

HeadStart Newham



Supported Volunteering (Team Social Action)

a review of Year 1 Newham HeadStart 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. Supported Volunteering (SV), (renamed Team Social Action, TSA) is a targeted intervention, whereby a HeadStart Youth Practitioner supports a group of pupils to develop and implement a social action project. It was developed by HeadStart Newham and Groundwork London. The aim of this qualitative study was to assess delivery as perceived by pupils, school staff, and Youth Practitioners.

Methodology

A qualitative research design included focus groups with pupils, Youth Practitioners, and an interview with school staff. This study comprises a small sample and focuses on one intervention group only. The findings should therefore be treated with some caution. Fieldwork took place in summer 2017. Research encounters were audio recorded and analysed using a thematic approach.

Summary of findings

Recommendation to SV. The school recommended pupils for who there were known concerns. This school was not given the HeadStart recommendation form, which includes the target population criteria. They recognised that some pupils did not fit the criteria and on reflection, noted that the pupils may have been different, had they had the form. Pupils reported that they were not consulted before being recommended to take part, nor were they aware of why they had been chosen. Pupils appreciated the 1:1 with the Youth Practitioner. They described the Practitioner as attentive and

engaging, and that this helped them to initiate a trusting relationship. However, 1:1s did not provide pupils with an explicit choice to opt-out, or clarify why they had been recommended.

Working with a Youth Practitioner. Facilitation by an external Practitioner was valued by schools and pupils. The findings suggest that the Practitioner is central to a positive intervention experience. Pupils noted that the Practitioner's informal education approach felt different to the traditional pupil-teacher relationship. The school noted the Practitioner's ability to build positive relationships with young people.

Choosing a social action project. In this school, the social action project was chosen by pupils. However, Practitioners encountered schools that had a preference for particular projects, related to existing school affiliations with community and voluntary organisations. Negotiating the project topic with the school could delay the project, or result in the project not being completed. This could be frustrating and disappointing for pupils. Youth Practitioners recognised that agreement about potential topics with the school lead early on may avoid delays to future intervention delivery.

Peer relationships and the group dynamic. Pupils liked that the initial sessions focussed on building peer relationships. Sessions usually started with group games. These activities facilitated pupils to get to know one another, particularly for less confident pupils. They also facilitated interaction with peers from different social circles, who pupils may not usually engage with. Pupils stated that working as part of a team felt different to regular school lessons and made them feel part of a shared experience. Youth Practitioners and pupils reported that the group dynamic could be challenging, due to inappropriate behaviour and a perceived unequal workload between pupils. A concern of school

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

staff was that a negative group dynamic could inadvertently effect pupil confidence, and hinder development of communication and social skills.

Pupil differentiation. Pupils had different interests, skills and abilities, but felt that their individual qualities were not taken into account by the Practitioner during project task allocation. Similarly, there were pupils who did not want to take part in the school assembly, but felt expected to, which could cause anxiety. The school echoed this finding and expressed a concern that timid pupils may not have been included in decisions about project task allocation; and, pupils with low confidence may have felt excluded from participating in the assembly and were therefore not part of the final project delivery and celebration the group's achievement.

Behaviour management. Pupils and school staff shared frustrations about behaviour management during sessions. They had expected the Practitioner to be firmer and enforce the school's behaviour policy. Pupils reported the Practitioner's behaviour management approach was only temporarily effective. Inappropriate behaviour could consume the Practitioner's attention and leave pupils disappointed that their time with the Practitioner was disrupted. If left unaddressed, poor pupil behaviour could generate feelings of discomfort and frustration for the group and make it difficult for pupils to concentrate on their tasks.

Parent/carer engagement. As part of the recommendation process, the school provided a letter and hosted a parent/carer meeting about the intervention. The letter was drafted by the school and not approved by HeadStart, which could lead to inconsistent intervention information. Pupils reported that their

parents/carers did not engage with them about the intervention.

Working with schools. The school lead felt well informed by the Youth Practitioner about the intervention. Pupils reported that some teachers did not value non-academic activities and were negative about their involvement in the intervention or made it difficult for them to leave class early to attend sessions.

The school lead would have liked more notice from the Practitioner about the project requirements to better support activities, such as the assembly. With more notice they could have minimised disruption to regular lessons.

Pupil outcomes. Pupils and school staff attributed participation in the intervention to increasing pupil confidence, and/or improved communication and social skills. The school lead would welcome formal feedback about pupil progress and outcomes as a result of the intervention.

