

**Implementing Head, Heart, Hands:**  
**Evaluation of the implementation process of a  
demonstration programme  
to introduce social pedagogy into foster care  
in England and Scotland**

**Main Report**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Edition – November 2016**

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***Implementing Head, Heart, Hands: evaluation of the implementation process of a demonstration programme to introduce social pedagogy into foster care in England and Scotland.***

***Foreword from The Fostering Network***

*We are pleased to present one element of the independent evaluation into the Head, Heart, Hands programme. This report uses an implementation science methodology to explore the internal operational structure and approach taken throughout Head, Heart, Hands. This is the first of several reports and resources emanating from the programme, concluding with the full evaluation of the programme's impact on children, young people and foster carers in November 2016.*

*The Fostering Network welcomes this report and is proud to be adding significantly to the knowledgebase around implementing social pedagogy within UK foster care. The work of The Fostering Network, and of our delivery partners in the Head, Heart, Hands programme, has helped to increase understanding around leading and implementing innovation programmes, and paves the way for further important exploration of innovation within children's services and social care more widely. This report, and in particular its use of implementation science, helps highlight and synthesise key learnings for future programmes.*

*Deborah Ghate and Sam McDermid's report sets out who was involved in Head, Heart, Hands, what was done over the course of the programme and the role and journey of the national delivery partners and local fostering services who took part. It provides valuable learning, both for us, and for organisations in the wider sector, around what was done well and recommendations for areas to consider and strengthen in any future implementation programmes around social pedagogy or wider innovation.*

*In November 2016 the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University and the Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation will collaborate once again to publish the final report on the impact and outcomes of the Head, Heart, Hands programme for foster carers and the children and young people they care for. We look forward to receiving this final report and are hopeful that it will provide further learnings and recommendations for the sector and substantiate early signs of positive impacts across the programme.*

*We would like to take this opportunity to thank our independent evaluators, and all of our local and national delivery partners, for their dedication and hard work over the course of the Head, Heart, Hands programme.*

*Melissa Green, Director of Operations  
August 2016*

## Acknowledgements

This evaluation is the result of the hard work and assistance of many individuals, to whom we are extremely grateful. Many thanks to all those who made time to speak to the evaluation team, in spite of many competing demands, including local site staff, social pedagogues, funders and representatives from the central delivery partnership. Special thanks should go to the site project leads in for their help with arranging the local site visits and data collection.

We would also like to thank Melissa Green at The Fostering Network who has been unfailingly supportive and the central management team who have supported the evaluation throughout. We thank the Head, Heart, Hands site project leads for helpful comments on their site case studies, and also the members of the Social Pedagogy Consortium for their feedback on an earlier draft. Thanks also to Dez Holmes who acted as an independent reviewer for the first draft. As independent researchers, we take full and sole responsibility for the interpretations we have placed on what participants have told us.

All analysis is based on the empirical data and on a spread of views across the programme as a whole. In order to give a full account of this highly complex, challenging and ambitious programme we have taken care to protect all those who participated in the evaluation and who contributed their time, insights and honest reflections to this work. Where possible, only roles have been identified. The sites are not named in the main report analysis and are given pseudonyms in the implementation case studies (see separate Appendix)

Deborah Ghate and Sam McDermid  
August 2016

### ***To download further copies of the implementation main report, case studies or summary***

- This **Main Report** is available to download at the Colebrooke Centre website at [http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/Implementing\\_Head\\_Heart\\_Hands\\_Main\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/Implementing_Head_Heart_Hands_Main_Report.pdf)
- A **Summary of Key Findings** is available to download at [http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/Implementing\\_Head\\_Heart\\_Hands\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/Implementing_Head_Heart_Hands_Summary.pdf)
- The individual journeys of sites that participated in the programme are published as **Implementation Case Studies** in a separate Appendix to the main report: [http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/Implementing\\_Head\\_Heart\\_Hands\\_Case\\_Studies.pdf](http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/Implementing_Head_Heart_Hands_Case_Studies.pdf)
- **All documents** can also be retrieved from CCFR's Project website at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/ccfr/research/exploring/project---head-heart-hands.html>
- And on The Fostering Network's website for Head, Heart, Hands.

# PART ONE

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# Chapter 1 Setting the scene: Introduction and Background

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## In this chapter we:

- Introduce this report and the backdrop to the evaluation
- provide a brief introduction to the programme, including its purpose and structure
- give a brief overview of the broad discipline of social pedagogy and its recent development within the UK
- explain the background context and key design features of the implementation element of the national evaluation
- situate the evaluation within the emerging field of implementation science
- set out the structure of this report

## Introduction

**Head, Heart, Hands** was set up in 2012 as an ambitious ‘demonstration’ programme within foster care, directly involving both foster carers and staff in fostering services and agencies. Its stated overarching aim was to *‘develop a social pedagogic approach within UK foster care, thereby increasing the numbers of young people in foster care who achieve their potential and make a positive contribution to society’*. To achieve this, The Fostering Network identified the following objectives, see Box 1:

### Box 1: the objectives of Head, Heart, Hands

#### The objectives of Head Heart Hands

- To develop a professional, confident group of foster carers who will be able to demonstrate that by using a social pedagogic approach, they will develop the capacity to significantly improve the day to day lives of the children in their care.
- To develop social pedagogic characteristics in foster carers. Foster carers will have an integration of ‘head, hands and heart’ to develop strong relationships with the children they look after.
- To implement systemic change and a cultural shift which will support social pedagogic practice and recognise the central role of foster carers in shaping the lives of children within their care.
- To provide a platform for transformation of the role that foster carers play as part of the child’s network.

This report is the final report on the implementation element of the innovative Head, Heart, Hands programme led by The Fostering Network and co-funded<sup>1</sup> by a consortium of funders headed by the KMPG Foundation and seven local implementation sites who part-funded both direct and indirect costs of the programme from local budgets. A specialist ‘social

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Co-funded’ because the implementation sites themselves also part-funded both direct and indirect costs of the programme from local budgets.

pedagogy consortium' (hereafter, SPC) were contracted as delivery partner for the programme and supported sites and staff. This report is part of a suite of outputs produced by an independent evaluation consortium, and focuses in particular on how the programme was implemented, in other words, the process by which it was put into practice and policy. It does not deal in detail with the ultimate outcomes of the programme for foster carers or for children and young people in foster care as it was written some months before final data on outcomes for these groups were available; however the outcomes for children, foster carers, and for staff are explored in detail in other publications arising from the evaluation<sup>i</sup> and in a final report integrating key findings on impact and implementation available from October 2016<sup>ii</sup>. Data specifically on outcomes collected as part of the implementation evaluation are also not covered in this report, but are discussed in the integrated report.

This report describes and analyses the process of implementing Head, Heart, Hands over three years from autumn 2012 to winter 2015. It synthesises findings from three waves of data collection from the first, second and third years of the programme's operation, and is based on qualitative data collected in 132 mainly one-to-one interviews and in 24 focus groups. Detailed interim reports were written for internal stakeholders at the end of the first and second year of the programme focusing on 'real time' description and analysis of implementation progress, and making recommendations of relevance to the programme as it continued to evolve. The focus of this final report, by contrast, is on summarising the experience of implementation of the programme across the whole time period, and on lessons learned with the benefit of hindsight having reached the end of the programme. The report uses an '*implementation lens*' informed by theory and data collection frameworks based in implementation and improvement science to consider the whole implementation process from initial design and delivery to the impacts on professionals, teams, organisations, and on the wider system. This is discussed further below.

The report is structured in three parts. **Part One** (chapters 1-2) presents an overview of the central and overarching aspects of the programme. It explores factors that characterised the 'central programme' as a national endeavour, involving seven sites widely spread across England and Scotland, and draws out general messages relevant to understanding implementation of programmes of this kind in a broad range of real world children's services contexts as well as in fostering. **Part Two** (chapters 3-9) begins with an overview of the implementation journey at national and local level and then explores the learning from the ground up, in the local implementation sites. This part of the report references seven similarly structured **implementation case studies**, contained in a **separate Appendix**, one for each of the geographic sites that took part. In these case studies we highlight specific local context differences as well as exploring how local findings generalised across the programme and contributed to our understanding of the wider issues in implementing innovation. In **Part Three** (chapter 10) we review the overall messages and learning, and discuss the implications for future similar innovation efforts.

## A fluid approach, not a ‘set of practices’: the implications for evaluation

Although ‘programme’ is the term used by stakeholders in relation to Head, Heart, Hands, and we use this term throughout the report, Head, Heart, Hands was not in fact a programme as that term is typically used by intervention researchers. The term was not used in the sense in which it is more commonly understood in the field of child welfare, as an identifiable set of practices “*of known dimensions*”.<sup>iii</sup> The reasons for this were twofold.

First, as we explore in more detail below, social pedagogy is described by its exponents as an approach, a philosophy, and sometimes as a ‘way of thinking’ that *influences* the way people behave towards one another but does not *determine* it.

As one stakeholder described it:

*“Social pedagogy is an approach that uses methods chosen as a consequence of social pedagogical thought”* (SPC member)

### Box 2 What is Social Pedagogy? Definition by the Social Pedagogy Consortium

#### **What is Social Pedagogy?**

*“Social pedagogy was defined in the early nineteenth century as a field for theory, policy and practice. It is sometimes referred to as education in its broadest sense in that, unlike much formal education, it takes a holistic view, seeking to support physical, emotional, intellectual and social wellbeing, and to promote social agency and resilience. The phrase Head, Heart and Hands signifies this holistic approach. In public policy, social pedagogy refers to measures that take such a broadly educational approach to social issues. It is also an academic field in its own right, with its own theories as well as drawing on those from disciplines such as psychology and sociology.*

*Social pedagogy is a recognised profession in much of Europe, with social pedagogues working across a wide age range. The ethics of today’s social pedagogy are based in democratic and emancipatory values and it prizes opportunities for cooperation. Social pedagogues’ practice centres on building relationships often in the course of everyday activities, but also via creative and out-door pursuits. Reflection, leading to practical outcomes is seen as essential. The Head Heart and Hands programme set out to deliver models and theories that fostered reflection and would put social pedagogy principles into action”.*

**Social Pedagogy Consortium, 2016**

Throughout the evaluation, those formally trained in social pedagogy were strongly resistant to the idea that social pedagogy could be defined in practice except as a variable approach, dependent on context and on individuals, underpinned by certain core values about human relationships and their interface with care and development. See also Box 2 below:

Second, the programme itself was framed by the funders and the delivery partners as ‘exploratory’. By this, they meant that each local site would be encouraged to develop their own delivery ‘model’ for social pedagogy in fostering, unconstrained by central prescription about what form that should take. In this way, it was hoped, learning about a range of

different interpretations of how social pedagogy could be delivered on the ground in the specific setting of foster care would emerge. See Box 3.

**Box 3 Head, Heart, Hands and social pedagogy: Extract from the Evaluation Summary, 2013**

**Head Heart Hands and social pedagogy**

The Head, Heart, Hands programme refers to social pedagogy as a blend of academic knowledge and research (head), an understanding of emotions (heart), and practical skills and activity (hands) to help fostered children thrive. It puts foster carers at the heart of the child care team, and aims to empower them to help fostered children build relationships and make sense of their world in a way that leads to stability, better outcomes and long term wellbeing. At the same time the programme recognises that in order to develop a social pedagogic approach to foster care, changes are needed in the wider system that influences the way foster carers view and relate to their fostered children – both the immediate system of the fostering service and connected children’s services, and also the wider political and societal system.

Social pedagogy is an overarching framework for social care in many continental European and Scandinavian countries. However, the framework is socially constructed, reflecting the values of society, and therefore the Head, Heart, Hands programme and evaluation is exploring how the framework can be applied in the UK, rather than ‘importing’ a model of care.

**Evaluation Team, 2013**

Thus, Head, Heart, Hands, as a vehicle for introducing social pedagogy into foster care, was a ‘programme’ in the sense that there was a national management and support infrastructure created by the delivery partners. There was also a core package of resources (including human resources – the social pedagogues) provided by the funding and more or less consistently offered in each implementation site. However Head, Heart, Hands was not a ‘programme’ in the sense of there being a set of prescribed activities implemented with consistency across all sites. Although in practice, activities across sites shared similarities and there were some standardised elements, as we discuss later, there were also important variations in the way

each site used the resources provided. And although one of the products of Head, Heart, Hands was to introduce carers and fostering staff to a menu of methods and frameworks designed to promote social pedagogic thinking and influence practice, there was not agreed to exist (at least, by most of those deeply experienced in the professional discipline of social pedagogy) a clearly delineated set of methods or practices that characterise ‘social pedagogy in practice’. (There was however a helpful list of ‘characteristics of social pedagogic foster care’ provided in early proposal documentation that gives a high-level insight into what this might mean; see Appendix 1 to this report). The ‘practice’ of social pedagogy and how that might be defined in the course of normal ‘business as usual’ in fostering was, we were told, considered to remain undefined by many stakeholders throughout the programme, and remained so at its end.

One of the key learning points from the implementation evaluation concerned the challenges, both for the implementation of innovation itself, and for analysis and evaluation of innovation, of this position. Evaluators typically struggle with extremely fluid approaches and boundaries that cannot be located. Evaluation itself relies on 'observation', whether qualitative or quantitative (when it is usually called 'measurement'). To systematically observe something across multiple locations or iterations, evaluators generally want to be able to define what is being observed, and what is excluded. To use a tailoring analogy, it is not the fabric alone that makes the garment, but the precise way the fabric is draped, cut, and stitched. If the fabric is the values, philosophies and thinking style of social pedagogy, then how these are put together (the draping, cutting and stitching) forms the delivery in practice. Both are required to achieve the intended outcomes (to keep the wearer warm, dry, protected, etc). And to make more than a 'one-off' garment, we (using the practical lens of those interested in implementation) would argue both the fabric, and the method of making, must be carefully specified so that the effort can be repeated. We called this process of specification 'operationalising' the programme; see Box 4. This was an ongoing challenge in the context of a fluid and exploratory approach.

## Box 4 Why operationalisation is important – the view from implementation science

### Why operationalisation is important – the view from implementation science

The research evidence tells us that an essential part of putting a new approach into successful practice is to define and describe it<sup>ii</sup>. Indeed, it is not possible to put an innovation into practice in a purposeful and intentional way, or to test its claims to efficacy, unless implicit assumptions and underlying theories are articulated and made explicit.

Capturing the 'it' (in other words, describing what is 'it' that will be done that is different and likely to result in beneficial changes?) is often referred to as 'operationalising' the new idea, and this is generally agreed to be a pre-requisite for replication. Even in 'developmental' innovation, having an articulated operational model early on in the process, even if subject to ongoing review and refinement, is highly recommended.

Operationalising a new idea generally involves addressing three questions, about the 'why', the 'what' and the 'how' of the idea, as follows:

- *Why* is the approach expected to bring about the desired changes? (Articulating the theory)
- *What* is actually done as part of the approach? (Articulating the content)
- *How* is the approach delivered to beneficiaries in practice? (Articulating the process)

Answering these questions generally allows us to clarify a fourth question:

- What is *distinctive* about the innovation compared to usual/existing services (Articulating the 'added value' and why investment in the innovation is worthwhile)

Put together, these four elements can be built into a *theory of change*, which provides a road map for how an innovation is expected to achieve change for its ultimate beneficiaries. This road map is often summarised visually within a *logic model* that can be used to explain, in a concise form to the outside world, the key components of the innovation, and what it seeks to do.

© 2014 Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation, from the first interim report on the implementation of Head, Heart, Hands (Ghate, McDermid and Trivedi, 2014)

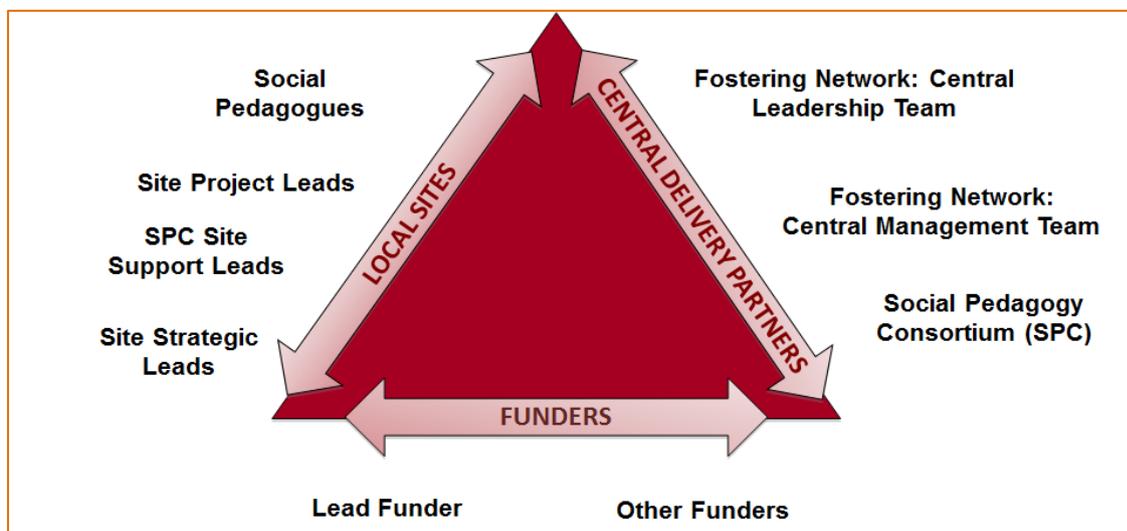
Over time, and partly to make our own job possible, the evaluation team attempted, through observation and questioning of stakeholders, to create a description of potential core components<sup>iv</sup> that could be said to constitute the essential features of the Head, Heart, Hands 'version' of social pedagogy for the purposes of this programme. This description is elaborated in Chapter 2. It is important to note that it has been done *post hoc* (at the end of the evaluation), rather than being a plan that informed the design and delivery of the programme itself.

## Social pedagogy in the UK

While social pedagogy is common across continental Europe, it is less well understood the UK. Interest has grown since the 1990s<sup>v</sup>. Since then, a number of authors have explored the potential contribution that social pedagogy could make to children’s services<sup>vi</sup>. While there have been grass-roots attempts to develop ‘practice groups’, the adoption of social pedagogy as an approach or as a profession in the UK remains fragmented limited to a number of isolated examples. There are a small number of academic courses now available. Some universities have started to include social pedagogy into social work training courses, and a smaller number have introduced degree and masters programmes on social pedagogy, alongside other complementary subjects. Some local authorities have started to introduce training programmes across different service areas. A Social Pedagogy Development Network<sup>vii</sup> has brought advocates for the approach together. As a parallel development to Head, Heart, Hands, a proposed Social Pedagogy Professional Association aims to support the recognition and quality assure social pedagogic practice in the UK. The evidence base on the impact of social pedagogy on children’s services in the UK remains in its infancy, and there is no evidence specifically relating to the use of social pedagogy in foster care (and see the Integrated Report<sup>i</sup> for further discussion of the evidence base for social pedagogy). Apart from a Department for Education-funded a pilot in 2010 to explore the feasibility of introducing social pedagogic principles to residential care<sup>viii</sup> which reported mixed results, the Head, Heart, Hands programme was the only significant practical attempt to introduce social pedagogy into services at a national level.

## Structure of the Programme – overview

Figure 1 Funding, leadership, management and delivery structure of Head, Heart, Hands

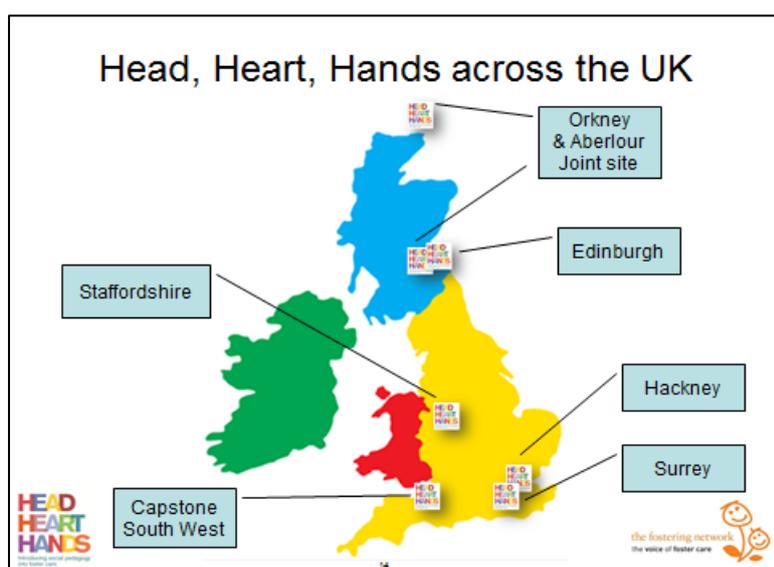


The Head, Heart, Hands programme was co-funded by a consortium of seven Philanthropic donors: KPMG Foundation, Comic Relief, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Man Charitable Trust, The John Ellerman Foundation, the Monument Trust and the Henry Smith Charity; (**the Funders**). Each contributed a portion of a £3.7 million grant over four years from 2012 to 2016. The funding consortium was very actively chaired by the KMPG Foundation, (the **lead funder**) who were also the originators of the idea for the programme and strong advocates for it. (Their representative was described by others as “*a passionate believer*” in social pedagogy). The lead funder, unusually for a programme of this sort, remained closely involved throughout, at times taking a virtually operational role, and also engaged in and separately funded a range of parallel activities connected with the development of activity in the sites and of social pedagogy as a profession<sup>2</sup>. The lead funder also employed an independent consultant who also engaged in development activities involving the programme sites, although separately from the main programme and not described in this report.

Operationally, the programme was led by **The Fostering Network**, a national children’s charity working with foster carers and fostering services. The Fostering Network are the developers and copyright holders of *The Skills to Foster* training course, the most widely-used pre-approval training for foster carers across the country. The Fostering Network were not, prior to the Head, Heart, Hands programme, associated with work on social pedagogy as an organisation.

**Seven local sites**, three in Scotland and four in England, participated, co-funding the work through salary contributions and with direct and in-kind resources including senior staff time. The sites included two independent foster care providers (‘IFP’s’), one private, one voluntary; and five local authorities.

**Figure 2 Location of the Head, Heart, Hands Sites**



Two sites in Scotland were treated as a single entity for some purposes of the programme, although these sites were funded in the evaluation as independent project sites since they functioned as such. The sites were selected through competitive application and were specifically chosen to offer a range of different

<sup>2</sup> These did not form part of the national evaluation.

contexts in which to explore how the programme could work (more detail on the characteristics of the diverse group is given in Chapter 3 below). All but one site had some prior exposure to social pedagogy or to social pedagogues, although this varied in intensity; see Figure 2.

To design and support the delivery of the programme, the Fostering Network contracted a 'delivery partner', the **social pedagogy consortium (SPC)**, a group of practice and academic specialists in social pedagogy, consisting of Jacaranda Recruitment Ltd and ThemPra Social Pedagogy CIC, and Pat Petrie, Professor at the UCL Institute of Education. The consortium advised and guided The Fostering Network on programme strategy, acted as designers and advisers, and took the role of 'holding' the programme's view of social pedagogy. They and The Fostering Network liaised closely throughout. The SPC also wrote the base resources (including the programme's 'reference tool'), and designed and led 'learning and development' courses for foster carers and staff (a centrepiece of the programme). Jacaranda and Thempra also gave support to sites (one or two designated 'site support leads' - members of the SPC - were assigned to each site), including sitting on or facilitating the steering group in each site (or equivalent structure), supporting the site project leads within sites, and supporting or providing external supervision to the social pedagogic practice of the social pedagogues working on the Programme. The site support leads between them shared a budget of just under 430 days across the whole programme, averaging 71 days per site over the three and half years, and ranging from just under 60 days per site to 77 days in total, or just under 24 days per year or 2 days per month, per site.

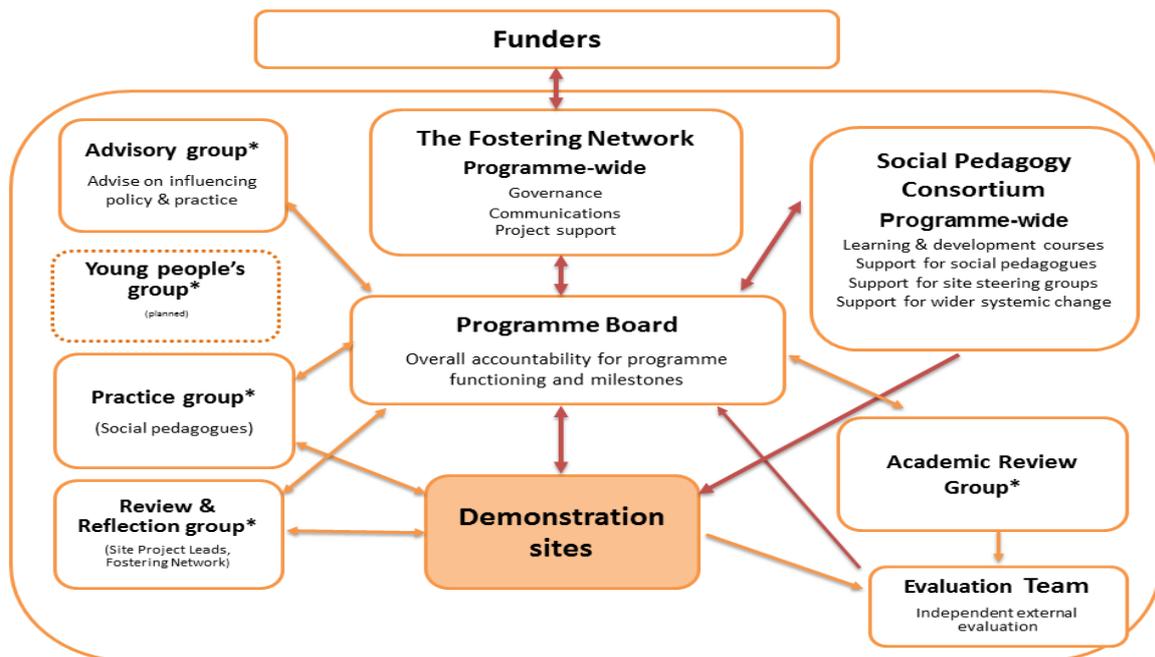
Sites were intended as a condition of taking part in the programme to employ two **social pedagogues** each, and were given funding to cover 50% of the salary of two full time staff, although in three sites, the actual number employed varied from one to three (see below, Chapter 2). Social pedagogues are usually social work-trained professionals, usually with degree-level qualifications in social pedagogy as a professional discipline. Over the course of the programme social pedagogues came variously from a wide range of countries all outside the UK, from Germany, Austria, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, Spain and Slovenia. Pedagogues acted as a bridge between the national programme and local implementation, and provided a range of expert inputs to develop sites' social pedagogic learning and activities, as well as supervising foster care placements in some cases or holding other social work roles.

Each site had an operational **site project lead** for the programme, a person at service or team manager level within the fostering service, who was pivotal in local implementation. Site leads were accountable for the local project work, usually line-managed the social pedagogue(s), and led on reporting and day to day liaison with The Fostering Network. Site leads were supported by project **strategic leads**, usually at Head of Service or Assistant Director level. These people approved the site's involvement and were kept sighted on the

project's activities, usually sat on the project steering group, but were not usually involved in day to day operational decisions.

In addition to this basic structure, there were a variety of reference and advisory groups attached to the project; see Figure 3, which shows the programme structure as it was during the first half of the programme period.

**Figure 3 Programme Structure overview**



Roles in the Head, Heart, Hands programme were complex and overlapping, and Box 5 gives a glossary of stakeholder terms used in this report and a quick guide to roles.

#### Box 5 Glossary of stakeholder terms: a quick guide

##### Glossary of stakeholder terms: a quick guide

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- **The Funders:** a consortium of seven philanthropic donors: KPMG Foundation, Comic Relief, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, The Man Charitable Trust, The John Ellerman Foundation, the Monument Trust and the Henry Smith Charity
- **Lead Funder:** The KPMG Foundation, who originated the programme, chaired the consortium, and engaged actively in various activities during the whole course of the programme.
- **Central leadership team:** the senior executive leadership team of the Fostering Network (variously comprised of the CEO and Deputy CEO (both left in 2014); then the Operations Director (new in post from late 2014).
- **Central management team:** small team of staff at the Fostering Network who provided programme management and support, including the Programme Manager, the Programme Officer, and various administrative assistants.
- **Central programme team (in this report):** jointly, the leadership and management teams at The Fostering Network)
- **The Social Pedagogy Consortium (SPC):** a group of practice and academic specialists in social pedagogy contracted by The Fostering Network and consisting of Jacaranda Recruitment Ltd and ThemPra Social Pedagogy CIC, and Professor Pat Petrie, UCL Institute of Education.
- **Central Delivery Partners:** jointly, The Fostering Network teams and the SPC team
- **Sites:** the seven fostering agencies in locations receiving funding to implement Head, Heart, Hands in their fostering service. Comprised of five local authorities (two in Scotland, three in England), and two Independent Fostering Providers (IFPs, one in Scotland, one in England). Two sites in Scotland were treated in the programme as a single entity for some administrative and funding purposes, although they operated in practice quite separately. To protect confidentiality these are identified by colours (Green, Orange etc) in the case studies.
- **Social Pedagogues:** Social work-trained professionals, in Head, Heart, Hands all with degree-level qualifications in social pedagogy obtained in a variety of countries outside the UK. Training focuses on social and emotional development and 'education' and upbringing of children in a holistic sense. In Head, Heart, Hands, one to three pedagogues were appointed to each site working approximately half time on Head, Heart, Hands, half time on other duties, including in some sites as supervising (fostering) social workers with statutory duties, where they were qualified to practice in the UK.
- **Site Project Leads:** the individuals responsible for local Head, Heart, Hands project management and team leadership in each of seven sites
- **SPC Site Support Leads:** Members of the SPC assigned to specific sites to support the SPL and the pedagogue(s) in that site
- **Site Strategic Leads:** authorising senior individuals within the sites, usually Assistant Director, Board or Head of Service level

## Background to the evaluation

The overall evaluation was designed in modular form with separate components for researching:

1. the impact of the programme on children and young people in foster care
2. the impact on foster carers
3. the process of implementation overall and in participating sites.

Separate work was also undertaken to explore the economic impact of the programme. Each module has reported separately at key stages of the programme and some of these reports were placed in the public domain. Others, and in particular the first two interim reports of the implementation module (Ghate, McDermid & Trivedi, unpublished reports to the Fostering Network 2014, 2015), were written primarily to inform internal stakeholders. A final report, integrating all modules and with analysis of the outcomes and costs set alongside the implementation of the programme was prepared for publication in autumn 2016.

### Methods for the implementation evaluation: sampling, data collection and analysis

The implementation evaluation that is the subject of this report was extremely comprehensive and designed around three waves of data collection in local sites: wave one at the end of the first full year of programme operations, wave two at the end of the second year, and wave three as the programme funding period drew to a close.

Methods for the implementation evaluation were primarily qualitative, and used frameworks and tools adapted from the fields of implementation and improvement science (see below) as well as some specially designed for this project. A case study approach was used for the implementation evaluation, allowing the evaluation team to explore any key aspects of site context associated with implementation progress (explored further in Chapter 3) while also creating an overview of the implementation of the programme as a whole. The Site Project Leads assisted the evaluation team to sample key stakeholders, who were invited to take part in various ways. The sampling allowed the team to obtain a 'rounded view' of the project, whereby individuals with a range of proximities to the project expressed a variety of views.

Data were collected over three evaluation waves. Data for Wave 1 were collected between September and December 2013 and covers the period 2012-2013 ('Year 1'); Wave 2 data were collected between November and December 2014 and covers 'Year 2' (January to December 2014). The final wave of data were collected between November 2015 and January 2016 and covers the final year of the programme ('Year 3') from January to December between 2015.

The principle method of data collection was in depth one to one and paired depth interviews, each lasting between one hour and one a half hours in general (though many were considerably longer). Across the entire evaluation time period a total of **132 interviews** were carried out with:

- Site project Leads
- Social Pedagogues
- SPC Site Support Leads
- Site Strategic Leads
- Social Work Team Managers
- The Fostering Network
- Funders

In Waves 1 and 3 interviews were primarily conducted face to face during site visits undertaken by the evaluation team. In a few cases interviews were carried out (or continued) by telephone or Skype for practical reasons. Wave 2 was designed to be 'light touch', consisting of fewer data collection time points and made greater use of telephone interviews. Qualitative, thematically structured interview guides were used across all three evaluation waves. These were accompanied by along with a set of stimulus materials that addressed different aspects of the project development, structure and functioning.

In addition, a total of **24 focus groups** (attended by 98 individual participants) were conducted. Semi-structured, thematic guides were used to ascertain front line workers' views on the impact of social pedagogy on their own practice, and the practice of the foster carers they supervise, along with their impressions of the implementation process. Groups generally lasted for around one and half hours. Table 1 below shows the number of interviews and focus groups carried out and the number of participants in each site over the successive waves of the evaluation.

Interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts of interviews and focus groups were read, coded and summarised within and across sites using a standardised thematic framework, based on key implementation themes. Verbatim quotations are used throughout, presenting individual participants' perspectives to illustrate points of analysis.

Full 'local evaluations' were not carried out as part of the overall evaluation design. Given the variation in context and in each site's local delivery model for Head, Heart, Hands it was not possible to capture the level of detail that would permit fine-grained analysis at the local level. The focus of the implementation research module was therefore on comparing and contrasting local experiences in order to understand the influence of context on implementation progress, and to identify key contextual variables that were analytically significant for understanding how implementation unfolded. Therefore throughout this report, **readers are referred to the seven case studies which are contained in the separate**

**Appendix to this report.** In these case studies, we identify ‘in common’ experiences that occurred in two or more of the sites, as well as local or context-specific features that provided a particular backdrop for understanding implementation within a site. We also utilise examples drawn from individual local sites within the overall body of the report.

**Table 1 Evaluation data collection and participants in all three Waves**

	Wave 1 Data collected September – December 2013	Wave 2 Data collected November - December 2014	Wave 3 Data collected November 2015 – January 2016	Total
<b>Mode of data collection</b>				
Number of interviews	48	34	50	<b>132</b>
Number of focus groups	10	6	8	<b>24</b>
<b>Data collection time points total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Individual evaluation participants</b>				
Site Project Leads	9	7	8	<b>24</b>
Social Pedagogues	12	8	10	<b>30</b>
Strategic leads	13	5	7	<b>25</b>
Operational Managers	7	7	11	<b>25</b>
SPC Site Support Leads	8	7	9	<b>24</b>
Front line staff	45	20	33	<b>98</b>
Other	2		0	<b>2</b>
Funders	-	-	2	<b>2</b>
The Fostering Network	-	-	4	<b>4</b>
<b>Total participants</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>234</b>

### Using an ‘implementation lens’ for the evaluation

The Head, Heart, Hands implementation evaluation used an ‘*implementation lens*’<sup>iii</sup>, informed by the emerging sciences of implementation and improvement. Implementation science and practice research focuses on the use of theory-based and systematic methods for understanding how existing services and especially *innovations* (novel programmes, services or approaches to providing services to people) are put into practice. It is concerned with capturing the process of turning an idea into a reality, and analysing and understanding how aspects of this process interact with, and impact upon, the ultimate effectiveness of services. We drew on a selection of themes and concepts that are being increasingly elaborated in this field<sup>ix</sup> and that seemed most fruitful for understanding this initiative. These included:

- Implementation theory emphasises that innovation is all about **disturbing the system**: in other words, that (as in the natural and biological world) change, growth and evolution happen fastest when systems are pushed out of equilibrium. Innovation by definition introduces perturbations and challenges to the *status quo*:

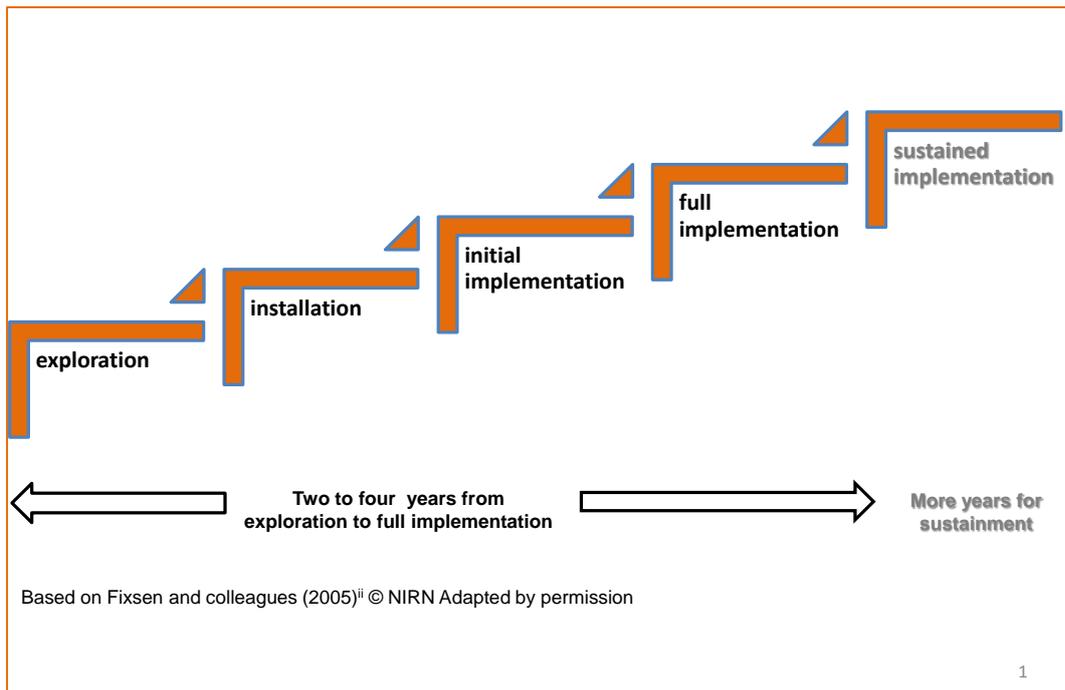
and the disturbances introduced by unfamiliar innovations produce both anticipated and unanticipated effects. Successful implementation is all about anticipating, facing and then negotiating those challenges, and about retaining the integrity and goals of the original idea (often whilst making necessary adaptations to it, to accommodate emerging realities and changing contexts). Thus, in implementing innovation, disturbance is necessary and vital, but it must also be managed and channelled to ensure it does not destabilise the system in unconstructive ways. We used the construct of disturbance throughout the research to pinpoint ways in which the programme created reactions within sites, both positive (learning and changes that improved practice or embedded policy informed by social pedagogy) and negative (for example, disturbances to existing practices or working routines or relationships that trigger problems; arguments and outright disagreements described as negative by participants or observers; negative responses to the new people, ideas or activities introduced by the programme; time consumed in managing or mediating relationships that had become difficult, etc).

