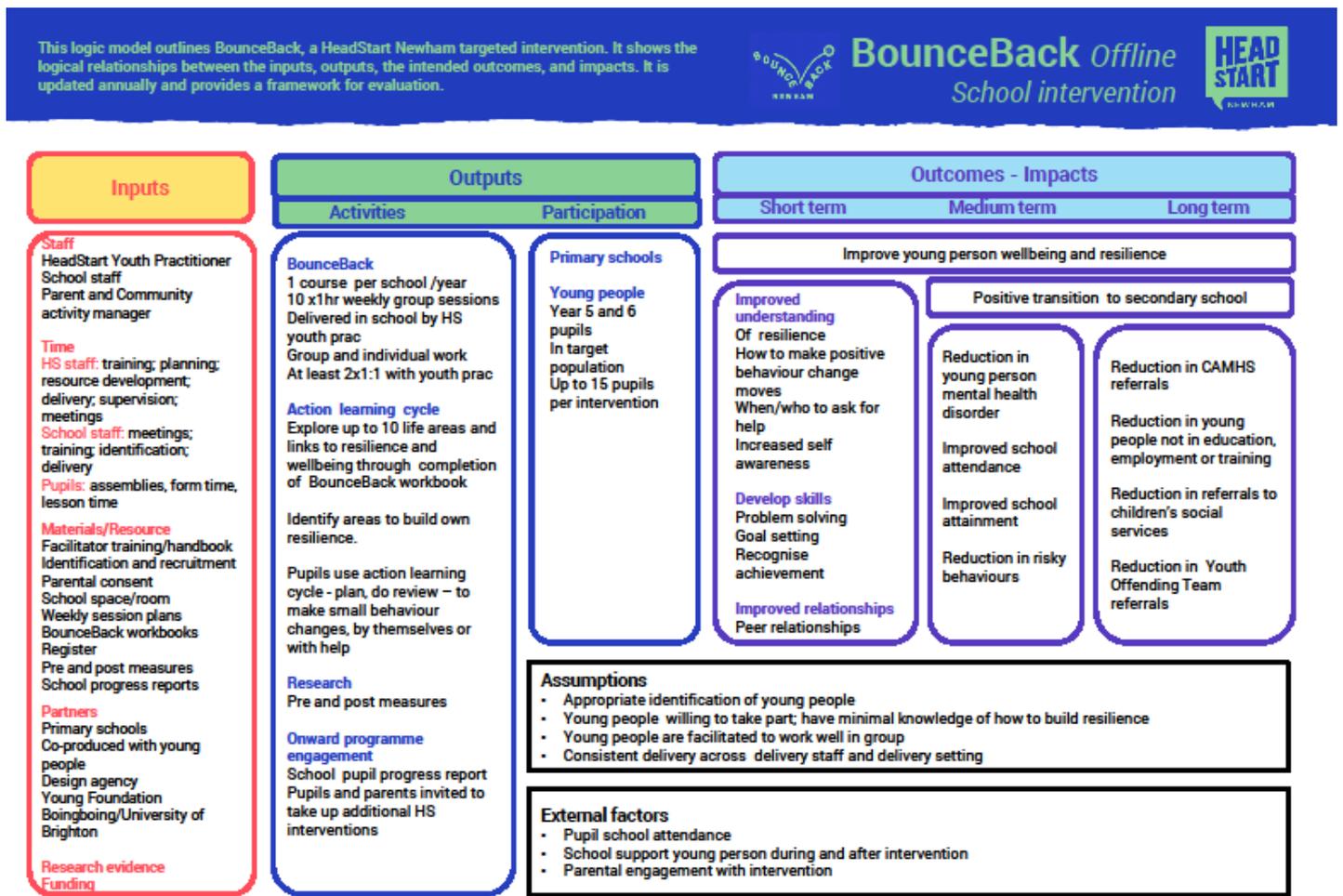
Young people can be recommended to the intervention by a professional (such as a teacher) or they can self-recommend. To take part, young people must attend a primary school that HeadStart is working with, be in Year 5 or 6, have at least one indicator of emerging mental health difficulty (mild or moderate emotional, behavioural, attention, or relationship difficulty) as assessed by the professional recommending or them self. Pupils under the care of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are excluded. Following receipt of the recommendation form a Youth Practitioner has a 1:1 discussion with the pupil to check they meet the inclusion criteria, explain the intervention and confirm they want to take part.