Making use of the findings

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

- The recommendation process: promoting self-recommendation; ensuring pupils can opt-out; and considering the group dynamic.
- Working with schools: aligning social action projects to the school ethos while retaining pupil choice; and engaging whole school staff understanding and support.
- Pupil differentiation: meeting pupil needs in a group setting.
- Positive pupil behaviour management.
- Supporting parent/carer communication and engagement with the intervention.
- Pupil outcomes: supporting pupils, school and parent/carer engagement of pupil learning and outcomes.

Our learning

The research suggested areas for learning and improving how Supported Volunteering (Team Social Action) is delivered. Headstart Newham is committed to learn and refine the SV/TSA 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"> • Recommendation forms and the target population criteria were not provided to school ahead of pupil recruitment. • Pupil self-recommendation was not promoted. • The importance of assessing the group dynamic at recruitment stage. • 1:1s did not provide clear expectations of the commitment and engagement required by pupils, an explicit opt-out opportunity, nor information on why the pupil had been selected. 	<p>What we have done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendation form has been revised and the target population criteria are clearly defined. Each school has received whole school training and support to identify target population pupils. • Recommendation forms must be completed and submitted before 1:1s are done. • Pupil self-recommendation is encouraged by Youth Practitioners. • The recommendation forms are on the HeadStart Newham website. <p>We are working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of how 1:1s are done to ensure that all young people get the same information about the intervention, and to enable pupil choice in deciding to take part. • An introductory TSA taster session for all recommended pupils. Where possible, we do this before 1:1s so that pupils can make an informed choice to take part.
<p>Working with schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning social action topics with existing school affiliated organisations or ongoing projects, whilst retaining pupil choice and HeadStart co-production ethos. • Engaging and encouraging whole school staff to show support of pupils on the intervention e.g. letting pupils leave class early, providing positive reinforcement. • Communicating pupil progress and outcomes with the school. 	<p>What we have done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have tried to ensure the project pupils choose is supported by the school by having an explicit sign off point. Where this has happened, it has been positive to the progression and timeliness of the project. • Introduced pre and post intervention surveys to quantitatively evaluate progress of pupils across key outcome measures. This information is reported back to schools and can be used to inform future support for pupils. <p>We are working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing partnerships with community and voluntary sector organisations in Newham to partner and support social action projects. • The whole school work will continue to support staff understanding of targeted interventions and the importance of supporting pupils wellbeing • We are developing an assembly to share the TSA project with the wider school community.

Our learning	HeadStart Newham's response
<p>Pupil differentiation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils had different levels of need which may need to be considered by Youth Practitioners, particularly for task allocation and celebrating achievements. 	<p>What we have done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run best practice workshops for Practitioners to share what works. • Our resilience training leads have run Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) workshops to support Practitioner understanding of SEND and how to best work with all pupils. <p>We are working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to increase 1:1 contact with young people, outside of the group session, to ensure pupil needs are met. • Embedding differentiation into every session plan.
<p>Behaviour management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to manage difficult pupil behaviour in a challenging group dynamic, and enabling pupils to resolve minor conflict themselves. • Managing expectations of school staff, agreeing behaviour management approach and process for reporting misbehaviour. Ways to align behaviour management approach with school policy. 	<p>What we have done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our resilience training leads have run training on behaviour management. The aim of this training was 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 school interventions. • We have tried to work more closely with the school contact to report project progress, including behaviour incidents where appropriate. <p>We are working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing Professional Development to support learning and sharing best practice around behaviour management
<p>Ending the intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting pupils through the end of the intervention and ensuring pupils receive exit 1:1s. 	<p>What we have done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit 1:1s are now standard practice to discuss pupil progress and next steps. <p>We are working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building in a final group reflective session to support young people to identify their own learning and facilitate a good ending.
<p>Communicating with parents/carers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing consistent information to parents. • Engaging parents on the aims and benefits of the intervention, and how to further support the young person's learning. 	<p>What we have done:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed a parent/carer pack which provides information about HeadStart, TSA and how taking part may benefit young people. <p>We are working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sending postcards home at intervals across the intervention to report pupil progress to parents/carers • Practitioner presence at school Parents' Evenings in schools to promote TSA and Headstart to parents/carers.

Main report

Background

HeadStart is a preventative early help service that promotes the resilience and wellbeing of 10-16 year olds with emerging mental health difficulties. Supported Volunteering (SV) (subsequently named Team Social Action, TSA) is a targeted intervention delivered by HeadStart Newham in secondary schools. This qualitative research study was commissioned to seek feedback from key stakeholders about SV at the end of the first year of programme delivery.

Supported Volunteering (Team Social Action)

Supported Volunteering (Team Social Action) is a targeted intervention developed by HeadStart Newham and Groundwork London, and delivered as part of the Headstart Newham programme. A HeadStart Youth Practitioner supports a group of young people to develop and implement a social action project.