- The related concept of **fit or alignment** is key to implementation analysis. Ideally, part of the decision-making process for an agency considering participating in a new initiative would generally involve a consideration of the ‘fit’ of the new approach to existing goals and ways of working in order to identify where adjustments might need to be made, and to anticipate where point of friction might arise. Whilst innovation - by definition - will not be perfectly aligned with existing services or ways of working, if the fit is very poor, friction will be created and the existing services or systems may marginalise or in ways hinder the adoption of the new approach. Fit in this evaluation was considered broadly, in a number of ways, including fit and alignment with the culture and ethos of the participating sites and teams; between staff in key roles; in terms of the match between role and context; with the existing content of ‘good practice’ in fostering; and with the practical and operational requirements of fostering services generally.
- The concept of **core and variable components**. As discussed in Box 4, one of the central tenets of rigorous implementation analysis is that we should first define the ‘it’ (meaning the shape and form of what is done or provided to service users), or “operationalise the components” before we can analyse how well ‘it’ was done or whether ‘it’ produced the effects that were desired<sup>ii</sup>. If the ‘it’ cannot be captured and communicated clearly to others, how can evaluators be sure what they have observed or analyse what they have learned? Most importantly, these are not just problems for evaluators, but also for innovators themselves. If the ‘it’ cannot be defined, how can social innovators replicate or scale up positive solutions? Whilst implementation science (in particular) increasingly recognises the important role of local flexibility and “contextually sensitive adaptation”<sup>x</sup> in effective intervention, it also stresses the importance of identifying a core model or a set of elements or design features that constitute the backbone and the essential and non-negotiable

ingredients of intervention<sup>iii</sup>. Without a model of the core components we can neither determine what has been delivered, nor whether it was more or less effective than anything else that might have taken place. The concept is increasingly used within implementation studies as part of the effort to identify the '*active ingredients*' of effective social interventions. The point of trying to disaggregate core and variable components is to understand what aspects of the project are essential to achieve the outcomes, and therefore must be reproduced in any future delivery efforts, and what aspects of the project can safely be adapted or even left out in order to reflect local preferences, context and culture without compromising the likelihood of positive outcomes. It is why we have returned repeatedly to the issue of defining what constitutes (and conversely what does not constitute) 'social pedagogy' in practice in this report, even though some exponents of social pedagogy regard this preoccupation as reductionist and narrowing.

- The concept of **stages of implementation**. This became a central organising framework for this evaluation. The 'stages' model was originally derived from a wide-ranging international and trans-disciplinary literature review of the learning from studies of the implementation of a wide variety of human services. It has been one of the most useful contributions of early implementation science in helping to create an orderly structure for understanding the (typically very disorderly) process of implementation in the real world in social care and health. The study of real-world implementation trajectories has revealed that implementation almost always occurs in discernible stages and that critical activities are most productive when aligned strategically to the specific stage concerned. Put simply, implementation is a process rather than an event. All authors agree that it can take several years - typically two to four years from initial exploration to sustained implementation. Although the terminology of 'stages' may imply orderly progression, implementation is rarely a sequential linear process but instead is iterative and recursive, messy and 'stop-start'. It frequently involves the revisiting of previous stages, particularly if the ground work associated with each prior stage has not been adequately completed. The number of stages identified varies by author, and for this evaluation, we used a five-stage model adapted from the work of Fixsen and colleagues<sup>iii</sup>; See Figure 4 and Box 6 for further detail.

**Figure 4 Stages of implementation from exploration to sustainment – basic model**



## Box 6 What the stages of implementation mean

### Stages of implementation

**Exploration** is an important stage of scoping and fixing the parameters for a new initiative, both pre- and post- the final decision to go ahead. It refers to the period of assessment and examination of feasibility of an innovation, during which potential funders, commissioners and providers of a new initiative assess the need, problem or gap that requires attention, identify potential solutions, assess the pros and cons of alternatives, and, if the innovation is being introduced to an existing service or agency, explore the 'fit' of the preferred approach(es) with what they already do ('business as usual'). At the post-decision stage, the theory, logic and content of the preferred approach should be clarified, outcomes should be defined, basic project plans will be devised, and key parameters such as personnel, budget and timelines are scoped out.

**Installation** is the stage after a decision is taken to introduce a new innovation, and refers to the activities that put in place the necessary supports: awareness-raising and communications, mobilising resources, identifying and preparing key people. Project plans are usually refined at this stage, in addition.

**Initial implementation** refers to the point at which the funded activities commence: staff are in place, people are trained in and begin to use the new approach, and changes both to individual's practice and to the services or agencies within which they operate begin to be made. Outcomes (changes) in practice of practitioners should begin to be observed, and there may be observed (anecdotal) indications of changes for service beneficiaries.

**Full implementation** refers to the stage at which 'business as usual' starts to change: all those who are part of the innovation are trained and using the innovative practice, and the new ways of working are influencing and changing standard practice. At this stage it should be possible to clarify what changes in practice and in business as usual have been made, and to measure change for service beneficiaries.

**Sustained implementation** is the phase at which the innovation can be said to be fully established and a standard feature of business as usual. The positive benefits should have been proven, and becomes self-sustaining, with adequate funds, resources and expertise to continue into the longer term. It may also involve 'scaling up' (extending the new approach to new individuals, groups or locations). Ongoing development and refinement of the approach continues indefinitely.

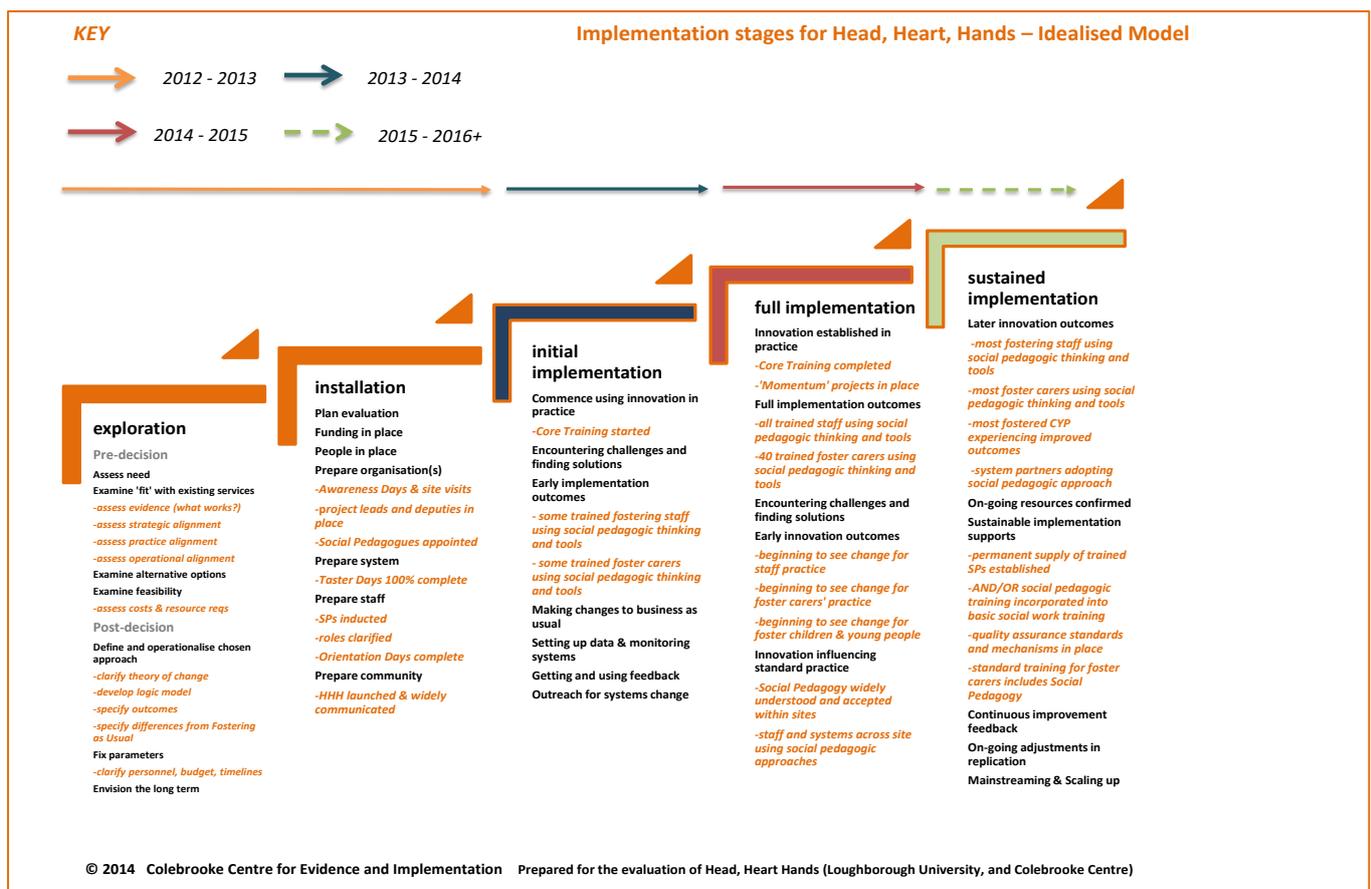
© 2014 Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation, from the first interim report on the implementation of Head, Heart, Hands (Ghate, McDermid and Trivedi, 2014)

## Applying the stages of implementation framework to Head, Heart, Hands

The basic framework of **implementation stages** is a (superficially) simple but compelling and very practical framework for structuring how we can think about the process of implementation of innovation as a journey with successive phases. There were however many challenges in applying the framework in the context of a fluid, exploratory and emergent approach instead of to a programme of more clearly 'known dimensions'. Over time, we adapted and expanded it to create an 'implementation stages model' that was specifically tailored for Head, Heart, Hands, but some stakeholders felt and continue to feel that the model imposed an artificially 'structured' evaluation lens on a programme that was intentionally left unstructured in many respects.

In the Figure 5, the black text shows generic aspects of the framework that could in principle apply to *any* innovation, and the orange text elaborates how these generic aspects might have looked in the particular case of Head, Heart, Hands. It sets out aspects of both 'central' and 'local' activity at different stages of implementation, and we refer to it to describe and analyse the progress of the programme over time, both centrally and locally.

**Figure 5 Implementation stages for Head, Heart, Hands – idealised model**



Two things should be noted about this model: First, this model was introduced by the evaluators, not the programme designers. It was not used as a framework either for initial

design or for subsequent development of the programme as it unfolded, but only as a framework for data collection and analysis. Second it is an *'ideal'* model. In the real world, we know that progress is rarely linear and continuous, and the relative height of the 'treads' of the staircase may be different, so that the climb from one stage to the next may be harder or easier depending on the circumstances. Innovation is known to be a tough process, and it is far more common for projects to falter and stumble during the journey than it is to leap confidently from one stage to the next. Innovators often get stuck at one or other of the stages (often: somewhere between 'initial' and 'full' implementation). Implementation learning also teaches us that real world implementation often gets pushed back to repeat earlier stages, especially if one stage has been incompletely addressed or rushed. It also teaches us that stages are not mutually exclusive and that all stages include continuous learning, so that stages overlap and co-exist, and this was certainly expected to be the case for Head, Heart, Hands and other programmes that are highly innovative and developmental.

Arguably, without this theory-driven framework we would have struggled even more than we did to make sense of this highly fluid and exploratory initiative. Using an implementation science framework did however give rise to a particularly forensic scrutiny of the programme: more so, probably, than a traditional inductive/thematic process evaluation would have done. And as with all frameworks, the fit of the model to the reality and its ability to illuminate the explanations for specific outcomes was at times less than optimal. We have already noted the issues around the fluidity and constantly evolving nature of Head, Heart, Hands; the intentions of the many different stakeholders may also have been hard to capture using a single model. For all the reasons highlighted above, our description of the programme's implementation journey is not one that all stakeholders in the programme accept. We ourselves acknowledge the criticism that evaluation science is a blunt tool, often ill-equipped to assess the efficacy of fluid approaches. Our analysis is our own interpretation only, formed from the perspective of independent outsiders. It is firmly and rigorously based in empirical data but is (as any analysis) open to challenge and debate. From the perspective of implementation science, given its increasing attention to how the concept of flexibility can be operationalised, there is an important debate to be had about the best methods for assessing approaches to practice in human services that are as much about thought and intention and style as about actions and behaviours in practice, though that is not a debate for this report!

### How we assessed implementation success

Judging what constitutes 'implementation success' was challenging and contentious in a programme of this nature. This study focused on the implementation process at the organisational level, and on the journey as described and experienced by stakeholders in sites and by the central programme delivery partners. It is to some extent artificial to judge implementation independently from outcomes for service users, and this report should be

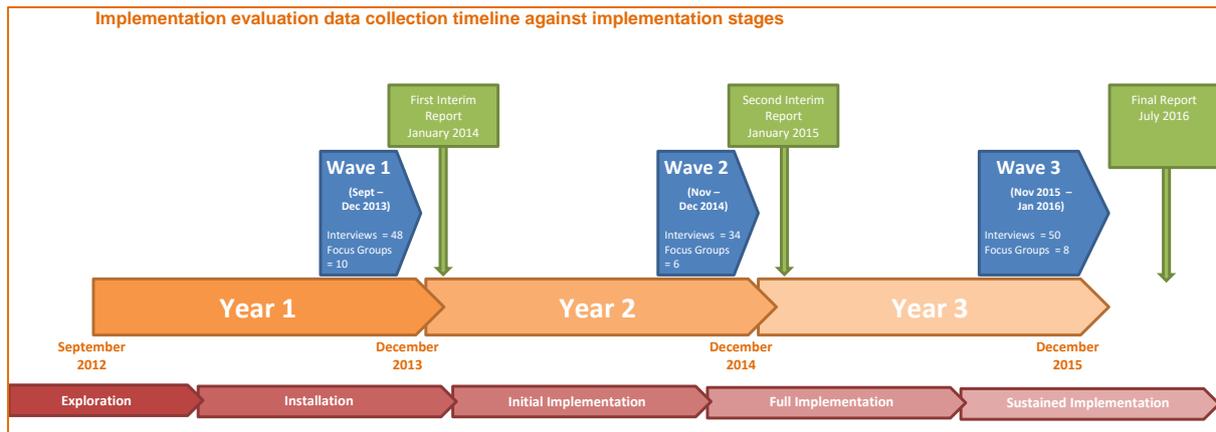
seen as one chapter of a bigger, integrated story which will be reported on in the coming months. However, the decision to report on implementation separately from outcomes for carers and children was taken with care. A growing body of work demonstrates that implementation experiences are the vital but often missing link in understanding how to deliver not just effective, but efficient (cost effective, focused) services. Irrespective of the outcomes, understanding how the implementation journey unfolded allows us to identify learning for future efforts to develop similar initiatives. Without detailed implementation analysis, we will only partially understand the outcomes; replication of successful initiatives is not possible; and refinement of less successful ones likewise is prevented.

From the central programme perspective, however, there were no pre-determined expectations of what implementation would look like, or what would count as implementation success apart from the high level objectives and outcomes set out in Chapter 2 and the aspirations set out in proposals from the SPC and The Fostering Network prior to the programme's commencement. As implementation evaluators, we created structure for the process of assessment using implementation science constructs, and used two main benchmarks to guide our overall conclusions. These are benchmarks of **local** progress, since the programme operated at the level of local projects; however they also serve as indicators of the **central** journey to the extent that the purpose of the central programme was (as far as possible) to create the conditions for and facilitate the delivery of the programme 'vision' at local level. They are mainly qualitative judgements (not quantitative metrics) based on sifting and weighing what different stakeholders told us in evaluation interviews, taking account of what participants thought had been achieved, and how they described the quality and ease of the journey itself, for individuals and for organisations. Our benchmarks were:

- (1) whether the local sites managed to reach a stage of 'full implementation', with all intended individuals trained, and the confidence expressed by those closest to practice that all (or at least the majority) of those trained were utilising the learning through changed thinking and practices
- (2) the progress towards 'sustained implementation': whether or not sites wanted to - or looked reasonably likely to – continue the work to develop, diffuse and embed social pedagogy after the official end of the Head, Heart, Hands programme

Figure 6 shows how the evaluation timeline mapped onto the implementation stages:

**Figure 6 Evaluation timeline against implementation stages**



## Chapter 2: Describing Head, Heart, Hands in national form

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### In this chapter we:

- describe the national framework of the programme in more detail, including its structure and objectives
- explain the features of the design that we believe were intended to be or were in fact 'core' across all participating sites, and those that were variable, noting the complexities of applying the concept of 'design' to a fluid approach rather than clear framework for practice
- describe the local interpretation and operation of the national programme including an analysis of how local projects were structured and staffed, what activities they pursued, and the extent to which they varied the 'core' design of the national programme

### The national framework of Head, Heart, Hands

#### The central programme team: leadership and management

The central leadership team at The Fostering Network from 2012 until mid-2014 comprised two members of its most senior leadership group in England, the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive. Neither had been deeply familiar with social pedagogy until 2010, when The Fostering Network's senior management team attended a day's training on social pedagogy, and, as a leadership team, began considering introducing social pedagogy into foster care. The Director for Scotland had some prior knowledge of social pedagogy and was involved in early discussions and was actively involved in the recruitment of the three Scottish sites, but described having relatively little close involvement until later stages of the programme. Once the programme was established, the central leadership function appeared to be mainly focused on liaison with funders and from time to time with strategic leads in the sites.

A small central programme management team was appointed from outside The Fostering Network, led by a consultant programme manager supported by a programme officer. Neither of the central programme management team members was previously familiar with social pedagogy, and neither had worked in fostering before; and both arrived after most key decisions about the purpose and the shape of the programme had already been reached. This small team managed central strategy, planning monitoring and reporting, as well as programme funding, budgeting and expenditure. They also managed national level communications and stakeholder engagement, and developed and convened the various programme structures set out in the previous chapter over the course of the programme. Other departments of the Fostering Network provided specialist inputs at various times, (for example, in the communications), but in essence, the bulk of the work devolved to two people who were new to fostering policy and practice. Both agreed that they had to contend with a '*steep learning curve*' in particular during the first year of the programme.

A key feature of the implementation of the programme was an unfortunate gap in senior staffing at The Fostering Network during the middle of the programme period in mid-2014. We highlight it here because it was generally agreed by many stakeholders to have affected the implementation journey of the programme at central level in significant ways, and this fed down to local level at times. In the middle of the programme, both members of The Fostering Network central programme leadership team left the organisation within a short period. There was generally agreed to be a weakening of leadership in relation to the programme during this period, both prior to the departure and for some months after, as neither post was immediately filled. In the months following, coinciding with the middle stages of implementation (which are typically highly challenging for most innovation programmes), the small central management team therefore managed the programme without close leadership support. In Autumn 2014, a new Operations Director came into post, and picked up the work of the programme with fresh vigour. A new Chief Executive came into post later, in 2015, taking over from an interim CEO who had been in place for 9 months. It was universally noted across stakeholders at all levels that the arrival of the new Operations Director, who took a particular interest in Head, Heart, Hands, marked a positive turning point for the programme. The central leadership then became stronger, more proactive and more visible, as well as more engaged with the programme management. However, there was a consistent view across stakeholders who were sighted on central programme functions that strategic programme leadership, despite the best efforts of the central management team who remained in post throughout, had been sub-optimal from a relatively early stage. This left a legacy of difficulties that persisted in later stages of the work. We return to this issue later in the report.

### **The social pedagogy consortium**

Not surprisingly given the newness of social pedagogy to the UK, prior to the Head, Heart, Hands programme, there was not a well-established infrastructure of substantive or implementation expertise in the UK. Two organisations and one independent consultant from one of the key English university centres for the study of social pedagogy were brought together especially for the purposes of the programme, in a relationship brokered by the lead funder. The three partners of the specialist social pedagogy consortium or 'SPC' were each independently working in the field in Europe and in the UK and had co-operated but not formally collaborated previously. They also had not worked with The Fostering Network before.

Under contract to The Fostering Network, in an arrangement also created with the help of the lead funder, the SPC had a major and central role in the programme, both centrally and locally. See Box 7, in which the Consortium described their role in their own words.

## Box 7 The role of the Social Pedagogy Consortium in Head Heart Hands

### The role of the Social Pedagogy Consortium

*Text provided by the SPC, 2016*

*“The SPC contributed to the development, set up (including the assessment and selection of sites and recruitment of the sites’ social pedagogues) and running of the programme: the writing of the learning and development programme, including creation of materials and facilitation of the courses; guidance to the central programme team nationally; and support for the sites, with one or two SPC site support leads per site.*

*Central to this role was building and maintaining strong professional relationships with site project teams. Alongside the guidance from local social pedagogues, they provided formal and informal support to the site team, guiding their reflections and planning, including any necessary local adaptations. SPC site support leads also engaged site stakeholders in obtaining further long-term support for social pedagogy. Importantly, they aimed at an appropriate level of coherence and consistency across the programme, taking into account any variance in the local contexts and the professional background and practice cultures of the employed social pedagogues. They were in frequent, regular contact with the site teams, locally contextualised, for: monthly pedagogical supervision for the social pedagogues (and 6 monthly group supervision across sites); attending site strategy/steering groups and other programme development meetings; guidance on developing social pedagogic materials; developing and (co)-facilitating other programme-related courses.*

*Nationally, the SPC supported the Fostering Network in developing their understanding of social pedagogy and the application of social pedagogy in fostering. This included a two-day social pedagogy introduction course. The SPC liaised with the central programme team remotely on a monthly basis, and met on average five times per year for coordination and programme development. They also participated in the quarterly programme learning network meetings, which brought together site project teams, the SPC and The Fostering Network. An SPC member served on the Programme and Advisory Boards”.*

*Social Pedagogy Consortium, 2016*

At central level, their role was described as ‘delivery partner’ in the programme, in particular, given their expertise in social pedagogy, taking responsibility for quality in relation to the substantive content of the programme. They were also responsible for supporting programme and project strategy, and for supporting the professional social pedagogues, who mostly had to be recruited from abroad as the specialism was not widespread in the UK.<sup>3</sup> In the early stages of implementation - exploration, installation and initial implementation - they designed and then delivered the content of an eight-day learning and development course that was a core component of the Head, Heart, Hands programme. They also designed and delivered ‘taster’ sessions for general audiences and a 2-day ‘orientation’ course intended as a primer for those who would subsequently attend the 8 day intensive course. In later stages of the programme, from initial implementation onwards, they provided support at local level to site project leads in shaping their projects at local level, although

this part of the role varied from site to site, as one SPC member explained:

<sup>3</sup> One of the SPC organisations, Jacaranda recruitment Ltd, also provided (under separate contract) the specialist recruitment services needed to recruit pedagogues from overseas for the programme, and this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

*I went into my site saying, in terms of the strategy development groups and that kind of thing, steering groups, that my role was advisory so I shouldn't have voting rights or anything. Mine is purely an advisory role. I'm there to support and advise and to provide training and that kind of thing. Whereas I think, in other sites, there's been a difference in how that role has come about in the steering groups.*

Once social pedagogues were in post, SPC site support leads also offered local 'social pedagogic supervision' to social pedagogues (described by various stakeholders as akin to independent clinical supervision provided to therapists and psychologists in clinical practice). They were present in sites for a specified number of days per year averaging approximately two days per month per site. Their role in sites was hence quite distinct from that of the central management team at The Fostering Network, who remained more 'in the background' at site level and were seen as mainly concerned with governance and monitoring. The SPC were very much at the heart of the relationships between sites and the newly appointed social pedagogues, (one said: *"It's mostly the Consortium that implemented the programme (at local level)"*) and the central programme management team and were in a sense the bridge between national and local elements of Head, Heart, Hands.

## **The design of Head, Heart, Hands as a national programme**

### **Overarching goals of the programme**

The Head, Heart, Hands programme in the UK was expected to demonstrate different ways of achieving positive impact at the following levels:

1. children and young people in foster care
2. foster carers (and their families)
3. foster care providers (organisations, whether public, private or third sector) and personnel
4. the wider systems within which foster carers and providers are embedded

The methodology by which Head, Heart, Hands would achieve these aims was however described as 'exploratory', in the sense that each local site would be encouraged to develop their own model for implementation, within a very few fixed parameters. The theory underpinning how the programme would work, either at national or at local level, and how the desired changes would be brought about or how the programme would take shape (or be 'operationalised') at local level was therefore largely implicit rather than explicit. It was clear, for example, that a key element of the methodology would be the activities and practice development work of the social pedagogues placed in each site. However, what the social pedagogues would do to achieve change was unspecified at this early stage, and even how they would divide their time between core types of activity was only specified in the

broadest possible terms. All of this was left to be worked out as the programme progressed at site level. Over time, as the evaluation began to reveal that sites and social pedagogues were feeling hampered by lack of guidance, the role was further specified and was described ‘in principle’ in a document known as the Aspirations Paper. However, this only articulated the roles at a broad level, and as it was not produced in final form until mid-2014, perhaps came a little late in the process to be really effective.<sup>4</sup>

### The purpose of the programme: demonstration or test

Another way of exploring goals which is relevant to understand how implementation unfolded is to ask what ‘kind’ of a programme Head, Heart, Hands was: a showcase ‘demonstrating’ was already known to be effective practice, or a ‘test’ of what could be effective under various circumstances. Head, Heart, Hands was described by its architects (the lead funder, The Fostering Network and SPC) as a demonstration programme, whose primary purpose was to provide a vehicle for showcasing how an approach to working with children that was thought to be highly effective in other countries could be delivered across a range of different contexts in different parts of the UK.

Research into the perspectives of other participants regarding the starting point and overall purpose of the programme revealed, however, some important differences in how stakeholders perceived the purpose of the programme, and this may have influenced what they expected out of the programme and how they defined the markers of success. Some were, like the architects, already fully persuaded of the benefits of social pedagogy and considered it a given that it would improve – and even transform – the quality of foster care. Others, whilst highly sympathetic to the value base of the programme and generally persuaded of the potential benefits, retained a more questioning turn of mind about the extent to which the approach could add substantial, measurable value to the current practices of ‘real world’ UK foster care. They saw the purpose of Head, Heart, Hands as about exploring and testing empirically whether, and to what extent, this approach could improve outcomes in foster carer in the UK. (The evaluation team itself was, not surprisingly, located in this latter group). Some – including the Fostering Network - moved between these two positions as time elapsed and learning accumulated. These positions, to a degree, shaped expectations, influenced initial planning and over time, influenced stakeholders’ analysis of progress. Funders themselves were divided along these lines: the lead funder, it was noted by colleagues “*would clearly say it works; and this (programme) is about demonstrating that*” whereas another funder on the board noted: “*I thought we were testing whether this particular model would have value in improving outcomes*”

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<sup>4</sup> Efforts were also made at later stages of the programme, following recommendations arising from the interim evaluation reports, to articulate and create a theory of change for how the programme would work, including considerable work carried out by members of the SPC and the central management team at The Fostering Network. However, no final model was agreed before evaluation data collection was completed.

To the extent that we can describe the design of Head, Heart, Hands, given what has been said about the nature of social pedagogy, Head, Heart, Hands can be thought of as a set of *operational features* (structures or vehicles for delivery, and specific activities): for example a core learning and development course, and access to a specific form of pedagogic expertise in the persons of social pedagogues and the members of the SPC, underpinned by the *values, principles and 'ways of thinking'* that characterise social pedagogy, and accompanied by a *menu of methods or frameworks for practice* from which carers or staff doing direct work could choose. Whilst values and methods were specified during the programme training and in the accompanying materials, practices themselves (in the sense of practice behaviours: what social pedagogically informed practitioners and carers would do) were not specified, on the grounds that these would be person- and context-dependent. One can readily grasp this rationale at an intellectual level, but from the outset the absence of specification of how social pedagogy would be used in specific practice situations made the approach seem relatively intangible to many practically-minded stakeholders. It also resulted in ongoing difficulties in differentiating social pedagogic practice from social work 'practice as usual' and in communicating to non-pedagogically trained practitioners how they might change or improve their practice in real situations. Over time, more concrete examples of different or new practices began to be synthesised through accounts of project work 'in action'. However many stakeholders were still saying, even at the end of the programme, that although the values were clear, the practice of social pedagogy lacked clarity and specificity. We discuss (in brief) the values and methods of social pedagogy, and then the operational features of Head, Heart, Hands below.

## Values and methods

As we have already noted, as a body of theory, an academic discipline, and a 'field of practice' social pedagogy is often described as a 'a way of practicing', although not 'a set of practices'. A set of **core principles** are applied through the use of **tools and models**. We pick out below those that were most frequently mentioned as part of the presentation of social pedagogy as articulated in Head, Heart, Hands. For instance: at the heart of all social pedagogically-informed practice is the principle of the primacy of **authentic, supportive and equitable relationships** between the 'practitioner' and (in the case of Head, Heart, Hands) the child or young person in foster care. The everyday environment is recognised as presenting opportunities to develop those relationships and foster learning in the broadest sense. The '*Common Third*' Model brings these principles together, where an activity or event is used create a shared situation, bringing the individuals together in a way that creates equality between them and where both parties learn together and develop their relationship. Social pedagogy also recognises the **use of self in practice**. The '*Three Ps*' model is used to help practitioners distinguish between 'professional', 'personal' and 'private' domains to ensure that their own experiences, interests and skills can enhance practice while maintaining appropriate boundaries. All social pedagogic practice is underpinned by **critical reflection**, either as an individual or in group settings. Models such

as ‘*The Four Fs*’ provide frameworks for analytic reflection, enabling practitioners to work through the ‘facts, feelings, findings and futures’ of a particular event or problem. Further detail on how the SPC define these and other models can be found on-line<sup>xi</sup>.

One challenge for framing or designing ‘a programme’ to deliver social pedagogy is not only that values and principles are complex to operationalise, but also that there is considerable heterogeneity across the discipline<sup>viii; xii</sup>. Different traditions have developed across different countries and contexts, whereby some principles are emphasised over others, or different interpretations of the models are employed. In the evaluation of Head, Heart, Hands, we regularly observed this diversity amongst this culturally mixed group of stakeholders, and instances of disagreement or long-running debate between the social pedagogically trained personnel about how social pedagogy could be exemplified in the field were reported as common by site project leads and by the central programme management team, and by some social pedagogues.

### Operational features: core and variable

The concept of a design as a plan or a blueprint is easily applied in a traditional programmatic approach to social intervention where specific components are combined in specific ways to produce specific effects. But as will be apparent from the foregoing discussions, it is less easily applied to a fluid, evolutionary type of initiative like Head, Heart, Hands. Indeed, it is questionable whether the term ‘design’ is even the best term when used in the context of Head, Heart, Hands, given the relatively few fixed parameters that were defined at the outset and the expressed intention to let each site develop its own model within an exploratory framework.

However, although local areas were given considerable latitude it was possible to discern some common parameters that the evaluation identified as forming the design ‘as intended’ (in the conventions of evaluation science) and that were more or less fixed across all sites. Below, we describe our own analysis, as evaluators, of what we judge to have emerged as the *basic operational design components* of Head, Heart, Hands at national level. It is important to stress that these have been distilled post hoc (ie, during and after the programme) from our observations and the accounts given by stakeholders who participated in the evaluation, and not from any authorised description produced for the programme at the outset. Our description may be viewed as reductionist by those closely involved in the programme’s internal complexities. However, as one is required for evaluation purposes, we were obliged to develop our own. Below we describe the core (ie, more or less fixed) operational features of the Head, Heart, Hands programme, with indications of flexibilities ‘around the margins’ that occurred at local site level. We then describe some variable features (ie, tailored, selective, heterogeneous) at local level. These two categories are roughly analogous to the distinction drawn between ‘core’ and ‘variable’ components that is emphasised in implementation science writing as key to identifying

‘active’ and ‘inert’ ingredients in effectiveness, and at a practical level, establishing what will be the key elements for replication in scale-up efforts.

### Core components

In its most reduced form, the fixed parameters of Head, Heart, Hands’s operational design ‘as intended’ can be categorised under the headings of

- target population
- resources, including access to staff and supportive expertise (inputs)
- activities (outputs)

In terms of **target population**, the projects were intended to be:

1. **Based (embedded) in a fostering service**, whether public or private. In all but one site, this was indeed the case. In one site, for specific local operational reasons described in the case study, the Head, Heart, Hands was located in the Virtual School and co-led by the deputy head of the school.
2. **Offered to a fixed cohort of 40 carers and up to eight staff**. A fixed cohort of 40 carers per project (split between the two smallest sites), maximum 240 over the whole programme, was intended to be the target group to benefit from the full suite of Head, Heart, Hands resources and activities. This cohort was the focus of the formal evaluation of outcomes. All sites allowed carers to self-select onto the programme, and in the event, some sites trained somewhat fewer on the core learning and development course and some sites somewhat more than 40 carers (see Chapter 3). Numbers of staff joining carers on the courses were intended to be the ‘matched’ supervising social workers supporting foster carers involved in the programme plus an unspecified number of others, and were expected to be fixed at around 8 people. In the event, this ranged from none (in one small site) to 18 in one medium-sized site. Of course, most sites contained many more carers and many more staff than this. Later in the report we discuss the implications of the design, limited as it was in this way to this cohort.

In terms of core **resources or ‘inputs’** provided from the central programme funds and by the sites’ own budgets, this was mainly in the form of human resources, and included the following personnel:

3. **a strategic lead** who was expected to support the project in principle, and chair or participate in the site steering group. This person was usually at head of service or assistant director level. All sites had consistent leadership at this level bar one, where corporate restructuring left the site without its original advocate after the second year of the project.

4. a **site project lead**, usually a person at service manager level, responsible for the operational aspects of the programme. In one site this role was shared between two people, and in one site, the site project lead also served as the strategic lead.
5. **two trained and professionally qualified social pedagogues**, co-funded by Head, Heart, Hands and the site itself, usually employed from outside the agency (but in two cases, utilising staff already employed by the agency). Some of these were also registered to practice social work in the UK. See Box 8.