The intervention

A trained Youth Practitioner supports a group of Year 5 and/or 6 pupils with emerging mental health difficulty. Pupils work through the BounceBack workbook over 10 weekly sessions, exploring up to 10 different life areas and how these link to maintaining wellbeing and emotional resilience. Using an action learning approach - "plan, do, review" - each pupil sets a weekly personal behaviour change challenge and rates their progress towards achieving it. BounceBack is delivered during school hours, for up to an hour. BounceBack aims to improve pupil understanding of resilience and wellbeing, provide practical skills to make positive changes, support pupils to build their confidence and friendships. These outcomes are hoped to support a positive transition to secondary school. The logic model (see figure 1) outlines the intervention selection, activities and intended outcomes and longer-term impacts.

² <http://www.boingboing.org.uk/>

Figure 1. BounceBack Newham logic model



Study aims

During the first year of HeadStart, BounceBack was delivered in 13 Newham primary schools, 189 pupils took part and 93% of pupils completed the intervention as planned.

The aim of this study was to provide a qualitative assessment of the experiences BounceBack delivery, as perceived by intervention participants, school staff, and Youth Practitioners.

The aim was to qualitatively map and explore the range of views of the intervention among participants; specifically:

1. How pupils experienced the intervention journey, from start to end.
2. The facilitators and barriers to taking part.
3. The perceived outcomes of the intervention for young people.

This research does not provide findings relating to how prevalent a view may be, nor is it a formal impact assessment. It sought to ascertain the views and experiences of select stakeholders to support a review of delivery and inform areas for service improvement.

Method

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study. Experienced researchers facilitated:

- three focus group with pupils (n=13) that had taken part and completed BounceBack across three primary schools;
- one focus group with HeadStart Youth Practitioners and an interview with a Senior Youth Practitioner that delivered BounceBack; and
- one interview with a member of school staff with pastoral responsibility.

Focus groups allowed for exploration of people's narratives, views and experiences of the intervention; identification of the areas of consensus and differences across individuals, and the opportunity to generate suggestions for service delivery, based on participant's experiences.

Topic guides were agreed with the HeadStart Newham management. The guides were used by researchers to ensure consistency of coverage across data collection activities.

Research fieldwork took place between June and July 2017.

Sample and recruitment

This study included 13 pupils (seven Year 5 and six Year 6 pupils) that had completed a BounceBack intervention in the academic year 2016/17. The study did not include pupils that exited the intervention early.

Participants were recruited across three primary schools. These schools were chosen as they included a mix of where the intervention had run "as planned" and where there had been challenges, such as pupil behaviour, (perceived) school engagement with the intervention, change

of HeadStart Youth Practitioner during the intervention. To explore consistency of delivery, schools selection ensured interventions were facilitated by different Youth Practitioners.

The school and associated Youth Practitioner supported the study by arranging focus group logistics, including acting as gate keepers to recruitment, ensuring a diversity of pupils were included and that pupils provided informed consent to participation in this study. The researcher explained the study and sought consent to participation directly before each focus group/interview.

Analysis

Each research encounter was audio recorded, with participant consent. Framework is a thematic approach to analysing qualitative data and was used in this study. Following familiarisation of the focus group recordings, an analytical matrix framework was developed in Excel; whereby key themes were listed in different column headings and each row represented a focus group. Data from each focus group was summarised under the appropriate column heading, allowing for systematic and comprehensive analysis and comparison of themes between groups. Data was compared and contrasted between case (looking at what different groups said on the same issue) and within case (looking at how a group's opinions on one topic relate to their views on another) investigation of the data. The analysis was fully documented and conclusions could be linked back to the original source data.

Findings

This section presents study participants' reflections of their journey through the intervention, from start to end.

Recommendation to BounceBack

All pupils in the study had been recommended by a professional (school staff)³. Across the three schools in the sample, each took a different approach, including different levels of consultation with young people and parents. This may be reflective of wider differences in school cultures. Pupils across the schools recalled the following approaches to their recommendation:

- No pupil consultation: whereby the pupil was instructed to have a 1:1 with the Youth Practitioner by a teacher/school staff. Staff provided little or no information about the purpose or reason of the 1:1. This was the first the pupil had heard about the intervention.
- Parental/Carer consultation but no direct discussion with the pupil: whereby schools informed/sought consent from the parent/carer, but not with the pupil directly. In some instances, pupils had a discussion with their parent/carer about taking part. However, not all pupils felt part of the decision-making.
- Pupil consultation: whereby pupils were consulted by a teacher/school staff about doing BounceBack and informed that they would have a 1:1 with a Youth Practitioner. School staff provided limited explanation of the intervention. Pupils recall being told it would be "fun", "exciting" and "build their confidence", and good for them, but were not given any detail about what it would specifically involve.