Recruitment to intervention

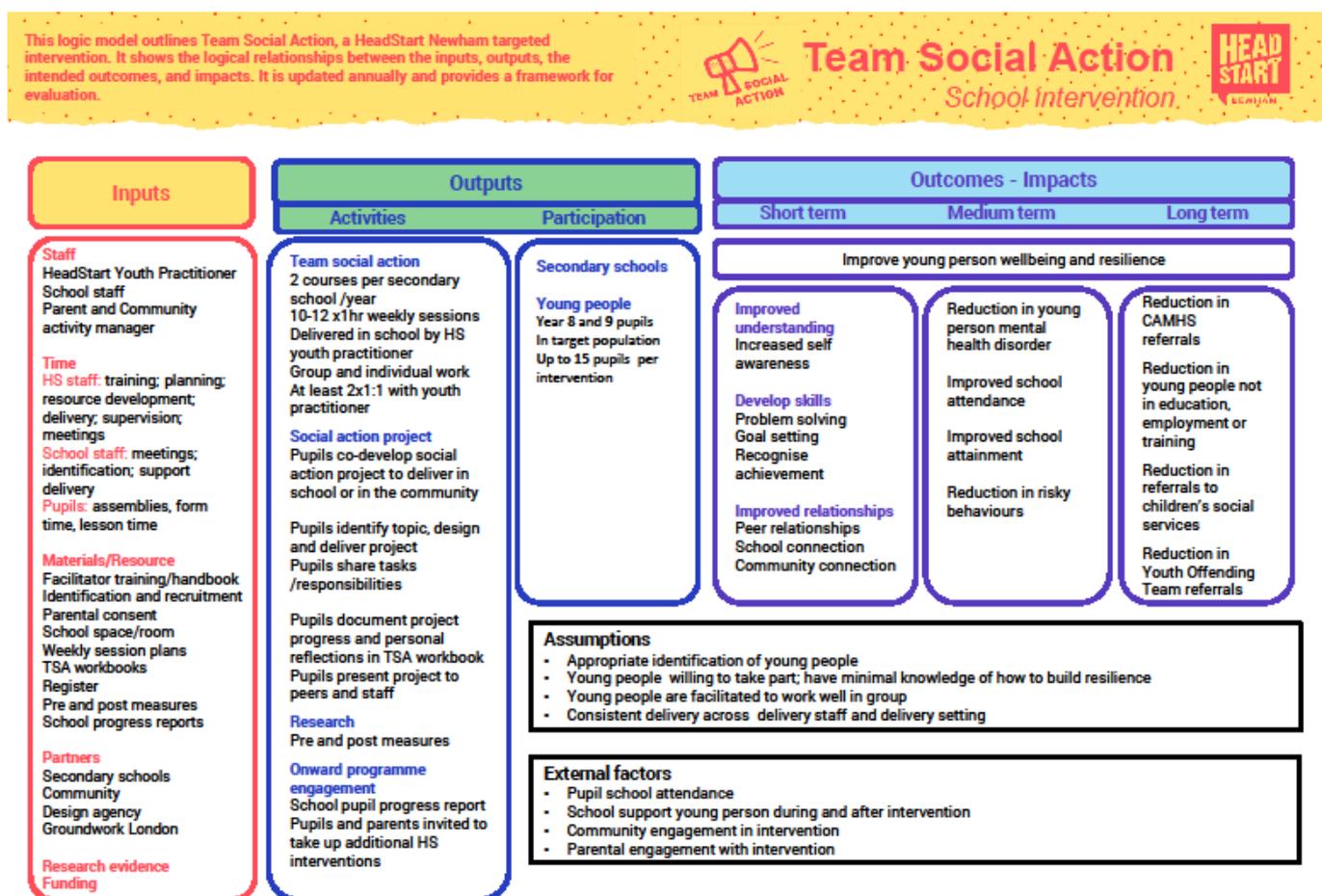
Pupils can be recommended to the intervention by a professional (such as a teacher) or they can self-recommend. To take part, young people must attend a Headstart-assigned school, be in Year 8 or 9, and have at least one indicator of emerging mental health difficulty (a mild or moderate emotional, behavioural, attention, or relationship difficulty) as assessed by the professional recommending or the pupil themselves. Pupils under the care of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are excluded. Following receipt of a recommendation form, a Youth Practitioner has a 1:1 discussion with the young person to check they meet the inclusion criteria, explain the intervention and confirm they would like to take part.

The intervention

The intervention involves a group of young people attending between 10-12 weekly sessions, facilitated by a HeadStart Youth Practitioner at their school. Sessions may take place during or after school. Pupils identify a topic and co-develop a social action project to be delivered in school or in the community. The sessions entail both individual and group activities. Pupils are assigned specific tasks and responsibilities. Pupils design, develop and deliver the project as a group. At the end of the intervention, the group present their project and achievements to peers and school staff, where possible.