#### Box 8 Social Pedagogues in Heart, Heart, Hands

##### Social Pedagogues in Heart, Heart, Hands

*Social pedagogues were in many ways the most important and distinctive - and certainly were the most innovative - aspect of the implementation model of Head, Heart, Hands. Embedded within fostering teams (except in one site), social pedagogues were expected to be a key 'active ingredient' of the programme, bringing with them specialised degree-level training and skills. The job descriptions used at the time of their recruitment emphasised that they would work in a variety of ways, including with carers, young people and fostering families; with other staff at the sites; and with wider system partners and stakeholders. They were expected to work both independently, but also, importantly, alongside other staff to 'model' how social pedagogy could be used in practice. Most did some direct work although sometimes this was limited. Critically, not all pedagogues in the programme were registered with the English/Scottish social work accreditation bodies (HCPC/SSSC), and so it was known in advance that some would not be able to practice as 'supervising social workers' or hold statutory responsibilities for fostering cases.*

These people are described in this report as 'dual role' (ie, half time on the Head, Heart, Hands project, half time as social worker undertaking statutory supervision of foster care placements). The decision to have two social pedagogues, co-funded, arose from findings in the DfE-funded pilot of social pedagogy in residential care, which found that lone social pedagogues placed into a site could become professionally isolated. Head, Heart, Hands sites exercised flexibility in this regard. In the two smallest sites, each employed one (full time) social pedagogue; and in another sites, the funding was used to deploy three social pedagogues to the project. In other sites, as a result of social pedagogues leaving, there

were some times when social pedagogues who were normally part of a pair worked alone. Two key **variable** factors also related to the activities of social pedagogues: (1) regarding whether they were 'dual role' holding fostering cases, or not; and (2) whether and how much direct work with young people and families they did. These emerged as critical factors in implementation experiences at site level, and are discussed in later chapters.

6. one or more **social pedagogy consortium site support leads ('SPC site support lead')** from two of the organisations that formed the social pedagogy consortium who

acted as expert advisers, recruiters and delivered learning and development throughout the programme. How SPC site support leads in fact operated in practice was also a matter of flexibility, reflecting the local contexts and preferences of sites.

Finally, key fixed parameters of operational **activity**, as intended and more or less common to all sites, were:

7. design and delivery during the early part of the first year by various members of the SPC of two **one-day 'taster' days** and up to four **two-day 'orientation' courses**, in each site, intended as introductions to social pedagogy for foster carers and professionals in and around the site.

### Box 9 The core learning and development courses in Head, Heart, Hand

#### The core learning and development courses

*In each site, the **core learning and development courses** were intended to be delivered to an identified cohort of **40** foster carers (up to 20 each in the two smaller sites), and up to **8** staff who were the supervising social workers for carers on the course, and others from a variety of backgrounds and levels of seniority.*

*This followed a set plan, and drew on adult learning theory including the importance of experiential learning. It was based around previous social pedagogy-specific training materials developed by members of the consortium. It was supported by a written reference tool that set out key theories, concepts, frameworks, and specific tools, and formed the most 'concrete' and standardised element of the programme's design.*

8. design and delivery during the first year of the project by the SPC site support leads and colleagues of an eight-day '**core learning and development course**' for up to three mixed groups of foster carers and staff. See Box 9. This was the most standardised element of the programme, delivered with only minor variations (in practical arrangements) across all sites. Table 2 shows the numbers trained in different groups and the proportions of carers 'reached' as

a percentage of the total pool of carers in each site at the beginning of the programme.

**Table 2 Attendance and reach at core learning and development courses**

Core Learning and Development Courses							
Site	Blue	Pink	Yellow	Purple	Orange	Green	Red
Number of courses	3	3	3	3	6	2	1
Dates	May 2013 (1) Jun 2013 (1) Jul 2013 (1)	May 2013 (1) Jun 2013 (1) Oct 2013 (1)	Sept 2013 (3)	Mar 2013 (1) Oct 2013 (1) Jan 2014 (1)	Jul 2013 (3) Oct 2013 (3)	Mar 2013 (1) Sept 2013 (1)	Oct 2013 (1)
<b>Total attendance</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Reach to carers as % of total pool</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>82%</b>
<b>Attendance breakdown</b>							
All Foster carers	31	40	47	39	48	20	9
All staff	18	7	13	9	15	0	7
<i>Supervising Social Workers</i>	11	5	7	2	7	-	3
<i>Managers</i>	5	1	1	-	1	-	-
<i>Other internal</i>	2	1	5	7	7	-	4
<i>Other external</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Figures provided by sites in December 2014. Head, Heart, Hands site project team (social pedagogues and site project leads) are excluded from the attendance numbers shown here.

9. **support provided by the SPC site support leads**, over a specified number of allocated days (averaging 2 days per month per site) to strategic leads, site project leads and social pedagogues including ‘social pedagogic supervision’ for the social pedagogues<sup>5</sup>; advice and support to the site project lead; and chairing of the project steering group. Over time, sites exercised some flexibility in how they used the SPC days allocated to them. One site did not use any days for supervision as they considered their own site project leads (a qualified social pedagogues) best placed for this role; another used the SPC supervision for one social pedagogue but not another. There was also some flexibility in how sites configured the role of the SPC site support lead in their steering groups.

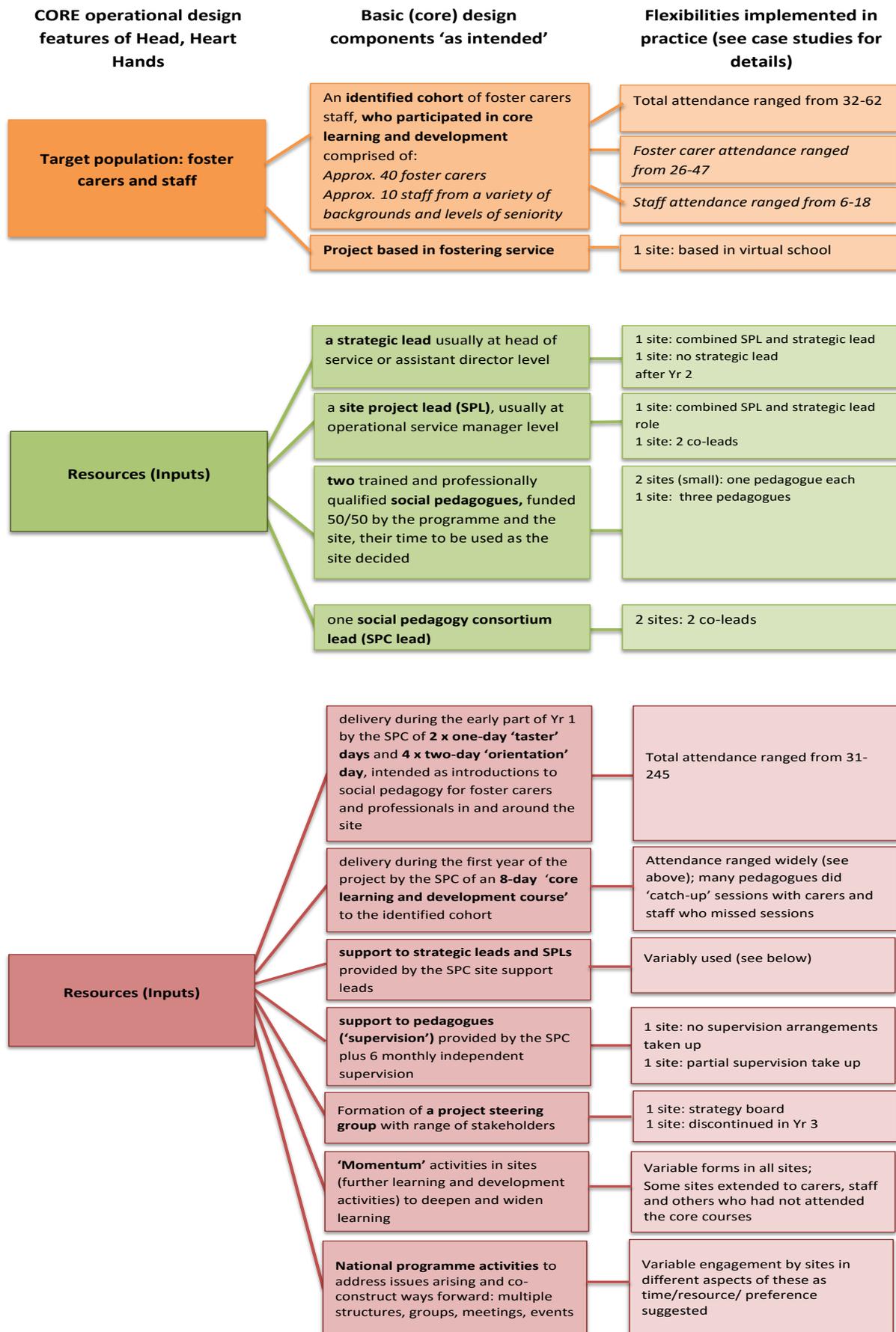
<sup>5</sup> Bi-annual ‘group supervision’ sessions for pedagogues run by an independent practitioner were also provided.

10. encouragement to undertake activities in support of continued **'momentum'** intended to deepen and consolidate learning and understanding about social pedagogy in the core course attendees. These included including reading groups, action learning sets, peer support groups to outdoor and creative activities. The form these took varied substantially from site to site.

11. participation in a range of **national programme activities** including peer support groups for social pedagogues, meetings and events, and partial support for learning and development activities including opportunities to attend independently-run social pedagogy development meetings. Participation varied by site.

See Figure 7; Note that for the purposes of this Figure, we have in combined the numbers in the two smallest sites, who also shared between them the funding resource provided to larger sites

Figure 7 core operational components of Head, Heart, Hands at local site level



## Variable components

In addition to the flexibilities around the core described above, there were also elements of the design that were implemented differently from one site to another to the extent that they are best thought of as entirely variable components.

**Variable** parameters of operational activity, engaged in by some but not all included:

- **whether the social pedagogues were dual role** or not: an intentionally variable component:
  - 3 sites: social pedagogues half time on Head, Heart, Hands, half time holding fostering cases (dual role)
  - 2 sites: social pedagogues full time on Head, Heart, Hands (not dual role)
  - 2 sites: social pedagogues half time on Head, Heart, Hands, with a range of other non-statutory social work duties not in fostering, for example in residential care, Virtual School (intermediate type)
1. **direct work with families and with children and young people undertaken by social pedagogues.** Direct work, whether supervising fostering cases or in other ways, was intended to be a core component of Head, Heart, Hands, so that social pedagogues could model social pedagogy in action to colleagues and carers. All social pedagogues did some direct work at first: some extensively so (especially those holding cases), and continuing throughout. Others did less, and by the later stages of the programme, for various reasons including availability of time, and aptitude, were doing relatively little or none at all. Another variable feature was how much direct work was undertaken alone, or as joint work with other staff (in order to model social pedagogy in action).
  2. **fostering case work with families by social pedagogues:** an intentionally variable component - not all social pedagogues were registered to practice as social workers in the UK and some could therefore not hold cases.
  3. **reviews of fostering service policies and procedures** through a 'social pedagogy' lens
  4. delivery during the last year of the project by the SPC lead (sometimes in collaboration with the social social pedagogue at the site) of '**social pedagogic leadership' courses** for staff
  5. activities in support of development of a **cross-site 'champions' group** aimed at supporting sustainability, in the latter half of the programme
  6. **awareness-raising events** for internal fostering service stakeholders and external colleagues and organisations including commissioners to introduce them to social pedagogy

# PART TWO

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## Chapter Three: Overview of the implementation journey

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### In this chapter we:

- give a brief overview of the implementation journey at national and local levels, by way of preface to the more detailed analysis that follows

### Introduction

Head, Heart, Hands was an ambitious innovation with the aim of demonstrating that social pedagogy could improve practice for core participants, and create supportive changes in the wider fostering system. Over a period of nearly four years (2012-2015), the initiative was designed and delivered in seven local sites, all very different from one another, reaching over 230 foster carers and 69 fostering and other children's social care personnel across the country in a core cohort, through a substantial training programme. Innovation is a tough process and research has demonstrated that success is rarely guaranteed at the outset. In Head, Heart, Hands, all seven sites remained engaged with the programme to the end; a significant achievement in its own right, as experience indicates that it is normal in multi-site pilots for some to fall by the wayside.

Beyond the core group on whom the impact evaluation focused, some number of others was also touched by the programme at various times and in various ways through other social pedagogic learning and development activities<sup>6</sup>: for example there was a diffusion of activity that reached children and young people (both in the core cohort families and others) and events that reached a range of staff that included social workers and managers working in fostering services, family support workers, and some social work staff in other parts of children's services.

With the help of the programme, four local authority sites had by the end of the programme reached a point where they were committed to sustainment of social pedagogy in their authorities and judged by external criteria looked reasonably likely to succeed, each with a somewhat different 'flavour' and interpretation. One site was planning to blend social pedagogy with other approaches as part of a major new improvement strategy for children's services and had begun to take active steps in that direction. Three sites, including the two IFPs and one local authority, had however decided not (or had no concrete plan) to continue with the work. On the way there was a great deal of learning about what drives or holds back the use of a social pedagogic approach in fostering services, at different stages of the implementation process, and this detailed learning is further elaborated in the following chapters.

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<sup>6</sup> One of the difficulties of a fluid approach is that it is not possible to quantify the numbers of people who have been exposed to the initiative, nor to define what constitutes 'exposure' for the purposes of assessing outcomes. We had no method for doing this as part of the evaluation.

## The central implementation journey

The initiating group (Funders, The Fostering Network, the SPC) who came together specifically for the purpose of the programme began with much enthusiasm and optimism for the future potential of social pedagogy, speaking of expected ‘transformative’ change both for those who participated directly, and for the wider system that would be touched by the programme. Each of the delivery partners had substantial expertise in their own arena: The Fostering Network as an organisation were highly experienced in supporting foster carers and in understanding the fostering sector from their position as a leading charity, and the SPC were acknowledged national experts on the principles of social pedagogy. Within the latter group, there was substantial experience in delivering training, in recruiting social pedagogues for social care and allied sectors, and in systemic change strategies. However, neither delivery partner was experienced in the design and implementation of major innovation programmes, and nor were the individuals charged with day to day management. This inevitably shaped the nature of the process.

The programme’s design made a virtue of the evolutionary, locally developmental and locally determined nature of Head, Heart, Hands. The fixed parameters of the programme’s operational design, as described in Chapter Two, were minimal and not particularly complex. However, complexity was introduced by the intangibility of the construct of ‘a social pedagogical approach’ consisting of core values and principles, a menu of methods, but no specification of core policies and practices that would clearly distinguish the new approach from ‘business as usual’. Complexity was also inherent in the wide degree of local flexibility and some wholesale variation in delivery of the operational components, and in the diversity of the contexts in which the programme was to be tried. Further complexity was introduced a complicated structure of partners and stakeholders in the programme, all of who had differing expectations, interests, constraints, and different ways of approaching the work. This created for the programme a ‘complex adaptive system’<sup>xiii</sup> in which many factors – internal and external – would combine to influence its development in predictable and unpredictable ways.

For the central delivery partners (The Fostering Network and SPC), complexity arose at all levels of the interface between central and local as well as from the nature of social pedagogy, and made for a challenging journey from the very beginning. The decision to co-produce the programme with local providers, each making their own substantial resource contribution by funding the site project leadership function and co-funding social pedagogues’ salaries and expense, as well as creating their own design ‘in action’, meant that the locus of control of and influence over the work shifted constantly. Added to this was the fact that the new approach was being introduced into mainstream services, highly pressured, subject to stringent regulation, and not delivered exclusively through managed professional staff (ie social care staff) but also through families in the community (foster carers).

The idea of a one-size-fits-all model has been comprehensively discredited in the social intervention literature<sup>ix;x</sup>, and it was appropriate to encourage local sites to find their own paths. However, this made it exceptionally challenging for the central team at The Fostering Network to shape the work in the ways that integrated the requirements and satisfied the expectations of the multiple parties involved. The evaluation data strongly suggests that some (though not all) of the challenges encountered on the central implementation journey might have been eased had there been greater attempts to specify core components of the design (or designs) to be 'demonstrated' from the beginning. We expect that the forthcoming qualitative impact data, especially from the carers who benefited directly from the programme, will show that some (and perhaps many) individuals found the learning powerful and inspirational, and will provide examples of the positive influence of the programme on individual care practice. The subsequent chapters of this implementation report also give examples of ways in which the policies and procedures of participating organisations were beginning to be adapted to take account of social pedagogic principles. However, for the organisations and staff that led the work at local level, the implementation journey as described to evaluators was one of continuous hard and effortful work, and although some sites did describe feeling energised and inspired by the end of the programme, the work was more often described as frustrating and challenging, even for those sites that looked most likely to sustain the work into the future. Though it is normal for innovation to be challenging, through the practical lens of implementation, we suggest that at the central programme level of Head, Heart, Hands perhaps there was an over-rejection of the idea of standardisation, and an over-reliance on 'experimentation' as an ongoing implementation methodology. There was perhaps too much of an expectation that local sites would themselves be able to design and capture 'how social pedagogy could work' in their own particular context, given the limited support that could be provided centrally in time and budgetary terms (two days per month per site), and given the basic unfamiliarity of such work to the sites. It may also be that there are fundamental, even irreconcilable, challenges in trying to implement through any kind of 'programme' methodology (which we believe implies a degree of standardisation) something as intangible and personal and complex in its interpretation as social pedagogy.

## The local implementation journey

Head, Heart, Hands was at least potentially a substantial intervention into business as usual in some of the smaller sites. Conversely it felt relatively small scale to some of the larger sites with large fostering services. All sites were however 'disturbed' (in implementation science parlance) to a relatively substantial degree by the programme, in a range of positive, and some less positive ways. These are discussed in detail in the chapters that follow and in the site case studies.

By the end of the programme, the broad body of implementation data showed that sites had fallen into two broad groups. Some had developed great enthusiasm for social

pedagogy as an approach as a result of having been introduced to it through Head, Heart, Hands. In four of the seven sites full implementation had been achieved and a degree of sustainability had been achieved by the end of the programme, in one case dramatically so with a plan emerging to train up all children's services staff in the approach. These four sites were the success stories of the programme: although not without effort, and still subject to any of the challenges experienced in other sites, they all considered that they were firmly set on path to continue with the development of social pedagogy in their local areas. All were intending to continue the employment of social pedagogues embedded in service teams and even to expand this to other teams, and all were intending to utilise some of the methods, supports and core resources originally developed through the programme (for example, using the core learning and development materials to train new cohorts of carers, and contracting with SPC organisations or individuals to provide ongoing external capacity).

But in three sites, full implementation had not been reached by the end of the programme, and sustained implementation therefore seemed either unlikely or relatively distant prospect. Pedagogues were leaving and no replacements were planned, and the sites had no clear strategic or operational plans to continue with the work, albeit that two expressed continuing commitment to using social pedagogy in their work and the third agreed that there had been positive benefits for some carers, some young people and some staff. Two of these site leads, despite having worked very hard, felt the project had not delivered the best value for that effort and third, though happy with the value, described a series of challenges that had only partly been overcome by the end of the funding period.

There is no doubt that the programme was a catalyst for many positive developments at local level. In all sites the programme clearly provided valued extra human resources (especially in the form of the highly skilled social pedagogues) and materials that were highly regarded. Positive disturbance was created by the social pedagogues in all sites. The pedagogues were a unique and often very highly valued resource, and even in sites that had previously employed pedagogues in social care roles, none had previously had social pedagogues employed specifically to develop social pedagogic practice service-wide. All indicated that the presence of the social pedagogues had many positive impacts, and all praised highly the quality of the practice that social pedagogues demonstrated. In some sites social pedagogues had integrated well into 'business as usual' and it was hoped that there would now be a permanent place for such skills in the service.

The core learning and development courses were also universally considered to have been skilfully delivered and well received. All sites valued the expertise provided by the SPC site support leads, and used this in various ways. The national programme also very importantly provided a focus and externally-validated credibility for the local work, arising out of participating in a wider initiative.

However, challenges and less constructive forms of disturbance also arose at different stages of the implementation journey. Whilst some of these were related to local level

factors (for example, how receptive 'hosting' staff teams were to the idea of a programme to introduce social pedagogy; local cultures and structures; and local operational priorities), some were created by aspects of the central programme's functioning (for example, lack of articulation of a clear narrative around the anticipated 'added value' of the programme, lack of early specificity around roles and remits, and lack of clarity about the design of the programme beyond its few fixed parameters, as we go on to discuss in later chapters). All sites described the central programme as constraining and frustrating at times, especially during the first half of the period, and some felt that time spent engaging with this was not always as productive as hoped. There were also challenges that arose which might have been pre-empted to some degree, we suggest, had more in-depth and focused exploration and installation efforts been undertaken.

In the four sites that were intending to take the work forward in specific ways, (and especially in three of them), the Head, Heart, Hands programme was acknowledged as having provided a significant springboard and a re-enforcing factor for those developments. However, it was also true that independent events and circumstances arising outwith the programme fundamentally influenced the position they reached by the end of the programme period. This is as one might expect in a complex adaptive system where no one factor ever fully accounts for how circumstances unfold. In one case, for example, the site was already working to expand social pedagogic expertise within their children's services workforce, and although Head, Heart, Hands was acknowledged by the site to have given impetus and acceleration to this, they considered they would have been pursuing this path notwithstanding the programme's existence. In another site that was intending to scale up social pedagogy, participants noted that a 'critical event' (a poor Ofsted inspection result) may have focused their strategic thinking and may have been influential and to a degree '*fortuitous*' in building positive support at senior levels for a decision to scale up social pedagogy not just for its own sake but as part of a wider, forward-looking and integrated improvement plan. A further site, in Scotland, already had a strong interest in social pedagogy and strong local networks prior to the programme that they continued to look towards and further develop as their own work in the field developed.

By the same token, in the three sites who had come to a pause at the end of the programme, again, special contextual and systemic factors were also almost certainly at play. Two were the only IFPs in the programme, which as noted in Chapter Four, were substantially exposed to the 'sharp end' of public-sector austerity and significant and increasingly pressure to reduce placement costs, over the life of the programme. Both were also without engaged strategic and corporate level support for the latter part of the programme, when confidence started to diminish. One was a local authority but a very small, geographically isolated one with a small, longstanding team and correspondingly particular organisational dynamics. In all of these sites, their social pedagogues did not hold fostering cases but devoted themselves mainly to Head, Heart, Hands and some supporting direct work, and in all of these sites social pedagogues struggled to feel fully integrated and

accepted into the teams in which they worked. They sought out allies, but a degree of polarisation was the result, with some keen advocates but also some very sceptical colleagues emerging. There was also a stronger narrative around the unforeseen costs of the project in at least two of these sites, and in (another) two, a degree of disappointment expressed by some colleagues regarding of the amount of direct work that was undertaken by the social pedagogues. Finally, in all of these sites, the SPC support was extensively focused on the social pedagogues (some of whom commented that without this, they would have resigned) but much less visible at the project lead and strategic levels than in (some) of the sites that reached sustainment. Here the SPC work at strategic level was more in the background (for example, taking a more 'back seat' role vis a vis the steering group). Although this was described as an intentional strategy to encourage local sites to feel ownership of the project, it did not have the desired effect in the long run and may have resulted in a disconnection of influence. In all of these sites, a stronger and more assertive central lead to articulate the importance and added value of the programme, and earlier work around clarifying roles and expectations of the social pedagogues' roles in particular (which had been problematic throughout, in all of these sites) could have been helpful.

## Chapter 4: Head, Heart, Hands in local context

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### In this chapter we:

- provide a brief overview of the key features of the seven sites that took part as local Head, Heart, Hands projects including their socio-geographic and demographic characteristics, their scale and type, and their prior familiarity with social pedagogy
- give a brief overview of implementation at national and local levels
- discuss the key differences and similarities across sites that were analytically significant for implementation, including context variables, and operational variables

**These chapters should be read alongside the more detailed site case studies** contained in the separate Appendix to this main report, where we trace the individual implementation trajectories and analyse the factors that appeared to be most influential in each area. [Readers may also wish to read these first].

In the chapters that follow (chapters 5-9), using the framework of ‘implementation stages’ for each stage of the national and local implementation journeys, we:

- highlight general learning and messages at different stages of implementation in detail

### Key features of the project sites

The Fostering Network specifically selected seven sites that were highly varied, intending to reflect the very real diversity that exists across the sector. The diversity across the sites was expected to illuminate how Head, Heart, Hands might be implemented in different fostering contexts. Four of the sites were located in England and three in Scotland. The majority of the sites were local authority fostering services but two were drawn from the independent sector. One of these was a voluntary independent fostering provider (IFP) and one was a private (for profit) IFP. The size, scale and structure of the sites varied considerably, as did the geographical areas covered and the demographics of the populations they served. All of the sites were connected to fostering teams, with the project ‘embedded’ in part of the fostering service, with the exception of one where the project was located within a Virtual School. Three of the sites could be described as very large, consisting of over 300 approved foster carers and two were very small, with less than 20 approved carers at the time of the research.

The Table 3 overleaf illustrates some of that diversity, and also shows Ofsted and Care Inspectorate ratings relevant to these sites at the start of and later on in the programme period<sup>xiv</sup>.

**Table 3 Characteristics of the seven sites in Head, Heart, Hands**

Site	Type (private, voluntary public)	Scale		Structure (simple, mixed, complex)	Prior familiarity with Social Pedagogy (minimal, moderate, extensive)	Locus of Head, Heart, Hands within site structure (embedded, mixed, external)	Ofsted/Care Inspectorate rating (outstanding, v good, good, satisfactory, inadequate)	
		Geography and demographics (large, medium, small)	N of approved foster carers (in 2013)				Upon programme commencement	At the end of the programme
Yellow	Public Local Authority, England	Medium Urban. Inner city population <500,000 Many with low-income high needs communities, and a growing affluent population.	110	Complex Children's services department based on the 'Unit model'. Two fostering units headed by consultant social workers	Extensive Previously employed social pedagogues in the Looked After Children service. One of the two Site Project Leads was a Social Pedagogue.	External Virtual School	Ofsted rated 'Good' (October 2012)	No further inspections
Pink	Public Local Authority, Scotland	Large Urban City with a population <1m Mixed affluent/less affluent	350	Mixed Family Based Care service divided into five teams	Minimal- Moderate Employed social pedagogues in residential service	Mixed Specialist fostering team where both social pedagogues based, but most carers in HHH in general fostering	Care Inspectorate rated 'Very Good' (July 2014)	Care Inspectorate rated 'Good' (November 2014)
Blue	Private Independent Fostering Provider, England	Medium (spread out) Rural/sub-urban in four geographically distant locations Mixed rural and urban population; wide geographic spread	135	Simple 3 (of 4) offices participating in programme	Minimal Employed a qualified social pedagogue as a fostering social worker in one office	Embedded Three of the four fostering team offices.	Ofsted rated 'Outstanding' (May 2012)	Ofsted rated 'Good' (October 2014)

<b>Purple</b>	<b>Public</b> Local Authority, England	<b>Large</b> Rural/ Sub-urban. Population, c.1m. across a large geographical area clustered around core towns	300 'fostering households'	<b>Mixed</b> The fostering service is divided into six teams covering 2 areas	<b>Minimal</b> Participated in the Department for Education's pilot to introduce social pedagogy into residential homes.	<b>Embedded</b> General fostering service, which consists of two teams.	<b>Ofsted rated 'Outstanding'</b> (2008)	<b>Ofsted rated 'Outstanding'</b> (January 2013)
<b>Red</b>	<b>Public</b> Local Authority, Scotland	<b>Small</b> Islands; pop <25,000. Isolated, mainly rural community.	13	<b>Simple</b> One small fostering team w/in Health, Social Care and Justice merged functions authority.	<b>Minimal-Moderate</b> Prior experience with social pedagogy following one-off training initiative in residential service in 2010.	<b>Embedded</b> Fostering team	<b>Care Inspectorate rated 'Very Good'</b> (March 2012)	<b>Care Inspectorate rated 'Very Good'</b> (November 2015)
<b>Green</b>	<b>Voluntary</b> Independent Fostering Provider, part of a large child care trust <b>Scotland</b>	<b>Small</b> Taking placements from local authorities across the country (rural & urban).	27	<b>Simple</b> One small fostering team w/7 staff members, w/in agency with wide remit	<b>Moderate</b> Prior experience of social pedagogy, SPC previously involved with the site	<b>Embedded</b> Fostering team	<b>Care Inspectorate rated 'Good/Very Good'</b> (December 2012)	<b>Care Inspectorate rated 'Very Good'</b> (January 2016)
<b>Orange</b>	<b>Public</b> Local Authority, England	<b>Large</b> Suburban. Population <1m. Affluent as well as less affluent areas.	300	<b>Mixed</b> The fostering service divided into two area teams.	<b>None</b> No prior experience of social pedagogy.	<b>Embedded (in 1 team only)</b> General fostering service, which consists of two teams.	<b>Ofsted rated 'Inadequate'</b> (February 2011)	<b>Ofsted rated 'Inadequate'</b> (July 2015)

## Key aspects of site context associated with implementation progress

Although the sample of seven sites was small and there are limitations on the general inferences that can be drawn, we detected some features of the context in which Head, Heart, Hands was being implemented that appeared to be influential on its implementation trajectory over time.

### Type of site (private, voluntary, public)

Five of the seven sites were public sector providers of foster care (local authority fostering services), and two were independent fostering providers (one in the voluntary sector, one privately owned). One of the independent sites was also very small, although organisationally part of a larger agency providing services across a range of social care needs. The other was relatively large within the terms of Head, Heart, Hands, with three (of four) local offices from one region participating in Head, Heart, Hands.

Did the **type of site** appear to have implications for the implementation progress made over the course of the programme? The answer appeared to be yes. The period of Head, Heart, Hands coincided with a period of increasing stringency in public expenditure across the board. This affected the fostering services in the study to differing degrees. Although local authorities also experienced pressures, IFPs may have particularly exposed, as local authorities across the country reported shifts in policy that placed greater emphasis on 'in-house' placements and less on making external placements through IFPs. We saw evidence of this in the fact that all local authorities in the Head, Heart, Hands group had increased the number of fostering households on their registers (sometimes very substantially) over the four year period of the programme, and competition for carers between providers reportedly also intensified over the period. The kind of placements being made to IFPs were also described by site project leads as having changed and to have become more challenging, with a tendency to place mainly the children and young people with highest needs externally. In fact, site project leads and strategic leads from both independent and public sectors described 'the market' as having totally shifted over the life course of the programme, with local authorities purchasing placements described as "*wanting more for less*". However, neither of the IFPs, both of who were rated by their relative inspectorates as high performing at the start of the programme, said they were easily able to articulate what social pedagogy was adding to their already good offer (see also Chapter 10). One IFP in particular felt this held back the ability to 'sell' social pedagogy to their client authorities. 'Risk aversion' in the system may also have affected IFPs disproportionately in this programme. As further discussed in Chapter 10, in IFPs, permission had to be sought by from the local authority social worker for unregistered social pedagogues to become involved in cases, or for social pedagogues to do direct work that departed from standard practice. Permission was not always straightforward to obtain. The process-driven nature of

the regulatory environment, whilst pressing on all sites, was also described as particularly stifling to innovation in IFPs, whose continuing ability to survive financially depends absolutely on the highest possible compliance with regulatory standards. This may have left less latitude (and appetite) for IFPs to experiment with innovation in ways that might distract from core processes.

### Scale of site (small, medium, large)

The size of the site was intentionally a key variable across the evaluation, with substantial differences between large, medium and small sites. Three sites had in excess of three hundred approved foster carers, two had somewhat over a hundred, and two had less than twenty. The fixed resources provided by the programme were shared by the two smallest sites (ie, they got half the social pedagogue salary contribution of larger sites, equivalent to 50% of one salary rather than two, funding for half the number of places for carers on the core learning and development courses, 20 places rather than 40, and half the allocation of SPC support days of larger sites). But in other respects, the package offered and the expectations in respect of reporting and participation in national programme groups and events was the same irrespective of scale of the site.

Of particular relevance here was the **interface** between **size of the site** and **the capacity of the project**. In the larger and medium-sized sites the project was described by most site leads as a relatively small intervention in a large system. For example the annual budget for the fostering service in 2014-2015 in one medium sized site was set at somewhat over £8.5m; compared to this the funding provided by the project was considered relatively insignificant in financial terms. The total number of foster carers registered, relative to the numbers that could be trained under the programme or who were likely to ever receive focused personal attention from the social pedagogues, was an important variable, given that places on the programme were strictly limited (40 per site).

Table 3 showed the overall numbers (234) and the proportions of carers actually trained in the core learning and development courses as a proportion of all carers in that site at the beginning of the programme. Notably, in the two smallest sites almost all carers attended the core learning and development course; and in one medium sized site they reached a relatively substantial proportion of the overall pool of foster carers (almost half). But in all others, much smaller proportions were reached, ranging from two fifths of the total pool to one in ten. Moreover, several local authority sites reported very substantial uplifts over the course of the programme period of the total numbers in their carer pool, resulting in proportionately diminished 'reach' of the project over time. Some sites ran courses later in the programme, paid for independently of the programme, which increased the proportion reached over time. However not all could afford to do this. In the majority of sites, site project leads acknowledged that by the end of the programme that the degree of penetration of the approach was still limited. All of these sites recognised by the end of the

programme that they had begun, but in no sense completed, a journey to introduce social pedagogy to their foster care workforce.

The question then arises: was the proportionate degree of reach to carers useful as an 'explanatory variable' for the purposes of our implementation analysis? The answer was, interestingly and perhaps counter-intuitively, no. As set out in the case studies (see separate Appendix) of those sites who reached a promising degree of sustainability by the end of the programme, 'reach' to carers as part of the programme, as measured formally by numbers accessing the core learning and development courses, varied substantially between eleven and forty percent. Two of those who failed to reach a point where sustainment looked likely in fact reached the greatest proportion of carers of all, and the other reached just under a quarter of their total pool. Clearly, attendance at the core courses was just part of the picture that helps us understand whether and how implementation gained traction over time in this diverse group of sites, and this is discussed later in the report.

## Structure and style

Introducing an approach little known in the UK and delivered day to day in sites by social pedagogues with in some cases limited in-depth knowledge of UK social work (and in all cases, no knowledge of UK fostering social work) was always going to be an ambitious target for the Head, Heart, Hands programme, especially as the SPC support time budget was set at only two days per month. It was bound to raise a host of challenges connected with differences of professional and organisational culture as well as personal culture, training and professional style.

**Structural complexity and configuration** certainly played a role. Most of the sites in the programme tended to have relatively traditional operational and management arrangements, with fostering services separated from adoption services, and clear lines of management and reporting arranged on relatively hierarchical lines. Some however had more complex configurations of teams than others. One site had a very non-traditional structure, having reorganised into multi-disciplinary units (and uniquely, located the Head, Heart, Hands project outwith fostering, in the Virtual School, see below); another had recently merged health and social care into a single division.

In the early phases of implementation, it was noted that a relatively traditional and non-complex configuration of teams may have facilitated the project teams to get started. In these sites, this seemed to keep the project focus firmly on fostering, and these sites tended only to outreach to other services and teams around children once the core project was established. They tended to establish a firmer basis earlier on in the implementation process for the project within fostering, first deepening, and then only later widening their approach. However, the *quid pro quo* was these sites later found that extending the reach of the project *beyond* fostering was challenging, and few had more than limited success by

the end of the programme. Mainly this extended to a few specific individuals with a particular interest in social pedagogy, rather than leading to engagement with whole teams or whole services. Diffusion beyond fostering was also a particular challenge for the two IFPs in the group, who were relatively more isolated from other parts of the care system for obvious reasons.

Conversely two local authority sites with more complex structure and more permeable boundaries across teams and service areas struggled to establish the project within fostering (and in one case, never fully succeeded). However they did achieve a much greater degree of system-wide engagement. Pedagogues in these sites worked elsewhere in the system in addition to fostering, and gained acceptance in other settings.

Not surprisingly, the relative **stability** of the wider site (as well as within the Head, Heart, Hands project teams) also appeared linked to the ease with which sites reached full and sustained implementation. For example, two sites underwent a re-structure of the fostering service during the lifetime of the project. Both projects survived to the point that sustainment looked feasible, showing that this kind of upheaval is not necessarily fatal to the process of innovation. However in both sites implementation was certainly disrupted at times as staff had to focus on other matters (including practical aspects such as office accommodation) and both social pedagogues and site project leads felt that progress had been interrupted, at times, by this.

The **culture and style of teams** connected to the project may also have played a part in influencing the implementation trajectory in some sites, although this can be a difficult construct to assess for external evaluators. In particular, sites that had well-established teams, a strong sense of their identity and relatively little professional or cultural diversity within them seemed to find the 'disturbance' created by the project, and the social pedagogues in particular as the main agents of change and disturbance, somewhat more challenging to accommodate. Recent experience with other 'innovation projects' was an enabling factor, and those sites with limited prior exposure to the innovation process (we exclude organisational restructuring here) were perhaps less well-prepared to manage the challenge and upheaval that inevitably accompanies introducing a new approach or a new way of working. However, one site that described itself as notably 'traditional' and whose team had no prior exposure to innovation bucked this trend. It was able to integrate the project very successfully over time (albeit not without effort), and showed that traditionally structured and run teams could embrace the social pedagogic approach successfully where other factors were favourable and leadership was strong and engaged.