³ In Year 1 of HeadStart, all BounceBack pupils were referred by a professional, there were no pupils that had self-recommended.

However, school staff and parent/carers did not necessarily have or relay correct information to pupils. At one school, pupils were informed that they would be working with a social worker rather than a Youth Practitioner. This raised concern for pupils as they had negative associations with social workers.

"They [school staff] told mum, at school that I might be going on BounceBack. I was in the staff room ill, and they were talking about it.

Mum told me social workers will be interviewing me...I thought social workers were bad."

Young person, BounceBack participant

From a school perspective, the staff lead was clear about the overall aims of HeadStart to raise resilience and wellbeing of young people. However, they felt they lacked information about the BounceBack intervention and did not feel confident in explaining it to young people.

1:1s, pupil choice and expectations

Following initial recommendation, each pupil had a 1:1 with a Youth Practitioner before acceptance to the intervention. 1:1s are intended to provide an opportunity to explain the intervention, assess suitability and willingness to participate.

Pupil recall of the 1:1 was generally poor. Accounts from those that did remember the 1:1, indicated that different Youth Practitioners took different approaches to 1:1 discussions. For example, some Youth Practitioners showed pupils the BounceBack workbook at the 1:1; which helped pupils understand the intervention better and that it involved working through the workbook.

Regardless of school recruitment and Practitioner's 1:1 approaches, pupils did not fully

understand what the intervention involved, how it would benefit them or why they had been selected to take part. In the absence of a clear explanation, pupils had made assumptions about the purpose and content of the intervention. Pupils' expectations included that the intervention would provide a "HeadStart" to their academic development, or provide support about successful transition to secondary school. Pupils' reservations about BounceBack included that it would be "boring" and involve "more work"; or that their friends were not selected to take part.

There were reports of pupils feeling worried about taking part in a new and unfamiliar intervention. This finding should be considered in the context of the HeadStart aims and target population – young people with emerging mental health difficulty – who may have a tendency to worry. However, it was unclear whether pupils had discussed their concerns with someone.

"[I was] worried BounceBack would be a talking thing...thought I'd be asked personal questions. [I] don't like people looking at me– seeing what I have to say because I think they might laugh or something, but once I'd had more time there [on the intervention] I realised it was the best for me."
Young person, BounceBack participant

Pupils generally reported an interest in attending the first session as they were curious about the intervention. As BounceBack takes place during school hours pupils were also motivated to attend if they got to miss lessons that they did not like; conversely, missing 'favourite' lessons presented a barrier to attending.

However, pupils did not always feel they had a choice in taking part. Pupils that recalled being consulted by a parent or teacher/school staff,

felt it was their choice to take part. Whereas pupils that reported that they were not consulted, felt they did not have a choice. Furthermore, pupils viewed the 1:1 as a formality rather than an opportunity to opt-in or -out of the intervention.

Taking part in BounceBack

Pupils participating in this study had completed the BounceBack intervention; and they were generally positive about it. A consistent experience across pupils was that BounceBack felt different to regular school approaches to learning with regards to the subject matter, learning activities and Youth Practitioner delivery. The following section outlines pupils' reflections of the intervention, including the aspects they felt they benefited from, as well as facilitators and barriers to their engagement.

Resilience: learning that felt relevant

Resilience was a novel concept to pupils, reporting that they had not previously learnt about it at school. Before taking part in the intervention the word was not in their vocabulary.

"Didn't know what resilience was then [before the intervention], didn't even know it was a word".
Young person, BounceBack participant

Pupils felt that learning about resilience was made directly applicable in their day to day life through the use of the workbook and the weekly personal goals and challenges; unlike mainstream school subjects which can seem abstract.

BounceBack workbook

Use of the BounceBack workbook varied across Practitioner and individual pupils. While some groups used the workbook regularly, others had not. The reason for inconsistent use of the

workbook was unclear. It should be noted that there was a version of the workbook available for use, but the final version was in development during the first year of BounceBack delivery.

