

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

Summary of key findings

2nd Edition - November 2016

Deborah Ghate

The Colebrooke Centre for Evidence and Implementation

Samantha McDermid

Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University

Introduction

- This is a summary of the key findings of the independent implementation evaluation undertaken on behalf of The Fostering Network for **Head, Heart, Hands**. It is a final assessment of the **implementation process**; the **outcomes** of the programme are covered in a separate report (Loughborough University and the Colebrooke Centre; forthcoming winter 2016), and were not known at the time of drafting this report.
- The **Main Report** is available to download at:
http://www.cevi.org.uk/docs2/Implementing_Head_Heart_Hands_Main_Report.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
All documents can also be retrieved at:
<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/ccfr/research/exploring/project---head-heart-hands.html>.
- The implementation evaluation explored the **process of delivering** the programme over four years. It is based on 132 qualitative depth interviews and 24 focus groups, including over 230 individual participants across three years of data collection. The evaluation was informed by the theory and methods of implementation science.

Head Heart Hands and social pedagogy

Social pedagogy has been described as a philosophy, rather than a model of care. It places great value on critical reflection; and an approach to managing risk which allows children to grow and learn. It has at its core recognition that adults and children live alongside each other and share the same space.

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 ...was exploring how the framework could be applied in the UK, rather than ‘importing’ a model of care.

- **Head, Heart, Hands** was set up in 2012 as an ambitious ‘demonstration’ programme to introduce social pedagogy into 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’. While social

pedagogy is common across continental Europe, it is less well understood the UK. Interest has been growing here since the 1990s, but apart from a Department for Education-funded a pilot in 2010 to explore the feasibility of introducing social pedagogic principles to residential careⁱ which reported mixed results, the Head, Heart, Hands programme was the only significant practical attempt to introduce social pedagogy into statutory fostering services in multiple locations.

Structure of the programme

Funders

- The programme was co-funded by a consortium of seven Philanthropic donors: KPMG Foundation (who chaired the funding board), 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 central programme delivery team

- Operationally, the programme was led and managed by **The Fostering Network**, a national children's charity working with foster carers and fostering services.
- To design and support the delivery of the programme, the Fostering Network commissioned a 'delivery partner', the **social pedagogy consortium (SPC)**, a group of practice and academic specialists in social pedagogy. The SPC wrote the base resources and designed and led core 'learning and development' courses for foster carers and staff. Designated 'site support leads' were also assigned to each site to give practical and strategic support to sites, with an average time allowance of 2 days per month per site.

The Head, Heart, Hands teams at local level

- **Seven local sites**, three in Scotland and four in England, participated. The sites included two independent foster care providers (IFP's), one private, one voluntary; and five local authorities. The sites were selected through competitive application to offer a range of different contexts in which to explore how the programme could work. All but one site had some prior exposure to social pedagogy or to social pedagogues, although this varied in intensity.

What is a social pedagogue?

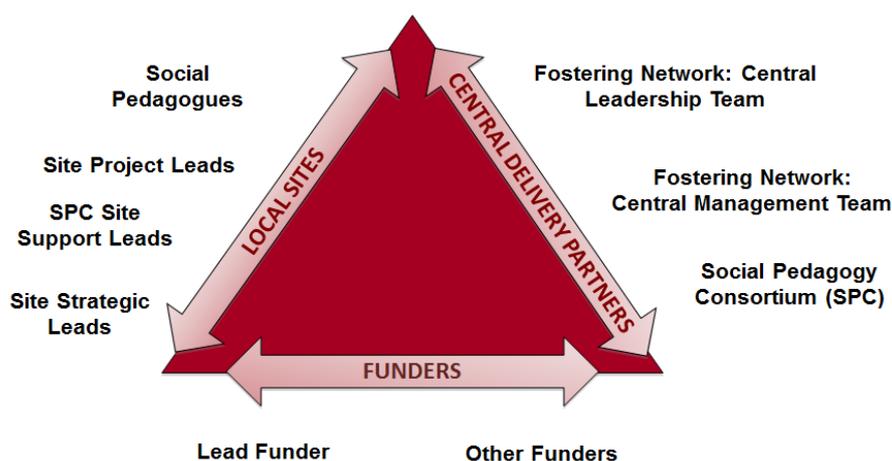
'Social Pedagogue' is a recognised professional designation in some countries although not yet in the UK. Their degree-level training focuses on social and emotional development and education and upbringing in its broadest sense. The social pedagogues in Head, Heart, Hands came variously from Germany, Austria, Denmark, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, Spain and Slovenia.

