



Department  
for Education

# Analytical associate pool

Summary of recent small-scale research  
projects

June 2019

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## Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) uses high quality evidence and analysis to inform policy development and delivery to achieve [our vision](#) - to achieve a highly educated society in which opportunity is equal for young person no matter what their background or family circumstances.

Within the DfE there is an analytical community which comprises statisticians, economists, social and operational researchers. These specialists feed in analysis and research to strategy, policy development and delivery.

While much analysis is undertaken in-house and substantial projects are commissioned to external organisations, there is often a need to quickly commission small-scale projects.

We have therefore created a pool of Analytical Associates who can bring specific specialist expertise, knowledge and skills into the department to supplement and develop our internal analytical capability.

In June 2014 we invited applications from individuals to join the pool. We received an overwhelming response and, after evaluating the expertise of everyone who applied, we established the Analytical Associate Pool.

Over 200 independent academics and researchers are in the pool, and they can be commissioned to carry out small-scale data analysis, rapid literature reviews and peer review. They also provide training, quality assurance and expert advice on an ad-hoc basis. Most projects cost less than £15,000, and more than 180 projects have been commissioned since the pool opened in September 2014.

## Summary of projects

At DfE we aim to make analysis publicly available and we follow the Government Social Research (GSR) [protocol](#) for publishing research. Much of the analysis undertaken through the Associate Pool is only small in nature and we are publishing a summary of findings here to ensure that they are shared. More substantial work is published in stand-alone reports throughout the year. See page 14 for details and links to projects already published.

## Review of Evidence: EYFS Early Learning Goals, Teaching Content and Pedagogy in Reception Year

**Associates: Chris Pascal, Tony Bertram, Kathryn Peckham (CREC)**

### The research

DfE commissioned a rapid assessment of literature about child development and learning in the reception year to address the following questions:

- What level of development in maths, literacy, communication and language does a child need to be achieving by the end of reception in order to achieve good levels of later attainment?
- What should teaching content include and what is the best way to facilitate a reception age child to achieve optimal development and outcomes in maths, literacy, communication and language by the end of reception (with a particular focus on disadvantaged children)?
- What is the role of other skills such as executive function (e.g. ability to filter distractions, prioritise tasks, set and achieve goals) as well as self-regulation and physical development in the development of maths, literacy, communication and language in reception?
- What is the optimal level of development and approach to learning for the understanding the world and expressive arts and design Early Learning Goals (ELGs)?

The review drew on evidence in peer reviewed journals, published between 2009 and 2017, with a focus on English or UK evidence. Studies which met the inclusion criteria were assessed against pre-defined quality criteria assessing relevance, theoretical framing, methodological rigor and the reliability and validity of findings. The final review included 148 high quality references (141 primary research and 7 secondary research or review).

### Key findings

The strength of evidence available varied across the research questions. Findings support many elements of the existing EYFS Statutory Framework but also indicate new knowledge and understanding which have the potential to inform further refinements.

Level of development that is beneficial to reach at reception age:

- Reception children need to first grasp basic mathematical concepts such as equivalence before engaging with formal mathematical skills such as counting or numerical recognition.
- Communication and language proficiency underpins all other areas of learning and is an important focus. This is particularly important for less advantaged children and children with English as an additional language (EAL).
- Literacy is dependent on a securely developed understanding of spoken language, vocabulary and listening comprehension skills. Synthetic phonics requires well-established systematic and structured development of phonic knowledge, print knowledge and cognitive factors of working memory and vocabulary. Reception children need to develop methods of extracting meaning from text, decoding and comprehending the language used.