Pupils who liked the workbook reported using it independently, outside of intervention sessions as well. Pupils that had limited use of the workbook in sessions had expected to use it more. There were also pupils that did not recall engaging with the workbook, although the wider group had. The reasons as to why some pupils did not engage with the workbook were not clear.

Pupils that liked the workbook felt it helped to teach them about resilience and made it relevant to their life. In particular, pupils were inspired by the real case stories of individuals such as the Olympian Ade Adepitan who has shown resilience by overcoming various life challenges. These case stories helped pupils understand what resilience is and that individuals can build their own resilience by setting personal goals and working through arising setbacks; which could prompt pupils to think about their own behaviours and their long-term future goals, such as career choices.

The workbook included "The Power of Parkour" to illustrate the parallels between Parkour (an activity involving rapid movement, typically in an urban area, and negotiating obstacles through running, jumping and climbing) and building resilience; as both require practise. The parallel between Parkour and resilience resonated for some pupils.

The workbook introduced pupils to Bugs (things that bother you) and Boosts (things that make you happy) to help facilitate self-awareness and provide pupils a language for this. Bugs and Boosts could be helpful to pupils if the Practitioner facilitated a discussion about them

too. Pupils noted that open discussion about things that bother / make you happy were not typical in their regular school work.

The workbook also outlined how to help other people to build their resilience and encouraged pupils to appreciate that different people are working from different starting points.

"Even if you are better at something than others, they are probably trying their hardest, even if you can't tell they are, you still need to respect them"

Young person, BounceBack participant

Activities

Aside from the workbook, sessions included weekly activities designed to support pupil understanding of how different life areas can build and support personal resilience.

In the focus groups, pupils noted that they particularly liked the creative activities, such as: drawing important people in their life together with a written explanation as to why these relationships are significant to them; drawing superheroes and what makes them extraordinary; and the celebration jar, whereby pupils wrote anonymous notes praising each other which were read out loud in the group. However, pupils could not always explain how these activities were linked to building their resilience.

Pupils enjoyed watching YouTube clips and videos in sessions. Pupils recalled watching videos of "a cute panda" and the "selective attention test gorilla video". Although pupils liked the use of multimedia, it was unclear how these videos were linked to the programme of work.

The same activities were not necessarily done in each intervention group, as

Practitioners could use their discretion to develop their own resources and implement activities as they saw fit. Practitioners suspected that they each delivered BounceBack in their own way; and therefore inconsistently across groups. Practitioners would have liked to shadow their colleagues during BounceBack delivery, as an opportunity to learn, share best practice and provide reassurance that a consistent intervention delivery.

Plan, Do, Review: weekly goals and challenges

A core element of the intervention is to achieve small behaviour changes through an action learning approach, whereby pupils plan and do a personal weekly resilience goal, which they review at the next session.

Pupils across the groups recalled setting goals during the intervention. However, it was unclear whether pupils set a goal each week, or whether this happened less frequently.

The resilience questionnaire - a set of questions linked to the Academic Resilience Approach framework which pupils rate themselves against - helped pupils to identify areas they could work on to build their wellbeing and resilience, and provided ideas for setting personal goals. For example, pupils set goals to not look at their phone/digital material an hour before bed; eat salad; and try a new activity. Pupils reported reviewing progress towards meeting their goals through group discussion in sessions and self-assessment through the use of smiley faces.

Pupils generally liked the resilience challenge component and the opportunity to discuss and review their progress. Pupils suspected that some of their peers lied or exaggerated their achievements, indicating that some pupils may not have remembered to do their challenge, or

did not feel able to share honest feedback about progress towards their goal and any setbacks they had encountered.

Informal education

Each session included group activities, games and play. Pupils particularly enjoyed games that required movement (rather than desk based play) and working in groups. BounceBack introduced pupils to new games that pupils had not previously played. Pupils liked learning and doing a different game each week.

Games were followed by core intervention work, such as worksheets / workbooks, setting weekly challenges, and discussions about resilience. Pupils noted that this session format felt different to school education, whereby work is completed before any games or “fun” activities. The inclusion of regular group activity felt notably different to school learning approaches; pupils perceived school to have a focus on independent and silent working. Pupils described how the games supported development of peer relationships as they involved the group work. This play element was viewed as ‘fun’ and facilitated engagement in each weekly session and the intervention as a whole. Pupils reported that a ‘fun’ first session could alleviate concerns about taking part in the intervention and made them want to come back the following week. However first sessions that felt unorganised, or where pupils were misbehaved could provide a poor impression of the intervention and act as a barrier to wanting to continue with it.

