



Department
for Education

Analytical Associate Pool

Summary of projects

August 2017

Contents

The Analytical Associate Pool	3
Introduction	3
Summary of projects	4
Deployment Fund Impact Analysis	4
Regional Differences in Early Years Attainment – Feasibility Study and Recommendations	5
30 Hour Free Childcare Early Implementers: Evaluation Feasibility Study (May 2016)	6
Technical Education: Employer Views and Engagement	7
Leadership Development Market Mapping	7
Mental Health Fitness approaches used by Schools – research review	10
Improving Permanence for Looked after Children: Understanding placement stability at local level	11
Parental Engagement in Schools	12
Exploratory Study – Evaluating the effectiveness of Opportunity Areas	14
Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy: Literature review	18
Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy: Teacher Interviews	19
School to School Support	21
Review of Inspection grading Models	22
Review of the provision of support for parents around children and young people’s mental health	23
School-based support for parents regarding child mental health	25
School Improvement and the Role of Ofsted	27
Literature review 2: subject-specific and general pedagogical knowledge of teachers	28
Transgender Awareness in Children & Families social worker education	30
Literature Review: Effective Deployment of a school Workforce	31
Published projects	34
Further information	36

The Analytical Associate Pool

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 180 independent academics and researchers are in the pool, and they can be commissioned to carry out small-scale data analysis, rapid literature reviews, primary research 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 100 projects have been commissioned since the pool opened in September 2014.

We welcome new Associates to join the Pool. The application form is available on the DfE [research page](#).

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 too small-scale to be published on its own, and this report summarises these smaller pieces of analysis. More substantial work is published in stand-alone reports throughout the year. See page 33 for details and links to projects already published.

Deployment Fund Impact Analysis

Associate: Simon Rutt, NfER

Key findings

This analysis looked for impact on pupil outcome measures amongst schools that had been supported through the NLE deployment fund (spring 2014) and the School to School Support (STSS) fund (December 2014). Both funds were distributed by NCTL as grant funding for system leaders (teaching schools, National Leaders of Education) to support underperforming schools.

Propensity Score Matching (PSM) was used to create a group of comparison schools that were as similar as possible to the schools that had received the funding. Difference in difference analysis then looked for whether particular pupil performance outcomes improved more in supported schools than in the comparator group between 2013 (NLE) or 2014 (STSS) and 2015¹.

Analysis was carried out separately for the two funds, and for primary and secondary schools. Although there were positive effects in schools receiving the funding across some of the outcomes considered, these were not statistically significant. Analysis did show a degree of school variability, with some schools achieving better outcomes than others.

Similar analysis of previous NLE deployment rounds showed improvement gains that were statistically significant². It is possible, therefore, that the short timescale between funding and assessment of impact in the most recent analysis, particularly for the StSS

¹ At KS2: average point score, % pupils achieving L4 in reading, maths and writing, % pupils achieving expected level of progress (in reading, writing and maths separately). At KS4: capped average point score; % pupils achieving 5 A*-C including English and maths; % pupils achieving expected level of progress (in English and Maths separately).

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/485609/DFE-RR488_Analytical_Associate_Pool_-_summary_of_projects.pdf

fund (where it was only a few months), was too short to detect change. Future analysis with additional datasets may detect a change. In addition, further research may be able to identify whether there were specific activities or behaviours amongst schools that did achieve improvements.

Regional Differences in Early Years Attainment – Feasibility Study and Recommendations

Associate: Neil Smith, NatCen Social Research

Key findings

Research into regional differences in attainment has been primarily focussed within primary and secondary schools. This feasibility study investigated the regional gap in early years at age 5 and made recommendations on the best data sources and methods for future study to evaluate the potential drivers of a regional gap.

There is evidence of regional differences in early years attainment outcomes such as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Millennium Cohort Study (MCS). However, the extent of variation within regions is likely to be greater than between regions. Much of the current evidence on regional differences is undermined by this large spatial unit of analysis which masks important trends between geographic areas.