SV aims to improve young people's wellbeing and resilience, increase their self-awareness, develop skills such as problem solving and goal setting, and support positive relationships with peers, school and/or the community. The logic model below (Figure 1) outlines the intervention selection, activities and intended outcomes and longer-term impact.

Figure 1. Supported Volunteering (Team Social Action) logic model



Study aims

During the first year of HeadStart, Supported Volunteering (SV) was delivered in eight Newham secondary schools, 142 pupils took part and 36% of these pupils completed the intervention.

The aim of this study was to provide a qualitative assessment of the experiences of SV, as perceived by young people, school staff, and Youth Practitioners.

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

1. Pupil experience of the journey through the intervention, 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. Experienced researchers facilitated:

- one focus group with pupils ($n=4$) that had taken part in SV in one secondary school;
- one focus group with HeadStart Youth Practitioners and an interview with a Senior Youth Practitioner who delivered SV; and
- one interview with a member of school staff with pastoral responsibility.

Focus groups allowed for narratives, views and experiences to be discussed, areas of consensus

and differences of the intervention to be explored, and the opportunity to generate suggestions for service delivery, based on participant experiences.

Topic guides were agreed with HeadStart Newham. 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 a small sample of participating pupils from one secondary school. The findings should therefore be considered with caution. A larger sample was not possible due to logistical challenges.

The school supported the study by arranging focus group logistics, including acting as the gate keeper to recruitment, ensuring a diversity of pupils were included and that pupils were willing to participate. The researcher explained the study and sought consent to participation directly before each focus group.

Analysis

Each research encounter was audio recorded, with participant consent. A thematic approach to analysing qualitative data, known as Framework, was used. 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 cases (looking at what different groups said on the same issue) and within cases (looking at how a group's opinions on one topic relate to their

views on another). The analysis was fully documented and conclusions could be linked back to the original source data.

Findings

Pupils, school staff and Youth Practitioners were asked to reflect on their experience of Supported Volunteering/Team Social Action. The findings are discussed below, and divided into 'what worked well' and 'what did not work'.

Recommendation to Supported Volunteering

What worked well

A systematic approach. Pupils that took part in this study were all recommended by a professional (e.g. by a teacher). The school staff explained how the school took a systematic approach to pupil recommendations, they specifically:

- reviewed pupil records and identified those where concerns had already been raised, such as behavioural difficulties, or struggling to settle in class;
- consulted pupil support mentors, as they were most familiar with individual pupil needs; and,
- considered the overall group dynamic when recommending individual pupils to the intervention.

Parental engagement. Schools sought parental consent as part of their recommendation process. For instance, the school sent a letter home about the intervention and invited parents to a meeting to hear more about the intervention.

What did not work

Communication about HeadStart/intervention. The parent letter was drafted by the school and not issued or approved by HeadStart. This could lead

to sharing incorrect or inconsistent information about the intervention.

Recommendation forms. School staff were not given the intervention recommendation form, which outlines the target population criteria. On reflection, their recommendations may have been different had they had the criteria. This implies some pupils they recommended may not have been in the target population. This was echoed by Youth Practitioners, who suspected that some participating pupils may not have had emerging mental health difficulties. It is not clear from the data whether pupils had a higher or lower level of need, or whether they may have benefitted from an intervention not specifically targeted for young people with emerging mental health difficulties.

1:1s and pupil choice

What worked well

Youth Practitioner approach. Following recommendation each pupil attended a 1:1 with a Youth Practitioner. Pupils liked that the Practitioner was attentive, and spent time initiating a trusting relationship with each individual. The Practitioner's approach to 1:1 discussions helped pupils to feel involved in the decision to progress onto the intervention.

Pupil confidentiality. Pupils appreciated the opportunity to talk in confidence, and described 1:1s as a 'private meeting'.

Pupil understanding of intervention. The 1:1 gave pupils a better understanding of the intervention, and what to expect from participation. For example, the Practitioner welcomed questions, which encouraged pupils to ask how the intervention would benefit them.

Initiating the Practitioner-pupil relationship. 1:1s provided the Youth Practitioner an opportunity to get to know each pupil before the intervention

started. Practitioners felt this was important for assessing pupil suitability to the intervention, and considering potential group dynamics.