Sites were given funding to cover 50% of the salary of two full time **social pedagogues**. In three sites, the actual number employed varied from 1-3 people. Social pedagogues acted as a bridge between

the national programme and local implementation, and provided a range of expert inputs to develop the site's 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, usually a person at service or team manager level within the fostering service, who was pivotal in local implementation. Site leads were supported by project **strategic leads**, usually at Head of Service or Assistant Director level. They authorised the site's involvement and were kept sighted on the project's activities.

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



Nature and form of the programme

- The programme 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.

- Reduced to its most basic **core components**, the programme had three core features that were applied in a (relatively speaking) standardised form across all sites:
 - a core training ('learning and development') programme based on social pedagogic principles, values and methods for a defined cohort of 40 carers in each site and (notionally) up to 8 staff, designed and delivered by the SPC;
 - the embedding of trained social pedagogues within fostering services, doing a mix of project-related social pedagogic development work and some social work activities;
 - the provision of external supports to sites and to individual pedagogues by the SPC.

- In addition, there were a number of **variably implemented components**, including:
 - whether social pedagogues appointed to the programme were also registered to practice social work ('dual role' pedagogues) and thus could undertake statutory fostering social work in fostering households;
 - the amount of direct work undertaken by pedagogues with families or with young people, and whether this was alone or jointly with other colleagues;
 - the extent of review and redrafting of policies and operational procedures by Head, Heart, Hands project teams within site fostering services.

- Defining the **substantive content** of the programme was more difficult than defining the operational features, however. The nature of social pedagogy, as defined by the SPC, was described as a fluid approach, based in core ethical values and principles, which included amongst others: the importance attached to building authentic, supportive and equitable relationships; child-centeredness; the use of everyday situations as learning opportunities; the value and significance of critical reflection during practice; and recognition and uses of the 'self' within practice. A menu of specific tools and methods were included in the core learning provided by the programme, and the SPC delineated a series of characteristics of social pedagogic foster carers in early proposals. However, clarity on the specific dimensions and manifestations of social pedagogy *in action* or *in practice* in a way that was clear and meaningful to non-pedagogically trained stakeholders remained elusive throughout. As set out by the SPC in their proposals: "*The difference lies more in 'how' social pedagogic carers approach something, not so much in 'what' they do*".

The implementation journey - overview

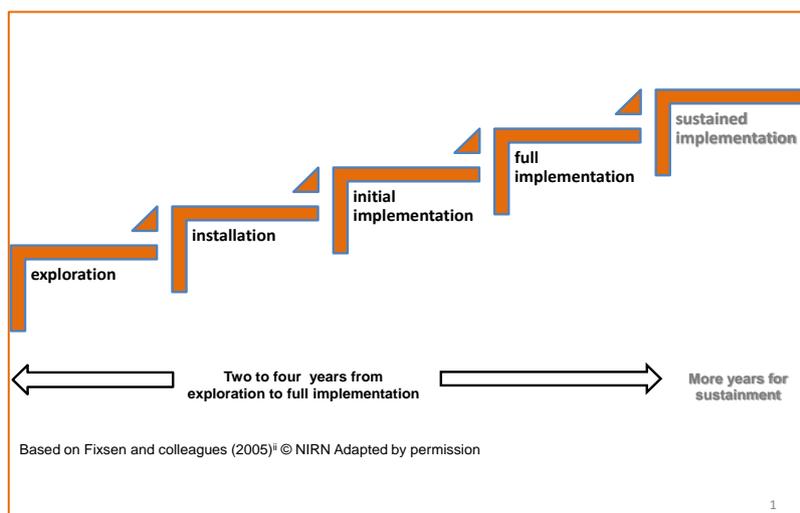
- In devolved innovation programmes of any complexity and length, it is usual for some sites to fall by the wayside for a variety of reasons. Somewhat unusually for a programme of this nature, **all Head, Heart, Hands sites remained engaged until the formal end of the programme**, a reflection of the dedicated effort and commitment of all involved.
- **All sites managed to implement the basic core components of the programme** in some shape or form. However, as might be expected within an initiative of such complexity, all experienced challenges arising out of the programme, not all of it positive or constructive.
- The overarching picture in terms of the quality of the journey the sites underwent was that it started with some difficulties, despite high levels of enthusiasm and aspiration, but gradually improved and gathered strength over time. 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, and **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 with a plan emerging to train up all children's services staff in the approach as part of a blended strategy which incorporated social pedagogy with two other recognised approaches to practice. These four sites all considered that they were firmly set on a 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).
 - In three sites, stakeholders felt that **full implementation had not been firmly reached by the end of the programme**. Sustained implementation therefore seemed either unlikely or relatively distant prospect. Social pedagogues were leaving and no replacements were planned, and the sites had no clear strategic or operational plans to continue with the work, although 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.