Perhaps even more important was **organisational culture**, not just in word, but in 'deed'. Where front-line staff as well as senior managers and leaders firmly embraced what might be called a culture of continuous improvement, and expressed a personal enthusiasm for learning and innovation of all kinds as part of standard professional development, the Head, Heart, Hands project seemed to have an easier journey. No-one in any site appeared to

quarrel with the underlying principles of social pedagogy: child centeredness, respect for human potential, equity and empowerment, the significance of relationships, the importance of reflection etc, but some sites contained individuals – both managers and front line staff - who vocally expressed reservations (often from the outset) that social pedagogy was not an obvious fit for their team, or questioned the need for this approach and this innovation project. In some cases these people already felt committed to another way of working, by virtue of background or prior training; in most cases they considered their work *already* embodied the principles espoused by social pedagogy and resented their being ‘claimed’ by social pedagogy as special to that approach. As we discuss later, some staff and managers also reacted against the assumption underlying the idea of a ‘demonstration’ programme, and conveyed in the programme’s introductory publicity and narratives, that social pedagogy was automatically and self-evidently ‘a good thing’ that would measurably change outcomes. As far as these people were concerned the ‘case’ for social pedagogy had not yet been made, and some retained a degree of scepticism throughout, and engaged with social pedagogues and the project relatively little and at times with some degree of unwillingness. In all cases these people were described by colleagues as being in a minority, but their capacity to influence how other staff responded to the project over time, and how the agency as a whole supported the work sometimes appeared disproportionate to their numbers. It certainly set a ‘tone’ in some teams that could be detected by the evaluators in a range of ways, from how people talked about the programme, to how involved staff at the site became in the work undertaken by the social pedagogues. The fact that social pedagogues in these sites also could not hold cases was unfortunate in these circumstances, and perhaps to a degree helps to explain it, as it further narrowed their opportunity to become integrated and accepted into the team and to share the realities of their daily working life ‘shoulder to shoulder’.

**Leadership style** played an interesting and not entirely clear role in the implementation trajectory of the sites. Hard and fast distinctions could not be made; however it was possible to detect some broad differences of leadership style amongst the site project leads. This may have reflected their relative familiarity and confidence with social pedagogy as an approach, or it may simply have been a matter of personal style. As we noted earlier, this was a challenging project, bringing with it the potential for disturbance of both positive and negative sorts. It sometimes required intervention on the part of site leaders on behalf of social pedagogues, and also with and between social pedagogues, to smooth working relationships and unblock practical obstructions. Some site leads gave very strong and relatively directive leadership to the project; others were engaged but adopted more ‘empowering’ and adaptive styles, intervening actively from time to time but mostly allowing the social pedagogues to work things through for themselves; and yet others had in-principle supportive but relatively ‘hands-off’ leadership styles, where project leads took the view that social pedagogues were the best judges of how the project should unfold and how challenges should be handled. The only consistent factor that we could detect was that

the ‘hands-off’ style did not work well when strong individuals in established teams raised challenges and objections. Here, a clearly authoritative managerial presence and a degree of assertive direction was helpful, although some site project leads had received the message that assertive direction was not a style compatible with social pedagogic values<sup>7</sup> and were therefore became increasingly reticent to intervene. Others perhaps simply did not always have the time required to deal with situations as they arose. Pedagogues in this situation (some of whom were young and perhaps relatively inexperienced) probably needed, but felt they sometimes did not get, the level of back-up required when trying to challenge established ‘business as usual’ in the site. It also did not work well for steering the direction of the projects, all of which seemed to go in indeterminate directions at some point, and several of which never really acquired a firm ‘direction of travel’ that meshed clearly and effectively with the site’s existing business processes.

### **‘Authorising’ environments: Active corporate support, flexible non-hierarchical structures and distributed leadership**

Strong and active support from senior (corporate and strategic) leadership was identified as essential among evaluation participants. At the outset all sites enjoyed this kind of support, and it is doubtful that the project would have achieved any degree of traction in any site without it. Over time, in two sites in particular, corporate support diminished. In both cases the site did not reach a point where sustainment looked likely.

The extent to which the Head, Heart, Hands site project lead was positioned and able to make or influence strategic decisions was also linked with successful implementation. Decision-making was facilitated through a number of channels including the autonomy of the site lead, ‘flatter’ organisational cultures that promoting lines of connectivity and influence between project staff and those involved in setting corporate strategy, and an effective Head, Heart, Hands steering group with influence in decision-making powers. Where the steering group was relatively weak because it did not have corporate representation regularly or met infrequently, this appeared to be associated with ongoing problems in the progress of the project and negatively associated with eventual sustainment.

### **Prior familiarity with social pedagogy**

All sites but one had some degree of prior experience with the approach including two that already had experiences of employing social pedagogues as social workers. However, counterintuitively (perhaps), this kind of prior familiarity turned out to be a poor guide to how easily the site would implement Head, Heart, Hands, and may even have been a positive hindrance in some sites. In some sites, pre-existing familiarity with social pedagogy

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<sup>7</sup> The stress placed on learning through one’s own experiences in social pedagogy created a tension at times for site leads whose natural inclination was to be more directive. Some site leads understood (rightly or wrongly) that this meant that managerial or directive intervention would not be welcome.

both as a discipline and with social pedagogues as professionals clearly enhanced sites' confidence in employing, supporting and managing social pedagogues. This was helpful, since (as we later discuss), this group of social pedagogues - set up as they were in the role of 'change agent' - turned out to be demanding and mostly high-performing colleagues requiring skilled, sensitive and confident management. But in other cases, sites struggled to fully utilise the unique skills and attributes of their Head, Heart, Hands social pedagogues despite claiming close familiarity with the approach. Others achieved full implementation with little - or in one case no - prior knowledge of social pedagogy.

Prior familiarity may have reduced the salience and appeal of the Head, Heart, Hands project locally, especially at the front-line, and a sense of prior 'affinity' with social pedagogy turned out to be a double-edged sword. Whilst a sense of familiarity with the approach was a positive implementation support in the sense of creating a precedent for social pedagogic work at these sites, it may also have decreased the expectation that there would be new learning from the project. The early absence of a clear articulation of the expected contribution of social pedagogy to fostering practice was noted programme-wide. Its absence was particularly challenging where practice was already perceived by some to be broadly social pedagogic and felt to be of high quality prior to Head, Heart, Hands, and where the programme was then presented as novel and transformative. It certainly seemed to make it harder for sites to clearly ascertain and communicate the specific added value of the Head, Heart, Hands inputs for their own local work. Some staff also seemed to feel that this was 'old news', and questioned the rationale for the investment of effort and money.

### **Locus of the project and degree of 'embeddedness' in fostering teams**

Some sites spread the project across multiple teams; other chose to locate the project in one team rather than others, and in one case, Head, Heart, Hands was located entirely outside the fostering service, which was gradually being re-organised in the early years of the Head, Heart, Hands programme. The degree of 'embeddedness' appeared to be important for implementation progress, and in particular, splitting pedagogues up, in the desire to increase the 'spread' of their influence more widely, may in fact to have had the opposite effect, diluting their impact and also interfering with the social pedagogues' ability to form strong working relationships with one another.

Spreading the project across multiple offices or teams certainly appears to have hindered implementation, albeit to differing degrees across the sites that took this approach. Possibly the project resource was already spread too thin to withstand further structural dilution. For example, in one geographically spread-out site, the different teams involved in Head, Heart, Hands each had different management and staff teams, and most significantly a distinct culture. Each responded to the introduction of the project and to the social pedagogues in different ways (one broadly positive, one broadly unconvinced, and one somewhere between these two). The two social pedagogues, who each looked after different teams, may also have experienced more difficulties finding a productive co-

working style. No doubt this was in part because of the more limited opportunities to meet and co-work in the same location. In another site, Head, Heart, Hands was located in one of two teams, with one of the two social pedagogues line managed by the site project lead, but the second social pedagogue based in another team, geographically located away from the central functions. In spite of a good level of cohesion between the two fostering teams, who shared a standardised structure and regular communication and coordination between the two team managers, the second social pedagogue experienced difficulties in becoming as well integrated as their colleague in the 'hub' team. Although other factors were also at play here, including differences in personal and professional style and aptitudes between the social pedagogues that interplayed with these structural arrangements, this seemed to be another example where splitting the social pedagogues across teams did not serve the interests of integration and cohesion within the Head, Heart, Hands project.

One site chose not to embed the project within their fostering service at all. This provided an interesting example of a novel route to implementation, reflecting accommodation to specific local factors. At the start of the Head, Heart, Hands programme, the fostering service was about to be the final children's services team within the authority to be restructured into multi-disciplinary units headed by consultant social workers. Staff levels were low, the unit leads were not in place, and the strategic lead in the authority took the view that the project's interests would be better served by their being located elsewhere in looked after children's services. Since the Virtual School already employed a social social pedagogue, this team was chosen to host Head, Heart, Hands, with co-leadership of the project supplied by the deputy (and later head) of the Virtual School and a senior manager located in another team, who was a trained social pedagogue. For the first year, the three Head, Heart, Hands social pedagogues had limited connectivity with the fostering service, other than indirectly through their work to recruit foster carers to participate in the core learning and development courses. However, as time passed, and the restructuring took shape, connectivity increased. By the end of the programme, although they were perhaps not as securely embedded in the fostering service as in some other sites in the programme, the team had succeeded in forging good links. They were helped in this by the presence of two non-Head, Heart, Hands social pedagogues in the fostering teams, recruited after Head, Heart, Hands was underway, (one a consultant social worker and a former Head, Heart, Hands social pedagogue), with the intention of building critical mass across the system as widely as possible. An added bonus of having taken this route was that the Virtual School was strongly able to benefit from the social pedagogues' presence, and also perhaps that the development of social pedagogy in this site avoided being 'pigeon-holed' as an exclusively fostering project, and was from the outset seen an approach that had system-wide application.

## Chapter 5: Exploration stage

### What is ‘exploration’ and what could it have included for Head, Heart, Hands?

#### Exploration stage

##### Pre-decision

###### Assess need

###### Examine fit

-assess evidence (what works?)

-assess strategic alignment

-assess practice alignment

-assess operational alignment

###### Examine alternative options

###### Examine feasibility

-assess costs and resources requirements

##### Post-decision

###### Define and operationalise chosen approach

-clarify theory of change

-develop logic model

-specify outcomes

-specify differences from Fostering as Usual

###### Fix parameters

-clarify personnel, budget, timelines

###### Envision the long term

The initial stage of ‘exploration’ is a critical stage for any new innovation, whether a proven intervention well understood from its implementation in other places, or a brand new and largely untested initiative, as in the case of Head, Heart, Hands. It is a stage primarily of research, investigation, and ideation: ‘thinking around’ the proposed innovation from all angles and developing an articulation of why is being adopted, what it will achieve, how it will be put into effective operation in the short and medium terms, and what it might lead to in the longer term. It is helpfully thought of as divided into two sub-stages, one that takes place before a decision to proceed with a specific innovation is made, and one that continues, deepens and focuses the investigation after a decision to adopt is made.

The **pre-decision** stage should ideally assess and verify that the need for the innovation is real, examine how the new approach will fit or ‘align’ with what is already in place including what is known or hypothesised about its effectiveness, and including strategic, operational and practice fit considerations. Although it is not required that a new innovation should ‘fit’ perfectly with existing services, (indeed, as noted in Chapter 2, it is usually fundamental to the principle of innovation that it does not ‘fit’ neatly but instead ‘disturbs’ and creates challenge and friction – to a degree – for the existing system), fit should be analysed carefully at this stage so that points of disturbance can be predicted and thereby managed more effectively.

The concept of ‘fit’ also applies in other senses: in particular, the feasibility of the proposed innovation should be carefully considered, including what it will cost, and whether the implementing organisations have the capacity (skills, knowledge, resources, expertise, time, inclination ) to carry the necessary tasks through to completion. If there are partners involved, crossing organisational boundaries or cultures, how will they fit together? Implementation analysts refer here to the concept of ‘readiness for innovation’, a

combination of preparedness ‘in spirit’ and ‘in practice’<sup>xv</sup>. In a devolved, national programme, such as Head, Heart, Hands, this work needs to be done at both central and local level.

**Post-decision**, but before any ‘installation’ activity takes place in specific locations, a key function the exploration stage is to define and operationalise (make concrete, and make ready to put into practice) the new innovation. Ideally, this includes articulating a theory of change and the logical model that describes the steps along the pathway to the desired results, specifying in precise terms the anticipated outcomes, and fixing key boundaries (overall costs and budget, human resource requirements, timeframes for example). In the case of Head, Heart, Hands, specification of how, precisely, fostering in a social pedagogic way would be different from, and an improvement upon, good practice in fostering ‘as usual’ would also have been very helpful at this stage. This later surfaced as a major point of contention between champions and some others, and was never fully resolved. We called this ‘*defining the added value*’ of social pedagogy. Envisioning the longer term, and outline planning for sustainment, if that is an aspiration, ideally begins at this stage too, however far off it seems, so that decisions influential on later sustainment are taken as thoughtfully as possible. In a devolved programme, much of the post-decision work can and indeed should be undertaken by the central team. However, local sites would ideally want to verify that they understand and can deliver the proposed operational model. They would ideally also verify that the ‘added value’ defined for the programme is, in fact, likely to be sufficient added value in their specific local context to be worth the investment of effort they will have to make.

## How the exploration stage unfolded at the central level<sup>8</sup>

The evaluation suggests that the exploration stage was one of the weaker stages of implementation for this particular programme. This unfortunately created some ongoing challenges that then required much energy and effort, later on, to resolve. This is not necessarily uncommon, however, in the process of innovation, and over time with learning and growing confidence, to some extent some although not all of these challenges were either successfully overcome, or circumvented.

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<sup>8</sup> The evaluation was not commissioned at the time of the *pre-decision* exploration phase. We were also not able to obtain a retrospective view of the process by interview with the original leadership at The Fostering Network, as this team left part way through the programme. This inevitably leaves gaps in our understanding of these earliest parts of the initiative, which is based on the retrospective observations of other stakeholders, as well as our own observations on how the programme unfolded over time. We were somewhat better sighted on *post-decision* exploration (the stage of defining and clarifying operational aspects of an innovation).

## Pre-decision: Examining fit between central programme partners

In terms of **fit** between the structure of the programme team and its overall architecture (the stakeholders and the division of responsibilities between them) at central level, there were some fundamental challenges that emerged early on, with differences emerging both between and within stakeholder groupings. Some were especially focused on the practical and pragmatic aspects of delivering and national programme; others were concerned with reflecting the principles of social pedagogy faithfully.

### Practical experience and expectations

The Fostering Network felt strongly that they held all the necessary practical fostering expertise and national recognition to lead this programme. They were in many ways ideally placed to lead the programme, having a long-standing track record in delivering funded projects, working across the whole fostering system from the ground up, and campaigning for systemic change. As an organisation offering direct support to foster carers, they were also familiar with the kinds of challenges carers would face in implementing changes in their own practice if other parts of the system were not supportive. However, they were always clear that they were not experts in social pedagogy, and at the exploration stage, agreed to work with the SPC who would have such expertise.

The Fostering Network were appreciative of this: As one senior staff member put it:

*The expertise of the SPC has really helped. They brought something new, with a fresh look.*

But working together was an especially challenging prospect given that the SPC, as a consortium of three bodies rather than a single organisation, had not worked formally together under contract in this way before. They sometimes offered different perspectives on the best way forward, and sometimes also seemed rather ‘unbending’ to other stakeholders:

*Respondent 1: The (SPC) are passionate believers in the model (and that) it works. They have a very what I would call, and I don't meant to be judgemental, but it's a very purist model. That I think has also been quite difficult at times for both the Fostering Network and the funders...on several occasions when we've talked about - particularly I think in relation to looking at what the core components may be and is that 'social pedagogy lite' [ie: a reductionist way of thinking] or not - and that's been a very difficult conversation I know. (Some have found that) purist approach quite constraining and quite difficult.*

*Respondent 2: Yes, absolutely, and also...the social pedagogues themselves don't necessarily have a consistent line and that's confusing for people as well in the sites. So I think it is very purist, it's not consistent necessarily. [Funding board members]*

Members of the SPC noted:

*There was a lot of learning within the SPC as well, in terms of you know our way of working together [...] We have got two very [different organisations]. There was some mistakes made to be honest and I think again that comes back to [the] pre planning stuff. [...] Even putting the training pack together, a lot of work went in to that, really you know we [SPC members] were in very different places and we had different conversations beforehand about it. [SPC Member]*

*(For me the learning is) there's something about, 'Could there be an agreed understanding about exactly how we (the SPC) would support the sites, given that we were different organisations working with different sites?' There was this understanding that (developed that), no, we would (each) do what we felt necessary with those individuals. (But) I do (now) think that it would have been helpful if we'd really been clear about what our roles were. [SPC Member]*

The SPC, although expert in social pedagogy, had mixed practical experience in relation to fostering. According to some perceptions which were articulated at both central and local level, although not necessarily accepted by the SPC:

*I think at times there have been challenges with them not understanding enough about fostering... the timetables of foster carers, their responsibilities, and understanding what really goes on in a fostering household, in terms of the range of some of the restrictions (they are subject to) [The Fostering Network]*

### Relationships and expectations

The working relationship between the SPC and The Fostering Network continued to be in development for some while. Both partners expressed a degree of mutual difference and unfamiliarity at the outset, and although this ameliorated over time, it continued to create frustrations on both sides in reaching agreement on how best to work together. Perhaps because the delivery partnership was engineered and to some extent brokered by the lead funder, rather than having arisen through previous collaboration or because of pre-existing mutual interest, some members of the SPC had the sense that The Fostering Network may have experienced the delivery partnership as (to some degree) foisted upon them. As one person framed it: *"It feels a bit like we were bunged on them"*.

The SPC felt that this had led to a long journey:

*Part of the frustration was the stuff about building relationships with TFN, which took a while... there were different cultures in place, different expectations. I am not sure that The Fostering Network had quite conceptualised what the programme involved... so there was a lot of retrospective reflection. Things (eventually fell) into place but there was something about the sequencing which actually created a few challenges which we could have avoided otherwise" [SPC member]*

In particular, tensions were caused throughout because many of the social pedagogically-trained stakeholders (SPC and social pedagogues) placed great emphasis on doing **all** their

work in ways that reflected social pedagogic principles, and considered this should also be encouraged in others involved in the programme. Although in fact we found no-one who quarrelled with the core values of social pedagogy, as far as they understood them, the perception that wholesale adoption of social pedagogy ‘in action’ in all aspects of the programme’s design, planning and conduct was required was perhaps a step too far for many stakeholders. It certainly had not been anticipated at the outset by any of the non-pedagogically trained stakeholders, it is fair to say. Thus over the years we were told of frequent time-intensive and protracted discussion about how meetings should be planned and conducted, how decisions should be made, how work should be produced, how thinking and leadership styles should be adapted, and even how whole organisations should function according to the principles of social pedagogy. The pedagogically trained stakeholders (SPC, social pedagogues) made the case that this was part and parcel of creating the conditions necessary for social pedagogy, as values-based approach, to flourish, but others commented:

*None of us thought that we were going to be asked to in any way adopt a Social Pedagogic approach (in all things). Why would you? Normally you don't, if you've got an outsourced training course, you don't have to go on it yourself. Whereas Social Pedagogy is fundamentally about a way of being, and because its values based - increasingly we were being invited - pressurised perhaps - to work in a (social pedagogic) way [The Fostering Network]*

At site level, later comments from some site project leads echoed this: they felt at times that the project was over-spilling what they thought should be its proper boundaries. One site project lead, for example, felt that the small Head, Heart, Hands team in the site “*have no right to dictate aims for the whole organisation*”.

There was also in this early exploration stage a failure to clarify mutual expectations around the scope of the programme and the respective roles and responsibilities in relation to it. The central management team at The Fostering Network explained that they had (initially at least) expected the focus of their work to be solely on programme management and administration:

*The thinking at those early stages about this programme didn't envisage the scope and complexity of the programme. When I came on board, this was not envisaged as a major scope, major complex programme. Our job was classic programme management. Budgeting, planning, monitoring, reporting. That was it, no content because all of the work was going to be done by the sites, with support of the SPC consultants.... so it was quite a simple vision.... [The Fostering Network]*

There were also definite misunderstandings around the scope of the programme between some of the delivery partners:

*When we started, we didn't know this was about culture change. I think I thought it was about training foster carers. No one said, 'This is about major culture change and organisational development.' If they had, I think a lot of people would have run a mile. None of our local authorities would have bought a culture change programme. [The Fostering Network]*

The SPC on the other hand recalled that the original application form completed by interested local sites spoke of system change (albeit in much less clear concrete terms than other aspects of the proposed programme<sup>xvi</sup>) and they considered that their initial proposals had clearly set out their own analysis that 'systems and culture change' would be a required supporting objective. They also expected that specific plans, resources, and activities much beyond training carers and staff would be required to achieve this, and saw these as to be worked out together from the beginning.

*Right at the beginning, we envisaged the role of the SPC, as being the organisation that would drive this forward. I think we all envisaged having more dialogue with The Fostering Network in the beginning but that didn't transpire. (Dialogue) about the how of what is it that they wanted us to do, what is it that we would be offering, what kind of role they saw the site support leads as having. The practical stuff. We had written (the proposal) as a basis for conversation, but, in fact, what we never did was sit down and have a conversation around that. [SPC member]*

Perhaps because of time constraints and the need to press ahead, this difference seems not have been resolved and not to have led to clear plans for how to translate this aspiration into practice. It may also speak to the relative intangibility of 'systems change' and 'culture change' as constructs, which are difficult to define.

Thus, stakeholders generally agreed that very little discussion took place during this early exploration stage regarding the detail of the SPC's initial proposals before the programme officially began. Some felt that essential early debate for sense-making and developing the practical expression of the aspirations in the proposal, did not happen.

### **Pre-decision: Assessing need and examining fit between programme and sites**

Key learning from implementation science concerns the importance of alignment and fit between innovations and the systems into which they are inserted, as discussed in Chapter 1. Some feasibility research took place prior to the programme in 2010 and 2011. A scoping report was prepared a year or so before the commencement of the programme by academic experts in social pedagogy<sup>xvii</sup>, but this pre-dated the specific plans for the programme. It therefore focused on high level issues in introducing social pedagogy to the UK rather than site-level characteristics that might be a good (or poor) fit for such a programme. Sites completed application forms, and after sites were selected, a series of meetings were held with corporate leads to ascertain commitment. Nevertheless, as the

programme progressed, it became apparent that the extent and depth of analysis of the alignment of the project with strategic, operational and practice considerations within the sites could have been more focused and more extensive. In retrospect it is clear that whilst all authorities and agencies shared an interest in social pedagogy as a promising and in some cases familiar approach, it aligned better with some sites than others. The degree of initial alignment did not (we must stress) wholly predict implementation success by the end of the programme perfectly, and there were exceptions: for example, one site that seemed less well aligned at the outset was, in fact, one of the implementation success stories of the group. However, in the three sites whose implementation faltered the most, it seemed that certain aspects of the site in terms of strategic context, operating model, style of management or culture of staff were from the outset less well aligned with the style, philosophy and operational flexibilities required by social pedagogy than elsewhere. In at least one site, the designated site project lead for example almost certainly did not choose the role, nor particularly welcome it. In others, some managers and senior front-line practitioners said they simply did not see the need for the project. With the benefit of hindsight through an implementation lens, it is possible (we suggest) that a more systematic analysis of these factors during the exploration stage (either by sites themselves, or by the central delivery programme team with assistance from the sites) could have been helpful. This could have flagged the most likely points of 'disturbance' and helped to anticipate some of the challenges that arose as the programme moved on. As one social pedagogue explained, using the example of a client in a therapeutic setting:

*I definitely think (you need to carry out) some form of assessment or analysis of what the need is of the organisation you're trying to introduce social pedagogy to. ...(Because) despite them saying, 'I want this' ..( in fact,) they're questioning everything, they're putting all these obstacles in the (way). Social pedagogues (coming into an organisation) need to see the organisation as if they were a client. Then that triggers all the normal things you would do if it was a family or a young person, where you would walk alongside and say, 'Okay I have this idea of implementing this Head Heart Hands here, but that might not be your need really... It's not about me doing the programme. It's about you going on the journey of the programme [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3].*

This element of the exploration stage speaks also to an issue regarding the 'fit' of social pedagogues to sites, which we discuss later. Knowing more about site organisational culture might (arguably) have helped optimise the selection of particular social pedagogues best suited by virtue of style or experience to working within sites' existing structures and cultures (granting that we acknowledge this pool was practically constrained, and the demands of social pedagogy 'in operation' in the UK were not well understood at this point.)

## Post decision: operationalising the approach; fixing parameters, envisioning the long term

### Familiarisation

Post-decision, exploration at the national level could have provided an opportunity for **familiarisation** for the central programme management team - who were going to run the programme on a daily basis but who were very new to the field of social pedagogy - with the core principles and practice of the approach. In fact, the central management team were never able to undertake the same core learning and development course that sites had experienced. Over time, this became a source of regret for them and for others:

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*I wish we'd gone on the course courses. (With hindsight) I think we should have asked the SPC to do some learning and development with us...(at the outset) because we were floundering more, in a way, than the sites were. We (the central management staff) were new to fostering, (central lead) didn't have a social work background and none of us were particularly practice-minded, and social pedagogy: none of us understood it. We could have shortened our learning journey a bit more, perhaps. [The Fostering Network]*

*I think if you then give your name to such a programme but you don't know actually what you're trying to sell as such, I think there is a danger, especially with something that is not so definable and so dependent on where you actually practice and who is practising and what the aim is and all these kinds of things. I think (one) would do better by taking more time into really finding out - or trying it out first for themselves to find out: okay so how could we benefit? I remember that I was really disappointed when I found out that (The Fostering Network) actually did their training after the first year of the programme. I was like, 'Really?' Because there was such a long period (for exploration) before they employed the social pedagogues and things. Why would you not considering doing training whilst considering it? [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

The Fostering Network team were however to undertake some other familiarisation activities (including a visit overseas to see social pedagogy in action in Germany and a two-day staff course in early 2014), and made huge strides in understanding the approach over the course of the programme. But the absence of a formal and timely familiarisation process inevitably reduced their confidence in supporting sites, especially in the first year of the programme. It also may have resulted in less confidence in challenging SPC members on certain key issues (like whether the programme content could be specified more clearly, for example). Rather, they described themselves as deferring to the SPC, as the expert holders of the content knowledge:

*The first thing we heard (from the SPC) is "There is no manual in social pedagogy". I think the SPC - they would never - but if you could have got them to write down the steps or stages or the different things or the active ingredients...but they want people to learn, and learn not by being told, but by learning and experiencing. So we had, I would say, it was a huge frustration, a massive frustration for myself - I'll speak for myself, but I think for the rest of*

*our team here - the SPC would never tell us what this thing was meant to be. I just didn't know what Social Pedagogy was, it took me years. [The Fostering Network]*

One social pedagogue commented:

*I think (at the beginning) there seemed to be anxiety (at The Fostering Network) around what they could do or what they couldn't. They were the umbrella organisation but I think they let the Consortium take the leadership away from them by being influenced (by them). It's difficult to take on a lead of programme if you don't know anything about it. [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

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### **Defining and operationalising the approach**

The key tasks of **definition and operationalisation** of the programme that would normally (ideally) be undertaken early on at the exploration stage were also not undertaken at this stage. The central delivery partners have said was to allow space for local response and development, and work did not begin on this until much later in the programme when the 'aspirations paper' was drafted once initial implementation was well underway. As we have noted, in part this was due to a vision of the programme as 'emergent' at local level, reflecting the local contexts and conditions of an intentionally diverse group of sites, and the idea that the work of articulating the shape of the approach would be mainly done at local level. There was also perhaps an assumption built into the programme design that because there was no 'manual', no firm written plans or guidance of *any* sort could or should be made by the central delivery team. Also, the degree of specificity of guidance expected may have been differently envisaged by the delivery partners:

*Q: Did you (The Fostering Network) have a strong vision of what full implementation would look like?*

*R: Not until we wrote the Aspirations document in ...2013-2014. Then it emerged and made sense.*

*Q: Did the SPC have a clear vision?*

*R: I think they must have had, based on their experience and the fact that they wrote a list of the characteristics of social pedagogic foster carers. But they never – and very carefully and deliberately – didn't write down what it would look like. I think they felt they'd written enough down, because they'd written down ...a direction of travel – principles, the theories they were going to base it on [ie, in their proposals and in the reference tool] – whereas I like to know where I'm going! I like to have a plan... I think there is probably a half-way house. [The Fostering Network]*

This was also a reflection of the fact that there are multiple ways of defining and framing social pedagogy (such that authors speak of 'pedagogies' not pedagogy<sup>xviii</sup>), and some stakeholders felt that the exploration stage had not allowed time for this to be worked through. As this social pedagogue observed in retrospect:

*Time is needed and the acknowledgement that even though you're employing social pedagogues and you have social pedagogues in the SPC, that there is not just one understanding of social pedagogy and that needs to be worked on. So people need to be given time and space to clarify how they want to communicate with each other, how they want to work with each other, what maybe their working definition of what social pedagogy might be for the sake of the programme. [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

Nevertheless, it was from early stages clear that sites at local level hoped for more guidance and specification of what the journey would be like and how the overarching goals might best be tackled; see Chapter 6, Installation.

This lack of shared understanding of the dimensions of Head, Heart, Hands from the very beginning shaped the implementation experience both at national and at local level for all stakeholders. It made it difficult to specify roles, particularly for the social pedagogues, and meant that activity plans had to be developed 'from scratch' in all sites. It gave the initial and full implementation stages a strongly local feel. This may have been considered a virtue (and, the SPC insist, a necessity), given the exploratory nature of the programme. However at the same time it provided little in the way of a consistent basis from which to learn about the potential for future replication beyond these specific sites. It also, in our assessment, prevented a clear vision of the longer term direction of the work. And demonstrating a general principle of implementation - that an implementation stage skipped will always have to be revisited - as the programme unfolded the two teams (SPC and The Fostering Network) were pushed back many times into time-consuming discussions of how best to approach and operationalise the programme. As evaluators, at the end of the first year of operation we raised this issue in our interim report and suggested that work be undertaken to start to define core and variable components. A process to develop both a theory of change and a stronger articulation of both programme components and programme roles began, culminating in an 'Aspirations Paper' that was circulated in final form to site in 2014. By 2015 there was also a theory of change document, prepared by the SPC and The Fostering Network, but it perhaps came a little too late to help shape the implementation of the programme in real time. There was, by the end of the programme, still no comprehensive written account from the centre of the key parameters and components of what had been delivered across the whole programme, and why.

### **Planning for systems outreach and sustainment**

The exploration stage also did not involve any concrete planning for **wider systems outreach** or 'wider stakeholder engagement' as it was known in the programme terminology. There was considerable *activity* undertaken by the early central leadership team from the outset to engage with senior policy makers and influencers at national level. For the local level, however, no *specification* or strategic plan was produced for what 'systems outreach' should or could involve; for example, each site was allocated

(approximately) eight places on the learning and development courses for staff at a mix of levels, but the specification of who/what type of staff should be invited (and more critically, *why* and to what end) was left open. The lack of structured systems outreach in many sites (and the seemingly *ad hoc* nature of the reach even in those that had some success (see Chapter 9) stemmed in part from these early gaps in the central plan.

Finally, no concrete national-level planning **for sustainment** was undertaken at this point. This could (arguably) have been congruent with the 'testing' model of programme delivery, where a programme might not ever be taken to sustainment unless proven to be effective. However it was not congruent with a 'demonstration' approach, which already believed the approach was proven and wanted to demonstrate how social pedagogy could be scaled up on a systemic basis. There was perhaps some lack of clarity in the thinking about whether it was *Head, Heart, Hands* (and its specific package of resources) that would be the target of sustainment, or *social pedagogy*. Thus, there was not a plan at this stage for how to train further cohorts of foster carers in the larger sites with many carers in their pool, in part because the training was seen as part of the *Head, Heart, Hands* package (which was time-limited and did not anticipate funding training on a long-term basis), rather than as part of rolling out 'social pedagogy'. A particularly concrete illustration of this which dated back to the exploration stage was, for example, the lack of consideration at the beginning of the programme about how the intellectual property boundaries between the SPC, The Fostering Network and the sites were delineated, and how these might impact on sustainment in the longer term. As full implementation unfolded and the sites proactively began to consider scaling up, sites realised that they would have to re-contract with the SPC if they wished to continue delivering the training programme in the form used in *Head, Heart, Hands*, and using the same materials in full, since the materials belonged to the SPC. A protracted process of re-negotiating how resources could be used then ensued (see Chapter 9 for further discussion). Stakeholders gave differing accounts of this to the evaluation team, and we do not attempt to rehearse or tease out the debate in full. We simply note that it did impact on plans for achieving sustainability at site level, and might have been anticipated. Some sites felt that it very much affected progress in the second year of the programme and held back what would otherwise have been more energetic progress towards equipping their own social pedagogues to deliver future formal training to carers and staff.

As one interviewee noted, on the subject of training:

*We had that year when we couldn't do anything because of, well, the programme sorting out [...] what we were allowed to [do]. [Social Pedagogue]*

## How the exploration stage unfolded at the local level

At site level, whilst the sense of excitement and positive anticipation was high, formal exploration and early planning was also limited, and there was for all a sense expressed of a leap (of varying proportions) into the unknown. The level at which the project was positioned in local sites was relevant here: service teams in local authorities and indeed in most other types of providers are not usually called on to design new initiatives or project delivery models. None of the site teams who participated had experience of this had prior expertise in service design and innovation planning; nor would they have had the time.

Some sites however and perhaps surprisingly did not establish a specific budget for the project, and only two generated written local implementation plans that set out a direction of travel despite repeated encouragement by the central management team at The Fostering Network. As an example of how this impacted on later implementation experiences, during the first year of implementation and to some extent during year two, all site project leads and many of the staff we spoke to for the evaluation complained that the project was taking more time and incurring more direct costs than they had expected, and some experienced a sense of project 'drift' (see Chapter 6).

This also became a source of difficulty later when it became clear that the central management team and local sites each expected the other to produce guidance or a plan for what would be happening over the lifetime of the project. Other examples also surfaced, including one site who well into the second year of the programme began to deeply question the degree of alignment between social pedagogy and their longstanding commitment to therapeutic approaches in fostering. Whilst there is no suggestion that such a debate was in any way a bad one to have, it was described, at the end of year two, as something of a hurdle to be jumped, and it was perhaps surprising that this issue had not been anticipated and tackled earlier on in the planning of the project. Certainly, it seems likely that had the site fully understood earlier how 'deep' the programme wanted to go (for example, in terms of reviewing their operating policies and procedures) they might have realised sooner that this was work that required attention.

### In summary

In practice, the exploration stage is a stage often characterised by more enthusiasm than realism. Generally, stakeholders are in a hurry to 'get started' once an innovation is being seriously considered, and commissioners often start the funding clock ticking at this point, hastening the end of the thinking stage so that 'action' can commence. As a result, more detailed aspects of critical reflection during the exploration stage are often overlooked in real world implementation, and this may have been the case for Head, Heart, Hands.

Our overall impression, after three years of observation and data collection, is that the exploration stage was perhaps the weakest of all the stages of implementation for Head,

Heart, Hands, both at central and at local level. Set against an 'ideal' model of what an exploration stage might have included, the evaluation found many gaps in thinking and planning (at varied levels) that had important consequences later on.

Funders themselves may have overestimated the ease with which such a challenging programme could be put into action:

*We were funding a model of working that would test the value of a different approach to supporting foster carer. But at the same time... there was an attempt at cultural and systems change, though quite honestly I'm not sure that were ever really defined what that...would really look like. I think there was a lack of clarity, actually, about what we could reasonably expect at the end. [Funder]*

Such an approach invites creativity but creates risks:

*I think (the leadership) were really very passionate about (the programme) and I think they were very excited about it. I think they were very knowledgeable in terms of what we knew about the outcomes could have been. (It was) a really strong match with what we'd already always been saying as an organisation about what we believed was right for foster carers and for children and young people in care. So I think there was a real passion and real excitement about when we get to the end, it'll be the right thing to be doing. I don't think there was a lot of knowledge in the organisation about what the process of getting to the end would feel (like)... It was very easy to be very passionate about what we could achieve with this, but very difficult to be knowledgeable about what the journey would be. [The Fostering Network]*

## Chapter 6 Installation stage

### What is 'installation' and what could it have included for Head, Heart, Hands

#### installation

Funding in place

People in place

Prepare organisation(s)

-Awareness Days and site visits

-project leads and deputies in place

-social pedagogues appointed

Prepare system

-Taster Days completed

Prepare staff

- social pedagogues inducted

-roles clarified

-specify outcomes

-Orientation courses completed

Prepare community

-Head, Heart, Hands launched and widely communicated

Installation is the stage where specific plans are made and structures put in place to support the establishment of an innovation in practice.

