

HeadStart Middlesbrough Update

HeadStarters Conference



Giving all Middlesbrough's children and young people the necessary support to build resilience and achieve good emotional health



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HeadStarters Conference

On the 26th of June, HeadStart Mhosted their second HeadStarters Conference. This year's conference was held at Teesside University's Curve building to allow for an increase in the amount of HeadStarters from 80 to 541 since the last conference.

What are HeadStarters?

There are currently 541 HeadStarters across 36 primary and secondary schools in Middlesbrough. The HeadStarters are the mental health and wellbeing champions who've taken part in the HeadStarters Educational Training Pathway from Bronze Award up to Gold. The Bronze Award is 15 + learning hours of introductory activities and lessons on mental health and wellbeing ranging from building resilience, developing different coping strategies, dealing with change and the links between physical and mental health. The Silver Award is a community project planned and delivered by the HeadStarters to benefit the wellbeing of other people in school or the wider community, peer mentoring and community reporter training. The Gold Award is the Peer Education element of the pathway, where the HeadStarters pass their learning onto a new group of students.

Why?

The conference was a day of celebration for the HeadStarters for the work they've done this academic year with HeadStart, to promote inter-school relationships, peer education and team work as well as being another chance to improve overall mental health awareness and understanding for staff and students alike. They were able to attend workshops around topics such as how creativity impacts our mental health, the effects of bullying, transition (delivered by our Year 7 Outwood Ormesby HeadStarters), positive relationships and the effect of balanced diets on wellbeing.



HeadStarters training pathway is accessible to all children and young people within Middlesbrough. Topics included in the pathway are friendships, understanding moods, emotional and feelings, stress and how to become more resilient. Work is delivered in a fun, engaging and creative way allowing children and young people to feel safe exploring their thoughts and feelings.

Morning The Mayor

168 HeadStarters from 13 Middlesbrough primary and secondary attended the HeadStarters Conference, over double the attendance of last year's event, with their respective HeadStart School Leads. The attendees were greeted by three major guest speakers to open the conference in Teesside University Student Union. ACTES Operation Director and Chair of the HeadStart Board, Paul Wales, opened the conference by explaining the HeadStart programme and the entirety of the HeadStart offer available to all Middlesbrough schools, while also speaking about how this will now be available in colleges and sixth forms from next year.



Edward Kunonga, the Joint Director of Public Health South Tees, then explained how the work the HeadStarters are doing in their schools and wider community is complementing the work of the Public Health South Tees team. Edward said "You are delivering public health in the real world. I'm really counting on you to do the best you can to support your friends and family and to use everything you have learnt to help people have good emotional health. Without you we can't achieve better outcomes for the people of Middlesbrough".

Finally, the newly elected Mayor of Middlesbrough, Andy Preston joined our HeadStarters for a Q+A around what the role of a mayor is and to speak about the importance of the HeadStart programme to Middlesbrough and his vision for the town. Mayor Preston finished his speech by saying "Well done HeadStarters, well done everyone here, keep working hard and make us the best town in the world".

We'd like to thank Paul, Edward and Mayor Preston for speaking at the HeadStarters Conference and for making our HeadStarters aware that their work and achievements are so appreciated and crucial to the future of the town.



Wonderful Workshops

After the opening speeches, the HeadStarters were separated into 11 pre-determined groups for their day of workshops. These groups were inter-school to promote peer relationships, to allow the HeadStarters to share experiences with each other and to allow our secondary school HeadStarters to act as peer mentors for our primary school HeadStarters. Each group took part in 6, 45 minute long workshops throughout the day with 13 workshops on offer, all centred around mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Drama

Outwood Academy Ormesby's Head of Creative Arts, Kate Mitchell, led a drama based workshop to explore issues within school that could affect student's mental health. Issues such as bullying and peer pressure were looked at by students, who were able to create and perform a short performance on their chosen issue.



Transition

Three of Outwood Academy Ormesby's Year 7 HeadStarters developed and delivered a workshop around transitioning from primary school to secondary school. Isobel, Poppy and Sam looked at some common secondary school myths, the benefits of moving to "big school" and took questions about life as a Year 7.