A literature review found that parents have a key role in determining attainment with the most powerful predictor being parental qualifications. The home learning environment is also important as well as fixed factors such as ethnicity. Differences in many of these characteristics are known to vary by region. However, secondary factors are also involved for example the availability, quality and uptake of early years care and provision varies geographically, although the impact is lower than parental factors there may be important interactions at play regionally where the importance of early years provision becomes more influential depending upon the socio-demographic composition of the local area.

The authors investigated several data sources for further investigation of regional differences³. They conclude that the MCS is the most complete source of information available to analyse regional attainment differences for children aged five or under. It contains physical, cognitive and socioemotional development variables as well as a large variety of potential attainment drivers with a large enough sample to identify differences at a local, sub-regional level. They recommend a longitudinal analysis of the MCS cohort

³ These included: Effective Pre-school, Primary and Secondary Education Project (EPPSE); EYFSP; Study of Early Education and Development (SEED); and MCS.

from 9 months to five years and possibly older, using decomposition analysis to estimate how much of the variation in local authority/regional attainment is explained by each risk factor (e.g. individual/family-level, school-level and local/regional characteristics).

Initial analysis from this project has informed a major programme of research within DfE exploring the 'London Effect', the phenomenon whereby disadvantaged children in the capital have far higher attainment than elsewhere in the country.

The project has also informed work being undertaken by DfE looking at social mobility which includes a specific element on early years.

30 Hour Free Childcare Early Implementers: Evaluation Feasibility Study (May 2016)

Associates: Ivana La Valle and Gillian Paull

Key findings

This feasibility study was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to review options for evaluating Early Implementation (EI) of delivering the 30 hour extended free entitlement for working families of 3 and 4 year olds from September 2016, one year ahead of the national rollout. The study was undertaken during January to April 2016.

The study looked at the structure of the national EI programme and plans for implementing the programme locally based on interviews with policy officials and EI leads, and a review of the relevant literature. It developed a logic model identifying what further information was required to understand how the programme was intended to work and generate the desired responses among childcare providers and parents. It discussed the pros and cons of a range of options for evaluating the EIs and provided recommendations for the evaluation design.

The study's recommendations centred an approach to the evaluation which would include:

- case studies with EIs including interviews with EIs, stakeholders, providers and parents to understand how national policy tools and local measures are implemented and are expected to generate the desired changes in behaviours among childcare providers and eligible families and what works well and less well.
- analysis of Early Years and School Census data to assess whether and how childcare provision changed in different local childcare markets, including the number of funded places and some proxy measures for quality and flexibility.
- surveys of parents and providers who take part in EI to explore their profile, views on the programme and perceptions of impact.

The feasibility report also included a plan for disseminating learning from the evaluation to DfE, EIs and LAs not involved in the early implementation ahead of national rollout in September 2017.

The feasibility report was used to develop DfE's EI evaluation strategy and informed the development of EI implementation ahead of rollout in September 2016. It was used extensively to support the commissioning of the main EI evaluation which is currently contracted and underway.

Technical Education: Employer Views and Engagement

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

This research comprised of forty qualitative telephone interviews with a range of employers to explore perceptions of the current vocational education and training system, views on proposals for technical system reform, experiences of recruitment, skills gaps and of offering apprenticeships and work experience.

They identified four key areas to improve in vocational education: ensuring work readiness, good attitudes, good basic skills (English maths and ICT) and building sector specific practical skills.

There was a range of views on proposals for new technical education routes. Employers liked the idea of allowing some flexibility for young people – particularly for those who were unsure of their chosen career pathway. They remained concerned however, that young people would develop a good range of transferable skills but inadequate levels of specialist/practical skills.