"Being able to drill down and really peel off the layers, that only really happens in 1:1s"
HeadStart Youth Practitioner

What did not work

Pupil choice. Pupils felt they were not given an explicit choice as to whether they wanted to take part, but rather felt expected to participate by the school and the Youth Practitioner. Pupils reported that the school did not consult them about being recommended to the intervention. Pupils described how they were told they had been selected to take part in SV. Practitioners discussed next steps with pupils during 1:1s, yet pupils sensed there was no alternative to participation. Furthermore, Practitioners reported that there were pupils who they believed attended sessions because they felt they were expected to.

In contrast, school staff described how pupils were given a choice. School staff explained that some pupils chose not to take part or to leave the intervention early.

After the 1:1, pupils noted that they remained unclear as to why they had been recommended by teachers to participate.

Managing pupil expectations. The requirement to engage with the project throughout SV may not have been clearly communicated to pupils. Pupils and Youth Practitioners reported that there were pupils who seemed to have little interest in the project. These pupils did not seem to be committed to contributing to project tasks, and were disruptive to the group. Practitioners suspected these pupils attended SV either due to a sense of expectation, or as a means to miss regular lessons. Practitioners speculated that

pupils who self-recommend may be more interested in the intervention itself, and therefore suggested prioritising self-recommendations in the future.

1:1s felt rushed. Practitioners felt the 1:1s were rushed, due to Practitioner capacity and pupil availability. Pupils, however, felt they had sufficient time for their 1:1 and did not report feeling rushed.

Pupil motivations. Pupil motivations to take part included :

- to try something new;
- a curiosity about SV;
- to miss regular lesson time; and/or,
- to help improve their confidence and social skills.

There were also pupils who did not want to take part. One reason for choosing not to take part was due to the timing of the session meaning that they would miss their favourite lessons.

Choosing the Social Action Project

What worked well

Pupil voice. Pupils in this study chose their social action project democratically, through a group vote. They chose to deliver a project in school, to raise awareness of gender discrimination.

Achieving aims. Pupils felt they achieved the project aims. The group hosted an assembly for their peers where they showcased a video about gender discrimination. They also did a role play to highlight how negative gender stereotypes can be hurtful.

What did not work

Pupil choice. Youth Practitioners reported that there were schools with a preference to deliver a project related to existing voluntary or charitable affiliations, which were at odds with topics pupils wanted to work on. This resulted in groups,

across schools, experiencing delays to the project timetable, or the projects could not go ahead at all; leaving pupils and Practitioners feeling disappointed. In contrast, school staff in this study acknowledged the importance of pupil voice, and ensuring pupils are included in choosing the projects themselves.

Tight timelines. Youth Practitioners felt that designing and delivering a social action project in 10 to 12 weeks was overly ambitious, particularly as weekly sessions were typically under an hour. Practitioners felt that not delivering a project (due to time restrictions) can be detrimental to a positive pupil experience, and consequently pupil outcomes. Practitioners found that their session schedules did not always go to plan, for example, taking longer to choose a project than planned. During this initial roll out of the intervention, Practitioners learnt the importance of considering the tight timeline when choosing suitable projects. For future delivery, Youth Practitioners suggested discussing possible projects and timelines with school staff, before bringing ideas to pupils, to make the most of the short intervention window.

Weekly sessions

The combination of group work, building positive peer relationships, and the Youth Practitioner's approach facilitated a different experience for young people, compared with regular school classes. Pupils noted that SV sessions were interactive. Pupils stated a preference for this informal learning environment of the intervention.

What worked well

First impressions count. Pupils found the first session to be informative, interactive and fun. The Youth Practitioner managed pupil expectations by providing information on what

the intervention would entail, and what tasks the pupils might carry out.

Building peer relationships. Improving peer relationships is an intended outcome of SV. Pupils appreciated that the early weeks were focussed on building relationships through group games and activities, which facilitated engaging, collaborative sessions. Pupils reported that the games provided a means for less confident peers to talk to and get to know others.

Teamwork. Pupils described the teamwork element of SV as both fun and novel, and stated that it made them feel part of a shared group experience. Working as part of a team felt different to regular class. Pupils perceived academic teaching as somewhere they were instructed to carry out independent work at their desk.

Group work gave pupils the opportunity to interact with peers from different social circles, who they would not usually engage with. This included pupils who were described as 'popular'. This finding suggests that this targeted group intervention may facilitate building peer relationships across social circles, which in turn may challenge established peer structures. As this research comprises a small sample, further exploration about peer relationships in a larger study may be needed.

What did not work well

Managing the group dynamic. When disagreements occurred, pupils had expected the Youth Practitioner to support the group to find a compromise and resolution. Pupils reported that minor conflict between peers, for example task allocation, could escalate and result in inappropriate pupil behaviour, such as, name calling. Pupils stated that if poor behaviour was not addressed by the Practitioner, it could generate discomfort in the group.