- The Fostering Network experienced an unanticipated **loss in continuity of leadership** of the programme during the second year of implementation, due to both senior executive staff leaving post. A small central management team worked without close leadership support during a period extending to several months. Senior staff joining later brought new vigour and increased oversight to the programme, but some persistent challenges remained.

The implementation journey – stage by stage

Stages of implementation from exploration to sustainment



The implementation evaluation used the framework of **implementation stages**ⁱⁱ to explore what was done and the experiences of stakeholders as the programme unfolded.

Exploration stage (scoping and fixing parameters; operationalising the approach)

- The initial stage of 'exploration' is a critical stage for any new innovation. It is a stage primarily of research, investigation, and ideation: ideally '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.
- **Considerable activity** was described by funders and stakeholders in the central delivery partnership prior to the programme's launch. This included early 'scoping' research by

independent academics, and a process of soliciting applications to be part of the programme and then selection of the sites.

- However, many potentially significant elements of implementation that subsequently had practical implications were left largely open at the outset. Exploration was probably the **weakest stage** in the programme.
- At the central level, some of the issues that might have benefited from more exploration included:
 - **The fit between the different partners who were to work together.** Both central delivery partners were mutually unfamiliar with each other's organisations and to some extent with the professional arenas in which each worked (social pedagogy; and fostering policy and practice). Each had differing expectations and understandings about the scope and requirements of implementation. Funders also noted they had not fully clarified their own expectations at this stage. Relationships got off to a difficult start and continued to be somewhat problematic well into the programme.
 - **The definition and operational form of the 'social pedagogic approach' that was to characterise Head, Heart, Hands.** At this stage, there was developed no clear description of what were expected to be core or variable components, no formal theory of change or logical model outlining how and by what means the programme would have its intended effects, and no clear framing of the relative practical roles of key 'change agents' including the core roles of social pedagogues. Although some of these matters were clarified to some extent as the programme progressed, lack of clarity continued to impede progress at site level to some extent in the longer term.
 - **Planning for wider systems engagement, or for longer term sustainment** of the approach. It was not intended that Head, Heart, Hands itself would be sustained after the four year funding period, although all sites hoped, and the programme's objectives implied, that sustainment of social pedagogy and diffusion into the wider system around fostering services and beyond was hoped for. However this was not scoped out or strategically planned at the exploration stage, and never acquired the focus that might have been optimal in view of the programme's wider objectives. While support was offered to the sites by the SPC and The Fostering Network, there was some ambiguity regarding who was responsible for planning and implementing sustainment at the local level. Evaluation participants from the sites expected the central delivery partners to take the lead on this area, while the central delivery team assumed that sites would take the lead, allowing them to develop local adaptations for sustainment.
 - **Sites themselves did very little systematic exploration** beyond applying to be part of the programme. It was realised later that sites had at this stage very little firm

information relevant to clarifying the practice implications at site level, and they felt underprepared.