Ideally, installation needs to combine practical steps to establish the structures that will actually deliver the innovation, and steps to 'prepare the ground' (the system, the agencies, the staff teams, the communities) amongst those who will be most affected.

By definition, most of the work of installation happens at the level of the operational project site, although in national programme, some of these processes may be dependent on central management and assistance. In the specific case

of Head, Heart, Hands, two key elements at the installation stage were particularly important for setting the optimum conditions for the implementation journey to come. One was getting key resources in place – and especially the key human resource of the programme **the trained social pedagogues** - with the right 'alignment' to the context and the job. Another was **preparing and creating readiness** within the sites for the programme and programme personnel to be welcomed and accepted into operation.

### How the installation stage unfolded at the national level

Overall, as we noted by end of the first full year of operation in winter 2013, sites had been largely successful in achieving the key milestones that formed the necessary elements of the installation stage. With support from the central programme delivery team, they had employed and inducted 13 social pedagogues, and mounted 19 'Taster' events and 22 Orientation Courses, and were to all intents and purposes ready to commence implementation. The central programme delivery team were substantially occupied during his period with assisting with the settling in of newly recruited social pedagogues; helping sites to plan and commence the awareness-raising and introductory events of the programme at the start of the year; and then by the end of the year, helping sites to set up for the initial implementation phase that involved delivering the core learning and development courses.

The installation stage was productive and achieved its key milestones. However, at the national level, some of the issues that we discussed as part of the exploration stage continued to be manifest at the installation stage and began to crystallise and create problems in various ways. In particular, the **lack of a clear specification** for what the programme would involve at site level had left individual sites unsure what specific activities should be prepared for the longer term:

*Sites didn't really understand enough about what their commitment was going to be...we could have been clearer (about this)...more clarity about roles and functions and in terms of what would be the expectations of sites... They didn't really know what they were taking on.*  
[The Fostering Network]

Towards the end of the installation stage this began to manifest as a degree of anxiety in some sites, and was mentioned by all sites in evaluation data collection at the end of the first year of operation.

*I wished I'd have known [about the implementation of the programme] in the beginning.*  
[Social work Team Manager, W1]

*In retrospect should we have done a little bit [planning in the early stages]? [We could] have done a little bit more because it took me a lot of effort to bring the team up to speed* [Site Project Lead, W1]

This led to a strong focus on the immediate - ie, awareness-raising and recruiting carers for the core learning and development courses – but less thought at this stage was given to the likely activities and structures for the second and third years of the programme, and sites often described themselves as waiting to be told where programme was going.

One team manager noted:

*I think it was because people didn't know what to expect, what it was about. I think they were... we've had quite a difficult journey as a team.* (Social Work Team Manager Wave 1)

One social work manager noted that:

*In terms of the implementation [and how it should be accomplished...] I am not sure that either we or The Fostering Network have done enough to broaden the understanding of this.* [Social Work Team Manager, Wave 3]

One site lead noted that:

*We didn't have a clear direction right from the beginning. There was a kind of "let's experiment, let's see where we go."* [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]

## Getting the social pedagogues in place

In relation to the getting the **social pedagogues** in place, there was general agreement by the end of the installation period that their **job role within the site** had had not been sufficiently clear in advance of their installation, despite the wide ambitions for the programmatic role of social pedagogues and considerable thought by the SPC. At this stage, the professional role of social pedagogues in other countries was not well understood by any stakeholders except the SPC and social pedagogues themselves, and it was not clear to everyone what social pedagogues in Head, Heart, Hands would actually do on the front line to achieve the expected transformations.

*You know, I felt quite sorry for [the social pedagogue] because I hadn't... you know, the team weren't prepared enough so they were kind of like: 'Why would we need to have a slot in our team meeting for social pedagogy? What do we need to do?' you know?*  
[Social work Team Manager Wave 1]

In some if not all sites, both social pedagogues and existing staff said they felt inadequately prepared for the transition, in spite of the hard work done by the SPC and site leads during this period. Each site was expected to have its own distinctive way of deploying the social pedagogues, but according to social pedagogues and to their managers, this role was largely emergent, opportunistic and sometimes reactive rather than thoughtfully planned. It varied substantially from site to site, making it challenging to generalise about the optimal role for these critical 'core components' of the programme. Analytically, this has also made it difficult in some respects to disaggregate aspects of the role from aspects of the individuals who performed the role. At the programme-wide level, the openness of the job descriptions for social pedagogues was described by the programme team as intentionally exploratory, with a desire not to constrain local development. To some extent this may have been appropriate. But with the benefit of hindsight, the lack of specificity at the outset in this particular regard was a particular challenge for local sites, and made the early job especially difficult for some social pedagogues, as was extensively discussed in the first interim report on implementation. There appear to have been misunderstandings arising from lack of clarity about expectations, and lack of effective communication about these expectations between key individuals. As we discuss in the next chapter (Chapter 7, initial implementation), this played out in various ways as the programme got underway. It also left a space that the social pedagogues each filled in different ways. Whilst this allowed for substantial creativity and innovation, to which some social pedagogues stepped up with flair and success, it also resulted in some social pedagogues being expected to give leadership and strategic shape to the day to day activities of the project for which not all were sufficiently suited or experienced.

In addition to aspects of defining the job roles of the social pedagogues themselves, their **role in relation to other key stakeholders**, and especially in relation to the SPC as programme designers, implementation advisers and supports, was also not clarified during the installation phase. This led to ongoing difficulties in later implementation stages in some sites. Implicit in the structure of the programme, which described the SPC (but not social pedagogues) as ‘delivery’ partners was the creation of what was perceived by some to be a hierarchy in which SPC members were initially seen as the greater ‘experts’, giving guidance and having support responsibilities towards social pedagogues<sup>9</sup>. This changed over time, and indeed some social pedagogues had no difficulty with this structure, willingly and gratefully accepting support and guidance and finding it indispensable. However, some more experienced or more confident social pedagogues rejected the idea that the SPC were more expert, and rejected the ‘supervisory’ element of the role. (This is further discussed below as part of initial implementation). Many social pedagogues were also surprised and disappointed to find that they were not to be given a role in co-delivering the initial core learning and development in sites, but were simply to be participants; see below.

### Preparing the ground

Much of the central effort of this period was focused on helping sites to prepare the ground (in their agencies and wider systems, and amongst staff and the wider community of stakeholders including foster carers). The focus here was through the planned taster and orientation events, together with other communications activities. At the central level, a key contribution was the shaping of the narrative about Head, Heart, Hands and social pedagogy, and about what the programme was expected to achieve. There was an upbeat and aspirational narrative that stressed the innovative nature of the demonstration for the UK, its proven effectiveness elsewhere, and the potential it held for UK fostering. During the early life of the programme, champions for social pedagogy from the national team often used a narrative of ‘*transformation*’ at introductory events for Head, Heart, Hands: the programme was described as aiming to transform practice and the outcomes for children’ in foster care, and aimed at re-shaping the relationship of foster carers to the foster carers within the fostering system so that carers were *empowered* and *professionalised*. At the time, this powerful language genuinely reflected the genuine degree of enthusiasm and aspiration of The Fostering Network central team and the SPC. For some, it was described as motivating and exciting.

However in terms of **how expectations were managed**, we can now see with the benefit of hindsight that some of the excitement surrounding the introduction of Head, Heart, Hands may perhaps have been unhelpful in the longer term. At the time of writing, the current language of the central delivery partners is much more measured<sup>xix</sup>. But for some

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<sup>9</sup> In the sense of supervision of pedagogic practice and support for pedagogues’ roles and development within the project. Line management for statutory and case work naturally continued to obtain in sites in the usual way.

established personnel in sites hearing about the new programme for the first time, the initial rhetoric was unfortunately experienced as alienating. Some front-line staff felt criticised, and did not accept that their practice needed ‘transforming’. Even amongst those intimately involved in the programme and largely positive towards it, staff in some sites felt from the outset (and continued to feel by the end) that social pedagogy was different from high quality social work mainly in the degree of emphasis it placed on key principles, rather than in its ‘fundamentals’:

*The very first meeting I can remember [a funder] talking about one of the most important things of social pedagogy was reflection and I can remember almost snapping at them: “but that’s basic social work! “ Of course social work is based on reflection.... If you can’t reflect you’re not going to get anywhere! I think it’s probably fairly true to say that it has got lost in social work over the years, but it is nevertheless something fundamental too. I expect people to reflect on what they’re doing and learn from it. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

*When you start analysing it (social pedagogy) and demystifying it, it may be that some of that stuff you’ve already been doing but there was no name for it. Or self-awareness and relationship building, you would’ve been doing under a different guise, maybe because you’re a counsellor a social worker. So it gives names to lots of things but it does also give space and time to reflect on how you’re working ....I think it makes you a much more reflective practitioner. [Social Work Team Lead, Wave 3]*

In the course of the evaluation, social pedagogically trained stakeholders and some strongly engaged programme participants addressed the perceptions that social pedagogy was not anything very different to what many referred to as ‘good old fashioned social work’: they strongly believed that it was different. However it remained the case that many programme participants at all levels remained unconvinced, even at the end of the programme.

Some senior and very experienced staff also felt put off by the sense created of ‘joining a (particular) movement’ when their experience told them there were many different ways to work effectively with children. There was established a slight sense amongst some from these very early stages that proponents of social pedagogy were prone to ‘evangelising’ or over-claiming for the approach (interestingly, many discussions about social pedagogy over the years of the evaluation have used the language of religion: ‘faith’ ‘converts’ ‘believers’ ‘agnostics’ ‘evangelical’ etc). Although some newcomers to social pedagogy (as will be shown in the forthcoming evaluation report on the outcomes of the programme) were genuinely deeply enthused and inspired by the approach, others were not. As one social worker commented:

*When social pedagogy first came on board I thought it was one of the ‘happy clappy’ band, [...] and everybody had to join in and we’re all happy and everything. We all had to go about singing social pedagogy is the best thing - that is how I felt. And sometimes when I sit and listen to people who are so indoctrinated by social pedagogy and I think yes I was right.[...] I do think it can be cultish at times: that is my own personal belief and sometimes (that is) how people have been talking. [Social Worker, Wave 3]*

One strategic lead commented:

*I'm not interested in joining a movement: I'm interested in promoting better outcomes for children and young people [Strategic lead, W2]*

Some site leads also thought that expectations had been raised to levels that could not be satisfied:

*The (SPC lead) describes social pedagogy as being transformational. That hasn't hit me. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

*The language has changed from what they were using at the beginning. So in the beginning it was language like, 'We're going to change the world.' That was language that was used, and actually 'we' (in our authority) don't feel that you can change the world! What we can do is influence our organisations and then send ripples out. That's what we can do. We can't change the world. So I think some frustration grew, that was the language they were using, whereas this was our reality, so there was a bit of a mismatch of expectation I think. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

Unfortunately, the aspirational narrative at this stage combined with so little concrete elaboration of how the 'new' approach differed in practice from 'good old fashioned social work' or how the new professional staff would be different from high quality social workers began, for some, a train of sceptical thought that became, for some, more entrenched as time went on.

*I don't have a sense that social pedagogy has (changed) our approach: and the reason that I say that is that people will tell you [that social pedagogy] allows us to describe better what we've been doing forever! I don't hear people saying it has caused me to change my whole approach: some people might say it has helped me think differently, but it wasn't a case of "oh my god when that came, I thought the end of the world had arrived and hey ho things are better now!" [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

*So there is this view of not being sure what we are taking on because this is organic and if it's going to work, it has to percolate through all of the organisation. But then - what is it that we're demonstrating? Yes, there are lots of theories (in social pedagogy). Yes, it (social pedagogy) is all about people. Well yes, we're all about people (in social work), and a lot of those things are (also) taught on other courses! (But) what are we actually delivering (through this project)? [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

## Monitoring and progress assessment

**Monitoring and progress assessment** systems were also introduced by the national team during this stage of implementation, modelled on standard project management approaches including the submission of regular progress reports designed to flag emerging issues (a 'traffic light' system), combined with narrative reports, written by social pedagogues, capturing stories of how social pedagogy was being used in the sites to good

effect. There were also a range of meetings, review groups and events arranged by the national team for site project leads and for all the social pedagogues. Monitoring activities are also, of course, an essential part of any effective programme management system, and were also one of the only ways for The Fostering Network management team to keep connected to the work on the front line, given The Fostering Network's more 'back office' role in supporting the programme relative to the SPC's role and higher visibility in sites. They also reflected the high value The Fostering Network placed on good governance of programme expenditure and on detailed reporting of operational activities for the funders, who were regarded (by more than one group of stakeholders) as particularly demanding in this respect. The creation of the groups was thought to have helped to give a sense of a national programme identity and enabled project leads and social pedagogues to meet together as a 'community of learning'. This gave an important sense of being part of something bigger, and over time, created relationships between certain sites that have endured as ways to share practice.

*It's given me all sorts of experiences. It's been wonderful meeting with the other sites, fabulous. I just learnt so much from them, and I've contributed... [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

However, as the programme went on, the time demands of monitoring and convening and the considerable direct costs of the latter (especially for geographically distant sites) became an issue, 'creating a lot of busyness' (as one social work team manager put it). These contributed to a sense of fatigue and placed a strain on relationships, especially between site project leads and the central management team, and was a dominating feature of the evaluation interviews at the end of 2014. In retrospect, by the end of the programme, many site project leads considered that too much time had been taken up by these activities, especially by social pedagogues, in "feeding the machine" of the programme relative to doing direct work in support of social pedagogy. It also added to a feeling that the time costs of the programme to sites were proliferating. One interviewee noted: *We seem to be feeding a great administrative beast and not really getting much back for that.* And another, in Wave 2, described the reporting requirements as 'unnecessarily complex'. Many site project leads and their strategic leadership colleagues had also become concerned that the programme was expanding and growing in uncontrolled ways, without strategic consideration of the likely benefits of some of the new initiatives, or the ability of some sites to fund such activities. One senior strategic lead in one site commented "we signed up for A,B ,C, but the Fostering Network have been asking for D,E,F and even G and H recently!".

It was generally acknowledged by the end of the installation stage that this had created a disproportionate burden on site project leads, and also on social pedagogues, and that this for while had impeded work in some sites. Site leads also felt they were being 'supervised' rather than 'supported' by the programme systems, and questioned the appropriateness of

this in a devolved implementation model where local sites were weaving in the Head, Heart, Hands work amongst many other high priority duties and statutory functions.

In response, the central team adapted their requests and models for reporting, reducing regular monthly reports to bi-monthly frequency and subsequently discontinuing them. By the middle of year two and through year three, most site leads agreed that the adaptations made had been very helpful, and were a good example of responsive programme management:

*The Fostering Network were very good in accommodating changes (in response to) what needs were. They were able to respond to some of the needs. So that I think has worked really well [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

## How the installation stage unfolded at the local level

As is generally the case in innovation programmes, the installation stage took some time and was a period of intense effort, taking in most sites the whole of 2013. As will be seen in some of the case studies (see separate Appendix), and the interim report prepared at the end of the first year, sites were exceptionally busy during this stage of implementation, which also overlapped during 2013 with the next stage, with commencement of the core learning courses. See Table 4 below.

**Various activities** were scheduled by central design. Day-long ‘taster’ and two-day long ‘orientation’ courses for foster carers, staff and stakeholders within and around the sites were held in all sites. These were intended to act as introductions to key principles and values of social pedagogy and give an insight (through participation) into how experiential learning methods would be used in social pedagogic practice. The orientation events were envisaged as essential for anyone who would subsequently attend the longer ‘core’ learning and development course; the taster events were introductory and also a first attempt to engage and inform the wider system around teams and around children. The events were designed and delivered by the SPC, although attendance lists were compiled and hosting was provided by the sites themselves. Organising the taster and orientation events was for most sites a significant task, especially in larger sites that ran several such events, and this led to a relatively long time horizon for some sites in reaching the next key milestone, marking the start of initial implementation (ie, delivering the core learning and development courses). The exception was in sites that ran core training and taster and orientation days in linked tranches, rather than waiting for the introductory events to be fully completed before moving to core learning and development for the identified cohort.

**Table 4 Attendance figures at Taster events, to end 2014**

	Red	Pink	Yellow	Purple	Orange	Green	Blue
<b>Taster Days</b>							
N of events	1	3	2	4 <sup>10</sup>	4	2	3
<b>Total attendance</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>87</b>
Foster carers	-	20	60	45	58	2	59
Supervising Social Wkrs	2	35	6	39	34	2	20
Managers	4	5	3	5	9	6	5
Other internal	-	120 (all Council employees)	42	75	44	14	3
Other external	25	65	-		32	16	-
<b>Orientation Courses (2 days)</b>							
Nr of events	1	4	4	7 <sup>2</sup>	4	2	3
<b>Total attendance</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>59</b>
Foster carers	9	62	50	91	69	18	41
Supervising Social Wkrs	5	11	2	21	8	5	11
Managers	-	-	1	5	1	-	5
Other internal	11	1	15	33	11	7	2
Other external	1	-	-	-	-	6	-
Chld/YPersn	-	-	1	-	-	-	-

<sup>10</sup> This site continued to run course through 2014

## Getting the social pedagogues in place

Another key process characterising the installation stage at local level was the **appointment and induction** of social pedagogues. The mixed group of social pedagogues were appointed (mostly) from outside the UK to the programme through a centralised process managed under a separate contract by one of the SPC partner bodies, who specialised in this work. Searches and initial vetting were carried out and a pool of applicants created from which sites could choose (within a limited selection)<sup>11</sup> during the autumn of 2012, when much still remained to be clarified about the needs of the programme at local level. Sites attended a central gathering to assess and interview candidates in the pool for themselves, and a process of negotiation between sites and with social pedagogues then took place to find a match for sites' and social pedagogues' preferences. Some sites for example only wanted to appoint social pedagogues with qualifications recognised in the UK, in order that they could undertake statutory supervision of fostering placements. Some social pedagogues had personal preferences about the location of the site. In the event, not all sites and not all social pedagogues got their 'first choice', and the necessity to have staff in place, from this limited pool, almost certainly constrained decisions in some cases.

This method of search and appointment was probably the only method likely to be effective or feasible, given the lack of an indigenous workforce of qualified social pedagogues in the UK at the time of the programme's start, and the process was for most sites relatively swift. Most sites had social pedagogues in post by early 2013, although in two sites social pedagogues left during the installation stage and these sites had to re-recruit at the end of 2013.

Despite often huge personal efforts by site project leads, who helped with practical arrangements such as finding accommodation for social pedagogues as well as host of other aspects of the move, the process of induction and settling in of the social pedagogues was bumpy in some places. This was in part due to social pedagogues' own needs for support, including sometimes with language as well as with cultural and practical aspects of living and working in the UK. But it was also influenced by unclear expectations and a lack of readiness amongst colleagues and in the team and agencies into which social pedagogues were being placed. As we noted in the interim report after the installation stage, some had a very difficult first year.

For example:

- Site project leads indicated there was a general expectation that once social pedagogues arrived in post, they would undertake the work of recruiting the carers to the various learning events. A number of social pedagogues, however, commented that they had not expected to play such a key role in this process, but

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<sup>11</sup> In two cases, sites were already employing 'incumbent' pedagogues on other work, and had these individuals included in the pool of Head, Heart, Hands-funded personnel.

had expected other staff to do this. In some sites, delays in starting this vital work may have resulted.

- Some social pedagogues expected to spend significant time working more strategically, across the wider site and even wider national context, and less time in direct practice with families. Again, this created difficulties where project leads expected - indeed required - that social pedagogues should spend substantial time on the operational rather than strategic elements of the project.
- On the other hand, some social pedagogues also reported (especially during the first months of their appointment) that incumbent social work staff and managers seemed to have formed the view that social pedagogues were at least partly in post in order to carry out 'crisis intervention' work with their most difficult cases. This had not been the social pedagogues' understanding of their role (although some had reportedly stepped up to it, with generally positive results).
- As the project unfolded into later stages of implementation, some site project leads became increasingly disappointed that social pedagogues were not undertaking more direct work in families or using direct work to model social pedagogic practice for other staff. By contrast, in at least one site, social pedagogues felt obstructed from undertaking direct work because existing colleagues had not expected this to form part of the role and were anxious about disturbing existing relationships with carers.

*Even though we have a really good leadership team, sometimes (there was) lack of clarity and strategy and clear messages from the top down (about what my role was, and) I still had to fight my way in, in my team. So the fact that up until six months ago there still was a backlash (from some colleagues) when I phoned foster carers. It took a while, didn't it?! [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

And in another site, one noted

*The difficulty is, if there is not this caseload, then you can't properly show directly what the difference [between social pedagogy and fostering as usual] is. I mean you just can try to explain it, which might make it hard [Social Pedagogue, W1].*

**The 'fit' of social pedagogues to sites and between social pedagogues** in site teams also began to emerge as an issue in some cases during the installation stage, and took some time to resolve. Many social pedagogues were coming to these posts from overseas, and some were young and relatively inexperienced. Sometimes the Head, Heart, Hands project was their very first experience of the UK social care sector. Ten of the 13 initially recruited had prior work experience in social care roles in a European country (some substantial, some less so), and most (all but three) had worked in the UK before. Two had also worked as part

of the programme funded by the UK government to introduce social pedagogy into residential child care. However not all were familiar with the particular type of organisational setting in which they were employed for the purposes of Head, Heart, Hands; and importantly, none had previously worked in the specific field of foster care. Pedagogues in the initial pool, and those available later to fill vacancies that arose as the programme progressed, were therefore mixed in terms of experience, confidence and style.

In most sites, most social pedagogues reported feeling satisfactorily integrated into their teams by the end of the programme. Given the challenges involved of importing a 'new' kind of professional, all from outside the UK, into established social work system, this was a major achievement. But for most this did not really feel fully accomplished until the programme was well into full implementation. There were also at least three sites where this had not happened satisfactorily, and the practical role and 'added value' of the trained social pedagogue was still very much in question amongst some colleagues and managers even at the end of the programme period. In one site which had opted not to retain social pedagogues in the future, the social pedagogue commented:

*I wasn't expecting there was going to be (such a) lack of support and understanding within the organisation [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

With hindsight we can detect that some aspects of misalignment between individual social pedagogues and the work sites expected they would do had already become apparent at the installation stage. For example, it was sometimes clear that the initial 'fit' of individual social pedagogues to the job roles in terms of style and skill could have been better.

One of the social pedagogues themselves noted that:

*I think what would have been good would have been [...] more thinking about actually what kind of people do we want here? Not just the social pedagogue, what kind of social pedagogue? Because yes, you can be lucky and find someone who quite fits, but yes, also the opposite.*

One SPC member noted the difficulties of balancing the exciting potential of an 'open specification' with the realities social pedagogues faced on the ground:

*I think there is something about clarity: about what the role was going to be. That is a really difficult one because to me it was a fantastic opportunity to have - I wouldn't say 'a blank sheet' exactly - but (you needed to work) within certain parameters to do things... to take hold of it, to actually say: no let's do it this way, what do you think? And move it forward like that. (But) feedback from the social pedagogues ...about ..the role was: "What am I supposed to be doing here? It is not quite what I was told it was going to be!". And so, expectations being different to the reality. (In the end in this site) one of them adapted to the organisation... to British hierarchy - better, in a way. So, there is something about getting the right people, getting the right social pedagogues, and something about being ...clear about what*

*expectations are, you know what the project is about and what they will be doing within it.*  
[SPC member]

This might perhaps have been most effectively addressed at the installation stage by more a systematic analysis of what the role required, what the particular existing team dynamics might best suit, and what the culture of the site might demand. As we have noted, social pedagogues were change agents and therefore expected (indeed required) to generate a degree of 'friction' in the existing system. However this is a challenging and exposing role, demanding considerable confidence and resilience. Almost all social pedagogues in Head, Heart, Hands, it must be said, displayed these qualities to a considerable degree. But nevertheless, some were probably not sufficiently experienced or well-suited to this role, or to the particular culture of the sites where they were employed.

As one interviewee noted about a particular social pedagogue:

*[The social pedagogue in this site], not being the kind of person to push themselves forward, hasn't had as much traction [SPC Member].*

And one site lead, observing a lack of fit between (some) social pedagogues and (some) sites, commented:

*It always feels like 'them and us' - the social pedagogues and the site leads: it always has done. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

Some sites (or more accurately, some people within sites) seemed to find the accommodation of the social pedagogues into 'business as usual' especially challenging. Whilst it is granted that some of these difficulties could not have been anticipated in advance, and some were likely due to differences of personal and professional and cultural styles, some perhaps were predictable: These included:

- The fit of specific skills to the expected role: some social pedagogues enjoyed and were highly effective in direct work with children and families. Others took a more intellectual approach, were interested in developing theory and tools, but were less competent in or confident about doing direct work:

*I think when [social pedagogue] came to their first meeting, there was a lot of talk about how they would help us in relationships with children and relationships with foster carers, but as it transpired [social pedagogue] didn't really have any residential or fostering experience...the relationships with the children and you know the difficulties that come (with working with vulnerable children) has been a bit harder for them. [Site project lead, Wave 3]*

- Similarly, although the social pedagogues were quite clearly conceived within the programme as key 'change agents' and as much more than simply high-quality

practitioners, none of the social pedagogues came fully equipped to take on the degree of change management that the role required. They were not trained or coached for this difficult role prior to the commencement of implementation, although by necessity, much of the SPC's work revolved around this kind of coaching and mentoring in later stages of the programme.

- The fit between social pedagogues' own values and style and the culture and ethos of the site, where in some cases better 'matches' might have been accomplished: variables at play here included social pedagogues with a particularly direct or uncompromising style; social pedagogues with a more intellectual than practical approach; sites where resources were especially stretched or contentious; sites where existing senior staff or managers did not regard change as necessary; and so on. On the whole, the combination that seemed to lead to a smoother implementation journey was one that included experienced social pedagogues, able to be pragmatic and flexible, and who placed a high value on integration into existing teams by demonstrating shared priorities, willingness to 'muck in', and fluid boundaries around what they did and did not do; in sites that were used to a degree of diversity in professional practice and where leadership was to some extent distributed (i.e. across people, roles and levels) rather than strictly positional and hierarchical.
- The fit between the social pedagogues who would work together: in the five sites where there was more than one social pedagogue, whether the site reached sustainment appeared to be associated with how well and how effectively the social pedagogues 'gelled' and performed together as a team. This type of alignment was extremely important, given what we have said about the multiple interpretations of social pedagogy, and where it worked well, it was a very substantial asset; where it did not, it was a problem:

*R1: I think we [two social pedagogues] work really well together and that's a huge strength we have since the very beginning. [X] and I liaise and work really complementary with each other so we always, when one can't do something, the other will do it or one will supply what is missing.*

*R2: We both have different skills and different strengths and we play to those and our team was quick to notice those and quick to use them [Social pedagogues, Wave 3]*

*R: (In this site) I think we've got really similar view of what social pedagogy is and I think what makes it so interesting is we're all from different countries and we've still got ideas from our own training that feeds in and then we inform each other about it and it was never, 'I'm not even interested in it'. That never happened because we are all very open and we all take it all on board and I think our general understanding of it is very similar. I didn't expect it necessarily, but it was then a joy to find it being so easy.*

*Q: Does that help you work together?*

*R: Yes, definitely. I think it is quite nice to have on one form the reassurance where you have a shared value base and then as well the beauty of having different experiences and different knowledge, but without this feeling of being threatened or competition within that.*

*Q: In the previous two years (you told me) some of the time for the social pedagogues here was spent negotiating between yourselves who would do what and what would be the best way to approach things. (There was) a sense of frustration that you had to do that before you could get on and do your work. Has that improved over time?*

*R: Of course you still juggle around different ideas - but it's nothing compared to ...the tension and as well the uncertainty of, 'If I say this how is it going to be interpreted?' and all that kind of pre-thinking. [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

### What we said at the end of Wave 2 : The role of Social Pedagogues

“The role of social pedagogues within the sites was a substantial focus of the Wave One report, where a number of challenges around clarifying their role were identified. In the second year of programme operation the role has continued to evolve. In the Wave One report, we identified that there was, in the design of the programme, a lack of clarity about the relative balance of social pedagogues’ work between direct social pedagogic intervention work and work aimed at education and galvanising organisational and systemic change. At the end of the second year of the programme, the issue appears to be less that there is a lack of clarity, and more about understanding that it may not be reasonable to expect pedagogues to undertake work with such a wide remit. It has been very hard to for pedagogues to please everybody to whom they are accountable within the project: for example Site Project Leads and SPC Site Support Leads in some sites questioned the extent of time that social pedagogues spend in organising activities instead of in the client-facing work that is necessary to reinforce learning for carers, model social pedagogy in action for staff and families, and potentially to impact on placement stability. Conversely SPC site support leads in some areas were concerned that social pedagogues were not spending enough time on work designed to promote systemic change.

In the Wave One report we noted that there was considerable diversity within the population of social pedagogues hired to work on the project, and variation in pedagogues’ own professional styles and understanding of how social pedagogy should be practised in the field. We noted that there had been some tensions between pedagogues, who had not always been able to support one another within and across sites as effectively as had been hoped. In the second year of the programme’s operation, relationships *between* social pedagogues within sites seemed generally to be easier. Some of those who had been most disaffected or had found the role not as expected have left, and there has been a degree of reconfiguration of roles in some sites. In most sites, even where pedagogues considered they have different professional approaches, a way has been found to work effectively together and in some sites there is a now sensible division of labour reflecting the different strengths of the pedagogues. However the differences between social pedagogues in their interpretation of social pedagogic practice are reported to persist, with implications for the crystallisation of understanding about social pedagogy within the wider site.

Relationships between social pedagogues and *social work colleagues* were also a focus of the Wave One report, with considerable difficulties in some sites. At the point of Wave Two data collection there seems to be much less confusion about what it is that social pedagogues ‘do’ and the integration of pedagogues within fostering teams is now widely accepted and welcomed by most if not all colleagues. Most pedagogues now also feel much more confident about their understanding of UK systems in children’s services. In some - although not all - areas social pedagogues and social work colleagues are now working much more closely together, particularly where social pedagogues are either formally case holding, or have had other opportunities to demonstrate effective social pedagogic practice in action. This is not to say that all problems have disappeared, however. There is still a sense amongst Site Project Leads, social work team leaders, SPC site support leads and indeed pedagogues themselves that social pedagogues often have a very ‘direct’ approach and style that does not sit well with all colleagues. Conversely, some social work colleagues in some sites have continued to be unhelpful to pedagogues, which has created management and personal challenges for those involved. Issues around personal relationships and professional roles may therefore still be creating definite barriers to progress in some sites. There were also many comments about the difficulties for pedagogues from overseas working with the British culture of ‘politeness’ (by which was meant a tendency to avoid direct challenge and not to speak plainly) which can make the more direct style of some other cultures seem insensitive”.

### Interim implementation report, Evaluation Team 2015

## Project leadership

Project leadership was exceptionally important in this programme, and the fact that all sites stayed the course of the four year programme period was, we were in no doubt, substantially due to the tenacity and hard work of site project leads. At the installation stage, many site project leads first realised what they had taken on, and the sense of demand (according to most) never really diminished over time.

As one explained:

*I think it would be fair to say that the huge difficulty with this programme, and my guess is for all the sites ....is that this has been an add-on to my work and to (others') work. No additional time whatsoever given to us, so it has been a huge thing, huge...it has doubled my job. I think that for [SPC Lead] it has been enormously frustrating that I haven't been able to concentrate on it as much as they wanted me to. I just haven't got the time. Plus, the logistics of the Programme have been fairly horrendous - in terms of geography - travelling times etc. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

## In summary

Installation is a key stage in the implementation process that sets the scene for what is to come. In innovation processes, what is required for effective installation is by definition often unclear, and all the more so if the innovation being put in place is a fluid and highly exploratory and cannot be or has not been clearly specified.

Installation in Head, Heart, Hands was a busy and highly productive stage in which all stakeholders, central and local, worked extremely hard and with success to achieve the milestones. The focus was jointly on getting the new social pedagogues in place, raising local awareness about social pedagogy, and in preparing the local systems and people for what was to come as part of the local project.

Despite effort to support the process of settling in social pedagogues by the SPC at central level and the site project leads at local level, almost all social pedagogues considered that their experience had been made difficult by the fact that to some degree, colleagues in existing teams were relatively unprepared for the project. Some described reactions that were not wholly welcoming, and in a very few cases, bordering on hostile. This response was noticeably more marked in teams where the selected social pedagogues were not from the outset in dual roles (see initial/full implementation chapters), and in most teams it ameliorated over time and was much less in evidence by later stages of implementation. But it came as a surprise to social pedagogues, who not unnaturally thought that they were coming to sites who had actively volunteered for the programme and positively wanted their work and skills. Our analysis suggests that a combination of factors were at play. First,

inadequate specification of the role of the social pedagogue from exploration stage onwards first began to crystallise at this stage, with sites arguably unable to prepare for a role that would take a form as yet unknown. This may not have been helped by the introductory narrative shaped at central level which was 'high-level aspirational' but lacked tangibility and concrete explanation of how the wholesale transformation promised would be achieved. Second, there is a wide consensus that social pedagogues appointed for the programme were highly skilled, highly committed and showed extraordinary resilience and tenacity in some cases. However, there may have been some degree of misalignment of a few individual social pedagogues to the role and to the context. Whilst difficult to identify in advance, arguably a better specification of the role during the installation stage and a better analysis of the optimal fit of people to organisational contexts and team cultures might have helped here. Certainly, some more constructive preparation and discussion with teams *before* social pedagogues arrived around what it would mean to have 'change agent' embedded in one's team would almost certainly have been helpful. In those teams, it seemed very likely that more attention at the installation stage to preparing teams and listening to and directly addressing staff anxieties could have been very helpful in getting things off to a better start.

## Chapter 7 Initial implementation stage

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### What is initial implementation and what could it have included for Head, Heart, Hands

#### **initial implementation**

**Commence using innovation in practice**

**-core learning and development started**

**Encountering challenges and finding solutions**

**Early implementation outcomes**

**-some trained fostering staff using social pedagogic thinking and tools**

**-some trained foster carers using social pedagogic thinking and tools**

**Making changes to 'business as usual'**

**Setting up data and monitoring systems**

**Getting and using feedback**

**Outreach for systems change**

The initial implementation stage is frequently experienced as the most exciting and energising phase of implementation, when the new innovation is finally brought into practice. There are usually both continuing and new challenges, and early effects (both positive and negative) start to be observed. It generally involves both anticipated and unanticipated challenges, and requires fleet-footed 'adaptive' leadership and management, in particular to start making the adjustments to usual practice and business processes that may be required to accommodate and support the new ways of working. At this point, data systems and monitoring processes on the innovation itself

can commence, and the process of gathering feedback and using it can also start. Finally, work on system adjustment or advocacy may need to be attempted (again) in order to accommodate and nurture the new innovation.

In the case of Head, Heart, Hands, the chief and most tangible marker of initial implementation was the delivery of the core learning and development courses by the SPC. These were the centrepiece of this stage and the key vehicle for training the pre-defined cohort of 48 carers and staff (half in the two smallest sites). In the sites, this was followed by the start of direct work by social pedagogues with carers, children and young people, and staff colleagues. With the benefit of a better understanding of what the core components were in most sites, we would now also include the continuing support to site project leads and to social pedagogues by the SPC as key initial implementation 'markers'. Direct work by social pedagogues also began in sites during this stage, but is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

## How the initial implementation stage unfolded at the national level

### Introducing the innovation to practice: the core courses

The **commencement of the core learning and development courses**, an eight-day course in all sites, was the eagerly anticipated high point of this stage for Head, Heart, Hands, and indeed, for some it was the high point of the entire programme, and “*started the project with a flourish*”.

Site project leads for example noted that:

*I think the [core courses] started us off. Having that first flurry of engaged adopters made a lot of difference [...] I think [we] needed it for [our] starting point. You, know, we wouldn't be here without Cohort 1.*

*At the training (which I attended), there was a feel-good factor amongst those groups of people; we shared something, “we've experienced something that doesn't normally happen”. Lots of carers were saying “I get this, it is all quite simple stuff, and I feel quite comfortable with it”.*

There was a noticeable spike in enthusiasm in sites by the end of the courses. The courses went on throughout 2013 and into early 2014, and in most cases there were three per site (18 courses in 2013-2014). Overall, sites reported 234 participants attended; see Chapter 2. This was a substantial achievement, especially given that there was an expectation that carers would struggle with the commitment amongst all their other many daily demands.

