

## Appendix 1

### Sustainability Planning Stakeholder Consultation Summary and Recommendations.

#### 1. Summary

The HeadStart sustainability consultation gave stakeholders, including (statutory) system leaders, an opportunity to consider the impact of HeadStart – including what, how, and if, it should be sustained.

The consultation pulled together views from around 50 community stakeholders, and individually from 54 children and young people and 34 parent/carers, about the value of the HeadStart Community Offer to them and the impact of activities they had been involved in.

##### 1.1. The value of HeadStart

- **Consultation findings clearly indicate that participation in all elements of the community offer has led to an increase in social and emotional skills in children, young people and parent/carers; a greater sense of community ‘belonging’; and increased connectivity of community members to support and other resources.**
- Whilst this consultation is a snap shot in time and, of course, not an academic research evaluation, the *majority* of observations and individually reported changes in thoughts, feelings and behaviours attributed to HeadStart activity which can be directly mapped against domains of measurable social and emotional skills (see p. 21). This suggests a significant change in what are sometimes referred to as ‘soft skills’, and community resilience, both of which have a highly evidenced association with improved outcomes in adulthood, such as stable employment, physical and mental health, and well-being. ([Education Endowment Fund, 2013](#)).
- Added to this, the evidence from the recent national prevalence survey ([NHSE 2018](#)) of children’s mental health identifies one in eight 5-19 year olds have at least one mental disorder; plus a range of family characteristics associated with an increased likelihood of mental disorder.

This supports the intuitive and anecdotal feedback from stakeholders that **community based, easily accessible and culturally appropriate initiatives provided by HeadStart are linking children and parents at risk of, and already experiencing, poor mental health and other problems in to local enabling, activity-based resources.** The feedback of stakeholders and the direct feedback from children and parent/carers families gathered through this consultation confirms this.

## 1.2. Preparing for 2020/21 in partnership

- Given the investment of £9.5m in to Wolverhampton, HeadStart has represented an incredible opportunity for Wolverhampton to ‘test and learn’ within the children’s system. The findings in this consultation about the value of the community offer point to an overwhelmingly positive story of much valued impact, by those participating and stakeholders close to activities and initiatives.
- System leads realise that the evaluation will provide ‘no magic answers’ given the complexity of the environments in which HeadStart activities take place – a straightforward causality between X intervention and Y outcome will not be possible to pin down.
- Without being close to the programme it is challenging to understand such a broad range of activity and interventions, plus the various delivery mechanisms and enablers such as Community Development. Without the time to understand more detail, despite the best efforts of the HeadStart team and service providers, system leads felt they had an unclear picture of the Community Offer, and no clear, overarching narrative about what it does, for who and how. It is not surprising therefore that they reported mixed views and uncertainties in relation to its value.

*‘The programme has been quite insular because it had to be separate enough to be able to ‘put a ring around it’ which is what Lottery wanted. I think this means there is less ownership of it though now which makes it hard to then think about sustainability when there’s no local funding available!’.*

- For some, the separate identity of HeadStart and the sense that it is happening ‘over there’ rather than as part of a ‘pathway’ or integrated service model has also meant a sense of disconnect between the programme and the services and targets they are responsible for.
- In terms of funding, system leaders are clear that it is extremely unlikely any core statutory health or Local Authority funding will be made available to sustain HeadStart activities given the current context of pressures on budgets.
- All of the above represents a risk in terms of sustainability planning and implementation. HeadStart is several years old and in its final phase, in a context of constant change in public sector policy. The challenge for the partnership to ensure that HeadStart in its phase three guise ‘ends well’; and that the learning and established brand and relationships lead to new models for services, ‘vehicles’ for voluntary and community sector delivery, and inform commissioning plans.

- This consultation was requested in order to aid system leaders and other stakeholders in transformation planning; and ensure that, in keeping with the commitment of the Partnership Board to participation, all stakeholders including children, young people and parents help to shape the plans with their feedback.
- There are numerous options identified within this consultation for sustaining activity and impact through other means, many put forward or agreed with by system leaders in the City, and there at least a year in which to achieve them.
- The consultation offers encouragement, as does the emerging evaluation findings, that HeadStart has successful models of provision and significant learning to contribute to an integrated children's system in the future. With the right Sustainability Plan in place and an enthused and strong leadership, HeadStart can leave a positive legacy for the children and young people of Wolverhampton.

## 2. Summary of Recommendations

- 2.1. Engage system leads and stakeholders in a Sustainability Plan which more closely aligns HeadStart activity with broader strategic priorities for the children's system
- 2.2. Gain a clearer understanding of the impact of HeadStart on the broader system
- 2.3. Re-frame community provision in relation to higher levels of need and system integration
- 2.4. Sustain the contribution of the Voluntary and Community Sector within an integrated children's system
- 2.5. Strengthen and embed participation
- 2.6. Explore the potential of the HeadStart Brand
- 2.7. Schools – prepare to sustain momentum
- 2.8. Package learning from HeadStart to inform broader children's system planning and practice