Group dynamic: working with peers

The group comprised both Year 5 and 6 pupils, which could include pupils that had not previously worked or interacted with each other; which was different to regular school classes. This group dynamic provided an opportunity to form new relationships and work with older or

younger peers. Working with pupils from a different year group could challenge pupil's preconceptions of younger or older peers. Working with different people could also expose pupils to new and different opinions.

Some Practitioners split groups and ran specific Year 5 and 6 pupil groups. Practitioner reported that this split allowed for focussed primary to secondary transition work with Year 6 pupils.

Group activities (as discussion above) supported group formation. However, while pupils praised particular Practitioners for trying to include all pupils in all sessions; pupils in other groups reported that some individuals were consistently quiet and not encouraged to participate or included. Pupils commented that this could make them feel uncomfortable. This finding suggests that some Practitioners are more inclusive in their approach and skilled at supporting group formation than others. It also indicates that the group dynamic is important to pupils' experience of the intervention.

Working with a Youth Practitioner

Facilitation by an external Youth Practitioner, who was not a member of the school staff, was central to BounceBack feeling different to school and formal education. Pupils were generally positive about the Youth Practitioner and reported that their facilitation approach was different to teachers/school staff.

Pupils perceived Youth Practitioners to be expert BounceBack facilitators, whereas their teachers may not be; thus, possibly giving the intervention greater credibility than if it were school run. The school lead also believed it was beneficial working with an external service/Practitioner, as

it enhanced the school's capacity to support pupil wellbeing.

In particular, pupils liked the mild temperament of Practitioners, noting that they did not shout, or lose their temper with pupils.

"Normally a teacher would be angry, and [Youth Practitioner] is just calm"
Young person, BounceBack participant

Pupils stressed how this was a contrast to teachers' approaches. For example, pupils liked that Practitioners allowed talking and laughter in sessions, whereas they perceived that teachers would not allow this in the classroom. Furthermore, pupils noted that unlike teachers, Youth Practitioners did not make pupils feel that they had to do assignments/tasks, but rather encouraged them to do the work. Pupils valued working with the same Youth Practitioner for the duration of the intervention. Due to the nature of subjects discussed, some pupils said they felt more comfortable telling an external Youth Practitioner as opposed to a teacher.

"If my teacher done BounceBack I'd be embarrassed, I wouldn't want to go...It's better if you don't know the person, but if it's the same person then you get to know them."
Young person, BounceBack participant

Pupils reported that the Youth Practitioner sometimes made promises that they did not deliver. For example, a Practitioner promised to provide pupils with stress balls, but did not do so. Youth Practitioners may consider managing pupil expectations of the intervention and avoid making promise or explaining the reasons for unexpected changes.

Pupils and the school lead explained that some BounceBack sessions were cancelled when the

Youth Practitioner was unable to attend. Both pupils and the school lead reported that cancellations could be better managed by providing advance warning, where possible. The school lead was not always aware of cancelled sessions and there were misunderstandings about whether the school or the Youth Practitioner would inform pupils. Cancellation at short notice could lead to pupil disappointment and disruption to the school day.

Behaviour management

A consistent finding across groups was that pupil behaviour in sessions could be poorly managed. Practitioners acknowledged that pupil behaviour management could be challenging. Practitioners explained that this may partly have been due to the group size, but also because they were not specialists in working with primary school aged young people.

Pupils across groups questioned their Practitioner's ability to manage difficult and disruptive behaviours of particular pupils. Pupils explained that some pupils talked over the Youth Practitioner, did not listen, used inappropriate language, teased and called other pupils names. Pupils across groups felt that the Practitioner did not effectively manage pupil behaviour, which could be disruptive to the wider group and their enjoyment of the session.

Disruptive and poorly managed pupil behaviour at the first session could be particularly unsettling for pupils. It could make pupils doubtful about continuing the intervention and question the authority of the Practitioner.

"I liked everything except the first session, it was chaos, it [behaviour] was like a house of madness"
Young person, BounceBack participant

Youth Practitioners felt that it was difficult to

manage large groups of pupils. They sometimes split groups and ran two back-to-back sessions that benefitted pupils but could be tiring for the Practitioner. From pupil accounts, it appeared that Practitioner's behaviour management approaches were central to facilitating a positive group dynamic and how comfortable pupils felt in the group.

