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RESuLT Evaluation Summary

Background

RESuLT (which represents Residential and Social Learning Theory) is a team-based training programme for children's homes which has been developed by the National Implementation Service (NIS) based at the South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, in consultation with the children's residential care sector. The training programme spans 12 weeks and has been developed as a 'whole home' course attended by all staff in a children's home.

Funding was obtained by the NIS to implement the RESuLT training in six new sites between September and December 2015. Additional funding was sought from the Department for Education through the Social Care Innovation Programme to evaluate the training. The evaluation was undertaken by the University of Bristol, Loughborough University and Ipsos MORI between May 2015 and May 2016.

Aim

This 9-month evaluation aimed to understand whether the RESuLT training helps staff to develop their practice and whether this promotes positive behaviour and relationships with and between young people in residential homes. The primary outcome for the study concerned improved confidence, skills and knowledge of the staff teams in the residential homes.

Evaluation

The evaluation was carried out in six Intervention Homes (homes which were undertaking the training) in six locations and in four Comparison Homes (homes where the training was not taking place) in four of these local authorities.

A mixed methods approach was adopted and entailed the collection of quantitative data from the 82 staff who participated in the training. This included: staff experiences at work; young people's characteristics and progress, and monthly aggregate data about the young people. Qualitative data was also collected through interviews with 42 staff members (including 6 heads of home) and 10 young people living in the Intervention Homes.

Findings

The overall attendance rate was 79% across all sessions. Feedback from the training sessions was very positive with over 85% of respondents indicating 'very much' or 'pretty much' for all of the elements on the overall course feedback form. The most positively rated elements of the training were: 'I learned how to 'model' behaviour in how I act'; 'The facilitators recognised the challenges of working in children's homes'; 'Group discussions focused on noticing the positives in our young people'; 'I learned how to use positive reinforcement'; 'I learned how brain

development can impact in children and young people's development and emotional and relational responses' and 'I learned the importance of defining successful behaviours'. Staff appreciated being able to link the learning during sessions to their work with individual young people when carrying out the home tasks that were set for them each week.

Participant completion of a Staff at Work questionnaire in their first and last training sessions showed small improvements against nearly all 22 elements measured, especially in relation to quality of work, communication and motivation. In particular, the following 'items' on the Staff at Work questionnaire showed small but statistically significant improvements: 'I feel supported at work'; 'My managers in the home notice when I do things well; I feel valued at work'; 'I can tell that my co-workers respect me'; 'I feel that my co-workers and I work well together'; 'My colleagues and I have similar ways of working with the young people we look after'; 'There is space in team meetings to agree strategies for working with the young people we are looking after'; 'The objectives of my work are clear to me'; 'I understand how all our team works and fits together'.

We had limited data on individual young people (25 prior to the training and 17 afterwards) to gauge whether any improvements in outcomes had occurred. There were some signs of better improvements for the Intervention Homes group but these were not statistically significant.

We also gathered from heads of homes aggregate monthly data for all residents. This indicated fewer problems in residents' behaviour in Intervention Homes throughout the study period, however, we did not find improved behaviours in the Intervention Homes compared with the Comparisons as the training progressed.

Findings from qualitative interviews with staff and young people in Intervention Homes indicated that the training had made a positive difference to practice and the experience of working and living in the homes.

Recommendations

Training initiatives like RESuLT will succeed only in the context of a residential sector which has a clear purpose, is well-supported and not used merely for negative reasons with children who have not settled elsewhere. Our overall conclusion is that RESuLT training strikes the right chord, is suitable for the modern residential sector and should be encouraged and expanded with continuing evaluation.

For the NIS we recommend continued assessment and review of the training content to address future feedback. We also recommend clear communication strategies with new participants, at both a strategic and operational level to ensure consistent messages and information are conveyed to new intervention homes. Also we suggest that the NIS consider the development of a follow-up, booster training course for staff.

For future adopters of the RESuLT programme we recommend that at the outset of the introduction of the RESuLT training programme there is clear and consistent communication with staff in the Intervention Homes. To minimise disruption to the young people in the Intervention Homes they should ensure that adequate, planned staff cover is in place and that there should be some staff continuity each week. We also suggest that they consider the implication on the effectiveness of the training when 'directing' heads of homes to admit children to the Intervention Homes who are likely to have a major negative impact on the existing resident group.

The DFE's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme funded this project and its independent evaluation. Co-ordination of the evaluation was undertaken by the Rees Centre from the University of Oxford (www.reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk). A full copy of this report can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications