

Early Years Scouting Evaluation December 2019

Progress and Update Summary

Data collection progress

Child observations, child focus groups, adult focus groups – the visits have been completed/scheduled as follows:

Pilot phase:	Location:	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3
Scout led	Newcastle	7 th May 2019	10 th September 2019	26 th November 2019
Scout led	Southampton	12 th June 2019	25 th September 2019	11 th December 2019
Family led	Hull	5 th November 2019	17 th December 2019	28 th January 2020
Family led	Skipton	9 th November 2019	7 th December 2019	18 th January 2020
Partner led	Liverpool	19 th November 2019	7 th January 2020	11 th Feb 2020
Partner led	Exeter	12 th December 2019	Combined with Day 1	3 rd February 2020

Senior leadership/Group leadership interviews: Now that we have been able to visit all pilots and have an appreciation of the way each operates we have scheduled the individual interviews. These are underway and the majority will be completed before 3rd January 2020.

Monitoring data: Phase one data (summer term) has been analysed and reported on (July 2019). Phase 2 and 3 data, up to December 2019, will be analysed in January 2020 and will be reported back in the final report.

Initial thoughts and emerging areas for consideration

(NB As data collection is still ongoing these are only intended as indication of emerging thoughts, issues and considerations. Once all data collection is complete we will be able to frame these more comprehensively and with greater confidence to their veracity. It should also be noted that visits were occurring in the autumn and winter months which affected the range of activities it was possible for us to observe (eg outdoors).

Overall reflections: Pilots should be viewed in wider context of paucity of groups available for younger children, particularly less advantaged, since austerity and cuts in Sure Start Children’s Centres. The pilots are filling a gap in community provision for these communities which is acknowledged and valued locally. We found unanimous approval of the Hedgehogs initiative and all 3 models were seen to be sustainable, given time to embed. Uniform seen as very important in two models, encouraging strong group identity and links to wider Scouting movement. Worry about where children transition to if no local Beavers section. Hedgehog resource boxes and guidance viewed very positively, through more Scout focused information (to help adults as well as children) and more varied physical activity options were requested. Programme achieved high levels of child involvement but tension between strongly adult directed activity versus encouraging child initiative (good early years practice). Clear expression of need from volunteers for more early years focused training, designated Hedgehog Section support at district level and development of website with Hedgehog visibility and appropriate

content. Benefits of at least one Scout leader in delivery of sessions, working with another leader with early years experience (this balance of experience and expertise lacking in partner led model).

Scout led approach: Both pilots have received their three visits. They have both recruited quickly to full capacity. Although recruiting from less advantaged neighbourhoods, new reach to more disadvantaged and BME families communities is not strongly evident (even some resistance to this). Quality of programme offered is very high and children are highly involved and motivated. Positive impact on children (enhanced confidence, social skills and language) and volunteers (especially young leaders) is evident. Successful recruitment of Scouting leaders from local community evident.

Family led approach: Both pilots have received two visits. They have both recruited slowly and have not yet reached capacity. Although located within less advantaged neighbourhoods, new reach to more disadvantaged and BME families is strongly evident in one pilot site, but not in the other. It seems that local knowledge and existing relationships with local charities and early years organisations/schools is important in successful targeting for recruitment (problem of GDPR for obtaining information formally from these organisations). In one pilot requirement for parents to attend with child was seen as problematic and they had lost attendees. In the other, careful targeting and meeting on Saturday mornings had succeeded in sustaining the involvement. Both pilots relaxed age requirement to enable parents to attend with siblings. Quality of programme offered is high and children are highly involved and motivated. Positive impact on children (enhanced confidence, social skills and language) and also on parents is evident. Much potential in this model but tension in cultivating child independence when parent present versus pleasure and value of joint parent/child activity.

Partner led approach: Both pilots have now received their first visits (December 2019) but we still need further visits to make accurate judgements. They have both recruited from children in the setting so reach to less advantaged and BME communities is dependent on attendance. In both cases the sessions took place within the daily schedule of the early years setting. One pilot targeted children who they felt needed additional support, the other adopted a universal approach so all children could attend the group session on different days of the week. Although both used the Hedgehogs resources they were both far less identifiable as 'Scouts' sessions, particularly compared with the other two pilots (scout-lite, uniform not evident or valued, nothing reflecting Scouts visible other than hedgehog logo, children not aware of Scouts connection). From our initial visits we have some emerging queries as to how the model can engage the children (and parents) in the broader Scouting movement (rather than merely completing Scout written activities in their usual early years environment); and how the Scouts could implement and oversee monitoring and QA processes, particularly with regard to quality early years best practice, when working with a partner organisation. Positive impact of group sessions on children (enhanced confidence, social skills and language) was identified by session leaders. Little involvement of, and impact on, parents evident.

Chris Pascal, Tony Bertram and Sean Delaney: 19th December 2019.