School staff explained that they recommended pupils to pastoral interventions to help pupils build their self-esteem and confidence, and positively reinforce good behaviours. However, the school were worried that on SV there were pupils whose communication and social skills were inhibited by negative pupil peer relationships or group dynamics, and that some pupils could feel overshadowed. They noted that there were pupils who exited the intervention early because they felt sessions were dominated by more confident pupils. School staff stressed the importance of the Practitioner ensuring all pupils are included in the session. Furthermore, school staff in this study were not certain whether pupils had made positive progress through taking part in SV.

"A lot of the students overpowered some of the others, I think they felt even more pushed out and even more like they didn't have a voice...As a facilitator you have to find a way to say hold back now"

Behavioural specialist classroom practitioner

Task allocation. Pupils in this study felt there was a disparity in workload between young people in the group. They felt there were pupils who took on extra tasks to compensate for peers who showed little interest in contributing to the project. This caused frustration for pupils who felt allocation of tasks and responsibilities was unequal.

Pupils reported that some of their peers were unhappy with their role in the project. Additionally, school staff were concerned that timid pupils were not being included in decisions about task allocation, and that individual pupil interests were not taken into account. They felt that sought-after tasks were allocated to more confident pupils as they were able to speak up in a group setting, whereas quieter pupils may not. School staff felt this could inhibit pupil voice and potentially contribute to poor pupil behaviour.

School staff acknowledged the challenge of incorporating individual pupil needs in group sessions. Nonetheless, they stressed the importance of each pupil having a voice, particularly in decision-making processes.

“There needs to be a focus on individual students...I think some of the activities are quite forced. If they had more of a choice in what they want to do...it’s about finding what’s right for that student. I know it’s really difficult because they’ve got a whole class but they’re the kids that always tend to be overshadowed all the time”

School Behavioural Specialist Classroom Practitioner

Presenting the social action project. The pupils who took part in this study reported that SV involved presenting at a school assembly, about the project. Pupils felt expected to participate in the presentation. This could cause anxiety and make pupils feel they were being pushed too far out of their comfort zone. There were pupils who did not feel comfortable or confident in presenting to a large group of peers. As with task allocations, school staff felt the assembly was targeted towards more confident pupils, and did not account for those who may not enjoy this type of activity. They were concerned this aspect of the intervention could result in quiet pupils withdrawing further.

Pupils who completed the intervention were proud of themselves for overcoming their initial fears about the assembly. Ultimately, pupils felt it was a positive experience and achievement.

This finding highlights the skillset required by Youth Practitioners, to find a balance between encouraging pupils to overcome fears and push their own limits, and recognising and working with individual pupil boundaries.

Behaviour management. Pupils and school staff shared concerns and frustrations about pupil behaviour in the sessions. Pupils described

interruption to sessions by peers who they felt behaved inappropriately. This included laughing at or being rude to other pupils, and disruptive behaviour, such as throwing objects and punching the floor.

“If they’re going to make fun of other people there’s no point in them being here”
Young Person, SV participant

As a result, pupils could find it difficult to concentrate. They sensed the Youth Practitioner’s attention was directed toward managing behaviour rather than facilitating the group. This finding was confirmed by the Practitioners. Practitioner support was important to pupils, and pupils were disappointed that, as a result, project time with the Practitioner was reduced.

Pupils explained that they felt embarrassed to report poor behaviour during the intervention, which could mean that the Practitioner was not aware of the extent or frequency of poor behaviour.

Pupils wanted the Youth Practitioner to have a stricter approach to behaviour management. This seemed to be particularly relevant to the management of disagreements between pupils. Pupils reported that the Practitioner’s approach was temporarily effective, but the same pupils would misbehave again. According to pupils, allocating specific tasks seemed to temporarily improve individual pupil behaviour.

Pupils suggested a behaviour agreement including sanctions for poor behaviour could be implemented, as a group, at the beginning of the intervention. Furthermore, pupils suspected that smaller intervention groups or more Practitioners for larger groups may help to manage behaviour effectively.

School staff had anticipated that the Youth Practitioner's approach to behaviour management would be in line with school policy. They were concerned that a lenient approach may have been unhelpful for pupil progress.

"Whatever a teacher wouldn't allow them to get away with, they shouldn't be allowing, especially when there's no staff member around...they need to be really on it"

Behavioural Specialist Classroom Practitioner

School staff were frustrated that they were not informed about poor behaviour. This presented a barrier to them taking action where necessary, and providing relevant support to HeadStart staff. As a result, school staff were left with a negative impression of the HeadStart service.

These findings emphasise the importance of good behaviour management to positive group dynamics, individual pupil experience, and school trust in the service.

Parent engagement. Pupils reported that their parents did not discuss or engage with them about SV, during or after the intervention.