Teaching content and approaches that are beneficial at reception age:

- Limited rigorous research focused on the processes or outcomes of teaching and learning in reception classes. Findings should be regarded with caution given limitations in the depth and quality of the evidence base.
- The evidence that is available suggests that maths, communication, language and literacy development can benefit from a 'balanced' or 'hybrid' teaching approach, blending adult instruction with play-based, child-led, relational approaches, and incorporating adult-scaffolded learning objectives.
- Communication and language development is supported by a language rich environment and relational approaches where the child plays an active role in their learning. These should incorporate adult-child interactions, sustained conversations, role play, small group activities and peer-to-peer interactions. Vocabulary development (expressive and receptive skills) is supported through the use of reading aloud words, rhymes and stories.
- Maths development benefits from practical activities and visual imagery, offering opportunities to explore and manipulate resources and undertake problem-solving, counting and early calculation within social contexts.
- Teaching content for writing composition should reflect that it is built through spoken language and the comprehension of stories. High-quality synthetic phonics instruction can strengthen reading skills. Simplified phonics programmes may be most effective for children who begin reception with poorer phonological awareness.
- Features of effective pedagogic practice for disadvantaged children are congruent with those found to work for all children.

Other areas of learning:

- There is limited quality UK evidence on the role and impact of executive function, self-regulation and physical development as well as the optimal level of development and approach to learning for the understanding the world and expressive arts and design ELGs. Findings should be regarded with caution.
- Executive functioning and self-regulation skills which allow children to filter distractions, prioritise tasks, set and achieve goals and control their own cognitions, emotions and behaviour underpin attainment in all areas of learning.

- Physical development, for example gross and fine motor skill such as balance and co-ordination, is associated with educational attainment and that physical and mental wellbeing are critical in shaping the capacity of the child to learn.
- Early years practitioners may lack confidence and competence in the teaching of science. The impact of digital technology on children's lives and on reception class practice also needs further exploration and development.
- Some evidence, although limited, acknowledges the importance of developing children's confidence in their citizenship, understanding how communities work and how to sustain social cohesion within groups.

## Local Authorities survey on the allocation and use of the school improvement monitoring and brokering grant

**Associates: Dr Audrey Curnock, Dr Sophie Carr & Christine Watson (Education Unlimited)**

### The research

The research was commissioned to help the DfE to understand how local authorities were using the school improvement monitoring and improvement grant. Allocated since September 2017, this grant enables authorities (LAs)<sup>1</sup> in England to monitor the performance of maintained schools, negotiate school improvement (SI) provision and intervene when needed.

The grants awarded in 2017/18 ranged in value from a minimum of £50,000 to over £1 million with the overall amount allocated being based upon the number of maintained schools within the Local Authority.

This research was conducted via an online survey, open from 18 October to 12 November 2018, of representatives from all local authorities for which the DfE had contacts. Two reminder emails were sent and in total responses were received from 51 different LAs, representing an overall response rate of 36%. No responses were obtained from those 27 LAs that received in excess of £500,000. As such, the results of the analysis are representative of awards made to LAs across England up to a value of £500,000.

A data analysis plan incorporating both quantitative and qualitative, text-based, analysis was developed. This approach enabled the results to provide both structured statistical

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<sup>1</sup> The school improvement monitoring and brokering grant was awarded to 150 of the 152 Local Authorities in 2017/2018. Neither The Isles of Scilly nor the City Of Westminster were allocated monies and were therefore not included in this work.

responses when appropriate, whilst also investigating the reasoning and opinions behind the allocation, expenditure and impact of the grant.

## Key findings

Out of the 51 responding LAs, two indicated that they had not yet used the grants allocated;

The top three spending priorities amongst the remaining 49 respondents were:

- Commissioning school improvement (SI) support from other providers;
  - Providing a salary for SI Officers;
  - And, undertaking visits to schools to support a range of school improvement activities<sup>2</sup>.
- 
- Eighty-six percent of LAs receiving in excess of £250,000 allocated monies to the commissioning of other services than those receiving smaller amounts, of which, approximately two-thirds allocated monies to this area.
  - A total of 35 LAs provided details about the services they commissioned, 53% of these LAs reported commissioning school improvement services from teaching schools. Twelve LAs (approximately one third of this group) had used teaching schools, educational consultants and national leaders of education.
  - Fourteen LAs (almost a third of those responding) allocated over 75% of their grant to a single top priority area.
  - Conversely the remaining two thirds of LAs that responded allocated monies to a range of activities. Of these LAs, the highest percentage of allocated grant spending was spent on commissioning services from other providers, the salary for SI officers and visits to schools – the same top three spending priorities identified across all LAs.
  - When deciding where to allocate grant monies, a wide range of indices were used. The most commonly cited indices were: attainment and progress performance data; capacity of school leadership and, capacity for improvement. These align with the most commonly cited areas of improvement activities which were leadership support, monitoring and assessment support and performance reviews. Together, the indices used to support