- Interviewees identified four key areas to improve in vocational education - work readiness, knowledge of the work environment and appropriate behaviours; the need for the right attitudes, commitment and a good work ethic; concerns over the level of basic English, maths and ICT skills; and low levels of sector specific practical skills.
- Many employers interviewed were immediately positive about the proposals for new technical education routes, keen to simplify the system and raise the profile of technical education. However, the research was undertaken fairly early in the design process and, employers were uncertain about what the new system would look like. Where concerns were expressed, these tended to be whether young people would develop a good range of transferable skills but inadequate levels of specialist/practical skills

- Attitudes and behaviours seemed to be significant for employers when thinking about recruitment, including particularly professionalism in the work environment, a positive work ethic/commitment and good time-keeping. Soft skills were also considered important, in particular, communication and/or team-working skills.
- Work experience was considered useful but not a formal requirement for many roles at recruitment stage, particularly at entry level. It was more likely to be expected or required for higher level and technical roles.
- Most interviewees said they recruited apprentices for entry-level roles. Reasons for not doing so were: apprenticeships did not meet their staffing requirements, the time needed to recruit Apprentices, perceptions of low quality Apprenticeships, the risk of losing Apprentices once qualified.
- Around half (of the sample) of the employers offered work placements/work experience. Capacity within companies (to supervise young people) was a limiting factor as were health and safety requirements.
- While many employers interviewed said they would be willing to work with a local training provider to deliver new technical education routes provision, and some already did so in some form (e.g. Apprenticeship schemes; careers fairs etc.), but some noted the need to raise awareness among providers of what employers could offer.

This work is part of a programme of ongoing engagement and consultation with employers and key stakeholders to inform reforms to the technical education system. It has been used to inform the Skills White Paper.

Leadership Development Market Mapping

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

The importance of leadership development was signified in the recent White Paper which acknowledged the need to ‘develop and train the next generation of strong school and system leaders’ as changes take place in education, including the move to a more school-led system.⁴ The first step to ensuring that the leadership development market is in good shape to meet future needs is to map out existing provision. The Department of

⁴ DfE (March, 2016), *Educational Excellence Everywhere*, p40

Education therefore, commissioned CooperGibson Research to conduct a mapping exercise of the school leadership development market.

The mapping work involved:

- An literature review of good practice in schools leadership development
- Web-based searches, identifying relevant providers and individual school leadership development opportunities
- In-depth telephone interviews with seven representatives from Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and Teaching School Alliances (TSAs) to explore their approach to school leadership development

The mapping exercise identified 322 individual leadership courses/programmes delivered across 93 individual providers. Of the 322 individual courses/programmes the main providers were teaching schools, universities, specialist providers and private training providers. Smaller proportions are offered by professional bodies, unions, charities, local authorities and MATs. The majority of courses/programmes were targeted to middle or senior leaders and tended to be formalised with practical aspects (e.g. how to hold a difficult conversation). A minority were targeted to Headteachers and Executive Headteachers. These were informal, reflective (e.g. reflecting on the impact of one's own behaviour) and collaborative.

Key findings from the mapping exercise, interviews and literature review were that:

- whilst there is a range of training provision available for school leadership development, this is not always easily or efficiently found
- budgetary constraints, workload being at full capacity and staffing shortages, create barriers for leaders (particularly Headteachers) in accessing CPD opportunities for themselves
- the cost of accessing external provision was prohibitive for several MATs/TSAs, meaning that they were working to develop new ways to deliver relevant training internally
- the role of Headteachers and senior leaders (and distributed leadership roles in schools more broadly) were fundamental to the effectiveness of CPD planning and impact across schools

A range of examples of effective practice in identifying, accessing and delivering CPD for school leaders/aspirational school leaders were highlighted. The research also identified gaps in current provision and in existing literature, particularly around the nature of effective CPD and CPD needs and preferences of individuals in, or aspiring to, leadership positions. Interviews with MATs and TSAs suggested that areas for

development were: leadership development programmes need to be responsive to the changing role of leadership in education, the increasing use (and necessity) of distributed leadership in schools, and the fast-paced nature of national policy and curriculum change; increased access to collaborative working and learning; and increased opportunities for self-reflection and space to apply new theories or approaches in practice and to evaluate these.

