



# THE BRIDGE FOUNDATION

## STEPPING UP

Case study

### About the project

**Funding awarded:** £300,000

**Duration of funding:** 4 years

**Number of beneficiaries:** 311 young people aged 10 to 12

**Areas of delivery:** Bristol

[The Bridge Foundation](#) for Psychotherapy and the Arts (Bridge) has worked with children and parents in the most disadvantaged wards of Bristol for 20 years, providing support through qualified and experienced counsellors and therapists. In Realising Ambition, Bridge led [Stepping Up](#), a programme which engaged vulnerable children before, during and after their transition from primary to secondary school. Stepping Up provided children with combinations of services that were chosen specifically to meet their individual needs. The services were delivered by a partnership of five local organisations consisting of: [Creative Youth Network](#) organising arts-based group activities; [Empire Fighting Chance](#) teaching non-contact boxing; [Bristol Drugs Project](#) mentoring children affected by parental or sibling substance misuse; [Hawkspring](#) running an environmentally focused summer camp for children affected by parental or sibling substance misuse; and Bridge providing school-based counselling.

### Lessons learnt

**Stepping Up's delivery shows that it is difficult to replicate a programme that offers combinations of services that are chosen specifically to meet each child's interests and needs, meaning the service differs significantly from child to child. Successful replication depends on making all of the programme's component services replication ready and adapting them to new or local contexts.**

Given the specificity of the services offered in Stepping Up, it is unlikely that exactly the same selection will be replicated elsewhere. Additionally, schools tend to pick and choose which services they commission rather than purchase a pre-defined package. Realising Ambition has, however, helped each delivery organisation make its own component of Stepping Up ready for replication in new areas. Each organisation has tightened and refined its service and developed a clearer sense of the market for its individual offer. The organisations have also developed and strengthened their relationships with each other.

The partnership fully embraced Realising Ambition's learning focus and participated consistently in review and adaptation of services and management processes to improve delivery. This has developed the organisations' ability to work with local schools to identify and refer vulnerable children, share information and collaborate to achieve success for a child. They have also learned to appropriately measure and analyse outcomes. Each strengthened Stepping Up service is now ready to be replicated as an individual offer.

### 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:** The delivery organisations developed their service offer so that the programme as a whole was clearly defined. However, because of the specificity of the contribution



each partner has made, it is unlikely that replication in other areas will contain exactly the same selection of services. **That is effectively and faithfully delivered to those that need it:** The partnership developed clear processes to support schools to identify children that would benefit from Stepping Up. Each delivery organisation understands the importance of maintaining fidelity to the core aspects of their service so that outcomes may be measured, and is adopting this approach across other services they provide.



**Evidence is used to learn and adapt, as required:** The partnership consistently reviewed and learnt from its coordinated work and made adaptations to the content of the programme and the processes underpinning it as required. Each delivery organisation used evidence of outcomes to understand its own contribution to Stepping Up.



**There is confidence that outcomes have improved:** The programme creates improvements and stability both in young people's commitment to school and mental well-being.



**The service is cost-beneficial and sustainable:** The Stepping Up partnership has been dissolved as a formal entity as it is unlikely that schools will wish to purchase the service as a whole. Each partner is committed, however, to continuing to work together and to cross-referring young people as appropriate. Partners have agreed to collaborate formally when opportunities appear, either in the market or through grant funding.

## 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.**

Bridge delivered Stepping Up to 311 young people across primary and secondary schools in Bristol. Questionnaires were administered to 80% of beneficiaries at the outset of service provision and to 54% at the end of provision. Analysis of these outcomes indicate **improvements both in young people's commitment to school and mental well-being – particularly in relation to their conduct, emotions, and peer relationships, with the impact of their difficulties on everyday life also improving.** Programme level data suggests that **53% of participating children improved their commitment to school, 60% improved their self-reported mental well-being and 70% maintained stability in emotional difficulties scores.** Although the hyperactivity and pro-social behaviour of young people in receipt of Stepping Up remained stable, both outcomes began and ended in the normal range, meaning they had less room for improvement.

Improvements were seen in a number of outcomes, although these were more marked in some aspects of the programme. For example, **the young people involved with Empire Fighting Chance (Empire) reported improvement in relation to their school commitment, conduct difficulties and overall impact of difficulties;** **the young people involved with the Creative Youth Network reported improvement in their peer relationships;** and **those involved with Bridge and Empire demonstrated improvement in their emotional difficulties and significant improvement in their mental well-being.**

Whilst the lack of a comparison group means that outcomes cannot directly be attributable to Stepping Up, overall the results from this analysis are positive, with improvements and stability of outcomes identified between pre- and post-test. This is particularly positive considering the less intensive nature of most of Stepping Up's intervention components.

## What next

The five organisations responsible for delivering Stepping Up are committed to continuing to work with each other when opportunities allow. Bridge and Empire continue to co-deliver in Bristol schools focussing on working with children at risk of exclusion.

## Find out more



[www.bridgefoundation.org.uk](http://www.bridgefoundation.org.uk)  
[info@bridgefoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@bridgefoundation.org.uk)



[catch-22.org.uk/realising-ambition](http://catch-22.org.uk/realising-ambition)  
[realisingambition@catch-22.org.uk](mailto:realisingambition@catch-22.org.uk)



[dartington.org.uk](http://dartington.org.uk)  
[tim.hobbs@dartington.org.uk](mailto:tim.hobbs@dartington.org.uk)



[substance.net/case-studies/realisingambition](http://substance.net/case-studies/realisingambition)  
[neil@substance.net](mailto:neil@substance.net)



[youngfoundation.org/projects/realising-ambition](http://youngfoundation.org/projects/realising-ambition)  
[james.teasdale@youngfoundation.org](mailto:james.teasdale@youngfoundation.org)