The national decision to have the SPC design and deliver all the courses ensured quality standardisation across the programme and also enabled the course to start as soon as sites had recruited the numbers required. The SPC were universally commended for the design and the facilitation of the course, which included a mix of learning methods, and the course enthused most participants by most accounts. For example:

A team manager noted that the diversity in training style employed by the SPC was valuable:

*It resonates with a variety of different people at different levels so it accesses their learning style in different ways. So for some people [...] maybe some theory appeals to [them]. For others, the practical kind, (the) playing of games..to illustrate points and ways of being, that really speaks to them, they really hold onto those sort of things. Others are more visual and it's got quite a visual element to the training as well. So I think it's much more effective because it is much more holistic [Social work Team Manager, W1]*

Another commented that the Learning and Development courses:

*Gives you a way of explaining [social pedagogy] to the foster carer because it's in a very simple way that they can get just like that, and I think that's really helpful [...] it gives you a way of giving that information across. So that's what... I've found that quite helpful*  
[Social Worker W1]

There were however some participants who did not equally enjoy the experiential learning elements in particular, (and some reported they found them “silly”). One social worker interviewed for Wave One noted that:

*It has all become games and not enough theory for me... [...] I think that it was fun at first because it's nice to do those things and there was more theory [...] but now it feels more like [...] group games and group reflecting on those dynamics and how you felt and what was going on – which is fine and I'm happy to do that, that's fine – but there's not enough theory in there for me, I'm feeling.* [Social Worker, W1]

However, the decision not to include a leading role in the core courses for the newly appointed special social pedagogues had consequences. Practically, it might have held up the initiation of the core courses if it proved necessary to wait for newly appointed social pedagogues to brush up and in some cases acquire facilitation skills, since not all were skilled in this. In some cases, social pedagogues were also not prepared for and did not feel confident to take this role. However, many had understood this was exactly the kind of thing their Head, Heart, Hands job would involve, and expected to have the opportunity to co-deliver the course. Some felt at the time, and continued to stress as the programme unfolded, that this was a missed opportunity. One of the consequences was that the opportunity for social pedagogues to establish their credibility to carers and colleagues and communicate their values and methods of working from the very earliest stages, especially to those with whom they would be mostly closely involved, was lost. This underutilisation of the social pedagogues themselves was a consistent theme throughout the programme and seems to have been a flaw in the design, with the benefit of hindsight, and social pedagogues across the sites felt very strongly about it, although was agreed to have improved over time:

*I think there's been a fault in the beginning to (say) “These [SPC] are the social pedagogy experts” not including us (social pedagogues) and “it's about the system change”. (We felt) “Well then, help us with the system change (in our site)” but the [SPC site support lead] said they didn't have any experience with that! So then how can you say “Oh these are all the experts and you (social pedagogues) are not”? We have the same professional background, so it's really difficult.* [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]

*I think in the beginning we (social pedagogues) were all under the impression that we would also take (more of a) lead role (e.g in the training) ....Especially in the beginning there was a lot of hierarchies and the programme itself didn't always work social pedagogically. Social pedagogues were quite often in the beginning not recognised, their voice is not heard,*

*they're not allowed to make any decisions, etcetera, etcetera. (However) I think there's been a lot of working around this and a lot of openness to work around this and so I think we're definitely at a different place now than we were in the beginning. [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

*There was sometimes the feeling of a hierarchy.... So, there was the social pedagogy consultancy by the SPC, there were the social pedagogues on the sites, (and) basically the site support lead is a different status and is more on the management level whilst the social pedagogues are the practitioner. I think to have a more consultancy function in the role of the social pedagogues who've been placed on site, this would have been really important because I think only over the time it's developed that we've been taken much more seriously in our feedback. [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

A further issue that surfaced at this stage again reflected some gaps in the specification of the design for the programme at national level. Although the focus was mainly on carers, as the people with most influence over children's daily lives and care, the core learning was designed to be delivered to both foster carers, and staff with whom they worked.

Of the 48 places allocated by the SPC for each site (half in the two smaller sites), a notional 8 were allocated for staff ('notional' because in practice, only two of the seven sites delivered to the exact numbers, with some sites funding extra places and one small site taking up none). Two rationales were most often cited for the 'by design' inclusion of staff: (1) the primary reason - that the parallel learning process for social workers supervising foster placements and the carers they supervised would lead to a powerful shared experience, better levels of mutual understanding and hence better relationships, and a more joined up and unified use of social pedagogic thought and methods in the future care and decision-making for the children concerned; and (2) that including other staff would help to diffuse understanding of social pedagogy in the wide system surrounding carers (other social work and support staff).

However, no clear specification or written guidance for what kinds of staff, in what roles, and at what level of seniority was ever satisfactorily communicated to or implemented by the sites. In the event, the basis on which invitations were issued was never fully captured. By the end of the process, most site project leads agreed that attendance had largely been based on interest and availability rather than any more strategic planning.

## How the initial implementation stage unfolded at the local level

### The core courses

In all sites the core learning course went very well, with attendances throughout reported to be reasonably high amongst carers (somewhat less so amongst staff). Some degree of 'catch-up' was variably implemented for those carers who missed sessions in some sites. Sites organised the time differently - some split up blocks of days, others varied the hours (for example, ending earlier in the day) to accommodate child care and school days and other pressures on the time of carers – but the delivery of the core course was the most standardised element of the programme.

All sites invited self-selection onto the course for carers, and so it is a fair assumption that those who elected attend will have been those most motivated to learn and most willing to consider possible changes to their way of caring. Overall take-up and attendance varied: see Table 3 Chapter 2 which details the 'reach' to carers as a proportion of all carers in the site at that time. While in the two smallest sites, 60-80% of carers in the pool at the time were included on the course, in other sites the reach through the core courses varied from just over one in ten to two in five. We discuss later how this might have influenced the effectiveness of the core courses as a tool to diffuse learning about social pedagogy, and whether (in implementation science terms) the 'magnitude of the disturbance' created by the innovation of Head, Heart, Hands was sufficient to achieve its aims. We also lacked detailed data collected at site level on core course participants and attendance<sup>12</sup>, and so quantification of attendance tracked over time is not possible. This would be vital in any future attempt to training in social pedagogy and is a regrettable weakness in our evaluation dataset.

Generally those who attended reported back favourably, and although the experience of training staff and carers together was not entirely new for all sites, for most it was a positive and illuminating experience.

One social worker summed up the views of many when he noted:

*Foster carers [...] are also doing the training, so they know where I'm coming from, we're both kind of talking about these things together. [Social Worker, W1]*

In itself, this approach embodied the goal of the programme to equalise relationships between social work staff and foster carers, and in some cases senior managers (including

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<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately the evaluation team did not design a tracking tool for sites, understanding that these data would be collected at site level as part of routine monitoring, In the event, in the light of sites' concerns discussed earlier regarding over-burdensome monitoring, it appeared that this critical element of data collection became overlooked. We conclude that the evaluation should have given more leadership on this.

site project leads) attended, emphasising the importance to the programme of boundary-spanning relationships.

The design of the core course also anticipated, as an active ingredient, the joint participation of carers and the staff who supervised their placements. However, in many if not all sites, it was agreed that the numbers of 'matched' supervising social workers and foster carers was not as high as it could have been. Added to the natural churn of staff and carers that ensued in sites over the duration of the programme, with no formal arrangements for bringing new carers and workers into the 'trained cohort', the ideal of 'matched pairs' proved less than robust. An unknown number of trained carers were therefore not supported in the longer term by staff with a 'shared understanding' of social pedagogy. This means that the relationship of this element of design to carer and child-level outcomes cannot be tested.

### The role of the social pedagogy consortium

Head, Heart, Hands was in many ways a cutting edge innovation, not least in its incorporation of a strong support role as one of the core components of design. Over the course of the initial implementation stage and into the next stage of full implementation, the work of the SPC shifted focus from design and delivery of the core learning courses to support for social pedagogues 'in practice' and working with site project leads to embed the approach in their site and amongst wider system colleagues internally. They recognised that this role would be challenging:

*I think probably by The Fostering Network and the funders, we were perceived to be experts. (But) I think perhaps we had a greater humility that that... because nobody has done a programme like this before. And of course we had plenty of expertise and experience on other projects but always standing in a new river... [SPC member]*

The **SPC's role in supporting social pedagogues** in practice was by design a core component of the Head, Heart, Hands package. This kind of support was described by social pedagogue as routine for practice and career development for social pedagogues in other countries, and the Head, Heart, Hands programme designers correctly anticipated that it would be vital in order to support social pedagogues in what would otherwise be a professionally and personally isolated role. Overall, although the experiences across the programme were mixed, we concluded that this external support had been an essential and mostly effective element in successful implementation where sites had no internal access to pedagogic expertise, and perhaps especially during the installation and initial implementation stages of the work.

*Not only have the social pedagogues who have come from [the SPC] got the masses of training experience, they've also got all the knowledge as well. ..you can't replace the skills,*

*the high level of skill, that the external social pedagogues have got. I think they've been absolutely critical from the beginning in getting people on board because they're very compelling* [Social Work Team Lead, Wave 3]

For sites that were struggling with implementation and where social pedagogues were experiencing difficulties, the SPC support was described as having been indispensable, even in a couple of sites to the point of having enabled some social pedagogues to remain in post rather than resigning when implementation difficulties threatened to become overwhelming, especially in the first year.

*It was really essential to have that external support, and it felt we could have done with more. Those structures were really important - the supervision we had with (SPC support lead)* [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]

*I would say that the advisory slash consultancy aspect of it is rather helpful ...because management does listen to us very, very well but in sites where that might not happen, having this external person that will advise and consult and give guidance, that will hopefully go alongside what the social pedagogues are also saying does give a lot of credit and does build up that base of, 'What we are saying makes sense so please listen.' That's important.* [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]

Site Project Leads also felt that external support helped to provide an added safeguard to prevent dual-role holding pedagogues becoming side-tracked:

*I believe it's really important to have professional supervision for our social pedagogues to keep social pedagogy alive rather than it being subsumed into the general working. I think that some training for strategic people with people like ...[the SPC] is inspiring. There's no doubt that when I attend some training run by them or have a meeting, a steering group or when we've had Champions' meetings, it reignites that spark* [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]

However, the model did lack some essential flexibilities. As discussed in the second interim report, by the second year of the programme two sites had wholly or in part dispensed with the pedagogic supervision and support offered by the SPC, one because they had access to such support internally. Several social pedagogues made the point that in other countries, this relationship was one voluntarily entered into when a good fit was found between a social pedagogue and a supervisor or mentor. If the fit was not good, another supervisor would be routinely found. Unfortunately, in part due to limitations of supply and cost within the UK, this kind of flexibility was not designed into the Head, Heart, Hands resource package, resulting in a mismatch in a few situations. In at least one sites it took the site project lead considerable effort to find a solution acceptable to all. It was also notable however that the reported quality of the SPC-social pedagogue relationship did not predict overall implementation success, if this is judged by the sustainability of the work by the end of the funding period. Thus in three sites where social pedagogues and site project leads spoke of the relationship as indispensable, nevertheless, for different reasons in none of these sites was social pedagogy certain of vigorous sustainment by the end of the

programme. Conversely, in two sites where the relationships had been most challenging, and in the end, where less support for social pedagogues had been provided by the SPC, implementation progress appeared unimpeded and was looking promising for the longer term.

The SPC also continued to provide **support for site project leads** through the initial implementation period. It is clear that in the latter respect, closer engagement was achieved in some sites than others. Some site leads were fulsome in their praise:

*(X, SPC site support lead) has been absolutely fantastic [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

In some sites, the SPC lead took a very active role in chairing and/or facilitating the project steering group, and in these cases, was able to help the project gain traction internally in ways that were reported to be helpful in the gradual move towards sustainment, over time. In this site, an SPC site support lead had a very active role in a steering group:

*They keep you on the straight and narrow. The moment I have another brilliant idea and think well, if we just did this with it [laughs], ... you need people who say, 'Let's think about what social pedagogy is.' So it stops people like me having bright ideas, getting carried away with my own excitement and going off and rewriting everything! [Strategic Lead, Wave 3]*

In others, SPC leads intentionally took a more 'back seat' role, advising behind the scenes or giving support where invited to. The reasons for these different patterns varied and were a function of a mix of factors: the wish to foster a sense of ownership of the project within sites; the sites' own confidence in steering strategy in relation to social pedagogy; the SPC lead's own style and approach; the nature of the personal relationship between the SPC and the site project lead; and some practical factors such as the ease of travel to sites (in three sites SPC leads were based outside the UK). Of course, many other factors also were at play, well outside in the control of the SPC site support lead. However it was observed that three steering groups lost energy and momentum early on, and in all cases, these sites were in the position of doubtful sustainability by the end of the programme.

## In summary

Initial implementation for Head, Heart, Hands was a high point of the programme, enthusiastically received and reported to have met sites' expectations and exceeded them in some respects. Many of the participants spoke glowingly of the course content; (see the forthcoming report on the impact of the programme<sup>ii</sup>). The leadership in design and delivery by the SPC resulted in a high level of consistency and quality assurance over the programme as whole. However, some thought that also led to a missed opportunity for newly appointed and 'unknown' social pedagogues to demonstrate expertise and credibility in sites. Attendance over time was reported to have been good for carers especially. The

participation of staff may have been a weaker point. The low allowable numbers and some sporadic attendance (we are told) almost certainly undermined this as a method to ensure 'matched' pairs of supervising social workers and carers were co-trained (especially in larger sites). The lack of a clear (or clearly communicated) design for what kind of staff should be invited also made this a doubtful form of outreach for wider systems change or wider stakeholder engagement. We however lack systematically collected data on attendance, so our assessment is limited.

SPC support proved extremely valuable and important at this stage of implementation, especially in respect of personal and practice support to social pedagogues. In sites where some staff were less welcoming, felt more challenged by the projects, or where for other reasons social pedagogues found they were seriously struggling with the role, this was described as having been essential in helping people to persevere with the work. In small minority of sites, and for a small minority of social pedagogues, some more flexibility in choice of personnel might have been desirable.

Work by the SPC to support site project leads took variable forms and engagement was closer and reportedly more effective in some sites than in others. SPC leads that were able to take very active roles in steering groups seemed to gain more traction at corporate level for the project at local level, and this is perhaps not surprising given that those leading projects at site level on the whole may not have occupied positions close to corporate decision-making, and the involvement to skilled and expert advocates 'from outside' had always been expected to be helpful. There may have been interplay here with other factors in how this played out at site level, of course.

## Chapter 8 Full implementation stage

### What is full implementation and what could it have included for Head, Heart, Hands

#### full implementation

##### Innovation established in practice

-core learning and development course completed

-Momentum projects in place

##### Full implementation outcomes

-all trained fostering staff using social pedagogic thinking and tools

-all trained foster carers using social pedagogic thinking and tools

##### Encountering challenges and finding solutions

##### Early innovation outcomes

-beginning to change for staff practice

-beginning to see change for foster carers' practice

-beginning to see change for foster children and young people

##### Innovation influencing standard practice

-social pedagogy widely understood and accepted in sites

-staff and systems across site using social pedagogic approaches

The full implementation stage of any innovation is usually defined as the point at which the innovation becomes visibly established in practice 'as designed'. Challenges typically continue to arise and solutions continue to be required, and after the excitement of initial implementation dies down, the full implementation stage tends to be the point at which innovations either sink or swim at the front line, mainly because this is the first opportunity to observe if positive outcomes are emerging, and whether the effort and expense and disturbance to business as usual thus far has been

justified. Observers assessing whether full implementation has been achieved look for signs that the new resource and learning provided as part of the innovation are first being *used* by practitioners and teams exposed to the innovation ('implementation outcomes'), and second signs that that *actual practice* is changing in the desired direction and that the ultimate beneficiaries are experiencing positive benefits ('innovation outcomes'). They would also hope to see signs that standard practice was being influenced and that the new approach was entering the mainstream.

The main 'markers' of this stage were, as would be expected, at the site level, and most of the discussion in this chapter focuses at this level. These were the completion of the core learning and development courses, the continuation of direct work with carers and children by social pedagogues, and early reports of social pedagogy being used in practice by staff and by carers including those who had not been trained on the core course. Other indicators were the degree of integration of the social pedagogues into the business as usual of the team, and the range and diversity of activities that were designed to follow on from the core courses to deepen and widen the reach of social pedagogy to carers and staff.

## How the full implementation stage unfolded at national level

For the national programme, full implementation was a stage that took place under the new leadership within The Fostering Network. It mainly involved continuing to support the central structures such as the review groups, compiling information about how the programme was working, and negotiation around access to resources for sites to use on an ongoing basis.

It was also the stage at which the SPC support focused on encouraging the establishment of ‘momentum’ activities led by social pedagogues in sites, designed to consolidate and extend learning in the sites after core courses. There were also attempts to develop a central design for systems outreach (or stakeholder engagement) at local level, but in the event, no national strategy was ever agreed or put into action. A plan for supporting a group of ‘champions’ was developed, using a residential course model. An offer to develop ‘leadership’ courses was made to sites, in some cases to be funded separately by the site where their budget of SPC days had been exhausted. The national champions’ course was discontinued after some initial meetings as sites were not able to commit resources in the longer term, and The Fostering Network felt that sites had no appetite for setting up a cross-site structure for this purpose. One site took up the offer of a leadership course, commissioning their SPC site support lead independently for this.

It was also noted during this stage that, rather unusually for the UK, the lead funder was becoming involved in a range of meetings and activities supporting and influencing sites independently of the central delivery team. An independent consultant was also employed by the lead funder, and began working on a range of activities with sites, including drafting papers exploring aspects of interface between social pedagogy and other approaches to working with children<sup>13</sup>. These activities (although not forming part of our evaluation) were spoken of positively by sites, and there was a view amongst some other funders that this involvement had played an essential role in keeping the programme moving forward during the period in which leadership at The Fostering Network had been seriously disrupted. The central delivery team were however much less enthusiastic about this parallel strand of operational work from which they were excluded and on which they became increasingly less well-sighted. They felt it interfered unhelpfully with relationships, sometimes frustrating activities that were already under way and sending “*mixed messages*” to sites. They also found it problematic during this time that they were often instructed at short notice to undertake pieces of organisational work that were not part of their own central plan, and for which they had limited resources. Several other stakeholders also wondered at times “*who was leading the programme*”. It is likely that this undermined The Fostering Network’s standing and leadership role with sites, their confidence, and perhaps

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<sup>13</sup> recommended by implementation evaluation report at the end of Wave 2.

unfortunately persisted even once they became better placed to establish firmer control over the programme's central direction. As some other stakeholders commented:

*Q: Has there been anything that held the programme back?*

*R: Hmm. Well for example, the joint learning network meetings, the funder was always there and that had an impact. I think it brought a distance to the central team because the representative of the funders aligned with the sites and site leads, and questioned The Fostering Network publically or in corners... and in the meetings it had an impact ... it wasn't positive. It had real dynamics around it. And it is worth mentioning, it was always very unclear... the consultant that was brought in, it didn't feel clear to people what that person was doing, and what their role was and so forth. It think it was done (with) good intentions because it was felt there was a need to intervene and support, but the relationships (weren't) positive [SPC member]*

*The Funders I think sometimes behaved like they had all the power. And possibly they actually do! But it was counterproductive to the whole process, because there was always the lack of knowledge and uncertainty: what is going to happen, is there money available, how are we allowed to use it, is it Ok what we're doing here. For me, they had far too much influence on the programme, and (on) feelings around the programme. [SPC member]*

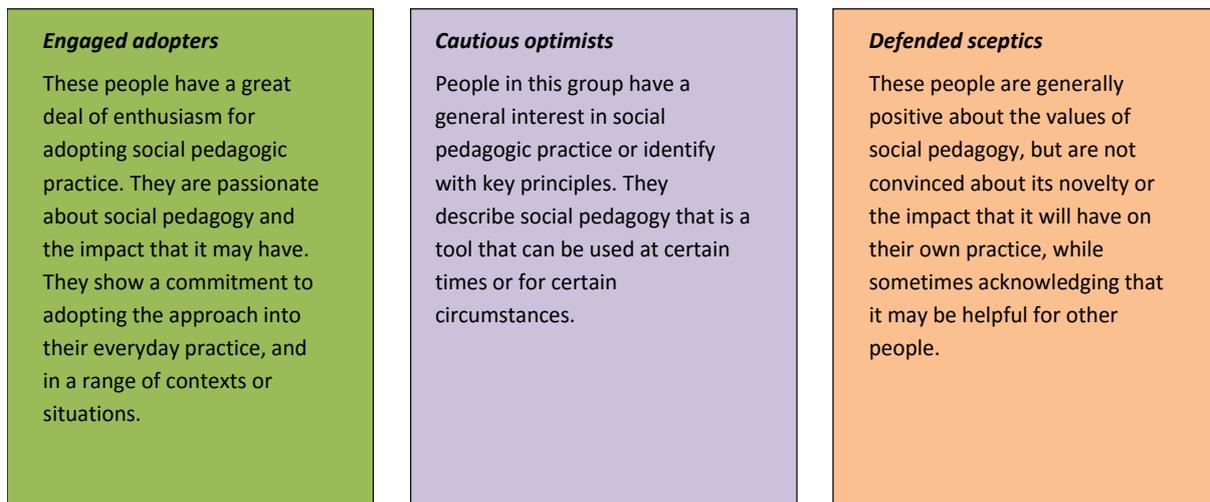
## How the full implementation stage unfolded at local level

### Overview

During the second year of the evaluation, we began to develop a categorisation of attitudes to social pedagogy that have helped us to understand the different positions evaluation participants expressed<sup>1</sup> and we refer to these ideas in later chapters in this report: see Figure 8.

**Figure 8 Head, Heart, Hands: different ways of viewing social pedagogy**

**Head, Heart, Hands: different ways of viewing social pedagogy**



In all sites we describe the full implementation stage as a mixture of deepening and widening in sites; some did more ‘deepening’ (working with those already trained on the core courses); others did more ‘widening’ (extending social pedagogy to others in the site), and some did both more or less equally. Overall, most sites started well into this stage. But over the course of the second half of the programme some differences began to emerge. By the end of the period these had crystallised into a group of sites that were definitely well established in the work by our evaluation criteria, and group that were less well established or even faltering. Four sites seemed to really find their feet during this stage, and their social pedagogues (who came much more to the fore at this stage) mostly described a stronger sense of their own roles and identities, and greater degree of integration and acceptance in their teams, and a greater sense of fulfilment as they began to do more direct work with carers and young people and had more latitude to develop activities in support of the consolidation and spread of social pedagogy within their sites. Enthusiasm for social pedagogy remained generally high among foster carers in the qualitative impact study for this period, which was described as a time of ‘embedding social pedagogy’ in practice for those foster carers who continued to be engaged. These carers reported that their understanding of the approach had developed and deepened and tangible examples of the impact that it was having on foster carers and children and young people began to emerge.

In three sites, although social pedagogues continued to work hard, full implementation was in fact never securely established, with Head, Heart, Hands reaching only a portion of the people it was hoped would by now be confident, engaged, and committed to continuing. In these sites there was a feeling amongst some senior staff, some social pedagogues and SPC site support leads that the work was losing vigour and momentum, despite the (universal) efforts of social pedagogues to avoid this.

*At the end of the core courses, there were going to be momentum groups to sustain it, but it all petered out. The momentum, I would say, got lost. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

Although all sites could justifiably claim that social pedagogy was established 'in practice' by having completed the core training process and established a range of momentum activities, their level of success in relation to our benchmark for full implementation (that all staff and carers who were trained were now actively applying social pedagogy in their practice) was much harder to assess. There were some very positive qualitative data from and about some highly enthused and engaged individuals (both carers and staff), and we explore these data and the extent and depth of impact on practice in our final report on impact, published in Autumn 2016. Some site project leads moreover rightly saw implementation of innovation as a very long game, and noted that they would not expect to see deep impacts at this stage. However, when asked to make a 'global' judgement on implementation success at the end of the three year funding period by our criteria, most site team members in all sites including most social pedagogues agreed that only a proportion of the trained carers and staff were definitely using social pedagogy (albeit that most felt they could not with certainty comment on the specific care practices of carers or colleagues on cases they were not involved in). Overall estimates (based on subjective judgements of observers, not based on standardised measurement) averaged at about half or less of those trained being still engaged in social pedagogic activities in some way.

For instance, one site project lead estimated, at Wave 3:

*[We have] some really engaged people which is probably [at] the 10 – 15% mark, [but there are others] who talk articulated, very passionately, but wouldn't stand up in front of the fostering service.*

Another noted:

*I would say we have more than half [of the original cohort still engaged]. And I think that we have got certainly some key drivers, four or five of them, that are absolutely passionate about it.*

In one site where relatively considerable traction had been achieved, a social pedagogue's cautious view was:

*I think (there is) going to be more (engagement) in the future. I don't think everybody's engaged yet. It takes time! (There's still) a lot of questioning, a lot of like, 'Yes, yes, this is fine but we do it [social pedagogy] anyways,' and, 'What's the purpose (of social pedagogy)?' [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

Other studies have however highlighted the low rates of transference of techniques and approaches learnt on training into foster carers' practice, even when high levels of

enjoyment and satisfaction in the training are reported<sup>xx</sup>. Therefore, these estimates suggest a relatively good penetration for a programme of this kind.

Some however felt that only a small proportion were probably still closely engaged and using social pedagogy regularly, and for some site project leads and their senior colleagues this marked the beginning of a process of losing confidence in the project and in its future sustainability.

*I've said this before. But I've been really disappointed. I know it's not a numbers game, and I know this is where pedagogues and others take issue with me. But I say: if people aren't turning up for things, that tells us something. I don't really buy that (they are just doing social pedagogy at home and they are all busy people): if somebody is enthused about something then they'll come, and they will want to continue to learn. There is some enthusiasm and some commitment, but I don't think it's enough to sustain it. Some of the carers are saying: "I haven't learned anything since the training. We were introduced to concepts and various things but then it all fizzled out...." I can't move away from this notion of if people aren't turning up, that is telling you something [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

And one SPC site support lead explained the magnitude of disturbance created by the design of the project may not have been sufficient in large sites in particular:

*I would say in terms of full implementation, I think one of the challenges which kind of comes in (for) sustainability as well, and has come up (in the site I support) was: I think there is... an acceptance of it (social pedagogy) but I think the understanding is limited and that is more sort of an organisational thing in that you know, there is - is it now 400 foster carers? It is a huge, huge site, geographically as well as demographically and a very small group of foster carers who have been trained in the depth, you know in the cohort. And we have been working really hard and they have been working really hard to get stuff out there to more service areas but I think that the actual scaling up has been a challenge just because of the sheer numbers of people. It is just sheer volume that is one of the challenges. [SPC member]*

Thus, no sites completely achieved the scenario described in our ideal model of full implementation, although five of the seven felt pleased with their progress on the trajectory (even though in one case the longer term prognosis was unclear). All of these five had moved 'beyond Head, Heart, Hands' as a programme by the end of this stage (and some, well before this). They were talking more about 'social pedagogy' in general, and their vision of what continuing with the work would require was articulated with progressively less and less reference to the specific package of resources that formed the core components of the programme.

### The role of social social pedagogues in sites

Key learning about the design of the programme began to crystallise 'in practice' at the full implementation stage regarding the **nature of the social pedagogues' role within sites**. In

particular, it began to be clearer whether or not **the holding of dual roles** by social pedagogues (ie, both practicing as social workers, and leading the Head, Heart, Hands work), was material to how effectively social pedagogy could be diffused within sites. In the local site case studies (see separate Appendix) it will be observed that there were differences between sites in how quickly and how well social pedagogues integrated into the teams in which they were placed, and throughout the evaluation this variable was kept under review. The diversity of approaches, (some dual role, some not) was a ‘by design’ feature of the national programme, reflecting both a genuine research question (would it make a difference?) and the practical reality of the lack of an existing indigenous workforce from which the programme could be staffed, meaning that some otherwise good applicants from overseas would not hold UK-recognised qualifications.

By the end of the programme we drew the firm conclusion that whilst holding a dual role was not inevitably a route to greater effectiveness an integration of the social pedagogues in UK fostering teams, it was a clear advantage. Full implementation got under way more smoothly and more quickly in sites where this was the case. The lack of understanding of local colleagues of what pedagogy ‘means’ in a routine social care context, which was definite a factor in making many social pedagogues’ early experiences more difficult, was more quickly addressed. The lack of familiarity with UK systems and the professional cultures of UK social work on the part of social pedagogues, which was certainly a factor for some, was also more easily tackled through holding a dual role.

First, holding statutory duties enabled social pedagogues, many of whom were new to working in the UK care system, and all of whom were new to fostering, to acquire a deeper and faster understanding of the realities and constraints within which social care operates in the UK, and how the fostering sector in particular works. It may have helped them to keep realistic in their plans and suggestions for how the work could develop, and (contrary to some innovation theory) did not seem to result in them becoming inured to ways in which operations in their sites could be improved. Second, it established the credibility both of social pedagogues, and of social pedagogy, for their ‘host’ teams, who were then more easily able to see how a social pedagogue fitted into the familiar structures of management and sharing of duties, and how pedagogy might be woven into social work practice on the front line.

One case-holding social pedagogue noted:

*Because we have cases it was harder to challenge us on: ‘you can’t do that here’, because we were doing it! [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

This view was echoed by a social worker in the same site who remarked:

*I actually think that for me [the pedagogues] has got... they have got more credibility because they have actually practiced. [Social Worker, Wave 3]*

By modelling social pedagogic thinking and practice in real world fostering situations with families and children known to other staff, they were able to show more straightforwardly how they could add value to daily practice. This helped to diffuse the approaches of social pedagogy to others who were not professional social pedagogues, and to 'demystify' the discipline. Social Work Team Managers commented at Wave 3:

*Sometimes I personally think that if you're promoting a practice, then it is good to see that in action [Social Work Team Manager, Wave 3]*

*You can go on a course and you can come back and you remember bits of it, and you might implement bits of it, but if I am working with you all day and that is how you operate then I will learn more from watching, listening doing and seeing than I ever would on a five, ten day, two year training course. [Social Work Team Manager, Wave 3]*

One operational manager in a site where the social pedagogue did not hold cases noted that:

*If you are trying to promote social pedagogy, if it was social pedagogy practice, you would expect that the social pedagogue would be (demonstrating) that practice. [Social Work Team Manager, Wave 3]*

Third, it enabled social pedagogues to become fully integrated members of their team and of the wider system, which in turn helped to widen the influence of Head, Heart, Hands across sites beyond the specially constituted Head, Heart, Hands 'project team' in the site. In all cases where social pedagogues did not or could not hold cases, we observed a definite tendency for the work of the project to remain much more centred around social pedagogues, and even in the later stages of implementation for social pedagogy 'in practice' to be seen as something still somewhat specialised and inaccessible to other staff. For example, in one such site, neither the site project lead nor most of the social work colleagues of the social pedagogue could describe the detail of what the social pedagogue did on a daily basis: "I don't really know, I don't see them much". Although several social pedagogues who did not hold cases worked hard to overcome these barriers (especially by taking on routine duties outside Head, Heart, Hands and sharing the load with social work colleagues), extra effort was required and did not always pay off as fast. Of course, there was always the risk (well recognised by all) that having dual responsibilities could result in the demands of statutory work crowding out time for developing social pedagogy. Some sites took the view that this was a real danger:

*When (our authority first employed social pedagogues) they were put into the Looked After Children service. But they got subsumed in casework. So I think the feeling has always been that if we're employing social pedagogues to be social pedagogues that they need to be pedagogues, so they not necessarily should be doing statutory work. That's not to say that people that are employed to do statutory work can't be social pedagogues. They have a different role. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

However it seemed that most site project leads in Head, Heart, Hands carefully and successfully protected time for dual role social pedagogues, allocating them reduced caseloads, and ensuring that the Head, Heart, Hands work remained a core focus. There were exceptions: Interestingly, in one site where the social pedagogues felt (and were described as) notably overstretched, neither held cases. In another site, where the social pedagogues were based outside the fostering service in the virtual school, they also did not hold fostering cases (although did do case work within the virtual school).

### **‘Momentum activities’ to deepen and widen understanding of social pedagogy**

It was recognised by the SPC at an early stage when formulating proposals for the programme that additional activities beyond the core learning course would certainly be needed, in part to scaffold learning for the trained cohort, and as way to spread some of the learning to other carers and other staff who had not been able to participate in the core learning. Thus, the idea for **‘momentum’ activities** emerged, both to deepen and widen the learning about social pedagogy at the site level. As with other aspects of the programme, a national design for these was not created. How sites approached this was left up to local sites and in some cases, left entirely to social pedagogues (although supported by the SPC). The intention here was to give social pedagogues a clear area of leadership in the programme implementation. Each site approached this differently. In all sites, a mix of small group work (discussion groups, learning sets, reading groups), larger public events (open spaces, presentations), and creative and outdoor activities for children and young people and carers were arranged, in which social pedagogic principles and methods were reviewed and used.

*R: I still would do the momentum groups because there was a lot of energy in (them) and even now, (they) continue. I think it was a really good way of providing a resource for those who attended the core training. But equally...we've put on groups and workshops for people who've felt less interested in attending (formal) training. For example...we developed well-being courses.*

*Q: What did those involve?*

*R: Some social pedagogy, and things like yoga, breath work, relaxation.... Many new carers joined those courses and have been really positive in their feedback about the course and said that they really learned, about social pedagogy but also really in particular about how to nurture themselves to be able and available for the children and young people. They said actually this was a format of workshop they really enjoyed attending and actually had fears and anxieties to attend a more formal training about social pedagogy before. So, this was a door-opener. [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

A common finding across sites was however that small group work tended to start well but attendance weakened over time. Sites noted that carers were exceptionally busy people,

and staff had many alternative calls on their time too. In many sites, small group work was more or less non-existent by the final year of the programme, except for a few stalwarts for whom it was described as very important (the highly engaged adopters, discussed elsewhere <sup>ix</sup>. As one social pedagogue noted:

*We're trying to get them (carers) all to come (to events) at the same time, which has been a mission! [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

One social work manager noted the difficulties for staff of balancing competing commitments as the project became more demanding on the site:

*So it was fun to begin with and then the workload (of Head, Heart, Hands) seemed to increase for everybody and the time commitment to all of the groups. Having to prioritise other stuff, and then feeling bad because I couldn't go to the momentum group because of a child's LAC review.... Then I think towards the end there were so many different factors that contributed to the declining amount of people that were attending. I think people became quite demoralised, that demoralisation just fed into further decline. It became a vicious circle. [Social Work Team Manager, Wave 3]*

Creative and outdoor activities were mostly not funded directly by the programme, but all sites ran at least a few such events and generally found these larger-group activities, by contrast, appropriate and popular ways to convey pedagogic thinking and experiential learning, especially to carers. In some sites these were viewed as extremely successful and helped to create the reverse trend: gathering, rather than declining momentum for the project. For example:

*R: When we started with these activities which were then new to our authority in that way to include the whole foster family, and the first year was really (slow) - you had to almost direct people to come along, (it was) something new. Now we send invitations out and the next day we have four, five responses already, etcetera, etcetera, so it's really not worrying anymore.*

*Q: Why do you think that's changed over time?*

*R: I think that changed because of people have experienced it and they think it's really beneficial. We can see that we always have a group of people who will always come but then there's also always new people so it's really a nice mixture. [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

*In terms of activities, there's been an absolute plethora of things going on and they're incredibly well attended. They had a day up at [outdoor centre] recently and they were disappointed not more people had signed up although, in fact, they ended up with about 50 people there, in the rain, but they all had a great time. Those things have gone down really, really well. [Social Work Team Manager, Wave 3]*

Of particular note was the opportunity that activity days provided to use particular models covered by the Head, Heart, Hands Learning and development courses, such as the *Common Third*:

*[We] just had the Christmas party and we were kind of thinking about that bit about everybody being connected [...] so we looked at an activity that we could do where everybody started off doing the activity, and everybody got laughing and we're all connecting [...] That is social pedagogy! [Social Worker, Wave 3]*

However, the numbers of people that could be reached in this way were sometimes limited, and in some other sites, this gave the impression to senior staff and colleagues that only a small and exclusive group were continuing to engage with social pedagogy in the period post training, *"in small pockets"* as one site project lead expressed it.

### Social pedagogic interventions: the significance of direct work

**Direct work** – which we termed elsewhere ‘**social pedagogic interventions**’ – was always intended to be a major part of what social pedagogues would do in sites with the hypothesis being that through direct work, social pedagogues would be able to model social pedagogic practice in action for other colleagues, thus helping to diffuse the approach through the service. Also, social pedagogues’ particular skills and methods were of course expected to be highly beneficial in their own right. Here we mean work in families and with young people that was not carried out as part of placement support where social pedagogues were supervising these, but additional work carried out either alone or with colleagues.

The direct work that social pedagogues were able to do was, almost without exception, praised by colleagues in sites, and notably, even by those who expressed other reservations about the project. Carers and young people also praised this work.