Endings: the final BounceBack session

The final session comprised a party with refreshments, pupil reflections on working together, and each pupil received a certificate of completion. The 'party' aspect and a focus on endings, appeared to be both memorable and important for pupils; they valued the opportunity to celebrate and it made them feel special. Pupils that were not at the final session felt they had 'missed out'. Pupils recommended a need to ensure snacks are appropriate for those on specific diets, such as a halal diet.

Those that enjoyed BounceBack and had built a relationship with the Youth Practitioner were generally sad about the ending of the intervention and that they would no longer work with the Practitioner. This finding suggests that the ending of an intervention does require preparation and management so that pupils have a supported ending.

After BounceBack

The sample included Year 6 pupils who were about to transition to a HeadStart secondary school, and were intending to take up HeadStart interventions in the new school. Pupils outlined three key motivations to take up HeadStart interventions in secondary school: firstly, because they felt BounceBack had been a positive experience for them and assumed other interventions would be too; secondly, pupils were motivated by the potential of continuing their relationship with the Youth Practitioner;

and thirdly, pupils that were worried about starting secondary school thought that HeadStart might help them settle in to the new school.

There were also Year 6 pupils that were not aware that HeadStart operates in secondary schools. Pupil awareness differed across schools. Furthermore, Year 5 and 6 pupils did not discuss BounceBack online, Creative and Sports interventions, nor the Peer Parenting course; suggesting they were not aware of the wider programme. This finding may be reflective of the information different schools and Youth Practitioners provided to pupils about wider HeadStart programme. This research fieldwork took place before all Exit 1:1s were complete and therefore, perhaps pupils were yet to receive this information.

Pupils were invited to the annual HeadStart celebration event at the end of the school year. Pupils were excited about this invitation. It further supported a sense of belonging and community to the intervention and made them feel special. The school lead also valued this event invitation. They hoped it would have a three-fold benefit for pupils:

- to know they are part of a borough-wide initiative;
- meet pupils from other schools that have taken part in BounceBack; and,
- for Year 6 pupils to meet pupils that were transitioning to the same secondary school.

School, parent and peer engagement with BounceBack

School engagement with the intervention differed across schools. Pupils in particular schools reported that a staff member had asked them about the intervention. However, there were also schools where pupils did not recollect

school staff enquiring about their BounceBack experience.

Pupils reported that a select few school staff were aware that they attended BounceBack; but that staff were not aware of what they did in the sessions. This view was echoed by the staff lead, who was not clear on session content. On reflection, they felt they would have benefitted from shadowing sessions to become familiar with intervention content, delivery style and for reassurance that pupils are provided with a balance of activities that were fun and linked to the intended subject matter.

Similarly, parental/carer awareness of and engagement with BounceBack varied across pupils. There were pupils that talked about the intervention, their experience and learning with their parent/carer. These pupils recalled that their parent/carer could reinforce their learning from the programme, for example reminding them to stay calm when angry as learnt through the intervention; or to try again when they initially felt they failed at a task. Some pupils used activities and games from the intervention at home with family, including parents and siblings, which they felt facilitated positive family interaction. There were also pupils that did not have any engagement with their parent/carer about the intervention.

School and parent/carer engagement with the intervention is an external factor that could have the potential to support and sustain any pupil outcomes of the intervention. HeadStart Newham may wish to consider ways to facilitate this.

Pupils also discussed peer engagement with BounceBack. Pupils across groups, discussed how pupils in their class (not on the intervention) were curious about BounceBack

and wanted to take part, as it sounded like a fun activity from pupil accounts. Intervention pupils liked the wider peer interest and approval in BounceBack. There were pupils that wondered whether their popularity at school may increase as a result of taking part in BounceBack, the wider pupil interest combined with feeling more confident and resilient.

“Since it gave me confidence, I can do more things. Because of BounceBack, the confidence they gave me, I can maybe put my reputation up so people will know me and it can make me a bit popular.”
Young person, BounceBack participant

Pupil outcomes

Participants were asked about outcomes they had experienced, if any, as a result of taking part in the intervention. Pupils felt they had benefitted in one or more of the listed outcomes:

- **Improved understanding of resilience**
Pupils reported that BounceBack introduced them to the concept of resilience and taught them how to build their resilience. Pupils understood resilience as “not giving up” and “trying again”. Prior to the intervention, pupils said they would feel downhearted when they felt they were not doing well at an activity; and BounceBack provided reassurance that everyone experiences setbacks and failures. Pupils provided examples of where they had used a resilience approach outside of the intervention in their school and/or personal life; such as, trying to answer a test question when they were not confident in the correct answer, or persevering at activities like shooting a basketball into the hoop. Pupils believed these changes were related to taking part in BounceBack and were of benefit to them now and as they grow up.

