BARNARDO’S PATHS® PLUS PROGRAMME

Case study

About the project

**Funding awarded:** £1,456,584
**Duration of funding:** 4 years
**Number of beneficiaries:** 23,646 young people aged 8 to 11
**Areas of delivery:** Bridgend, Cardiff, Glasgow, Greater Belfast, Leicestershire, London, NI West, Renfrewshire and Swansea

Barnardo’s transforms the lives of the most vulnerable children across the UK through services, campaigning and research expertise. In Realising Ambition, it delivered PATHS® Plus, which combined a universal classroom-based programme (The PATHS® Programme for Schools) and a targeted small-group programme (Friendship Group). The PATHS® team trains and supports teachers to deliver the PATHS® programme, which focuses on social skills, emotion recognition and emotional well-being. Friendship Group was delivered by Barnardo’s staff to higher-risk children displaying emotional, behavioural or social problems.

Lessons learnt

Replicating programmes delivered simultaneously across all four UK nations requires robust management to embed them, ensure they are delivered with fidelity and to sustain them.

Barnardo’s NI managed and led the delivery of PATHS® Plus across the UK. Locally based staff were recruited and trained in each of the delivery locations. The programme managers worked hard to create a team identity and support system for the geographically dispersed team. This included the frequent use of emerging technologies such as video conferencing and cloud based file storage. Barnardo’s worked intensively to ensure that regional implementation differences did not undermine the fidelity of the programme and only permitted surface adaptations to delivery. The organisation's national reach meant it was well placed to facilitate UK wide delivery, however this was a new way of working. The NI team invested significant time in regular internal communications and in developing relationships with personnel in other regions to establish and embed PATHS® Plus.

PATHS® Plus has an evidence base and all of the key characteristics of a highly replicable and scaleable offer. While finding funders in the current climate remains challenging, a diverse income stream across the UK is being developed. This includes both public sector and philanthropic funding, directly commissioned contracts and individual school funding. Sustainability requires more than a strong programme, however, and Barnardo’s is currently building its organisational capacity to support PATHS® Plus as a national offer and to ensure that its leaders understand the programme's potential. Barnardo’s is combining the expertise of regional directors and delivery staff from the Realising Ambition replication areas along with its business development unit to develop a sustainability strategy for this programme.

Five key ingredients of successful replication

The Realising Ambition consortium has mapped each project’s journey against our five key ingredients of successful replication. The key points from this follow below. Find out more about these ingredients.

- **A tightly defined and replicable service:** PATHS® Plus is a well-defined and established programme with the materials, resources and evidence to support its consistent delivery.
That is effectively and faithfully delivered to those that need it: The core programme is applied universally across a whole school. Therefore it is not targeted at particular children. This replication, however, was delivered in areas with high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. A specific and highly monitored system was developed to ensure that PATHS® Plus was applied with fidelity in each delivery area. The additional component of Friendship Group was targeted for children who were of higher risk of social, emotional or behavioural problems. Evidence is used to learn and adapt, as required: Programme content has been developed through an on-going consultation and feedback process. Programme staff, teachers delivering PATHS® within classrooms and developers have worked together to refine the intervention to meet the needs of children across the UK. There is confidence that outcomes have improved: Overall the results from the outcomes analysis are positive, with small improvements identified across the majority of outcomes between pre- and post-test, which is positive considering the mostly universal and less intensive nature of the programme. The service is cost-beneficial and sustainable: Whilst further work is required on cost-benefit, Barnardo’s has analysed both start up and unit costs. It is also clear about the pricing point for PATHS® Plus and the number of schools required to establish dedicated support staff in a geographical area.

Outcomes for beneficiaries

Each organisation has sought to monitor the outcomes of children and young people prior to and after service delivery. Find out more about outcome measurement in Realising Ambition.

Due to the high number of programme recipients, 23,646, it was decided that a 25% subsample (5,912 young people) could be randomly selected to complete questionnaires on outcomes. Questionnaires were administered to 116% of this subsample of young people at the outset of service provision, and to 73% at the end of provision.

Analysis of these outcomes indicate small improvements in young people's mental well-being and reductions in experiences of bullying victimisation between pre- and post-test. In terms of mental well-being, young people's conduct difficulties, emotional problems, peer problems, and hyperactivity all reduced, as did the impact of those difficulties on their everyday lives. Results of PATHS® Plus also demonstrated small improvements in emotional regulation between pre- and post-tests.

Overall the results from this outcomes analysis are positive, with small but significant improvements identified across the majority of outcomes between pre- and post-test. Where improvements were not identified, scores tended to start and end in the lower range of risk, meaning that stability of these outcomes was desirable. Whilst the lack of a comparison group means that any stability or improvement in outcomes cannot directly be attributable to PATHS® Plus, such findings are positive considering the mostly universal and less intensive nature of the PATHS® Plus programme and its focus on social and emotional learning.

What next

Barnardo’s recognises the strategic value of PATHS® Plus for its focus on emotional resilience and well-being, and is committed to sustaining and growing the programme within its portfolio of well-evidenced programmes. Post-Realising Ambition, the organisation has achieved funding in some of replication sites and is introducing PATHS® Plus to new areas whilst continuing to explore funding opportunities through other streams.

Find out more

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