- There were also clear signs that later emerged that some aspects of the **alignment** between the way sites operated and the culture of the teams who would 'host' Head, Heart, Hands was not optimal. Some of the social pedagogues appointed to specific sites were not optimally suited to that site's requirements or culture, and staff teams in the main felt they had been inadequately prepared for the coming disturbance that the innovation would bring.

Installation stage (putting in place the necessary supports)

- Installation is a key stage in the implementation process that sets the scene for what is to come. Generally it requires strong communications, and anticipatory work to prepare the ground and mobilise key resources. In innovation processes, what is required for effective installation is often unclear, and all the more so if as was the case for Head, Heart, Hands, 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 programme began to gather strength. At site level, **milestones included**: at local level, getting the new social pedagogues in place, raising local awareness about social pedagogy, and preparing the local systems and people for what was to come as part of the local project substantially through the delivery by the SPC of a large number of introductory 'taster' and 'orientation' events; and at central level, the development of monitoring and progress reporting systems led by the central management team.
- **Monitoring and progress reporting** by sites to The Fostering Network and onwards to funders required some ongoing adjustment in response to feedback over this period, as the level of demand on sites had, it transpired, not been anticipated, and was perceived to be onerous for site leads and pedagogues (who provided much of the data). It was reported in all sites to have diminished the social pedagogues' availability for direct and development work.
- **Inadequate specification of the role of the social pedagogue** from the exploration stage onwards began to crystallise with practical implications at this stage, with sites unable to prepare colleagues and systems for a role that would take a form as yet unknown.
- **An aspirational introductory narrative** shaped at central level lacked tangibility and concrete explanation of how the wholesale transformation promised would be achieved. It was perceived to stress the differences rather than the complementarities between

social pedagogy and practice as usual. While some were inspired, others felt at best sceptical and at worst alienated by this. Some social work staff and managers continued to feel throughout the programme that the differences between social pedagogy and established social work best practice (referred to as '*good old fashioned social work*') were unclear, or overstated.

- There may also have been, in a few cases, some degree of **misalignment of individual social pedagogues to the role and to the context**. There were also cases where the fit of particular social pedagogues who would have to **work together** as a team was not optimal. Difficult to identify in advance, this reflected in part the heterogeneous traditions of social pedagogy within the group as well as differences of culture and style.

Initial implementation (the new innovation is brought into practice)

- Initial implementation is the stage where the new innovation is brought into practice. There are usually both continuing and new challenges following exploration and installation work, and early effects (both positive and negative) start to be observed. It generally involves adjustments to usual practice and business processes to accommodate and support the new ways of working.
- In the sites, this stage was marked by delivery of the core learning and development courses, and the start of direct work by social pedagogues with carers, children and young people, and staff colleagues. Support to site project leads and to social pedagogues by the SPC was also key to this stage.
- **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.
- This stage was marked by the **successful delivery of the core learning and development courses** by the SPC. These were the key vehicle for training the pre-defined cohort of 40 carers and associated staff. Attendance over time was reported to have been good for carers especially. The participation of staff may have been a weaker point. Most participants enjoyed the mix of theory and experiential learning through games and activities, although there were also those who found these less compelling.
- The lack of a **clear (or clearly communicated) design for what kind of staff should be invited** however made this less effective than hoped as a form of outreach for wider systems change or wider stakeholder engagement.

- **SPC support was reported to be valuable and important** at this stage of implementation, especially in respect of personal and practice support to social pedagogues. In sites where social pedagogues struggled to feel accepted and integrated and found it hard to gain traction for their 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 support personnel might have however 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 support at corporate level for the programme. This is perhaps not surprising given that those leading projects at site level on the whole did not hold positions close to corporate decision-making, and the involvement to skilled and expert advocates 'from outside' had always been expected to be helpful. (There will have been interplay with other factors at site level, of course, in respect of this finding).

Full implementation (the innovation becomes established in practice as intended)

- The full implementation stage of any innovation is usually defined as the point at which the innovation becomes visibly established in practice 'as designed'. This 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. For Head, Heart, Hands, this 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 in the longer time frame, through '**momentum**' **activities** designed to deepen core learning and widen the group of those exposed to social pedagogy. These were intentionally not pre-planned 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 exceptions), and larger scale outdoor and creative events were much enjoyed and generated much enthusiasm.
- **Sites moved with mixed success into a stage of 'momentum' activities.** Some found this stage 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, regular momentum activities at a group level never seemed to become established, 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. Site project leads and other senior and front line staff began to suggest that the project had reached too few people to be a sufficient 'disturbance' to practice to create significant or lasting change. Momentum was considered by some to have faltered in some sites during this stage.