This has been used to inform the approach in developing a new model of delivery and content framework for future NPQs.

Mental Health Fitness approaches used by Schools – research review

Associate: Nick Coleman, Nick Coleman Research Ltd

Colleagues: Wendy Sykes and Carola Groom

Key findings

This report presents the findings from a rapid literature review of approaches currently or recently used by schools, to promote wellbeing, resilience and engagement in learning (approaches which could be considered to improve mental health ‘fitness’ in a similar vein to physical exercise and physical fitness). The review considers the range and types of approaches delivered by schools, how they are delivered and whether there is any evidence of effectiveness. The report aims to identify interventions which may benefit from further trialling and is not intended to be comprehensive.

Interventions were considered relevant if they were well-defined single interventions; were provided by school staff during the school day; were aimed at all pupils; and could easily be implemented with low training and cost implications.

The review used a purposive, intelligence-led approach to identify school-based interventions, using searches of selected research databases and of the internet; and by building on existing school and stakeholder networks.

Schools in the UK use a wide range of approaches and interventions aimed at addressing mental health fitness among pupils. The review identified more than 60 interventions meeting the inclusion criteria and these can be organised into broad groups:

- Calm and safe/protected spaces and environments;
- Mindfulness/contemplative practices;

- Relaxation and other stress-reducing techniques;
- Break/playtime interventions;
- Physical activity and exercise;
- Gardening and other outdoor/nature activities;
- Music-based activities;
- Art-based activities;
- Literacy and writing;
- Social and emotional development;
- Interactive/on-line models;
- Other diverse activities.

The evidence of effectiveness of interventions used in schools is mixed. While there are a few robust, external evaluations reported in the literature, overall the evidence of effectiveness is patchy, often being based on anecdotal feedback. However, the combination of initial evidence and evidence of appropriateness of interventions for use in schools suggests that there are promising interventions which could usefully be trialled further.

The findings from the review are being used to inform potential evaluation work the department could commission in the future to improve the evidence of effectiveness around school interventions to promote mental wellbeing and positive mental health.

Improving Permanence for Looked after Children: Understanding placement stability at local level

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

The DfE commissioned CooperGibson Research to conduct a short study to explore practice for supporting placement stability. As an exploratory piece of work, the purpose of the project was to provide some indications of the facilitators and barriers to placement stability, explore the reasons behind multiple placements and the organisational and practical approaches taken by local authorities to achieving and sustaining placement stability.

The project involved research with four local authorities ranging in size of looked-after children populations, geographic area, county and city boroughs and with varying degrees of success in placement stability. The qualitative approach included:

- review of up to six case files per local authority to identify the backgrounds, contexts, range of moves and reasons behind any moves or stability

- analysis of local quantitative data to identify local characteristics found in the 2013 data pack on placement stability
- Interviews and/or focus groups with practitioners, managers and service leads in each local authority to identify key facilitators, barriers and organisational policy and processes to support placement stability

The research highlighted the complexity of achieving placement stability for a diverse group of children with very different needs. There are many factors that can contribute to placement instability and these factors are not usually working in isolation. These factors are summarised into three areas:

- Organisational and system factors
- Carer and placement factors
- Child and family factors

The scale of this work means that the findings are not wholly generalisable. Whilst some future considerations for practice were suggested within the conclusions of the report these can only be preliminary to further research resulting in evidence based recommendations. The project highlighted the need to consider broadening the research to a wider spectrum of local authorities, care providers and care settings and utilising a range of methodological approaches. This could include a literature review collating existing evidence, involving the views of children and young people and carers, case studies and practitioner-led research and development work aimed at testing and learning from innovative practice.

The evidence from the research is being reviewed.

Parental Engagement in Schools

Associate: Elizabeth Davies, BMG Research

Key findings

The research involved an online survey of 1,210 parents/carers of children aged 4-18. It aimed to set a baseline for how schools currently engage with parents/carers and to inform policy decisions, by exploring the extent to which, on what issues and how schools inform, engage and involve parents/carers of children of this age group.