“I learnt a lot about resilience, and it taught me how to become a better person, instead of giving up all the time...now, I’m trying again.”
Young person, BounceBack participant

- **Building resilience through behaviour change**
Intervention participants were encouraged to make small behaviour changes each week. Pupils chose challenges that were meaningful, relevant and personal to them, and reported that some challenges provided new insight into how to manage their own wellbeing and resilience. Pupils that experienced a positive change during the challenge reported that they had or were attempting to maintain the change. Examples included reducing use of digital devices prior to bedtime to improve sleep; or strategies for deescalating their own emotional or behavioural responses to particular situations, e.g. walking away from a potentially aggravating situation before becoming angry. Changes that were supported by a parent/carer at home may have a lasting change; pupils reported that their parent/carer provided reminders and prompts to maintain the behaviour change.

“Before I tried to put up with everyone. Some people can just be annoying. Now I try to walk away from the situation, rather than trying to make it change. I got that from BounceBack.”
Young person, BounceBack participant

- **Improved peer relationships**
BounceBack could benefit peer relationships in a number of ways. Firstly, there were pupils that learnt that friendships have the potential to influence their wellbeing. Secondly, the group format of the intervention provided an opportunity for pupils to get to know new peers and develop existing relationships. Development of peer relationships were

supported through group activities, discussions and the emphasis on helping others build their resilience. Pupils interacted with peers that they had not spoken with, prior to BounceBack. Pupils described the intervention as providing a sense of community and belonging for them. In some cases, these positive peer relationships transferred to the classroom and break-times too.

“I’ve never been social before BounceBack. I like to play now and I like going with my friends more. Before I used to just walk around at break time. Before BounceBack I had friends, but BounceBack told me friends can help”
Young person, BounceBack participant

- **Improved confidence**

There were pupils that reported an increase in confidence which they believed was related to taking part in BounceBack. Pupils found it difficult to articulate why and how BounceBack increased their confidence; however, from pupils accounts it may be linked to one or a combination of: being selected to take part in the intervention; reassurance that it is okay not to be good at something straight away; trying new activities; the development of peer relationships; or wider pupil interest in them and their participation in the intervention.

“It has helped me take part in the talent show, because I was like ‘no I don’t want to do that’ but then I started doing [BounceBack], it raised my confidence, I’m not sure, it’s just something in BounceBack that just did it.”
Young person, BounceBack participant

- **Family/home connection**

BounceBack could have positive influences for pupil’s home life, in two key ways: either

through parents/carer engagement with the intervention, including discussing the intervention with their child or providing support with behaviour change challenges; or through pupil initiative, e.g. pupils taking activities and games learnt in the intervention home, to do with their siblings/parents, which could be positive bonding experiences. This overlap between intervention and home life could be positive for pupils and support connections at home.

- **School connectedness**

Supporting a positive connection to school is an intended outcome of the intervention. Pupils provided no evidence or discussion of BounceBack facilitating this. However, from a staff perspective, BounceBack presented an opportunity to interact with intervention pupil (when escorting them to and from the intervention) and the opportunity to have positive communications about the child with the parent.

- **Long term goal setting – future aspirations**

BounceBack inspired pupils to consider long term goals, such as education and careers prospects. Pupils felt that BounceBack had built their resilience and that this would benefit them in the longer term. Although pupils were not able to explain the link between the intervention and this long-term planning, this finding does suggest that BounceBack may have been positive for pupil’s personal aspirations and ambitions.

- **Enjoyment of the intervention**

There were also pupils that believed the intervention had no recognisable outcomes for them. However, they had enjoyed taking part. Additionally, pupils suspected that

individuals that were consistently disruptive during the intervention may not have benefitted from taking part.

From a school perspective, the school was confident that pupils enjoyed the intervention. However, without formal feedback or evidence of pupil progression information, there was less clarity on what else the pupils gained from taking part. The school lead explained that the school had an expectation that outcomes will also improve attainment and behaviour and that the school would value information about how each young person progressed on the intervention. The school lead was also not sure that pupils had understood that they had taken part in an early mental health intervention.