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<sup>2</sup> Although using the grant to fund visits to schools was a priority, most LAs did not allocate significant proportions of their funds to this.

decision making align with the key SI activities that underpin the main SI areas of focus for LAs.

- Nearly half of respondents (22), said the grant had had a positive impact. Those who responded, perceived the impact<sup>3</sup> of the grant to have been in three areas:
  - Enabling school-led improvement;
  - Allowing the LAs to think strategically and;
  - And, ensuring ongoing support to those schools who require it.
- Thirteen LAs (27%) said they had changed their working relationships with schools as a result of the grant, for example they are now acting as commissioner of school improvement services, rather than provider. Meanwhile 18% of respondents said they had increased or changed the support provided to schools.
- No responses to this survey indicated they were from the 18% of LAs which had received in excess of £500,000. As such, whilst the results of this survey are valid for those LAs that received less than £500,000 it is recommended that additional research be carried out on the allocation and impact of grants in excess of this amount.
- Although it was not a requirement of the grant that any evaluation or monitoring of the grant spend be undertaken during the academic year, 26 LAs (53% of those responding) have already undertaken an evaluation with a further ten (20%) intending to complete an evaluation.

The evidence has been used to develop understanding of how the grant is used by local authorities.

## **Evaluation of the Disadvantaged Pupils Pilot 2017/18**

**Associates: Sarah Gibson (CooperGibson Research)**

### **The research**

The purpose of the research was to evaluate a trial of a new approach to supporting primary and secondary schools with consistently low outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. These are schools that for two of the past three years had appeared in the bottom 20% in their region for published disadvantaged pupil progress scores. 'Disadvantaged' pupils

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<sup>3</sup> Within this report impact refers to that which has been reported by Local Authorities; impact has not been actively measured as part of this research report.



are those who attract the pupil premium to their school. This means pupils who claim free school meals, or have done so at some time in the past six years, pupils who are in care and those who left care through adoption.

Two Regional School Commissioner Regions, the South West (SW) and East of England & North-East London (EE/NEL), volunteered to trial the approach during the 2017/18 academic year.

Using the department's published data on disadvantaged pupil progress, schools with poor progress for disadvantaged cohorts ("pilot schools") were matched with schools that had a strong track record of delivering positive outcomes for disadvantaged pupils ('partner schools'). The intention was for the partner schools to coach the pilot schools so that improved practice could result in improved outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

The pilot's aims were to:

- 1) Encourage schools to work in partnership to identify new opportunities to enhance the support available to disadvantaged pupils, providing examples of what works in closing the gaps for disadvantaged pupils.
- 2) Learn how best to engage with and support schools in narrowing performance gaps.

The overarching aims of the evaluation were to understand how Regional School Commissioner (RSC) teams responded to the new data provided for their use, to review the strategies put in place to help schools to improve, and how well these were implemented. The key research objectives were to:

- Explore how the data enabled RSC teams to select schools for the pilot;
- Establish how the two regions approached the pilot, what worked well, and lessons learned; and
- Determine to what extent participating schools found the pilot model helpful in supporting them to improve the progress of disadvantaged pupils.

The research took place between March 2018 and November 2018.

1. The evaluation adopted a qualitative approach, comprising a series of telephone interviews with:

-RSC team lead officials in both regions

-Department for Education; Education Advisors (EAs) deployed in both regions

-Senior leaders from 18 schools identified as suitable for receiving support

-Senior leaders from 11 schools identified as high performing with disadvantaged pupils, and so suitable to provide support to pilot schools.