The value of Youth Practitioners

What worked well

Practitioner approach. Pupils in this study described a good relationship with their Youth Practitioner, which facilitated a positive overall experience of the intervention. Pupils believed that the Practitioner *'brought out the best'* in them.

The Practitioner's friendly, supportive approach felt different to the traditional teacher-pupil relationship. Pupils in this study described their Youth Practitioner as 'kind and funny'. They valued the Practitioner's time and attention, and the relationships they built with them, both as part of the group, and as individuals. Pupils felt

comfortable with, and supported by, the Practitioner. They appreciated their advice and active engagement and encouragement of pupil involvement. For example, one pupil reflected on how, prior to the intervention, they were rude to their peers, but believed they were now a nicer person. They felt this was, at least partly, due to the encouragement from the Practitioner to get involved during sessions which helped increase their confidence and communication skills.

"One of the pupils taking part used to be kind of rude and he turned her round to be more nice to other people – talking to her and getting her involved"

Young Person, SV participant

Pupils who had formed a positive, trusting relationship with the Practitioner were sad that the intervention had come to an end. They missed spending time with the Practitioner.

"Really formed friendship with [the Practitioner], so it's sad it's ending"

Young Person, SV participant

School staff highlighted the ability of the Youth Practitioner to build positive relationships with pupils.

"The students bonded really well with [Practitioner], [they're] really good at what [they] do"

Behavioural specialist classroom practitioner

These findings suggest that the Practitioner's ability to build rewarding relationships with young people was central to a positive intervention experience, and can contribute to positive outcomes.

What did not work

Exit 1:1s. It was not clear whether pupils in this intervention received individual exit 1:1s. However, school staff did report that an informal meeting with pupils was held by the Youth

Practitioner, where pupils received some feedback and were informed the intervention was over.

School staff engagement

School staff engagement with Supported Volunteering (SV) varied across schools, and across individual staff in schools.

What worked well

School lead understanding. Clear, informative communication by the Youth Practitioner facilitated school staff understanding of SV. School staff in this study reported that they were well informed of what the intervention entailed, and its potential benefits.

Pupils recalled staff who were supportive of their participation in SV. Specifically, one pupil was encouraged by a learning mentor, who wished them luck on the intervention.

Timing of the intervention. Youth Practitioners reported that delivery of sessions during school hours facilitated good attendance. According to school staff who took part in this study, the timing of the weekly sessions was easy to coordinate, and caused little disruption to the school schedule.

What did not work

School wide understanding of SV. According to pupils and Youth Practitioners, school staff not directly involved with HeadStart interventions did not have a good understanding of SV. There were staff that did not see the value of non-academic activities.

“One of the biggest values for kids is it’s an honest space, separate from school, but teachers haven’t really understood why we’re doing what we’re doing, and that’s damaging”

HeadStart Youth Practitioner

Pupils felt that some teachers were not supportive of their participation in the intervention. For example, pupils recalled one teacher who had a negative opinion of HeadStart, based on previous experience with what they perceived as a similar intervention. Pupils reported that teachers could be frustrated with pupils missing class to go to SV sessions. One teacher expressed concern that pupils’ school work would suffer, and that they would get bad grades or be put in a low set. This made pupils feel guilty about missing class time to attend.

This finding suggests that positive relationships with HeadStart school leads are imperative to a good understanding of the intervention, and contribute to a wider level of school staff engagement, such as, making pupils feel supported in taking part in the intervention.

Collaborative planning. School staff reported that communication between HeadStart and schools could have been better. Schools were keen to plan for the intervention in advance. School staff felt that there were intervention activities, such as the assembly, that were communicated at the last minute. This prohibited school staff from co-ordinating beforehand, and resulted in disruption to pupils (both on and outside of the intervention), staff, and scheduled lessons. School staff suggested that they should be engaged early on in the planning and scheduling of intervention sessions, and any additional activities, e.g. assemblies.

Youth Practitioners agreed that a joint approach to planning all intervention activity would be beneficial. Access to the school calendar could enable Practitioners to plan around busy school periods, such as exam time. Practitioners also recommended they be invited to initial meetings between Resilience Training Leads (RTLs) and school leads to contribute to the co-ordination and planning of the intervention.

Sharing pupil progress. Staff were not aware of how the intervention had benefitted the school or pupils overall, and expressed an interest in receiving evidence of progress of pupils.

Pupil outcomes

Pupils who took part in this study reflected on what they had gained from participation in SV. Pupils did not explicitly mention wellbeing or resilience, but described personal outcomes which could contribute to building resilience and positive wellbeing, which are described below.

What worked well

Confidence. Pupils reported an increase in confidence, which they attributed to taking part in SV. Pupils felt their confidence improved week on week as they formed relationships with their peers and the Youth Practitioner. Group work during sessions was also a facilitator to this.