Conclusion

Pupils were generally positive about BounceBack. The school lead and HeadStart Youth Practitioner team were also positive about the value of the intervention but expressed reservations about particular areas of delivery.

There was a lack of clarity about the intervention recommendation criteria and process among participants. Schools took different approaches to informing and consulting parents and pupils; and Youth Practitioners took different approaches in 1:1s with pupils. This resulted in pupils having little understanding about why they had been recommended to take part, and what the intervention would involve. Pupils did not always feel they had a choice in participating; and could feel apprehensive about the prospect of taking part.

The findings suggest that the initial intervention sessions were pivotal to informing a pupil's decision about whether they wanted to continue taking part. A "fun" initial session could secure

pupil interest in the intervention. Whereas poorly managed pupil behaviour, could form a poor first impression of both the intervention and the Practitioner's authority.

The core format of the intervention was largely consistent across groups; but, weekly content and specific activities were variable across Practitioners. The concept of resilience was novel for pupils as were some of the activities, which helped to engage pupil's interest. Resilience was discussed and taught in a way that helped pupils to relate it to their daily life. Use of the BounceBack workbook was inconsistent across Practitioners; however, where it was used pupils felt it supported their learning about the topic. The 'do-plan-review' model supported pupil learning; in particular, small behaviour changes could be facilitated through weekly resilience challenges. Pupils valued the opportunity to discuss and share personal reflections about the weekly challenge as well as discussion of the protective and risk factors for their individual wellbeing. Pupils stated a preference for activities that involved the whole group, creative activities and those that required movement or made use of video media. Although pupils generally liked the full range of BounceBack activities, it was unclear how they all linked to building resilience.

Pupils liked the informal learning approach of BounceBack and that it felt distinctly different to regular school lessons. Pupils noted the key differences to be: facilitation by an external Youth Practitioner; learning felt directly applicable to their life now and in the future; working with different peers; a focus on group work; starting with games before the core work; and permission to talk and self-expression during the sessions.

The group dynamic was central to pupil's BounceBack experience. Group activities and the emphasis on helping others to build their resilience, supported formation of the group as well as individual peer relationships. The practitioner's approach to pupil behaviour management was linked to the overall group dynamic. Pupils felt pupil behaviour management could be lacking.

Facilitation by an external service/Youth Practitioner was valued by schools and pupils alike. Pupils perceived Youth Practitioners to be different to school staff, especially noting their emotional control (i.e. calm approach and did not shout or show anger), compared with school staff. Pupils were comfortable discussing their emotional health with a Youth Practitioner and felt they may not be as comfortable with a teacher.

Parent/carer engagement with the intervention was inconsistent and varied by school and individual parent-child relationships. In instances where parents were engaged, they could support their child in making small behaviour changes and reinforce learning from the intervention.

Pupils enjoyed the intervention and felt they got something from taking part; whether it was one of the intended short-term outcomes (see logic model) or purely enjoyment of the intervention. BounceBack (and HeadStart Newham) enhanced the school's capacity to support pupil wellbeing. The school lead was confident pupils enjoyed the intervention but were uncertain about pupil progress and outcomes as a result of the intervention.

Considerations for service development

The HeadStart Newham service may wish to review the aspects of intervention delivery where

the research findings suggest inconsistent approaches across school or Youth Practitioner; namely:

- Recruitment and early communication of the intervention varied by school and Youth Practitioner; 1:1s were not seen as an opportunity to opt-out nor did they provide detailed information about what the intervention would include, beyond having fun.
- Pupil behaviour management in sessions, specifically, disruptive behaviour and drawing quieter pupils into the group. Pupils suggested a need to have more than one facilitator to support behaviour management.
- A review of the range of session activities and ensuring they help pupils to make the link between the activity (e.g. watching a cute panda video) and how it relates to building resilience or other intended intervention outcomes.
- How to ensure consistent delivery across Youth Practitioners. Supporting school and parent/carer engagement with the intervention, and ways in which they can further support and reinforce pupil learning; including outcome reports documenting the progress of each young person.
- Exit 1:1s as an opportunity to discuss and refer on to wider HeadStart interventions.

Further research. The service may consider further research, such as:

1. Pupil engagement with the new BounceBack workbook;
2. Research with pupils that exit the intervention early to explore the reasons behind this; and/or
3. Follow up past BounceBack pupils, now in Year 7 to explore the transition to secondary school and whether/how BounceBack supported them.



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