- It became clearer that **holding a dual role was an advantage for the integration of social pedagogues** into their sites, facilitating social pedagogues' own understandings of the specific context of fostering, and (where case work was undertaken jointly) allowing them to model social pedagogy 'in action' for colleagues. It also helped social pedagogues to be seen as sharing the 'real world' work of fostering teams and allowed better and faster integration into the mainstream. Some social pedagogues did not achieve optimal integration, and where this happened, it was time-consuming and demanding on all involved, and very hard both on social pedagogues and their managers.
- **Direct work with families and young people by social pedagogues was one of the most highly valued inputs** they made, and almost universally praised for its skill and efficacy where it occurred. It was challenging within the context of the national programme to give this demanding element of the role enough time and attention to satisfy all parties, and in any case, the amount of direct work that social pedagogues were expected to do had never been specified. Some site leads and site staff were disappointed by the amount of direct work that pedagogues did. In a few cases social pedagogues were described by site project leads as being less enthused by this side of the role, and this too was a disappointment.
- By the end of the programme, all sites indicated that the **visible penetration of social pedagogy into actual practice by trained carers and staff had some way to go**. In more than half of the sites, progress in this respect was considered acceptable. Stakeholders noted that as an anticipated feature of 'real world innovation', they would expect it to take many years before social pedagogy was fully established as a normal aspect of fostering practice. In other sites, this stage was felt to have been 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.

Sustainment (the innovation is fully established and becomes a feature of 'business as usual')

- Sustained implementation (or 'sustainment') is the goal of most if not all innovation programmes. This may mean sustainment in the sense of 'scaling up'; that is, extending

the work to new or larger groups of people or organisations. It may mean a process of ‘consolidation’; that is finding ways to ensure that the improved practice continues for the people and the agencies involved in pioneering its initial development, so that it becomes more than a one-time only initiative that eventually dies out.

- **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 scaling** by means of diffusion of the approach to other parts of children’s services. This happened in a limited way where the social pedagogues also had roles in other adjacent services (two sites in particular). It happened in one site in a more extensive way by virtue of a corporate decision to adopt social pedagogy more widely. Although other extraneous factors were at work in this decision, it supported a general sense that where the potential to use social pedagogy alongside other approaches was realised, its chances of reaching sustainment in sites was improved.
- **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 in their organisational culture and in practices. These sites also had weak plans for scaling or no plans at all at the end of the programme.
- There were however some encouraging signs in all sites (though some more than others) that **policies and procedures were being reviewed more critically** and through a social pedagogic ‘lens’ as a result of Head, Heart, Hands. 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 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, as many stakeholders insisted they were, this will create an ongoing and serious implementation barrier. Ofsted inspection criteria were given particular emphasis here, and were felt by some to be a genuine barrier for the uptake of social pedagogical principles, and were thought to prioritise process indicators over deeper markers of practice quality.
- In terms of **outreach for scaling and wider system change as an overarching aim of the programme**, we concluded that this had been an overambitious aspiration for this relatively short and limited programme, whether scaling for ‘the sector’ - the national country-wide system - or for local ‘systems of care’ in the participating local authorities and IFPs. Despite activity at the central level to engage with national policy makers and opinion-formers, there may have been an assumption at central programme level that

no 'generic' planning or tools could do justice to the extent of local diversity in how social pedagogy could be developed locally. There was an absence of a clear strategy for the programme at local delivery levels and central and local stakeholders each expected the other to take the lead. Purposeful and effective outreach for scaling had therefore not really been achieved.