2. One interview lasting about 45 minutes was completed with the pilot lead teacher in each school. All information was anonymised.
3. The fieldwork was delivered in two waves:
  - **Wave One:** March 2018 to April 2018 (RSC teams and EAs)
  - **Wave Two:** September 2018 to November 2018 (RSC teams and schools)
4. The break between the two waves was the result of a pause in research activity following departmental policy change in May 2018.
5. A breakdown of interviews completed by school/interviewee type and region:

School	EE/NEL Region	SW Region	TOTAL
Pilot School Primary	4	2	6
Pilot School Secondary	4	8	12
Partner School Primary	2	3	5
Partner School Secondary	4	2	6
RSC pilot lead and co-ordinator	2	2	4
Education Advisers	4	4	8
<b>Total Interviews</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>41</b>

41 Interviews were conducted in total. Six of which were conducted with matched pilot and partner schools. The two RSC teams conducted their own internal review of the pilot model and findings from these reviews were triangulated with interviews from EAs and schools

## Key findings

- School matching was usually successful however the EE/NEL region presented more challenges to achieving successful matches as the RSC team was operating across geographically dispersed areas with differing characteristics.
- RSC teams reported that the progress data supplied by Departmental analysts was useful, and informed decisions about which schools could benefit from additional support. Both RSC teams carried out some additional analysis to support their selection process and this proved resource-intensive.
- Despite initial scepticism from school leaders about the school matching, owing to the individual context of many schools, they were able to overcome this where there was sufficient congruence in school ethos and approaches to working with disadvantaged cohorts. Much of the effectiveness of the matching was founded by the ability of school leaders to forge open, respectful and trusting relationships.

- The close proximity of schools had some bearing on the success of partnerships, but where the schools were not locally located successful partnerships still emerged owing to inherent similarities and willingness to share learning.
- The nature of support provided to pupils varied, with some schools focusing on strategies to improve whole school cultures and aspirations and others delivering tailored interventions to specific cohorts.
- Many schools took a strategic view that included a review of the school's culture, operational systems, and teaching quality. Moderation, behaviour and attendance policies, use of data and tracking systems were also reviewed. Schools also shared pedagogical approaches to improve teaching with a focus on communication, language and mathematics.
- Schools gave positive feedback on the benefits of this way of working and there was a willingness in both regions to continue the partnership working beyond the pilot's end date.

During 2019 the department is considering the development of its regional approach and, while there are currently no plans for the pilot to be rolled out to other regions, the learning is available to all regional teams to support them in their relationship building with schools.

## **NDTi pathways to employment initiative for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability**

**Associate: Amy Skipp and Dr Vicky Hopwood, ASK Research**

### **The research**

The National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) provides support to local areas to develop pathways to employment for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). NDTi was provided with funding by the Department for Education (DfE) to support seven local areas to develop this over a twelve-month period. All of these areas were Opportunity Areas (OAs)<sup>4</sup>.

The support provided by NDTi covered five key work strands:

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<sup>4</sup> The [Opportunity Areas programme](#) was announced in October 2016 and now includes 12 areas across England in which social mobility is lowest. The programme aims to focus the Department for Education's energy, ideas and resources to provide children and young people in the selected areas with the opportunities to fulfil their potential.

- Collaboration with the OA leads in six areas to ensure that each area had a strong plan of work on preparation for employment for young people with SEND
- Facilitation of workshops in six OAs to involve young people, families, services and education providers in developing an evidence-based multi-agency local pathway to employment for young people with SEND
- Support for SEN assessment and planning teams and other key professionals in six OAs to develop skills around writing clear employment outcomes in Education Health and Care Plans and involving young people, families and staff in developing vocational profiles for young people with SEND
- Work with secondary schools and colleges (including pupil referral units and alternative providers) in six OAs to implement curriculum reforms to maximise impact on employment outcomes and develop relationships with employers
- Joint work with Mencap in two OAs to develop work plans around pathways into employment for young people with SEND

The aim of the research was to identify whether or not stakeholders felt meaningful improvements had been made as a result of the support provided to them by NDTi, and to explore the reasons for this. The evaluation methodology included:

- Desk research to examine local area information, coverage of post-16 support in SEND local offers and existing local pathways to employment for young people with SEND
- Baseline surveys of workshop attendees in three OAs, from which a total of 52 responses were provided<sup>5</sup>
- Qualitative interviews with five key OA (local authority) stakeholders with whom NDTi had the most contact.
- Five interviews with NDTi and Mencap staff to collect details of progress and feedback on barriers and drivers to local delivery

## Key findings

The evaluation found that the work plan detailed above was not fully delivered. The following activities were successfully delivered:

- Pathway to employment workshops were conducted in four OAs

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<sup>5</sup> NDTi were not able to provide final numbers of workshop attendees, so it is not possible to determine the response rate for this survey

- Scoping work with smaller groups of individuals to identify steps to take to create an employment support pathway was conducted in a further two OAs
- NDTi attended an OA partnership board meeting in three OAs
- NDTi conducted preparation for employment work with schools, colleges and training providers in five of the seven OAs. Preparation for employment work was also conducted with children and young people in four OAs
- NDTi engaged with employers in four OAs

The evaluation suggested a range of factors leading to this limited delivery, including:

- OAs being at different starting points and levels of preparedness to engage with the project. This meant that some OAs required more or different support to that originally planned, and that it was not possible to take a consistent approach across all seven areas. Given these challenges, the time and resource initially allocated to support each OA was not sufficient to properly address local issues and progress the planned work.
- OAs having been selected on the basis of poor social mobility: there are multiple challenges and demands on their resources in relation to this, and these meant that it was difficult for them to take up the support offered by NDTi.
- Significant time and resource being needed to locate and engage the appropriate stakeholders in each OA, meaning that it was not possible to work from a strategic (OA) level down. Better progress was made by engaging local practitioners and providers, but this led to a somewhat fragmented approach to delivery.
- Some key barriers to delivery were beyond the scope of this initiative: these included resources in individual OAs and issues related to provision of transport to workshops and related activities for young people with SEND.

Mencap, who were intending to provide complementary support in two of seven OAs, faced similar challenges: it was not therefore possible to measure the success of a collaborative approach between NDTi and Mencap.

Where NDTi did conduct work with local service providers, these were well received. Local services providers gave very positive feedback on NDTi's workshops, planning sessions and bespoke advice on preparation for employment for young people with SEND. Local providers also benefited from use of the NDTi Pathways and Vocational Profiling tools and information on person-centred planning. Where sessions were run with young people with SEND, feedback was positive from both the young people and those working with them.

Findings have been shared with DfE and NDTi, and a range of recommendations for future similar work have been developed. These include:

- Auditing services before working with them using a bespoke tool to assess starting points and preparedness<sup>6</sup>. This will allow project managers to develop appropriate objectives, assess the level of resource needed to achieve these and determine the level of 'readiness' of services in OAs to take this work on.
- Where appropriate, working from the bottom up rather than taking a top down approach: this has the potential to affect practice and mean young people are better supported into employment sooner.
- Securing an awareness of the context and challenges of local areas before starting to work with them and ensuring that the support offered is appropriate to these. In delivering this initiative, it was assumed that the OA Partnership Boards would have the infrastructure in place to receive and prioritise the support offer: where this was not the case, the initiative faced barriers to delivery.
- Engaging and encouraging enthusiastic and willing employers: experience on this project showed that where employer networks existed this led to better success across the initiative's objectives.
- Recognising that there is no 'one size fits all' approach: the evaluation for this initiative showed that it was not possible to implement a defined plan of activity across multiple OAs due to the wide variation in terms of local needs and levels of preparedness. Taking a more flexible approach and tailoring the support offer to take into account local circumstances will therefore be more appropriate in future similar projects.

## **Mencap Opportunity Areas Special Educational Needs and Disability Initiative Evaluation**

**Associate: Dr Stephen Boxford, Cordis Bright Ltd.**

### **The Research**

The Mencap Opportunity Area (OA) Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) initiative was developed collaboratively by Mencap and the DfE, and funded by the DfE.