*They [social pedagogues] do some core supervising social work, (although) they don't carry anything like half a case load. It's a lot less, but nevertheless, what they have shown to the teams very, very graphically is how working as a social workers fits in with social pedagogy. [Social pedagogue] has had a really good relationship with supervising social workers, so huge amount of respect. They have been able to push through a lot .... talking about how work can be much more pedagogic than the work we just do on a day-to-day basis [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

In addition to one-to-one and family work, social pedagogues spent a great deal of time in all sites organising and running group events and activities, most of which were very well received.

From an implementation perspective, however, some site project leads noted that they had been disappointed not by the impact but the *amount* of direct work that social pedagogues on the programme had been able to accomplish. No parameters for this were articulated at the earlier stage of the programme (for example, what the intended split between central programme development work and in-site direct work should be), and the central delivery team questioned whether sites had realistic expectations for what could be achieved. Be that as it may, site project leads and other colleagues complained that in some sites, social pedagogues were much embroiled in the developmental demands of the programme at central level (attending meetings, developing reports etc), leaving very little time for direct work which they considered an important active ingredient. This was especially the case where travel time was an issue (e.g in rural or very spread-out populations) but surprisingly did not seem to be a function of whether social pedagogues were case-holding. In at least one site, the explanation was different: social work staff holding cases were surprised and uncomfortable that the non case-holding social pedagogue was requesting access to foster families, and it took a long time for the social pedagogue to establish her 'right' to contact and work with families. In other sites, over time site project leads noted found that some social pedagogues were not as skilled or comfortable doing direct work as they had expected, which caused some disappointment.

As one Site Project Lead noted:

*[The social pedagogue] hasn't been able to work as social worker with us, which at times has been frustrating [...] because [the social pedagogue] is very quiet, so we have not had that kind of input.*

Eventually in at least one site it was eventually agreed that this would not form part of the workload. This of course speaks to the issue of the 'fit' of the social pedagogue to the roles they were expected to perform, and suggests that this was not optimal in all sites. It was observed, moreover, that where social pedagogues had not achieved as much direct work as was expected, these were the cases where contracts were not renewed as the programme drew to a close.

The extent of and access to direct work opportunities was important also because it interfaced with and influenced the extent to which social pedagogues were able to feel fully integrated with and accepted by their team colleagues. In sites where social pedagogues and others described the social pedagogues as less well integrated, we also observed that social pedagogues did much more of their direct work alone. Not only did they feel they were not being 'invited in' to co-work with colleagues (which was more or less essential where other colleagues were the supervising social worker), but conversely, they were sometimes described by colleagues and managers as 'keeping others out', not inviting them to participate. It was hard for the evaluators in these cases to judge which party was playing the role of gatekeeper. Overall, we simply note the sense amongst colleagues at all levels that more direct work engaging and reaching carers and young people directly, and in

particular, working alongside other staff, would have been highly desirable. This was especially so, given that it seemed often to be so effective and well received, and because this was assumed to be the key method by which actual social pedagogic practice would be learned by non-pedagogically trained staff and carers.

*Q: How much access do you and your colleagues have to the pedagogues to see how (social pedagogy) is done in practice?*

*R1: Not very much.*

*R2: We don't have a lot of access, but in our team they do lots of independent work. So we hear about the activities but we don't really...*

*R3: (Their job) doesn't seem to involve particularly talking to me about stuff, you know? I've got them involved in some of my cases and they have been helpful, but ...I just think the pedagogues in our team maybe don't do enough pedagogy. They tend to do a lot of casework (on their own). (ALL AGREE) I think they need to be more prominent in the team because I wouldn't necessarily go and ask them for advice because I don't see them as being very different to anyone else.*

*R2: They're doing all the stuff (for the project) they're doing and I think they're very, particularly one of them, is very busy doing all that stuff and so... [Social Workers,Wave 3]*

### What we said in Wave 2: Direct work by social pedagogues

“The most contentious and problematic core component currently appears to be the extent and form of direct work undertaken by social pedagogues with carers and/or with children and young people, which we are calling ‘social pedagogic interventions’. There is consensus that direct work by social pedagogues is a powerful active ingredient both in achieving change for families, and in modelling and demonstrating the value of a social pedagogic approach in practice for carers, and to assist other non-pedagogic staff in using the principles of social pedagogy in their work. Where it has occurred it is almost universally applauded as an example of how social pedagogy can achieve positive benefits. There is clear recognition that the direct work undertaken by most of the pedagogues personally is skilful and often very effective in turning around otherwise difficult situations. Except where pedagogues are case holders, and are therefore automatically engaged in direct work with families, there is however a broad consensus that the extent of direct work has been disappointingly limited, much more so than sites had originally anticipated. Sometimes this takes the form of a general complaint about the lack of availability of what is seen as a skilled resource; sometimes the complaint is more that social pedagogic input has not been available for mobilisation at specific times when it may have proved to be particularly useful. There are two key reasons cited for this.

(a) First, and most commonly reported, social pedagogues are seen by colleagues as being stretched too thin, over involved in servicing the requirements of the national Head, Heart, Hands programme (i.e. providing data, writing reports, participating in meetings), and much preoccupied with the preparation of activities at site level.

(b) Second, less commonly reported, some (but not all) social pedagogues are perceived to be somewhat reluctant to engage in direct work, especially in crisis situations (for example when a placement is seen as in imminent danger of breakdown). This is an important area to resolve in terms of the operationalisation of the project within sites over the final year of the programme. Some social pedagogues make the point that social pedagogy is not an appropriate form of crisis intervention. They point out that the power of social pedagogy for problem-solving is subtle and developmental rather than instantaneous, and with its focus on relationship building, the acquisition of mutual understanding, and the building of personal potential, social pedagogic work is about laying the foundations for successful work with families and children rather than about responding to specific and pressing immediate problems. However, some colleagues questioned why social pedagogues embedded within social work teams should feel that it is not their role to assist with casework, most especially in crisis situations where placements are threatened. Some site project leads commented that it was important that pedagogues working within service providing organisations were fully committed to assisting with all aspects of the service’s work, and in particular that their efforts are clearly directed towards assisting with what for managers are immovable bottom lines: keeping placements stable; and avoiding placement breakdown wherever possible. There was some suggestion, in a number of sites, that not all pedagogues seemed to share this interpretation of their role (see also the Section below).

*“She’s doing excellent work with one of my children, but I would have like more longevity of interaction”*  
(Social Work Team Manager) “

### Interim implementation report, Evaluation Team 2015

## In summary

The stage of full implementation was the stage at which clear differences between sites, and a clearer view on how implementation variables were influencing implementation experiences began to emerge. At the central programme level, effort by the delivery team shifted to focus on encouraging and supporting activities to embed the ideas of social pedagogy at site level, both in the immediate and longer term time frame. In the immediate term, momentum activities were intentionally not planned to have consistency across the programme, and took different forms in different sites. As a consequence it was difficult to discern any clear patterns in what worked best, other than that small group activities mostly attenuated over time (though there were undoubtedly exceptions), and larger scale outdoor and creative events were much enjoyed and generated much enthusiasm.

Not all sites successfully negotiated this stage to its conclusion by all the criteria that we used to gauge progress. In the immediate time frame, sites moved with mixed success into a stage of 'momentum' activities. Some seemed to find this stage extremely energising, and social pedagogues started to integrate into teams and work more effectively on a larger stage once given this area of leadership. In some however, momentum activities at a group level never seem to take off, the work of the project became more internalised and centred on special initiatives run by social pedagogues, working more independently and in some ways less visibly to the rest of the site. It became clearer that holding a dual role was an advantage for the integration of social pedagogues into their sites, and also that direct work by social pedagogues was one of the most highly valued inputs they could make, though it was challenging within the context of the national programme to give this enough time and attention to satisfy demand. There was also a perception that the penetration of social pedagogy into actual practice by trained carers and staff, though being observed at some level, had some way to go before reaching ideal levels. In some sites, progress in this respect was considered acceptable; in others, it was felt to be disappointing, and contributed to a weakening of support for the project amongst some senior stakeholders that influenced future planning for sustainment. This continued to be largely absent in some sites.

## Chapter 9 Sustained implementation

### What is sustained implementation and what could it have included for Head, Heart, Hands

#### **Sustained implementation**

##### **Later innovation outcomes**

- most fostering using social pedagogic thinking and tools
- most foster carers using social pedagogic thinking and tools
- most fostered children and young people experiencing improved outcomes
- system partners adopting social pedagogic approach

##### **Ongoing resources confirmed**

##### **Sustainable implementation supports**

- permanent supply of trained social pedagogues established
- and/or social pedagogic training incorporated into basic social work training
- quality assurance standards and mechanisms in place
- standard training for foster carers includes social pedagogy

##### **Continuous feedback for improvement**

##### **Ongoing adjustments in replication**

##### **Mainstreaming and scaling up**

Sustained implementation (or 'sustainment') is the goal of most if not all innovation programmes. This often means sustainment in the sense of 'scaling up': extending the work to new or larger groups of people or organisations. Less ambitiously (but no less importantly) it may mean a process of 'consolidation': finding ways to ensure that a new way of working thought to represent improved practice continues for the people and the agencies involved in pioneering its initial development; in other words, so that it becomes more than a one-time only initiative.

The ideal framework shown in the box assumes that the innovation in question is found to be effective, and that training and other supports for its adoption are extended beyond a pilot context to reach a whole workforce, a whole community of beneficiaries, etc. It envisions a gradual diffusion of the innovation into mainstream 'practice as usual', together with ongoing refinements and development as more is learned about using the innovation in new contexts. Although many would find it logical to consider consolidating or scaling only once a new approach was satisfactorily proven to be an improvement and to be cost-effective in the longer run, in practice the length of time taken to reach that degree of confidence often means that plans for sustainment begin much earlier. An implementation lens also shows us that if supports for sustained implementation are not put in place very early on, decisions taken later may reduce the likelihood of sustainment being possible, even once it is agreed to be an aspiration.

In the case of the Head, Heart, Hands implementation evaluation, we explored sustainment in both the consolidation and the scaling up sense. We anticipated that consolidation would be mainly a focus of local action, with some central programme support; that scaling across local systems would follow a similar pattern but with a little more central assistance in conceptualising the work needed; and that scaling in any wider (national or sectoral) sense would be mainly a focus of central programme activity.

It should also be stressed that we did not expect to find clear evidence of ‘sustainment’ after three and half years in any site: the implementation literature tells clearly that the pathway to sustainment is a long one, and most innovations in social care would be expected to take at least four years to reach this point, and some much longer (and social pedagogy in the UK might well be in this category, just by virtue of its lack of workforce and infrastructure). However we did look for signs of *sustainability* in the sites, and attempted to arrive at a prognosis for the longer term future of the development of social pedagogy in them.

We recognised that extending and scaling social pedagogy beyond the core cohort for the programme within the sites was not a given in the absence of the dedicated Head, Heart, Hands funding and supports (see below). Sites however, while not all making long term commitments at the outset, all spoke from early days about their concerns regarding how the small scale approach of the demonstration project could be widened within their own service, and the hope was always expressed that a sense of ‘the long term’ would be nurtured. In other words, even in the sites who spoke of ‘testing’ rather than ‘demonstrating’ social pedagogy through the project, sustainment, both in consolidation and scaling up terms, was a hoped-for outcome.

In the event, all sites felt they had gained from the programme, and all could identify lasting impacts on organisational and individual practice. Four had their own definite plans for consolidation and in some cases, scaling to other local service areas. But in three sites, neither consolidation nor local scale-up was assured, although in two of these some degree of system-influence was reported.

## How sustainment unfolded at the national level

In the case of Head, Heart, Hands, specific plans for sustainment of either consolidation or scaling were intentionally not developed at the national level. Clearly, planning for sustainment at any overarching level would require a clear operational definition of *what* exactly was to be sustained, and as noted, this clarity took a while to emerge and arguably, still remains to be articulated. In part, this position was also consistent with the strategic decision taken by the funders and the CEO at the beginning of the programme that ‘Head, Heart, Hands’ as a funded programme would be a one-off, after which social pedagogy as an approach would stand on its own two feet (or not), depending on a range of factors only some of which were within the sphere of influence of the programme. It also reflected a view within The Fostering Network that the participating fostering services, as independent organisations, would have their own strategic and operational priorities and constraints, and any move towards consolidation, though supported, should come from within. In respect of wider scaling, there was appreciation that a continued and expanded supply of one of the core components of the approach (professionally trained social pedagogues) and the growth of an indigenous UK workforce of such people depended on national factors outside the programme’s scope. These included central government and

national policy support, and the willingness of the higher education sector to take up the approach and provide professional and vocational training in the discipline.

There was however effort at the central programme level to influence the prospects for scaling the programme at a national level. This was undertaken by means of a series of engagements by staff at The Fostering Network and programme representatives and advocates (including carers) with nationally influential bodies and individuals. These included politicians, senior policy makers and commissioners, advocates for children's welfare and services, and representatives of the various regulatory bodies in Scotland and England. A mix of methods was used, from meetings to parliamentary launches, conferences and workshops. At the time of writing, as described in Chapter 1, we can detect signs of a move by some universities and other bodies to strengthen the prospects of developing indigenous expertise and a workforce in social pedagogy within the UK, and it may be that the presence of the Head, Heart, Hands programme has helped this. While referenced in official literature in both countries, there are no signs as yet of any national commitments at central government level either in Scotland or in England to endorse social pedagogy as an approach, but change may come, and can in any case hardly have been expected as a direct output of a single programme.

However at the local scaling and local consolidation level, most of the central delivery team input was localised, delivered in a tailored form through SPC support to individual sites as previously described. Whilst locally-tailored SPC support for strategic planning for consolidation and scaling was appreciated and reported as having been helpful (although more in some sites than in others), some site project leads did explain they had expected more 'central' assistance with formulating narrative, planning, and methods for reaching sustainability, both within their own services and within their wider (local) system context.

We would note, again, that in most cases people in the site project lead role were in operational management roles. They would mostly not have regarded strategic planning for service expansion or systemic influence as a familiar part of their 'day job', and it was not unexpected that this would feel challenging in the context of many other pressing operational commitments. As one SPC site support lead commented, reflecting on the differential journeys in the various sites:

*It was team manager level that was assigned to be project leads. But I think it would have benefited enormously if at site level (in all sites) there had been a coupling...with a partner who was more senior .. with access to strategic insight and power in the organisation [SPC Member]*

We also noted (in an earlier interim report) that in most sites the strategic leads (with organisational power and influence) who had been the initial advocates and authorisers of Head, Heart, Hands at their site had either moved on or had not stayed closely involved with

the project; and in no site (bar one) did the strategic lead role overlap with operational responsibilities. Thus, there was perhaps a ‘missing link’ in the thinking that connected how local sites would pursue sustainment locally, and what support might be needed for them to do this from the central programme if ‘in-house’ influence was limited.

As the programme progressed, a number of specific arenas in which sites would have like more help emerged. For example, sites would have liked:

- More clarity from the outset around rights to use Head, Heart, Hands-produced core learning and development materials, which some sites hoped to cascade to new carers and staff. As discussed in Chapter 5, although all but one of the models contained in the initial core training package were available in the public domain, the full programme resources (for example, the Full Reference Tool and the training materials) were not. These belonged to the SPC consortium or others and were subject to intellectual property rights from the outset. No agreement had been made for their continued use after the programme ended. Some sites perhaps had not understood or not taken on board the implications of these restrictions. As sites began to make plans for consolidation and systems outreach in the second half of the programme, not all were able to find funds to continue to contract with the SPC to provide ongoing training. Realising they were limited in their ability to use the materials independently, this created a blockage to progress for some and aroused heated debate. The Fostering Network considered the position had been absolutely clear to sites as one of the conditions of participation, but when the new leadership at The Fostering Network became aware of the problem, attempts were made to resolve the difficulty and to agree access for sites to the materials. However the original agreement remained unchanged. A shortened set of materials only was provided. It was not considered sufficient by sites.

As one Site Project Lead perceived it:

*Q: In terms of how the programme was set up... would you make any changes to that package?*

*R: Yes (there have been) ongoing issues (with the) reference tool. Ridiculous, (we) can't circulate the reference tool, (even though) everything in the reference tool is in the public domain. So every single theory or model that is in it apart from the diamond model, is in the public domain, you can find it on the internet, it is in a million books - but the package of putting it in that order is copyright. It is .... packaged in a copyrighted way (for Head, Heart, Hands) and that has left us with an issue that we didn't need to have.... I understand (the SPC) have put work in to it ...and also, clearly, they want to make sure that social pedagogy is quality assured. That is fine, OK: But (then) what you can't do is price us out of the market, price yourself out of the market, you know every local authority in the country is (struggling for funds): actually we're not bad compared to some – but we just can't do that stuff (pay for external providers). [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

- Development of a clearer ‘narrative’ explaining in concrete but concise terms the expected added value of a social pedagogic approach to fostering. This was felt to be missing throughout the programme, and its absence was seen as an impediment to scaling (through wider stakeholder engagement) and to consolidation by some sites, especially those who had to convince others of the value of continuing – whether internally or externally – in order to be able to continue with the work in the longer term.

*I think it maybe has been a hindrance in some respects, people maybe not understanding [social pedagogy], not been as articulated as you would want. [Strategic Lead, Wave 3]*

*That is what we are lacking I think: I think it would be really useful - maybe a workshop or something to say - ‘right, this is how we have used it now, these are examples you can give to your foster carers for this model, or that model’ because that is kind of what is missing, I think. [Social Worker, Wave 3]*

*[Its] a bit vague because I don’t think people really knew what it was and what it... what it meant really [Social Worker, Wave 3]*

*R: We haven’t been able to set out our stall. I’ve been disappointed that not much has been distilled (from the project or the programme). I would have anticipated that we would’ve been able to demonstrate the added value, and we haven’t. A lot of the stuff (in the programme progress reports) is over-reported: ‘we did this, and we did this, and we did this, and we did this’. Lots and lots of activities: but’s what’s the overall outcome and who’s benefited?*

*Q: Could you weave in anything into your standard training offer?*

*R: I don’t know what we’d be weaving in! I don’t think it’s formulated enough to be able to deliver. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

The need for help in formulating a stronger narrative was perhaps especially clear in the case of the IFPs in the programme. As will be seen from the case studies, for the two IFPs in the study, strategic pressures and priorities shifted during the period for the programme. With local authorities purchasing placements described as “*wanting more for less*”, it became more or less imperative that any shift in the offer of the agency (for example, adding social pedagogically-informed care) should both minimise the amount of extra resource required and offer clear added value. The absence of a clear narrative around the added benefits of social pedagogy worked against the programme’s sustainability against this backdrop, especially for providers outside the public sector. Neither of the IFPs, both of who were rated by their relative inspectorates as high performing at the start of the programme, said they

were easily able to articulate what social pedagogy was adding to their already good offer. In the case of the privately-owned agency, the Board of Directors in fact became less confident, as the project progressed, that the substantial effort and expenditure being incurred by the project was yielding enough added value. The site project lead noted in this site that it was difficult to articulate to client local authorities what the tangible extra benefits of social pedagogy would be, even in broad terms, let alone in relation to specific placements, in spite of the fact that some of the direct work carried out by the social pedagogues in the site was openly praised by the local authorities.

## How sustainment unfolded at the local level

### Sustainment as consolidation

Some sites began their projects with the firm conviction that social pedagogy would prove helpful, and they always expected to use the programme as a platform from which to expand their ambitions and refine their methods. As the programme drew to a close, all sites considered they had learned much, and irrespective of the future of social pedagogy more widely, would continue to use the learning of the programme in various defined and less-defined ways.

No site had succeeded in achieving the indicators listed in our ideal model, which describes a scenario where a majority of carers and staff in a site would be using the approach, such that social pedagogy was threaded through ‘fostering as usual’ and had even begun to penetrate the wider system of children’s services outwith fostering. This was hardly surprising, given the time frame of the project but was also an artefact of the design: only small proportions of carers and staff (in mid to larger sites) were intended to be trained as part of the programme. However several sites were talking confidently about how social pedagogy as an approach had been picked up internally, and about their plans to extend training to a wider group. In one site, several stakeholders re-iterated this message:

*Our chief exec has bought into the idea that an introduction to social pedagogy will be rolled out to all social workers. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

*(I am) very confident it will continue to grow. Because of the way the pedagogues have fitted into the team and the way we've just gradually introduced some changes in the way we do things, it doesn't feel like 'a project' in that we're doing this now and it's going to come to an end, and then we'll go back to pre-project ....I think we've shifted the team ...So it doesn't feel like it's coming to an end at all. It feels like what we've achieved will keep progressing. [Social Work Team Lead, Wave 3]*

*Q: Has it been worth it?*

*R: Oh, without a doubt. Absolutely, without a doubt it's been worth it. I'm not one to be seeing things through rose-tinted spectacles but I am confident that it has been absolutely as successful as it could be and that if we carry on doing the same, we will inch our way towards it being very much embedded. I think I'd be lying to say it's fully embedded throughout [this authority] already, but, with the people who are in place at the moment, with the pedagogues, and the people who are on board with this in the teams, there's enough of them for the message to just gradually strengthen and we just keep reinforcing that through the training. I think fostering is certainly in a much better place. They (the 'engaged adopters') might only be a relatively small portion but they're a very vocal and visible number of people and they've raised the profile of fostering without a doubt.[Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

Front line staff however recognised that Head, Heart, Hands had been just a small beginning:

*Within a decade you're (maybe) in a situation where pedagogy is something that is underpinning, certainly in foster care. ..The hope is that then feeds outwards, but certainly there has to be more training, that's been clearly identified by everyone ... from the very beginning.[Social workers, Wave 3]*

In four sites, all of whom were mid-sized to larger local authorities and some of whom already had experience with social pedagogy, sustained implementation at some level was achieved by the end of the programme period. As the case studies illustrate, in some cases ambitious plans to train the entire workforce were afoot, and several sites had begun to work with strategic colleagues to articulate a strategy that would secure social pedagogy in their local authority culture as a set of principles to which they were firmly and explicitly committed. In all of these cases, it was notable that social pedagogy was being blended with other 'relational' approaches and philosophies for working with families and children and young people. These included restorative approaches, attachment-based approaches, and systemic practice. It seemed therefore that where social pedagogy was taken up as part of an integrated or blended approach to care, its chances of being sustained were greatly improved.

At a practical level, some sites had decided to make available continuing funds for the employment of one or more social pedagogues within their teams. Most stakeholders agreed that it was hard to see how social pedagogy could continue effectively - and to any level of quality - without access to this kind of professional support. The strong balance of opinion in the evaluation (and not just from social pedagogues) was that this was an essential element of any claim to having moved towards sustainment, post-programme.

*It really questions the quality assurance of social pedagogy - how the implementation is continuing when actually there is no support of a social pedagogue. This will be really the question, how much social pedagogy may be diluted by not having the quality assurance, not having the resources to really double check if (what is being delivered) is social pedagogy or if it might be something different [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

Some sites were also (after successful negotiations around use of Head, Heart, Hands-developed materials) making firm arrangements for in-house or contracted out training for further groups of carers and staff, either delivered by their own social pedagogues or by others or (in several cases) by members of the SPC.

Three other sites, without access to resources or strong pre-existing connections into wider groups working on the development of social pedagogy, felt unable to make these arrangements. These were also sites where either there had been relatively more difficulty for the project in gaining traction within the wider workforce or within senior leadership, (or both) and/ or where commitment to the project at senior levels had faltered. Here, the levels of negative disturbance had been relatively great and the benefits had perhaps not been so widely appreciated. Two were IFPs, and one was a very small local authority. It seemed that these sites especially would have benefited from more external assistance in developing and implementing a plan for sustainment after the programme's close.

*I think of (this project) as a piece of research, I also think of it as a way of looking to see whether we can improve children's experiences of being fostered and looked after. I think what it's done is it's made people stop and think about their own role in child care, particularly foster carers....(but) I don't think of it as being fully embedded into the agency. It feels like a contained project and even more so as time's gone on because we started with a very good, committed group of carers and it dwindled down. [Social Work Team Leader, Wave 3]*

## Sustainment as scaling and systems outreach

Sites themselves made considerable efforts to raise awareness *externally* across multiple agencies with which they were connected, and over the three waves of data collection we attempted to see if this widened or deepened by completing 'systems maps' that showed connections with other parts of the local system. However, the results were inconclusive; some sites reported isolated individuals in other teams and agencies had become keenly engaged with the project; and some agencies had consistently taken an interest in the project, but this seemed to be often explained by individual relationships or interests. In general, we could not see signs that specific plans had been laid or specific other teams or agencies had been systematically 'targeted' for close engagement as part of a clear strategy for influencing the local system. That work is very much still to be accomplished at site level. Many social pedagogues, site project leads, and carers who had become engaged adopters were however involved in spreading awareness about the projects, and although we cannot quantify this, there is no doubt that levels of awareness within sites continued to increase throughout the life of the programme. This was considered as a very positive outcome of the work, and also offered as evidence of empowerment for some stakeholders (for example, some carers) who might not previously have been confident to speak in public.

*Internal* cross-system outreach was also moderately successful in at least three sites. There were two sites where the social pedagogues worked daily not just in fostering but also in other parts of children's services. In both these sites (one small, one medium-sized), social pedagogues themselves were able to achieve good levels of outreach to colleagues working with other groups of children and families including in education and in residential care, and here, some degree of cross-system outreach had certainly begun. One other site with a reportedly very effective Head, Heart, Hands steering group, and a series of events that independently created the permitting circumstances for substantial further investment in social pedagogy as part of a blended strategy, also looked likely to achieve effective internal systems outreach and potentially whole-agency adoption of social pedagogy alongside other approaches. One effective event that had helped was that the SPC were commissioned independently to run a workshop with a very applied focus on child safeguarding that had a major strategic and operational impact

*A social pedagogue in one of the other sites who's a team manager of a Child Protection team, came and did a really inspirational (workshop).. for all of our managers. Frontline managers, assistant team managers, team managers, across the board, about a 100 people in a workshop for the day to learn about, 'This is how you use (social pedagogy) in Child Protection'. That was really, really good. I was learning a lot then.[Strategic Lead, Wave 3]*

## Sustainment through policy and procedural changes

The adaption of local policies and procedures in response to the project's learning was a promising area where the evaluation identified the beginnings of the kind of local systems change that could assist in longer term sustainment. Almost all of the sites reported that they had undertaken some work to amend policies, procedures and/or paper work in ways that reflected social pedagogic thinking. Changes in policy and what is written does not of course necessarily translate to change in actual procedures or on-the-ground practice, and implementation science calls this kind of development 'paper implementation' as distinct from 'performance implementation', in recognition of this<sup>ii</sup>; however, these developments in some sites were considered encouraging and are a necessary first step to more meaningful change in the way organisations and individuals practice.

Examples of process or policy adaptations described as inspired by Head, Heart, Hands varied across the sites, but included:

- The initiation or more frequent use of critical reflection activities within team meetings
- Amendment of Looked After Children Review processes to make them more child-centred and to utilise frameworks and reflective tools drawn from social pedagogy as part of that process (including in the review meeting itself)
- Reform of supervision processes with foster carers to incorporate elements of social pedagogic practice
- Review and revision of Foster carers' Annual Review forms, Supervision forms, and Matching Profiles to reflect social pedagogic principles and practices
- Social pedagogy incorporated into HR processes, including reference to the approach in recruitment specifications
- Development of an underpinning framework for working with children and families, based on an understanding of social pedagogy, blended with restorative practice and the impact of trauma, attachment and loss on children's development
- Social pedagogic principles incorporated into services' practice manual and defined as an 'underpinning theoretical framework' for practice
- Social pedagogy written into an Integrated Children's Services Plan
- Social pedagogy mentioned in an Improvement Plan following an Ofsted inspection

*R: What they (the social pedagogues) have shown to the teams very, very graphically is how working as a social worker fits in with social pedagogy. (They led on) changing some of our forms to make them more pedagogic, more focused on children.*

*Q: What sort of forms are we talking about?*

*Placement planning forms, looking at delegated authority and that sort of thing so there's a nice synergy there. We've looked at our household and annual review forms, children's profiles, those sorts of forms.*

*Q: When you say you've changed them, in what way?*

*R: Re-written them completely to be much more child-focused. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

One area of development that evaluation participants thought particularly beneficial was the review and revision of allegations and complaints procedures (i.e. procedures for when allegations of mistreatment are made against carers by foster children: a not infrequent and often very difficult aspect of the foster care system in the UK). Social pedagogy was thought to hold particular promise for this kind of improvement to the wider system, by providing a more reflective, less 'procedural' and more child-centred lens. One site for example involved one of their social pedagogues in a review of procedures for responding to allegations across the service. In a more specific example of social pedagogy being used in actual practice, in another site, a social pedagogue was involved in one case where a birth parent had logged regular complaints to Children's Services Department, and the frequency of complaints had dramatically fallen. It was estimated that a cost in excess of £10,000 had been avoided through the involvement of a social pedagogue<sup>xxi</sup>. These adaptations were in part undertaken in recognition of the need for local environments to be more 'authorising' of social pedagogy. Throughout the evaluation, both social workers and foster carers – with mixed degrees of enthusiasm for social pedagogy - raised concerns about the extent to which the wider system would support the application of the social pedagogic approaches in practice. This concern among foster carers was explored extensively in previous evaluation reports and was echoed across a number of front line staff during the implementation evaluation. As one social worker noted:

*So actually although [social pedagogy] is great and I think there is loads of positives to it, there is no way, for me, that it is going to be embedded unless lots of legislation (also shifts); everything needs to change. The culture, blame culture has to change [Social Worker, Wave 3]*

The efforts of the project teams to adapt local procedures reassured evaluation participants that the system - at the local level at least - was both committed to social pedagogy as an approach *and* was taking steps to ensure that the local environment would support its practice. Indeed, previous evaluation reports have noted that the involvement of foster carers in the revision of supervision paperwork to align with a social pedagogic lens helped to reassure those foster carers that the service was committed to the approach. Therefore the adaption of policies, procedures and paperwork not only aided the further penetration of the approach in *specific* areas of practice, but also helped to encourage engagement with programme at the *general* level.

There was also some evidence that changes in the way that particular issues were viewed and spoken of had taken place during Head, Heart, Hands. Of particular note was the way

that fostering services approached risk. Front line social workers reported that Head, Heart, Hands had facilitated positive dialogue about risk, and had given them permission to begin to move away from a 'risk-averse' culture to taking a 'risk sensible' approach. For example, one site had reviewed the risk assessment policy, changing a 'one size fits all approach' into one in which each child's strengths and risks were assessed at an individual level. Another site noted that they had changed the types of activities they provided for children and young people as part of their activity programme. Activities such as archery which had been previously dismissed as too risky had subsequently been organised with great success. Alongside these practical examples, front line staff in particular, noted that the way in which risk was thought about had changed since commencement of Head, Heart, Hands:

*I think historically what was promoted as 'safer caring' created quite a stilted sort of fostering environment, and again carers were afraid to, sort of, be doing things that a natural parent would do because, you know, they were told about how to approach things. I think we are trying to shift that, and take a more common sense approach.*  
[Social Worker, Wave 3]

Others commented that:

*[Head, Heart, Hands has] uplifted the health and safety ban. Yes, revaluated ...the approach to health and safety, it is not that we don't say no.... as long as you put in the right [safeguards] you can do anything within reason. Whereas before we were so risk averse.* [Social Worker, Wave 3]

And while it was acknowledged that there was still some way to go, participating social workers for example suggested that such discussions about risk could presage broader changes in the future. In particular, participants were hopeful that these emergent shifts would lead to a move away from an instrumental or 'tick box' approach to social work that has been extensively documented elsewhere<sup>xxii</sup>, towards more relationship based approaches.

Risk aversion in the system may however have affected sustainability for the IFPs in this programme disproportionately. IFPs must, by definition, have the approval of the local authority client to depart from any standard practice in specific cases. They are rigorously monitored by regulation for compliance with statutory and 'safe care' procedures. In the IFP where neither social pedagogue was a registered social worker for UK purposes, this meant that permission had to be sought by the supervising social worker from the IFP from the local authority social worker for the social pedagogues to do unsupervised direct work. Again, although reportedly not critical of the quality of the work carried out, permission was not always straightforward to obtain. The nature of the regulatory environment, with its regime of all-powerful Ofsted/Care Inspectorate inspections also affected IFPs in particular ways. No IFP can expect to continue as a provider to local authorities unless they have

optimal inspection ratings. Inspectors' judgments naturally become significant determinants of practice in these circumstances, and there was evidence that in at least some respects, national inspection criteria were not optimally aligned with the principles of social pedagogy. For example, one of the IFPs described an inspection, approximately half way through the life of the project, which appeared to be substantially driven by process: procedures followed, spreadsheets completed, and a sense that the requirement was that "everything must be recorded; if it's not on the spreadsheet, it doesn't count". Even though the report was mostly very positive, in a few specific findings the site project lead felt that the site had been:

*...Pulled back to a focus on process, and a focus on regulation rather than relationships. It emphasised, for us, the tension between the two approaches [Ofsted's and that of social pedagogy] and it drew us up quite short [Site Project Lead, Wave 3].*

However, evaluation participants in all types of sites also mentioned that that the wider regulatory system for children's services including the inspection frameworks did not seem especially well-aligned with or hospitable to some of the core principles of social pedagogy. This was a problem no matter what sector the provider came from. Most sites for example underwent an Ofsted inspection during the course of the Head, Heart, Hands programme, and many were disappointed that there seemed little opportunity for the inspectors to take positive account of the work the site had been doing in developing social pedagogy:

*They came with their own agenda and they couldn't deviate from that at all so we tried to talk about social pedagogy and how much that benefits Looked After Children. It wasn't on their agenda, they didn't want to know.[Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

In addition, as one senior strategic lead noted, for social pedagogy to really take off, no matter how well local sites might do, a more concerted effort to integrate the local development of social pedagogy with a national 'direction of travel' for children's services will probably be necessary for long-term sustainment:

*I'm not quite sure that I can see nationally where we're going. There was lots of talk at the start of this, and The Fostering Network and everyone coming out to see the director, lots of talk about where this is going to be (long term) and all that sort of thing. But I don't know how this is joining up for us nationally. So I would quite like to know at a bigger level than authority by authority if this is going to be part of the future for Looked After Children. [Strategic Lead, Wave 3]*

*A good structure (for sustainment) would be actually if (someone) could take a lead on it nationwide. They would need then as well back-up from government because they also would need funding. If you don't have a lead on a nationwide basis, we're going to lose half of our sites and we're not going to continue with social pedagogy, or social pedagogues (will) leave. [Social pedagogue, Wave 3]*

And even more of a challenge, some evaluation participants felt cultural attitudes, including to children and child care in the UK might be hostile to social pedagogy, and that changing this was a very distant prospect:

*I think one thing that does make it really difficult to implement (social pedagogy) in this country, and by this country I mean England as opposed to Scotland, because I do think Scotland is very different, is our culture. I think we have got a definite culture that is not so predisposed to social pedagogy. I think it's challenging to us. I think (the problems in this site are not peculiar to us but) are symptomatic. It's almost like a... certain kind of perhaps negativity and cynicism that perhaps we have more of in this country and that's what I mean... a kind of scepticism....It (social pedagogy) didn't come from us and maybe that's why we don't like it very much. I think we will have to think carefully about how we can try and encourage people to think about it without them feeling too challenged, because I think people feel really challenged and because they do perhaps they're not open to it, really. So I think that's definitely a huge (obstacle). [Social Worker, Wave 3]*

## In summary

Four sites made encouraging progress towards consolidation of social pedagogy in their own fostering services, and in at least three sites, there had been some diffusion of the approach to other parts of children's services either by virtue of social pedagogues working in other services, or by virtue of a corporate decision to make it so. Three sites had no clear plans to consolidate the work (by our judgement, at the end of 2015) although all in different ways thought the approach would live on their organisational culture and in practices.

In terms the ambitions of Head, Heart, Hands to create wider system change, we concluded by the end of the programme that this had been an overambitious aspiration for this programme, whether we mean scaling for 'the sector' - the national country-wide system - or for local 'systems of care' in the participating local authorities and IFPs. In retrospect, this element of the programme never found effective ownership, with the central delivery partners and the local sites each expecting the other to lead the planning.

With regard to the local system change, especially in the absence of a clear strategy for what this meant in principle, and what it might look like in practice, we detected little clear impact. To achieve this, at site level, a considerably closer relationship between senior strategic and corporate leads and the programme would need to have been designed than was the case. Most corporate leads were 'hands-off' in relation to the project and only intermittently sighted on the progress of the project, and site project leads were rarely at a sufficiently high level of organisational influence to play this role. Moreover, reasonably enough, some strategic leads wanted to see how the project unfolded and if it looked likely to be worthwhile before committing further resource to any kind of systems outreach at scale, whether internally or externally. At a national level, scaling up for wider systemic

change was also unlikely within the lifetime of the programme, and again, lacked a clear strategic plan.