Furthermore, pupils explained that overcoming anxiety and fears about the assembly, and explicitly recognising their achievement helped to boost their confidence.

"Because they bottled it [anxiety] up, but when they done it [assembly] they let it [anxiety] go, released it"

Young person, SV participant

School staff echoed this finding, stating that pupils who had completed the intervention displayed an increase in confidence – although they could not recall any specific examples of this.

Communication and peer relationships. Pupils felt they had improved their communication and social skills through SV. Pupils wanted to emulate Youth Practitioner behaviours such as attentiveness and inclusiveness. Working in groups helped pupils to become more aware of their behaviour and to better understand how to

show respect to others. They developed skills in listening, and positive engagement with peers.

Pupil's enhanced self-confidence and improved social skills could help them to interact more with peers in regular class, ask questions during lessons, and talk to other young people in the playground.

"When I was younger I used to be arrogant and selfish but when I came to the group I started talking to [pupil] and [pupil]"

Young person, SV participant

An interest in taking social action. In addition, pupils reported that they were now keen to be involved in other awareness campaigns.

What did not work

Confidence. Pupil confidence could be adversely affected in situations where they:

- did not feel they were part of the group;
- felt overwhelmed by others in the group, or that their opinion was not heard;
- were the recipient of poor pupil behaviour, or felt embarrassed about reporting behaviour;
- did not feel comfortable taking part in the final assembly; or,
- felt pushed out of their comfort zone.

In addition, when pupils' preferred project choice could not go ahead, pupils felt let down which could negatively affect their own confidence.

Conclusion

Pupils were generally positive about Supported Volunteering, whereas school staff expressed reservations about aspects of delivery. All participant groups highlighted areas for service improvement.

Pupils that completed the intervention, enjoyed it and generally felt they got something from taking part including:

- increased confidence; and,
- improved communication and social skills.

Pupils liked the informal learning approach, and that SV felt different to regular school lessons and teaching. Delivery by an external Youth Practitioner and group work facilitated this. In particular, pupils valued Youth Practitioners attentive, engaging, and encouraging approach.

Nonetheless, pupils and staff shared two main concerns about the intervention. Firstly, the disruption caused by pupil misbehaviour and how this was managed by the Practitioner. While pupils felt poor behaviour was an annoyance, school staff were concerned that poor behaviour could negatively affect pupil's experience of the intervention and their self-esteem. Secondly, an unequal distribution of workload among pupils, and feeling expected to participate in elements that pupils did not feel comfortable with, such as the assembly, could be stressful for pupils.

Considerations for service development

The HeadStart Newham service may wish to consider the following aspects of the intervention for future delivery:

- *Selecting pupils in the target population.* Recommendation forms and the HeadStart target population criteria were not provided to school staff; and pupil self-recommendation was not promoted.
- *1:1s and pupil choice.* Pupils wanted to know why they had been chosen to participate. Pupils suggested the need to provide clear expectations about the commitment and engagement required. Pupils did not recall having an explicit opportunity to opt-in or out.
- *Working with the school.* School staff and Practitioners suggested a need to align the SV project with organisations affiliated to school, while maintaining the pupil co-production ethos. To ensure pupils can deliver the project, the topic, activities and timeline should be agreed with the school,

early on. Pupils reported that teaching staff were not aware of SV which could make it difficult to leave class early to attend, or staff were negative about such interventions. Headstart may consider ways to encourage staff to support participating pupils.

- *Assessing the group dynamic.* Pupils did not feel that this particular group dynamic worked well. Practitioners proposed allowing time at the start of the intervention to observe and assess the group dynamic, and pupil commitment to the project.
- *Pupil differentiation.* The findings suggest that pupils had different levels of need. Headstart may wish to consider accommodating pupils of differing abilities, readiness and interests, in particular for task allocation and celebrating achievements.
- *Behaviour management.* School staff expected behaviour management to be aligned to the school policy and misbehaviour to be reported to the school. Pupils suggested introducing a behaviour agreement at the start, while staff expected strategies to empower and support pupils to resolve minor disputes. Pupils also suggested increasing the ratio of facilitators to pupils.
- *Assessing pupil progress.* Schools wanted evidence of pupil progress and outcomes as a result of the intervention.
- *Ending the intervention.* Exit 1:1s can support a managed ending to the intervention and end to the Practitioner relationship.
- *Communicating with parents/carers.* The school drafted a parent/carer letter about the intervention. Pupils noted that their parents did not engage with them about SV. HeadStart may consider developing a letter to provide consistent messaging about the aims and benefits of the intervention, including how to support pupil learning.



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