In conclusion

- The programme had a complicated structure with multiple stakeholders, with unclearly defined expectations, understandings and roles. It was perceived as demanding by sites, especially in the first two years.
- It was made more complex by a combination of the differing local contexts in which it took place, and by the relative intangibility of the construct of social pedagogy 'in practice'.
- Claims at the outset of the transformative power of the approach made by exponents of social pedagogy were motivating for some, but alienating to others and led to some scepticism about 'evangelising' and over-claiming for the approach. Stressing the continuities rather than discontinuities with good social work and fostering practice might have been a more effective way to gather wider support for the innovation.
- **A key message was that where Head, Heart, Hands was simplest it was strongest:** in delivery of core training, in provision of a form of 'implementation support' to participating sites, and in establishment of qualified social pedagogues in sites. These elements were all successfully implemented:
 - The delivery of the core learning and training courses by the SPC was described by many sites as a high point of the programme. They were largely well-received, and well attended especially by the carers who had volunteered to take part.
 - The support provided by the SPC site supports leads was also a core component and probably also an active ingredient in many respects. It was implemented variably according to the agreements made with sites to reflect local preferences and circumstances. It was generally found to be helpful, in some cases, extremely so. Support to the social pedagogues was especially valuable in sites that struggled. Sites that struggled more with implementation were also those in which SPC support was described as more 'background'. This was described as intentional by the SPC, but in those sites there was also degree of drift that in the end, was detrimental to longer term sustainment prospects. The budget of time allocated for SPC support at 2 days per month may well have been insufficient for sites that faced particular challenges.

- Social pedagogues were a clear active ingredient of the programme and were generally praised for their contribution within sites, and their particular mix of skills and perspective was regarded by sites as a successful and valued element of the programme. The programme demonstrated that when the fit or alignment of individuals to role and context was good, social pedagogues could be successfully integrated to mainstream fostering practice in the UK and were perceived to have ‘added value’ to local team practice. There may have been an element of underutilisation of social pedagogues, who would have liked support to take a more leading role from the outset. Preparatory training in facilitation and in the difficult task of change management in particular could have been helpful in this respect.
- The stated nature of social pedagogy as fluid and more about *how* than *what*, made the content of the programme hard to communicate to those looking for more practical and ‘in practice’ expression of the approach. In effect, social pedagogy was never ‘operationalised’ as part of this programme, and it remains unclear how to achieve this or even if it is possible. This makes it hard to draw confident lessons for replication from this kind of evaluation including how to ensure quality and fidelity to this approach in future efforts.
- The ultimately mixed implementation experiences for sites, the effortful nature of the programme as experienced by the majority of evaluation participants who were closely involved, and the continuing difficulties in specifying the parameters of social pedagogy in operation suggests that social pedagogy may not be well-suited to implementation ‘by project means’ but may instead be better suited to implementation more organically ‘via the substrate’, through inputs into routine basic training for all new foster carers and for related staff.
- We did not at the time of writing have data from the impact evaluation about whether the programme benefited carers and young people, although we know from qualitative interim data that some carers and some staff certainly considered they had benefitedⁱⁱⁱ. From the implementation perspective, all sites considered they had gained valuable insights from participating in Head, Heart, Hands and most hoped to see benefits in terms of better outcomes and reduced costs. By the end of the programme, only one site project lead thought that perhaps the effort had not been worthwhile. Innovation is a tough process, and many of the challenges experienced in Head, Heart, Hands are familiar to innovation analysts. Most sites felt that the journey had been a hard one, as did the central delivery team. Some but certainly not all of the difficulties might have been eased by more agreement at the outset about the key parameters of operation. This would have allowed better specification of roles, responsibilities and better calibration of expectations to the practical constraints of real world implementation.

There was perhaps an over-rejection of the idea of standardisation, and an over-reliance on ‘experimentation’ as an ongoing implementation methodology. However, the intangibility of social pedagogy as defined by its exponents in Head, Heart, Hands does not readily lend itself to such thinking, we acknowledge. The programme has however provided rich learning to enable better crystallisation of the meaning of social pedagogy ‘in practice’, we believe, and shows clearly why this will be essential to any future attempts to further develop the approach in the UK.

ⁱ 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

ⁱⁱ 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). <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/resources/implementation-research-synthesis-literature>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/research/ccfr/research/exploring/project---head-heart-hands.html>