There were however some encouraging signs in local sites that policies and procedures were being reviewed more critically and through a social pedagogic 'lens', and some saw this as the beginning of a positive direction of travel in local policy and procedures towards a more child-centred and less process-driven system of care in fostering. However, whether the on-paper commitments made in some sites will lead to permanent change embedded in front-line practice remains to be seen and is likely to be a long game, influenced by many more factors extraneous to the Head, Heart, Hands project. In particular, whilst the national regulatory frameworks are seen to be pulling against the principles of social pedagogy, this will create an ongoing and serious implementation barrier.

In respect of the lack of a formulated plan for sustainment, there may have been an assumption at central programme level, as with many aspects of the early part of this programme, that no 'generic' planning or tools could do justice to the extent of local diversity in how social pedagogy was being developed. However, diversity is a feature of all major innovations that are implemented in different places or contexts. Collective planning, provided it allows for flexibility, can still be accomplished, and need not mean that one size must fit all. It need not imply collective implementation in some straitjacketed form. There was perhaps a lack of connectivity (again, identifiable as far back as the exploration and installation stages of the programme) in the thinking about how the specific resources developed and tested through Head, Heart, Hands could be useful to the wider development of social pedagogy, both within sites and beyond them.

Finally, we note that work has been independently initiated by the lead funder towards development of the workforce, aimed at scaling social pedagogy through a professional association. This has been external to the Head, Heart, Hands programme and we are not able to describe its progress, but it may be a helpful development for this emergent profession in the UK.

# PART THREE

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## Chapter 10: Discussion and conclusions

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### Introduction

This report is the third and final report on the implementation of Head, Heart, Hands. Head, Heart, Hands was a demonstration programme to introduce social pedagogy into foster care, led by The Fostering Network in a delivery partnership with a specially created 'social pedagogy consortium'. It was implemented in seven local authority and independent fostering provider sites in England and Scotland. The implementation evaluation was designed and conducted as a separate module of research from the research on outcomes for foster carers and children, which will report in Autumn 2016. It used theory and frameworks developed by the emerging field of international implementation science and practice to guide the focus of data collection and analysis. It used the concept of 'stages of implementation' as an organising framework for following the development of the programme over time. It mainly explored the implementation journey over the three and a half years of the programme's delivery phase (2012-2015) from the perspectives of the seven local sites and the central delivery team (the social pedagogy consortium - SPC, and The Fostering Network). It has been a hard report to write: as one key stakeholder wryly commented (encapsulating the essence of the *implementation* challenge, as well as the evaluation challenge):

*I don't envy you (evaluators) having to do your job. Because in a way, generalising about social pedagogy is very un-social pedagogic!*

At the time of drafting this report, the final results on the outcomes for foster carers, and for the children and young people they cared for were not yet available, and only indicative and interim findings were available. We know from interim qualitative reports that some participating carers and some participating staff felt very positive indeed about what they had learned as part of the programme, and in all sites, much was learned that is considered to have strengthened fostering practice. However, social pedagogy is a specialised professional discipline in which those fully qualified have typically trained for many years. Although it is widely believed to be effective in other parts of Europe, and is woven routinely into some national systems of child care, in 2012 it was relatively new in the UK and was not yet supported by an independent scientifically validated evidence base. Great challenges arose (for all, including the evaluators) in forming a clear understanding of how this approach manifests in daily practice and what it would mean to implement it in foster care policy and services. This made it intrinsically difficult for sites to put into practice, as well as very difficult to evaluate satisfactorily.

We observed through the programme that social pedagogy has a tendency to produce strong and often polarised responses in those exposed to it: for example, we heard some arguing passionately that the approach was life-changing and transformational for practice,

and that much that it taught was not foregrounded in contemporary children's social care practice. These voices will be clearly heard in the final report on outcomes being published in Autumn 2016<sup>ii</sup>. Others rejected not the values, but objected strongly to the claims to novelty made by exponents of social pedagogy. They by contrast saw close resonance with other values, principles and methods that they believed were already the foundation of good practice in social work and in foster care. They saw the potential for social pedagogy to be blended with other best practice approaches to child care, but reacted against the sense created (they felt) by some exponents that social pedagogy was a 'movement' that you had to join.

Most people however were united in agreement that the daily realities of the social care system including fostering as it commonly operates in the UK often worked against the principles at the core of social pedagogy: for example, that the principle that critical reflection is essential to good practice in action. Most agreed that time for high quality reflection is hard to find in the cut and thrust of often process- and task-oriented care practices in contemporary times, and that social pedagogy was right to iterate (or perhaps, re-iterate) the importance of this. Thus there was already a climate of opinion favourable to social pedagogy in all the local sites at the outset, and if anything, this grew over the period of the programme, undoubtedly fuelled by the foregrounding of principles of good practice by programme activities and personnel. During implementation, however, some key stakeholders became disappointed by the continuing intangibility of the approach in practice, and found the complexity of the programme demands effortful to understand and implement. In this way, problems with articulating what *social pedagogy* is, and problems with the *Head, Heart, Hands programme*, collided unhelpfully.

In the rest of this chapter we pull together some of the key themes that have appeared throughout the preceding chapters, and provide summative analysis of the implementation journey at central and at local level. We discuss this journey both in relation to its ultimate destination (as it appeared at the end of the period of funding in December 2015), and in relation to its overall 'smoothness' as described by evaluation participants and from our own observations. We reference the implementation and systems science concept of 'disturbance' throughout (ie, perturbation to practice, to organisations and to systems, brought about by introducing something new into an existing service). Disturbance can be both positive and negative and is the essence of change; it is integral and necessary to successful innovation. But its consequences require careful management throughout, in order that it can be constructive and not destructive, and may not always be predictable. We concluded that whilst there was much positive disturbance created by the attempt to introduce social pedagogy, negative disturbance was substantial and to some extent predictable, as this is much more likely if there is lack of clarity about *what* is being introduced, lack of a convincing narrative about *why*, or if the key aspects of specification (*how*) are left too open. In the case of this intentionally 'exploratory' programme, much

was left open, and much disturbance was correspondingly encountered, not all of it constructive.

**Overall we concluded that the programme was implemented with mixed success, but where it was simplest, it was strongest.** Had Head, Heart, Hands not been badged as a 'systems change' initiative, with corresponding ambitions for longer-term sustainability and systems impact extending beyond fostering services themselves to the system of care around these services, our judgment would have been less equivocal. Overall, the programme implemented its basic core components well: these consisted of (in our judgement, based on how stakeholders described the key features), the operational features of:

- a training programme based on social pedagogic principles, values and methods for a defined cohort of carers and some staff;
- the embedding of trained social pedagogues within fostering services doing a mix of project-related and case work;
- the provision of external supports to sites and to individual social pedagogues.

The central management team at The Fostering Network certainly agreed:

*I think the learning has been positive for everybody concerned. I really don't think anybody involved in this programme has not benefited. Where we are at the moment is just so positive compared with where we could have been. I think that the SPC have been phenomenal; without them, we would have got absolutely nowhere. They have been an absolutely critical core component. And the social pedagogues also I think have been brilliant. I think we've proved our point that social pedagogy makes a huge impact and there's lots of unintended benefits. ... I think now UK social care could really benefit from social pedagogy. [The Fostering Network]*

Funders noted:

*R1: (Better understanding) of what is core and what is variable, seems to be still a really important part of the work really... .Consolidation of a feasible and practical model.*

*R2: It was a very big investment for us...*

*R1: I suppose what I would say is: We still don't really know what the delivery is and the outcomes of the changes in some of the (sites)... I mean some of the evaluation is still to report. But actually, in terms of what we have seen so far and what's actually been delivered for that money, it feels like it's actually been quite good value for money, I think, because it feels also that there is evidence that within some of those authorities there's been a broader kind of dissemination and interest beginning to be picked up. It's grown a bit beyond those initial very targeted (teams). So I think in some ways, I don't quite know what our expectations would have been and how you make those judgements about, well, what's good value for money, but I don't think we feel unhappy with our investment. [Funding board members]*

We concluded however that the addition of multiple other elements and structures beyond the core components may have introduced too many complexities and at times, contributed to undermining confidence and destabilising progress at site level. There were many new national activities, structures and requirements introduced during the course of the programme.

*I think the model was difficult: so the funders commission the Fostering Network who commission the SPC, who have got all the sites, who then (have social pedagogues)... It really felt ...rather hierarchical. [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

Combined with a somewhat disrupted central leadership for the first half of the programme, wide flexibility at local site level, and encouraged by a specification that was left intentionally open and 'exploratory' at the substantive level and a lack of guidance on what sustainment-focused activities could involve, this contributed to a feeling at site level of not knowing where the programme was headed at times. Some of this may have arisen as a result of the funders framing the programme as a demonstration (showcase) rather than a test of social pedagogy in the UK: with the benefit of hindsight, it seems that it was too early to confidently demonstrate 'how to do' social pedagogy in UK sites and a careful and iterative test within a few more limits might have been more appropriate. There may have been an over-emphasis on exploration and experimentation, and an under-emphasis on distillation and consolidation of clear messages for practice which at times obscured the sense of direction. All sites experienced this, especially during the first two years. Some recovered their confidence and by the end of the programme had forged their own paths to consolidation and degrees of sustainability. Others got progressively more diverted, and by the end of the programme were not certain how to proceed. Everyone at all levels (central and local) described the programme as having been exceptionally demanding at times.

## The local implementation journey

Head, Heart, Hands was a national programme, delivered at the local level through seven sites chosen to reflect different implementation contexts. In devolved innovation programmes of any complexity and length, it is usual for some sites to fall by the wayside for a variety of reasons, and the fact that Head, Heart, Hands began and ended with seven participating sites was a reflection of the extremely hard and dedicated effort of the central delivery partners, as well as the commitment of individual sites and project teams headed, without exception, by tenacious site project leads. All sites managed to implement the basic core components of the programme in some shape or form, and four completed a stage of

full implementation and were poised to enter a phase of sustained implementation by the end of the programme. Three looked much unlikely to sustain more than fragments of the project, but even these sites were all still sure that social pedagogy had something to offer: they just hadn't found a satisfactory way through the programme to consolidate it.

All sites were required to 'find their own way' to the application of social pedagogy with help from the SPC and their social pedagogues, as this was part of the expressed intention of the programme's open design. However the uncharted nature of what they were then required to do was probably particularly hard for small sites, where the project was very much 'on show' and exposed to critical scrutiny, or for sites with less confidence, or for social pedagogues with less access to opportunities to demonstrate in action what could be meant by social pedagogy in real world practice. However in all sites the project created a great deal of 'disturbance', not all of it constructive, which was perhaps surprising given that no-one to whom we spoke argued with the central values and principles of social pedagogy.

It was hard systematically to analyse the factors that influenced the overall direction of implementation success due to the many variables in the mix. Even identification of the core components articulated in Chapter Two took the evaluation team a long time to formulate, and there were many exceptions to the general rules we tried to discern.

However, criteria that seemed to be associated with a 'smoother' journey at site level included:

- Large or medium site: small sites and small teams were easily destabilised by the presence of strong sceptics in their midst, and also struggled with balancing the demands of fostering business as usual against what was sometime seen as the 'luxury' of social pedagogic practice
- Experienced and professionally and intellectually flexible social pedagogues holding a dual role that included holding some fostering cases: these social pedagogues mostly integrated faster and felt more widely accepted and valued than others
- Openness to a culture of innovation and improvement in practice, expressed by team members at all levels (not just senior staff): where teams were unfamiliar with innovation projects, or where there was a strong feeling that established practice was already optimal or close to it, it was harder to gain consensus around for the 'need' for the project and tolerance for the disturbance it created
- An effective relationship between the SPC lead, as the site support provider, and the site project lead, and direct connection for the SPC lead in each site to the corporate level of decision-making: where the SPC lead was seen as mainly a support for the social pedagogue(s) and as taking a more 'back seat' role at steering group level this seemed to detrimental to sustainment.

Interestingly and perhaps counterintuitively, prior familiarity or expressed organisational 'affinity' to social pedagogy as an approach did not predict the ease of implementation. Some felt that prior familiarity may even have been a barrier, reducing interest in any new learning and encouraging sites to assume that the project would go smoothly, social pedagogues would perform well, or would more easily be accepted into teams than was the case. The site which perhaps looked most likely to reach sustained implementation 'at scale' by the end of the programme was in fact the only site that had no prior organisational familiarity with the approach at all.

This may also have been a factor behind gaps in the 'exploration' and 'installation'-stage work that was undertaken at local level. These stages were not well-implemented at site level, and some sites possibly assumed that the familiarity of the approach or the (relatively) small budget were an indicator of the likely ease of implementation. Or they may simply have been unfamiliar with the challenges of innovation and participating in a national and externally-run programme. Still, it was notable that no site seemed to have effectively prepared their workforce for the coming disturbance that a social pedagogue would imply, so that social pedagogues mostly arrived into teams who knew little about their skills and professional stance, or what to expect of Head, Heart, Hands in the coming years.

## The central implementation journey

From the beginning, the central delivery team and especially the SPC and the central management team at The Fostering Network worked exceptionally hard to produce the programme. The small central management team who were recruited especially for the programme did much of their work in the first half of the programme during a time when close leadership support was absent. Especially given their lack of prior experience in fostering or social pedagogy (and indeed were new to The Fostering Network itself), this must rank as a great achievement. The SPC successfully designed and delivered a well-received core component of the programme (the core learning and development courses), and supported social pedagogues and site leads on an very minimal official budget of days averaging just under 2 days per month per site (shared between the two smaller sites) over the programme period.

The programme was however characterised throughout, and especially at the beginning and through the first half of the funded period, by a lack of clarity around the key parameters and around roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder in this complex mix. This was to an extent understandable and to be expected given the unknowns associated with any innovation. However in this programme it seems to have been widespread and particularly problematic. This played out in various ways and even extended to the lead funder's role at times: for example, The Fostering Network were the programme leads but did not hold the context expertise on social pedagogy (this lay with the SPC); the SPC were the support service working at site level, but were perceived by some to have limited prior experience

of the implementation context (fostering); the lead funder was heavily involved in an almost operational role, at times in direct contact with sites and in relation to the programme but independently of the central programme leads; sites occasionally complained that the programme was over-involving itself in matters that were properly the province of the provider, or was making calls on time that exceeded acceptable limits; social pedagogues at times noted that they did not always know to whom they were accountable for different elements of their remits (the site, the SPC, the programme); and there were other examples. Participants in the evaluation reported that fractious relationships and prolonged periods of intense debate about how to move forward were the result, and many different stakeholders noted that considerable energy was expended on resolving these difficulties.

*I think everybody was stepping into the unknown. If we had our time again I'd want all of the partners we've got... but I think clarifying how that (partnership) would work in a programme like this (would be desirable). Too much time (has been) spent on sorting out broken relationships and difficulties that have emerged. [The Fostering Network]*

It was also perhaps not surprising that the lack of clarity in specifying who would do what, and how, also fed through to site level, with social pedagogues, in the first year and a half especially, often describing feeling caught between conflicting demands on their time and attention and not knowing how to balance their own role in sites to best effect.

There seemed at times to be far too many 'balls in the air' and too many different structures and strands of activity for the central programme delivery team to juggle. As we noted in earlier interim reports, the programme structures and stakeholders and proposed interface between them were designed from the outset in a complicated way. This, combined with the lack of clarity on roles at both central and local levels, and some clear differences in perspective about the purpose of the programme and whether social pedagogy was already proven or yet to be tested, made the programme itself hard to understand and describe. As one senior professional from The Fostering Network noted: *"I think it's an extremely complex structure that the programme had, that maybe could have been simplified a bit"*. Some of the complexities of structure were rationalised over time in response to feedback, but they left a legacy of a sense of work started but not finished, and structures and roles not quite adapted to the programmes' needs. It is also likely that some key stakeholders had different expectations, and some may not have fully appreciated the realities of each other's position and professional worlds until the programme was comparatively advanced. This may have been a flaw in the design from the earliest days, and certainly created ongoing challenges that connected with the ease of implementation at the central programme level. Of course, social pedagogy was a new approach in the UK apart from isolated groupings of expertise, and Head, Heart, Hands was the first attempt to introduce into fostering (although not to children's services practice). But it is, for example, perhaps not surprising that an organisation new to social pedagogy found it challenging to lead a programme on such a subtly (and some would say, opaquely)-defined approach. Equally not

surprising were the difficulties of translating the approach to real world practice, given the team supporting delivery at site level did not themselves attach priority to operationalising the approach in practical terms.

These factors, combined with the general intangibility of social pedagogy in practice, may help us to understand why it proved so difficult for the central delivery team to produce and get consensus on what is now generally accepted as a vital part of an effective programme design: that is, a theory of change, a clear and concrete articulation of the expected mechanisms, in practice and in policy, of how the programme would achieve its outcomes. A specification of expected (or suggested) best practices of social pedagogy in operation is still awaited. Although some stakeholders argued forcefully such a thing could not, and should not, have been developed as it would constrain the exploratory and creativity of the programme, the fact that some sites still at the end of the programme could not articulate confidently what social pedagogy was or why their organisation would want to invest in it was, we feel, evidence of how much this was needed.

Finally, at the central level, some specific stages of implementation were not well undertaken. Exploration seems to have been weak, and focused on some but not all of the factors that were likely to influence subsequent implementation success. Installation (at local level) suffered further from lack of specificity of expectations at central level, and might have been assisted if the programme design (which as we have noted, was not, in its core components, especially complex) had been articulated more crisply.

## The role and functioning of the social pedagogues: the most active ingredient

Throughout this report we have touched on different aspects of the social pedagogue's roles as they played out at various stages of implementation.

Pedagogues were a clear active ingredient of the programme, and most (although not absolutely all) evaluation participants agreed they were essential to the delivery of high-quality social pedagogy.

As one interviewee noted:

*I have to say for me the most important [component of the programme] is the pedagogues. By a country mile. (Site project Lead, Wave 3)*

*They're passionate about their work. I never hear either of them say, 'Oh God, I've got to go and do this tonight. I don't want to.' They just get on with it. Very, very positive. That is quite rare and it's lovely. It's really lovely. I've absolutely loved it. [Social Work Team Lead]*

The programme has shown that professional social pedagogues can be integrated into established UK social work teams providing care is taken to carve out an appropriately balanced role and where the 'fit' of the skills and professional style to the context is good. Although they suffered some of the same challenges reported in an earlier attempt to introduce social pedagogy into children's social care in the UK<sup>viii</sup>, the Head, Heart, Hands programme wisely chose to place two social pedagogues in most sites which helped – to an extent – to counteract the professional and personal isolation that professionals coming from overseas and from an unfamiliar discipline would be expected to face.

Even in sites where there were challenges in settling social pedagogues or where social pedagogues and managers did not always find it easy to agree on a way forward (four sites to our knowledge), site project leads were universally and unreservedly positive about the quality and skills and contributions of social pedagogues in many areas of site functioning. Their direct work with children and families was especially admired, and other praise was given for a range of things: exceptionally hard work and dedication, persistence and resilience in the face of occasional but sometimes prolonged and implacable resistance by individual colleagues, willingness to work flexibly and well beyond routine hours and duties, creativity and imaginativeness, adaptability, courage: the list of admired qualities was long and leaves us with little doubt that social pedagogues in the programme collectively brought with them many valuable skills and attributes.

Some key learning has emerged through the programme about how social pedagogues might optimally be deployed in any future similar initiative. First, holding roles that combine development of social pedagogy with routine operational social work responsibilities seems to be optimal, provided managers assist with the delicate balancing of time that must be achieved. In most sites, dual role social pedagogues were holding somewhat less than half a full case load; even so, time was always at a premium. However, where social pedagogues did not hold cases and could not (or in a couple of cases, preferred not to) do direct work with fostering households, this impeded their integration into and acceptance by existing social work teams. It may also have created a barrier to fully appreciating the daily realities and constraints of operational colleagues, and of the UK social care system. And most fundamentally of all, it prevented non-pedagogic colleagues from witnessing social pedagogy being modelled 'in action' and so cut off one of the main anticipated routes for diffusing social pedagogy into the wider workforce.

The fit (or 'alignment') of social pedagogues to one another, and to their specific working context also made a difference to how they coped in the project as individuals, and how the project unfolded (the two being intimately linked, of course). Given that the diversity of approaches to social pedagogy internationally is wide, and the social pedagogues themselves were drawn from very different pedagogic traditions, it was not surprising that some 'matched' social pedagogues simply did not fit together easily in professional terms. Where it happened, this was consuming of time and emotional energy, and may have got in

the way of implementation at times as social pedagogues were reported to spend much time debating and consulting about the way forward. Flexibility and pragmatism generally was a key requirement: those who expressed a pragmatic and open view about the forms social pedagogy could take and how it could be woven into social work business as usual seemed to more quickly become accepted and integrated both in the project team and outside it. These social pedagogues also seemed to fare better than those who took a more intellectual or even (as described in one site) somewhat 'pedantic' or 'purist' view of how the project should unfold.

Finally, although social pedagogues were worked hard in this programme, there was a pervasive feeling amongst them and amongst some SPC members that their assigned position in the Head, Heart, Hands programme structure had led to their being underutilised in some respects. Some of the more experienced social pedagogues (and some were very experienced, just as some were very inexperienced) could perhaps have taken more active roles for example in co-design and especially in delivering the core learning and development courses. Some felt they did not need the kind of support and supervision offered by the SPC, and could even have taken this role themselves, for less experienced colleagues. Their first year, spent largely in orchestrating but not delivering the core courses, might perhaps in some cases have been better used. Overall, the extent of diversity within the group of social pedagogues was perhaps underestimated. This was the perception of one social pedagogue, typical of what many said:

*I think what would have been better, it was actually a bit of a criticism of the programme - I think the social pedagogues should have been seen more as the experts. Actually some of our social pedagogues are more experienced than (some of) the social pedagogues in the SPC. So I think there needed to be a bit more of an acknowledgement of that. That's got missed, so with the SPC in place these are the experts, this is the project, these are the managers of the project, and you are the social pedagogues who do (less important) work. I think that was the wrong start maybe [Site Project Lead, Wave 3]*

## Overall conclusions

As with any innovation, there was much in this programme that was very new and unfamiliar to the stakeholder organisations and individuals, as well as to the field in general. As the single most ambitious programme of its kind, Head, Heart, Hands has contributed seminally to the learning on development of ways to include social pedagogic ways of working in mainstream fostering services and also, substantially, to learning about implementing innovation in general in the context of UK public services.

Was the extent of the 'disturbance' created by Head, Heart, Hands sufficient to produce the kind of change desired? We will have to await impact results before we can definitively

connect design and implementation findings with results, but the implementation evaluation suggests not in all respects, though a substantial start has been made. As one strategic lead explained:

*Q: Has it been enough of a disturbance? You've trained a proportion of your carers but not the whole pool. So then the question is has there been enough to get critical mass and set you off on a new path?*

*R: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I think that's what we're about to find out. I would hope there has. (But it recently came to light that) a lot of our frontline workers didn't know (what) social pedagogy (is), so I think for our director, our deputy director, that (was surprising) ...So no, I wouldn't say we've finished that bit yet. [Strategic Lead, Wave 3]*

This kind of comment was typical from social pedagogues, who tended to focus on the quality of the disturbance, rather than the extent of it:

*Those people who are fully engaged; I can name a number of social workers and foster carers who will continue social pedagogy, who have found their own way, how they like to promote social pedagogy, how they like to also reach out for others. So, this will be continuing because (they are) really transformed and they wouldn't lose this. This will be really sustained and I'm really positive about this. [Social Pedagogue, Wave 3]*

Overall, however, we can form some conclusions about the implementation of the programme that may be helpful to any future attempts of this kind:

As a national programme, Head, Heart, Hands was successful in some respects and not in others. It was always going to be a challenge to implement a flexible, fluid approach that resists definition at the level of practice: and so it proved. All sites who participated stayed involved to the very end, despite the length and demands of the programme and the fact that it was part-funded by sites themselves. In the context of implementing national programmes in multiple sites, in our extensive experience it is usual for some sites to drop out for a variety of reasons. The fact that none did so in Head, Heart, Hands, despite a backdrop of growing austerity in public services during the same period speaks to the value of the programme and the sense of commitment that sites felt towards it. The programme confirmed that there is an appetite for social pedagogy and for social pedagogues in mainstream services, and showed that some sites, albeit not without struggles, took to social pedagogy and were finding its benefits sufficient to want to continue well beyond the end of the funded programme. Some were if anything more excited and enthused than they were at the beginning, and all agreed that there had been much useful and important learning.

However, three of the seven sites were not expressing clear commitments for further development of social pedagogy by the programme's finish, and all sites and many

individual stakeholders at times spoke of difficulties well beyond initial expectations. Our analysis was that a combination of over-complexity and under-specification in the central programme played out in a very challenging way for sites, and in some cases impeded a focus on doing the basics well and effectively. Site project leads commented throughout on the degree of 'busyness' and activity the programme created, and in early stages in particular also reacted to the expense and time-demands of the central programme and some of the myriad local activities that were being created (although all were eagerly awaiting the final impact report which will report on whether costs have been justified by potential and actual savings). Some of this busyness was undoubtedly in pursuit of the 'systems outreach and change' agenda of the programme, and we question whether this was always an over-ambitious goal given the youth of social pedagogy in the UK. The absence of a clear narrative regarding the added benefits of social pedagogy for senior site personnel to use to secure corporate and external buy-in in the longer term also seems to have been a particularly problematic for some sites. Again, this stemmed, we judged, from the difficulties of trying to package an approach characterised dominantly by principles and 'mind-set' into tangible and concrete procedures and practices whose benefits could be described as an improvement on routine practice. A message for future similar programmes would be to concentrate on specifying basics, implement those basics well, and only once the basics are securely established branch out in to more ambitious and far reaching activities, using a clear strategic and operational plan to guide the work.

Some important learning has also been generated from Head, Heart, Hands regarding the implementation of social pedagogy in general:

One participant spoke forcefully about how in their site, social pedagogy had been so ill-defined and ill-explained that it brought confusion rather than clarity. The design and framing of the contribution of social pedagogy needed to be sharper, and the added value to their existing offer needed to be articulated:

*The marketplace is changing constantly... we have to be very sensitive to that market, have to cut cloth according to that. So it might (have) helped us to focus on the things that are really important rather than working in this kind of haze...of social pedagogy [Site Project Lead]*

Even those who had learned to live with the fluidity continued to reflect on the barriers this creates for the implementation of social pedagogy:

*I think very quickly we realised that we can't give it a definition in the same way that people expect it to be because it's just not that kind of concept. That's the hard thing, because people want a definition. People find that very frustrating. If you can't have a definition then how could you possibly understand it? [Family Support Worker, member of a project steering group]*

In Head, Heart, Hands, despite the unfamiliar terminology and unfamiliar concept of ‘social pedagogues’, no-one questioned the values or aspirations of social pedagogy. This suggests that stressing the *continuities* rather than the *discontinuities* of social pedagogy with existing practice may be a more favourable route to follow in future. The Head, Heart, Hands programme narrative of change and transformation, though initially exciting and motivating, may have been the wrong narrative to adopt in this programme, and certainly alienated some and in others raised expectations that were not met. Identifying strength-based points of connection with existing practice and then using social pedagogy as a way to challenge agreed weaknesses might have helped to win over some of the sceptics who remained unconvinced to the end, some of who did not assist the implementation process to run smoothly. The same may be true of the ongoing tension that we discerned in multiple narratives about the programme: some stakeholders (at all levels) felt they were being ‘pressured’ to adopt social pedagogy as the ‘one right way’ to do things, and that adoption implied a total process into which every organisational policy process and practice must fit. This impression – whether justified or not – seems to have been counterproductive to some degree. It may have been true that, as one SPC member framed it: *“social pedagogy is holistic... (but) the holistic development (in the programme) was limited by .. a caution in endorsing social pedagogy as an approach for fear of being perceived as excluding other approaches”*, but it might also have been made easier for some if the emphasis had been more integrative and pragmatic, and a little less exclusive.

In the countries where social pedagogy exists as an established discipline and whose example inspired the architects of Head, Heart, Hands, social pedagogy is a way of working threaded through different strands of basic practice. It is supported by other aspects of system structure as well as by different cultural attitudes and practices in child care and to rights, democracy and social justice and so on. The fact that several of the key terms in social pedagogy have no equivalent in English testifies to the ‘differentness’ that many Head, Heart, Hands participants struggled to accommodate. It is not delivered as a ‘project’ in these countries, and with the benefit of hindsight and the learning from Head, Heart, Hands, the implementation evaluation suggests it is not yet clear that it *can* be successfully delivered at scale in the UK in this way, as an ‘insertion’ into mainstream services. Any attempt to introduce social pedagogy by ‘programme’ or ‘project’ means may always be limited if it resists being packaged as a clear set of structures and activities. What most of the evaluation participants recognised from the outset was that introducing it via the ‘substrate’ – though basic, widely-available training to social workers and care staff and to foster carers - may be the optimal route for this strongly intellectual and hard-to-capture approach, which is as much about strengthening thinking and mind-set as it is about eliciting defined practice by carers and staff.

Finally, in an independent review on the current state of children’s residential care in England published just as this report was going to print, in a chapter on European Social

Pedagogy, the author Sir Martin Narey writes pointedly in terms that very much reflect the findings reported here:

*“There is no singular agreed definition (for social pedagogy). As such, many practitioners find it difficult to articulate or even conceptualise... I do not believe that social pedagogy is a panacea; nor do I believe that it necessarily involves a radically different approach to the care of young people... What is it is important that (residential children’s homes) are clear about the approach they utilise... good and outstanding homes are generally clear about their model of care and make sure that what they offer and to whom is reflected in their statement of purpose...”<sup>xxiii</sup>*

The implementation analysis of Head, Heart, Hands clearly shows that the single greatest future obstacle to the widespread introduction of social pedagogy, not to mention its robust evaluation, will be the difficulty of gaining clarity on what social pedagogy is, and what it is not, and in what respects it is believed to be different to, and an improvement upon, received understandings of existing ‘good practice’ in children’s services. Unless and until exponents can clearly communicate to practitioners and observers without extensive training in social pedagogy how it can be delivered in real world, front line practice, and what specific structures and supports are required to implement it effectively, it will remain difficult to adopt into the mainstream and difficult to evaluate with confidence, no matter how positive and engaged individual carers and staff may feel. The Head, Heart, Hands programme has therefore proved extremely timely. It has provided rich material to enable its exponents to distil relevant learning on how to define social pedagogy for fostering practice, going well beyond the data that has been previously available in the context of residential care services. As such it has been a major step forward.

## APPENDIX Characteristics of Social Pedagogic Foster Carers

### **Extract from proposals to The Fostering Network from the Social Pedagogy Consortium (2011)**

Below are some of the characteristics of social pedagogic foster carers: the difference lies more in 'how' social pedagogic carers approach something, not so much in 'what' they do. The list below, although somewhat reductive, goes some way to describing how social pedagogic foster carers understand themselves and others, and their use of rights, law, research and theory to inform how they approach the relationship with foster children. Developing strong relational skills would help social pedagogic foster carers to support and accept children who have experienced trauma or who come from tough realities, and would help the carers to be strong nurturers for the whole foster family, including their own children.

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- Foster carers would have an **understanding of the core elements of social pedagogy**, as described in section 3.
- They would be acutely conscious of **the wellbeing of the child**: acknowledging individuality, recognising and appreciating the person, finding practical ways of enhancing well-being, paying attention to 'the little things', seeing the child holistically and relationally.
- **Relationship**: they would pay acute attention to developing positive and equal relationships, recognising that it is always the adults who have responsibility for the relationship; understand that persons who are negatively described are thereby excluded; have an acute awareness of all relationships within the carer's family; understand how relationships can be built through everyday activities.
- **Rights-based approach**: social pedagogic foster carers would understand that children have rights, not only in the present but also with regard to their long term wellbeing.
- **Creating learning opportunities**: recognising that educative possibilities are inherent in everyday activities and the 'common third' (below); creating a learning atmosphere; establishing norms rather than rules; developing children's risk competence.
- **Reflection and 3Ps**: acknowledging the benefits of being reflective; understanding the connections, interplay and potential between the professional, personal and private person they are; able to share practice, doubts or critical views positively, with colleagues
- **Hermeneutical Practice**: seeing the world through the eyes of the other person and their subjective experience: the meaning of someone and their actions stems from their personal perspective in particular contexts. Other people's points of view must be learned through genuine and attentive listening and improved communication based on theory and reflection; labelling behaviour as 'right' or 'wrong' is relinquished, and practice is based on holistic understanding and care
- **Common Third activities**: thinking through their aims and the best ways of achieving them through activities carried out with, rather than for, the foster child; using fun and creativity; recognising the intrinsic value for the relationship in having fun with the child
- **Creativity**: using their own creativity and interests as a resource; creative activities seen as opportunities for development and understanding
- **Providing a positive experience being cared for in a foster family**:
  - **Being pro-active and responsive**: not letting things escalate, understanding their own impact on a child's behaviour and having the skill / confidence to deal with dynamics
  - **Mistakes seen as learning opportunities**: away from blame culture – learning from experiences
  - **Calmness**: a relaxed and calm atmosphere and ways to facilitate this
  - **Meaningful practice**: every moment can be meaningful, every positive experience counts
- **Continuous development**: taking ownership for their own learning and sharing their learning with colleagues and other professionals in a variety of forums.
- **'Haltung'**: a consciousness of their own values and ethos, reflected in how they see children and this being reflected in their actions

## ENDNOTES

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<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/content/ccfr/publications/HHH%20Impact%20on%20FC%20%20CYP%20T2%20FINAL.pdf>
- <sup>ii</sup> Forthcoming (Autumn 2016): *The impact of Head, Heart Hands*, Loughborough University and Colebrooke Centre
- <sup>iii</sup> Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M. & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation Research: A Synthesis of the Literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network (FMHI Publication #231).  
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- <sup>vii</sup> See <http://www.thempra.org.uk/spdn/>
- <sup>viii</sup> Berridge, D., Biehal, N., Lutman, E., Henry, L. and Palomares, M. (2011) *Raising the Bar? Evaluation of the Social Pedagogy Pilot Programme in Residential Children's Homes*. London: Department for Education
- <sup>ix</sup> See Ghate D (2015) From Programs to Systems: deploying implementation science for sustained real-world effectiveness in services to children and families *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15374461.2015.1077449> for a short overview of key concepts in implementation science
- <sup>x</sup> Chambers D.A., Glasgow R.E., and Stange K.C. (2013) The dynamic sustainability framework: addressing the paradox of sustainment amid ongoing change *Implementation Science* 8:117  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-8-117>
- <sup>xi</sup> <http://www.thempra.org.uk/social-pedagogy/key-concepts-in-social-pedagogy/> and *the Social Pedagogy Pocketbook* [www.jacaranda-recruitment.co.uk](http://www.jacaranda-recruitment.co.uk)
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- xiv Care Inspectorate and Ofsted ratings should only be considered to be an approximate guide to the quality of care provided. Direct comparisons should not be drawn between the HHH sites based on the ratings awarded alone, due to the substantial differences between the inspection regimes and regulatory frameworks in England (Ofsted) and Scotland (The Care Inspectorate). For instance, English and Scottish local authorities are measured against different criteria and while individual judgements on each criteria are awarded in both countries, an overall judgement is also given to English providers. By virtue of their differing organisational structures, the inspection framework for IFPs also differs from local authorities. Inspections within IFPs are considered to be 'stand-alone', concentrating on the one or two services offered by that particular agency. In contrast, local authorities are subject to 'whole service' inspections which take into account the entire range of duties and services they provide.
- xv Peterson S.M (2013) Effective implementation processes for meeting people where they are in Halle, T., Metz A and Martinez-Beck (eds) *Applying implementation science in early childhood programs and systems* Chapter 3 43-64 Baltimore: Paul. H Brookes Publishing Company
- xvi "In each of the demonstration sites there will be an overarching development programme with three key components. Firstly, a learning and skill development programme for foster carers, supervising social workers and other professionals concerned with foster care. Secondly, employment of social pedagogues who will have a dual role: to assist in awareness raising and championing the project; and to work directly with children and foster carers to model social pedagogic practice and consolidate their learning. **Thirdly, a mechanism to provide a strategic overview of the system and how it can be changed to achieve a stronger focus on the quality of foster care within the child's network.**" Extract from SPC Proposal to The Fostering Network, 2011
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- xxiii *Residential Care in England: report of Sir Martin Narey's independent review of children's residential care;* Department for Education, July 2016, 66-68 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/childrens-residential-care-in-england>