This research suggests that the more informed and engaged parents/carers felt, the more they felt they could hold their child's school to account, and the more they felt they had a say in the running of the school..

Parents'/carers' likelihood to be 'very satisfied' or 'very happy' with information and engagement increased when:

- They had been consulted on their preferences and these had been met;
- More topics of information were provided by schools; and
- More engagement opportunities were available.

Parents/carers receive a range of types of information and engagement methods from their child's schools and the majority of parents/carers were satisfied with these materials and the information they value most is about their child's progress. The form of information received varied by topic, although across all types of information, parents/carers were least likely to receive information via social media, text message, or bespoke app or websites.

The majority of differences in parent/carer experiences were based on the phase and type of school that their child attended rather than demographic factors. This suggests that school approaches for information provision and engagement are inclusive and not specifically targeted at particular demographics. For example:

- Parents/carers with a child in primary school were more likely than those in Secondary, to have opportunities for frequent informal contact and to take part in workshops/learning opportunities to support their child's learning.
- Parents/carers with a child in primary school are more likely to receive information about what their child is learning and consider this to be more important.
- Parents/carers with a child in secondary school are more likely to receive information about general school activities and events; however they considered information about the curriculum to be most important.

The majority of parents/carers (62%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel able to hold my child's school to account". Only one in ten disagreed and only 3% strongly disagreed. One-fifth (20%) of parents/carers reported that they did not know how to hold schools to account.

Parents/carers had very mixed responses about the extent they felt they have a say in the running of their child's school. However, the extent to which they were satisfied with

the information and how a school engages them was significant in how they viewed their say in the running of the school.

Other than from the school, parents/carers receive information from their child (63%) and friends and family (35%). Parents/carers with a child in primary school were more likely to get information from friends and family. Parents/carers with a child in secondary school were more likely to get information from their child and were also more likely to use information based on their personal experiences and knowledge, as well as from the internet, to support their child's education.

The findings are being used to develop policy thinking and to inform future parental engagement strategies

Exploratory Study – Evaluating the effectiveness of Opportunity Areas

Associate: John Rodger, York Consulting LLP

Key findings

The Opportunity Areas (OA) strategy is a place-based initiative operating in 12 areas facing entrenched and widespread educational challenges. The Opportunity Areas programme involves local partnerships formed between early years providers, schools, colleges, universities, employers, charities and local authorities to identify local challenges and develop strategies for achieving change in each area.

This project was commissioned to critically assess the suitability and feasibility of our initial evaluation models and proposed methodological approaches. The contractor was also commissioned to assess and identify new sources of data (beyond our current metrics) that could be used to measure the impact of OAs.

This study was conducted between January-April 2017 and was primarily a desk based piece of analysis alongside a review of the relevant impact literature, consultations with DfE analysts and policy makers and a review of early implementation plans in each of the Opportunity Areas.