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<sup>6</sup> This tool is in draft form and has not been published.

The initiative was designed to support young people with SEND in seven OAs<sup>7</sup> to prepare for employment via:

1. **Work ready workshops.** A series of three two-hour workshops focussing on preparing young people for work, facilitated by Mencap staff at schools and colleges over three consecutive weekly visits. The initiative had a target to deliver the workshops with 252 young people.
2. **Work placements.** The initiative had a target to broker work placements for 60 young people, all of whom had attended the work ready workshops across Ipswich, Norwich and East Cambridgeshire and Fenlands.

The initiative was evaluated by Cordis Bright between December 2017 and September 2018. The evaluation focussed on understanding the process of developing and implementing the Mencap SEND Initiative and on young people's experiences of the initiative. The methodology for the evaluation included:

- A survey completed by young people before and after the work ready workshops.
- Qualitative consultation including interviews and focus groups with 42 young people who attended workshops, four providers (individuals who worked at schools/colleges where workshops took place), seven Local Authority (LA) stakeholders and 10 Mencap employees.
- Analysis of monitoring data on the number of participants attending workshops and taking up work placements

## Key Findings

### Initiative activities and outputs

Workshops were conducted at 16 schools across six of the seven OAs. No workshops were conducted in the seventh OA due to a lack of interest from schools and providers. 181 young people (72% of the target of 252 participants) are reported to have attended the first work ready workshop session. Based on monitoring data, at least 115 (46% of the target) attended all three sessions.

The initiative also aimed to successfully broker 60 placements. 66 work placements were developed as part of the initiative.

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<sup>7</sup> The [Opportunity Areas programme](#) was announced in October 2016 and now includes 12 areas across England in which social mobility is lowest. The programme aims to focus the Department for Education's energy, ideas and resources to provide children and young people in the selected areas with the opportunities to fulfil their potential.

## Young people with SEND's experience of the workshops

The majority of young people who completed the survey after the final work ready workshop<sup>8</sup> reported that they had enjoyed each of the three workshop sessions; that they had found each session clear and easy to understand, and that each workshop had helped to prepare them to get a job. The majority of young people who gave feedback in consultation events were similarly positive about their experience of the workshops. Young peoples' average responses to 9 out of 10 statements about their readiness to enter employment were higher after completing the workshops.<sup>9</sup>

### Implementation of the initiative

**Relationships with schools and colleges.** Mencap used a range of approaches to engage schools and colleges, but a large number of these did not respond or declined the support offer. Mencap staff reported that low engagement was the result of schools already having provision in place, the support offered not being in line with schools' needs or preferences and a lack of urgency from schools to take up the offer. When Mencap were able to engage schools, both Mencap stakeholders and providers were positive about the relationships formed.

**Workshop participants.** LA and Mencap stakeholders interviewed described a range of different age criteria for eligibility for the initiative, with variation apparent both within and between individual OAs. This suggests that there was a lack of clarity about the eligibility criteria for the initiative.

**Workshop content and delivery.** All providers and Mencap stakeholders commented that the topics covered in the workshops were relevant and appropriate for the young people attending. Young people, providers and local authority stakeholders were also positive about the workshops' delivery, describing them as engaging and interactive.

Stakeholders from local authorities, providers and Mencap reported that the workshop content and delivery was accessible to most of the young people who attended them, those a small number of respondents reported that the content was not at the right level for their needs. Additionally, Mencap encountered challenges in getting employers to attend the 'meet the employer' session, which was disappointing for providers.

**Work placement organisation.** Though Mencap were able to broker 66 placements, none of these were ultimately filled. Mencap stakeholders largely attributed this to challenges in successfully engaging and working with schools, including that: (1) Placements were offered to schools too late in the year; (2) In some areas, there were a

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<sup>8</sup> The percentage of responses to each statement which were positive ranged from 76% for the statement "Workshop 3 helped to prepare me to get a job" (n=75), to 90% for the statements "I enjoyed workshop 1" (n=82) and "I enjoyed workshop 3" (n=81).