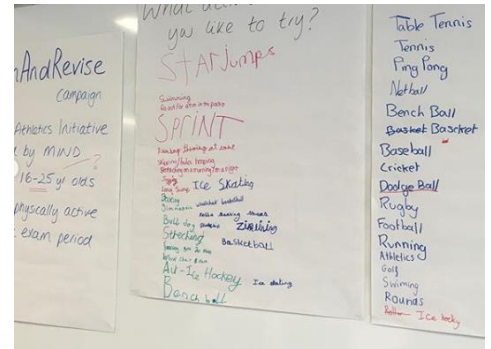


Mindfulness

HeadStart School Development Officer and resident yogi Nicola Hunt offered her expertise to put on a mindfulness workshop for the HeadStarters. Nicola took her groups through relaxation exercises, yoga postures and mindfulness techniques that students could take away to help support their own emotional health.

Physical Health

More Than A Run's Pamela Highfield promoted the benefits of physical activity and the links between physical health and mental health. The workshop was part information and part practical as Pamela took the HeadStarters through 15 minutes of physical activity so that the groups could see the short-term effects of exercise.



Food

HeadStarters were able to create their own fruit cocktail and taste some new foods with the team from Little Sprouts while looking at the impact food and the way we feel about food can affect our mood and feelings.



Art Therapy

Northern School of Art student Zoe Widdowfield used art and painting in her workshop to show the HeadStarters how creating and expressing yourself through art can help with relaxation and releasing emotions.

Finger Prints

HeadStarters in this workshop were able to create a key-ring of their finger print with the help of Teesside University Ambassadors. This activity was done in a relaxed, therapeutic environment to promote the benefits of discussion to emotional wellbeing while creating.



Family and Friendships

Inward Bound detailed how friends and families can affect mental health while investigating what a good friend is and how building self-esteem can benefit you.





Young Carers

The Junction helped our HeadStarters learn more about the concept of a young carer and how being in this position can impact somebody's mental health. The groups looked at how common being a young carer can be in Middlesbrough and learned about support and services they could access.

Fantastic Feedback

At the end of the HeadStarters Conference, each HeadStarter and their teachers were asked to fill out an evaluation form on the day. We've detailed some of this feedback below.

- 100% of the HeadStarters had a positive experience at the conference and rated the event.
- 100% of school staff who attended the conference said that they had benefited from the day, as well as their HeadStarters
- The most common positive from school staff was that integrating different schools into the same group had really benefited their HeadStarters in terms of building relationships. One teacher said in their evaluation form that "The HeadStarters have loved working alongside other HeadStarters and it has given them a real sense of community by showing how vast the range of HeadStarters are."
- This was echoed by the HeadStarters in their evaluation forms as "being able to make new friends" was one of the most common positives of the event.
- The most common positive from the HeadStarters was the wide range of workshops on offer throughout the day.

We also looked at the wider impact the HeadStarters Educational Pathway has had on the HeadStarters, as part of their evaluation form.

- In response to being asked "how has being a HeadStarter helped you?" the most common answers were "being able to help people, increasing mental health knowledge and "making me more confident to talk about things". Through the HeadStarters Voice workshop we were able to identify that the majority of the HeadStarters first chose to take part in the training to help people.
- One student said in their evaluation form "the things I've learnt in HeadStarters help me make better decisions every day" while another student said "it has given me some good coping strategies for when I'm struggling"
- School staff said that the HeadStarters pathway had increased overall awareness in school on mental health and emotional wellbeing, raised confidence of the HeadStarters and drastically increased the level of peer support in school.

- All school staff said that HeadStart Middlesbrough should continue its current work within school to “help children develop an holistic understanding of their wellbeing” and “to remove stigma attached to mental health”
- One teacher said in their evaluation form “The impact of HeadStart is invaluable” while another said that “HeadStart is essential as it creates a whole school key focus”

THANK YOU

The HeadStart team would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended the HeadStarters Conference and helped to make it such a special day.

Firstly, thank you to Teesside University, Adam, Gary, Luke and the Ambassadors for accommodating the conference and supporting us in organising and delivering the day.

Thank you to Paul Wales, Edward Kunonga and Mayor Preston for their insightful and much appreciated opening speeches.

Thank you to Outwood Ormesby, More Than A Run, Inward Bound, The Junction, Little Sprouts, Cleveland Police, Teesside University, Involve Tees Valley, Beth Bradshaw and Laurie Hunter, Nicola Hunt and Zoe Widdowfield for giving their time and expertise to deliver workshops.

Thank you to all of the school staff who organised travel, chaperoned and took part in the conference, as well as for all of the support they’ve given to the HeadStart programme within school every day.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to the HeadStarters for attending the conference and for all of the fantastic work they’ve achieved this year. We’re lucky to be able to work with you on every bit of learning, every community project and every school event.

We hope you all have a fantastic summer holiday and we will see you next year.

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