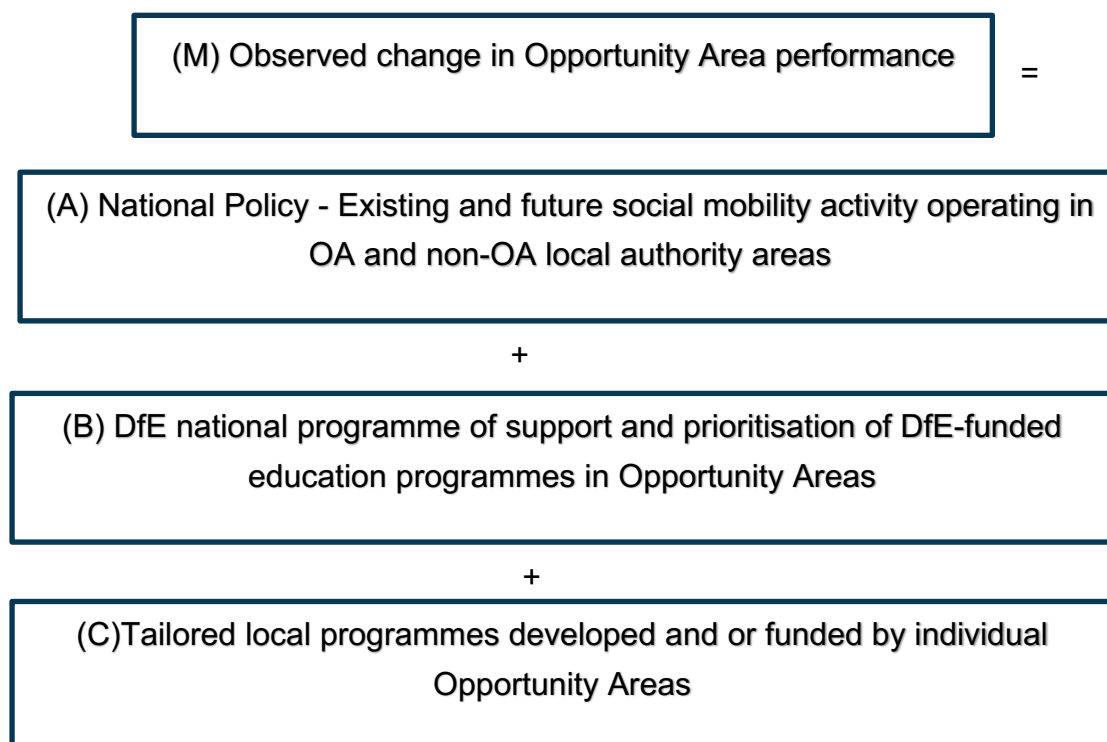
Opportunity Areas have been designed to improve social mobility in the chosen areas. It is therefore important to have a consistent measure or approximation of what constitutes social mobility. The OA headline indicators operate as the programme's outcome measures and will enable us to measure progress against the key barriers to social mobility the programme has identified. These will form the basis of an analysis of impact.

The evaluation framework sets out the key areas of analysis for the Opportunity Areas evaluation.

The Change Equation

The complexities of the elements to be taken into account when measuring Opportunity Area impact is summarised in the “change equation” shown below in figure 1

Figure 1: The Change Equation



The impact of any change in Opportunity Area activity (M) is a function of existing and future social mobility related activity, mainly common to all local authority areas (A) (essentially business as usual), plus Opportunity Area programme focused activities (B and C). In terms of scale of activity and contribution to total area achievement, component (A) will have an overwhelming impact and includes a plethora of existing programmes and initiatives.

The additional social mobility support invested in Opportunity Areas is associated with components (B & C). Our analytical interest in these elements is in the way they combine with (A) to impact on Opportunity Area wide social mobility. In addition consideration needs to be given to the relative effectiveness of these additional support initiatives and their contribution to improving the aspect of social mobility at which they are targeted.

In addressing the change equation it is important to draw a clear distinction between national (macro) and local (micro) evaluation activity. The former focuses on the collective impact of all activities (A-C) while the latter addresses aspects (B & C) of funded support.

Key analytical activities:

Opportunity Areas Impact Evaluation

We would expect a national evaluation to focus on macro impacts at programme and local Opportunity Area level in addition to comparative assessments of achievements across all areas. Key activities will include:

Comparator analysis: Assessment of value added will involve contrasting Opportunity Area achievement with a matched sample of non-Opportunity Areas. This could be achieved using Propensity Score Matching and Differences in Differences to understand changes in the programme's headline indicators which will be used as outcome measures.

Cost Benefit Analysis: Conduct a predictive cost benefit analysis based on delivery costs and permutations of fiscal, economic and social impact. This could be done for the programme as whole plus individual Opportunity Areas.

Cross Area Analysis: A detailed comparison of achievements, obstacles and future opportunities by local area. This might include recommendations of initiatives to be expanded/more widely rolled out.