<sup>9</sup> Two of these increases in mean scores were found to be statistically significant: knowing the qualities which employers like and communicating well in a work environment.



large number of organisations offering similar support; (3) Schools had inflexible expectations about the kinds of work placements would be available; (4) A number of schools were unable to take up the offer of placements because of the staffing or transport arrangements this would have required.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations for similar future initiatives were developed from the evaluation:

1. **Planning.** Any future interventions should be underpinned by (a) An evidence-led theory of change and logic model for the project which is theoretically robust, and (b) a clear SMART project plan with clear output, impact and outcomes targets.
2. **Conduct a needs assessment.** Assessing and ascertaining whether there is a need for an initiative across its intended areas and its target participants should be a crucial early stage in any future work.
3. **Assess the support needed for schools and colleges to take part in the initiative.** In the case of this work, exploring the support which schools and colleges needed to enable them to prepare and to enable young people to take up work placements would have been beneficial.
4. **Communication and Engagement.** Future work would benefit from an evidence-led approach to communication and engagement. In this case, it would have been helpful to build on Mencap's experience of delivering similar initiatives to agree a strategy for building relationships with local authorities, schools and colleges. This could include building a map of key contacts to help ensure that in the future engagement is sufficient to meet targets.
5. **A systematic approach to engagement.** Future initiatives should review which approaches work in engaging local authorities, schools and colleges and take a more evidence-led and systematic approach to engagement. Evidence about what works in successful engagement can be shared and built on for future similar initiatives.
6. **Clear eligibility criteria.** Future interventions for young people with SEND should develop clear eligibility criteria for participants and communicate this to all stakeholders. In the case of this intervention, this would have assisted in addressing confusion concerning eligibility for the initiative among local authorities, schools and colleges.
7. **Develop a clear process for the oversight of the initiative.** This at a minimum should include regular updates on the progress of the work against targets.
8. **Monitoring.** In any future interventions in this area, a robust approach to the collection of monitoring data should be implemented. This should include systematic analysis and reporting to ensure that the initiative is on-track and changes can be made to it based on evidence.

9. **Evaluation.** Future initiatives should measure the distance-travelled of young people participating in terms of impact and outcomes.
10. **Consider a longer funding period for similar initiatives in the future.** This would help to reflect the time required to develop relationships, engage schools and deliver work.

## Published full project reports

In addition to these summaries, some Associate Pool projects have been published as a full report on the [DfE Internet site](#) or on Associate's own websites. See below for more information and links to these publications.

**Table 1 Associate Pool Published Reports since March 2019**

Date	Title	Description
24 May 2019	School improvement through school-to-school support	This report looks at recent evidence on school-to-school support, specifically the effectiveness of partnerships and collaborations aiming to improve the performance of schools in challenging circumstances.
30 May 2019	Alternative Student Finance: current and future students' perspectives	The research explores decisions about higher education, and how religious beliefs and the current student finance system influence these decisions.
30 May 2019	Benefits of post-18 education for individuals and society	This report explores the influence post-18 education has on individuals and society.
30 May 2019	The student finance system: impact on disadvantaged young people	A report considering the published research literature, particularly evaluation evidence on the impact of the post-18 student financial support system on socioeconomically disadvantaged young people, assessing the evidence on the impact of the recent and major changes in student financial support.
30 May 2019	International comparison of post-compulsory education systems	This literature review compares the post-compulsory education system in England with those in ten comparator countries. It explores how they differ in terms of who provides academic, vocational/technical and apprenticeship routes, the role of government and the take-up of different educational opportunities. It also explores how these are funded.
30 May 2019	Choices students make between different post-18 education routes	This report aims to understand: how students choose between different post-18 education routes, how students choose within different post-18 educational routes (such as the courses and providers they choose), how the role of finance and information affects their decisions and the choices that mature students make.

## Further information

If you would like any further information about the Associate Pool or the projects included in this summary please email us on: [associate.pool@education.gov.uk](mailto:associate.pool@education.gov.uk)



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