National Programmes: Coordination of evaluation findings from evaluations of core national programmes. Also, using this data to estimate the likely local impacts in Opportunity Areas.

Bespoke Programmes (cross OA trials): Either evaluating bespoke programmes or collating the findings of bespoke evaluations to estimate local impacts.

Cross Cutting Barriers: Conducting evaluations or collating evaluation findings relating to issues such as Home Learning Environment and Aspirations to build the evidence around what works in different local contexts.

Local Evaluation

It will be necessary for each Opportunity Area to have its own customised evaluation study. This will require the allocation of a named evaluator in each area who will lead and coordinate evaluation work locally. Activities will include:

Performance Monitoring: Monitoring local performance against the nationally agreed local performance framework. This will include a logic model of expected impact. Intervention level evaluation: Evaluation of a sample of interventions to build the evidence on what works and in which contexts.

Evaluation risks

Unrealistic Expectations

There is a danger that expectations of programme impact may be set too high. As the programme is designed to address impacts on social mobility it will be assessed against the programme's headline social mobility indicators. Within the 3 year evaluation timescale it is unlikely that significant progress will be evident on all the headline indicators. This needs to be made clear from the outset and plans made to monitor progress annually over a longer timescale.

Unable to impact on Headline Indicators (programme outcome measures) at LAD

Given the diverse and overlapping nature of the interventions it is unlikely that any impact against the headline indicators at local area level will be detected by 2020. It might be necessary to set a longer time horizon to allow sufficient headline outcomes to materialise.

Evaluation indicators and Opportunity Area Interventions are specified separately

Within the Opportunity Area programme there is a danger of introducing a disconnect between what local programmes are seeking to achieve and how they will ultimately be assessed by the end of the evaluation. Each OA's delivery plan will set out their criteria for success and the evaluator will need to incorporate this into their review of activity at a local level. In agreeing an Opportunity Area programme of activity all parties need to be clear on the success criteria.

Increased Pressure on local Evaluation

Given the potential time delays linked to a national impact analysis greater emphasis will need to be placed on local project evaluation. It will therefore be important to commission a balanced programme of project evaluation to capture the full range of likely impacts.

The project has enabled DfE to review and quality assure our initial plans for the evaluation. This project has informed the evaluation strategy and will inform the Invitation to Tender for the evaluation of the Opportunity Areas programme, the overarching model of the evaluation we commission and its methodological design. The findings from this exploratory research will be shared with all potential bidders to ensure that the final impact evaluation design is shaped by robust and independent analysis and evidence

Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy: Literature review

Associate: John Hamer, AlphaPlus Consultancy Ltd

Key findings

The report presents the findings from a rapid literature review of UK and international research evidence on teaching and learning of MFL, with a focus on effective pedagogies. The aim of the literature review was to develop the evidence base on what makes good MFL teaching by providing a summary of the existing research. The primary focus of the work was on secondary schools but pedagogy more generally was also considered.

The literature search utilised an extensive combination of 'secondary education' keywords with 'language teaching' keywords and 'pedagogy' related keywords to search a range of bibliographic databases and language journals. Article abstracts were then coded for relevance against a number of research questions to agree a final list of the most relevant articles for inclusion in the review; it is not intended to be comprehensive. The selected articles were summarised and the findings synthesised by a range of topics.

First and foremost, it should be noted that the review was limited by the scarcity of robust academic evidence. To be able to say conclusively that certain pedagogical approaches are more effective than others, requires research evidence produced by robust trials in schools with detail about specific approaches and how they should be adopted in the classroom. Evidence to meet these standards was not found. From the literature reviewed, findings were grouped in to the following key themes;

- **Vocabulary Development and Usage:** No evidence was found about specific pedagogies that are used for vocabulary development and have a clear, positive impact on outcomes, or of the relative strengths of different approaches. However clear arguments were present in the literature about the importance of vocabulary levels in the acquisition of language skills and that vocabulary should be explicitly taught.
- **Grammar Usage and Development:** the evidence about grammar teaching is that it should be taught explicitly and that a range of approaches should be used depending on the grammar being introduced and the skills being developed.
- **Use of target language:** a range of different approaches were advocated ranging from immersion in the target language to restricting first language use to simple classroom instructions or for clarifications and to support awareness of target language. No clear consensus could be drawn from the evidence.

- Impact of technology: evidence was mixed with different reviews drawing different conclusions as to the impact of technology. Evidence was found to support technology use in specific areas, such as: vocabulary acquisition, extended writing and communication.
- Other evidence: literature that does not fit easily within the previous categories summarises a range of evidence on factors affecting language learning, and finds strong evidence to support; intentionally and explicitly orienting students' attention to features of the target language, practice and automatism of explicit knowledge, the impact of working memory on explicit language learning and varying difficulty in learning different features of language.

The findings from the literature review were used to inform an independent review of modern foreign languages pedagogy in secondary schools conducted by the Teaching Schools Council.

Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy: Teacher Interviews

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

The report presents the findings from a series of qualitative interviews conducted with MFL (Modern Foreign Language) teachers. The research explored the attitudes and behaviours of effective MFL teachers and schools with the aim of identifying practices and tools that could be adopted more broadly.

Semi-structured telephone interviews were conducted across 33 schools – 16 identified as more effective in language performance and 17 identified as less effective to allow comparison of pedagogic approaches and practices across both types. In total, 33 MFL Departmental Leaders and 58 MFL teachers participated. Due to the qualitative nature of this research and the small sample size, caution is advised in extrapolating the findings.

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Overall, the outcomes of this research have identified few differences between the views and practices of participants across schools that are more or less effective at delivering MFL provision. Rather, provision was often determined by student needs, ability levels and key stage, resources and time available, learning objectives/focus (including working to the new GCSE specification) and the teaching style/preferences of individual teachers. General findings and notable (although small) differences are detailed below.

Use of target language: Departmental Leaders and teachers in more effective schools were more likely to use or require the use of the target language in the classroom *nearly all the time* (those in less effective schools more commonly used it *selectively*).

Vocabulary and grammar: a pedagogical approach set by Departmental Leaders that *requires* equal focus on both accuracy in vocabulary and grammar and authentic exposure to the target language, was slightly more common in the more effective schools. In less effective schools, this approach was more readily *encouraged* among teachers, but not necessarily *required*).

Practicalities: Teachers in more effective schools highlighted issues of balancing administrative/workload issues with having enough class time to effectively cover the curriculum. However, it was predominantly teachers from less effective schools who tended to report that teaching time for languages had been reduced.

Use of resources: Leaders in more effective schools were more likely to suggest that there was some guidance to use textbooks as a *core resource* – in less effective schools, textbooks were regarded more commonly as a resource to *'dip into'*.

Homework: Homework tended to be used either to reinforce and extend learning undertaken during class time, or as a way of learning vocabulary lists (with tests then carried out in class). Teachers in more effective schools were more likely to set a piece of writing as homework.

Effective teaching: The common factors for effective teachers reported across all school types were enthusiasm, passion, subject knowledge and the ability to build good relationships with students. Supportive departments were also important in motivating teachers, although teachers in less effective schools also highlighted the importance of student behaviour and class management

Support and guidance: Interviewees in more effective schools reported having more external training opportunities available (such as local network membership, teaching Leadership courses and the commissioning of external consultants).

The findings from this research were used to inform an independent review of modern foreign languages pedagogy in secondary schools conducted by the Teaching Schools Council.

School to School Support

Associate: Paul Armstrong, University of Manchester

Key findings

This study was conducted during the last round of bids to the School to School Support fund in Autumn 2016. It explored and established how system leaders worked together to identify and prioritise both which schools to work with and the type of support needed. The research looked at what structures and processes were available to enable school to school support, how system leaders shared intelligence, how they engaged schools to be supported, how they assessed need and how collectively they learned from their experience. A multiple case study approach was adopted after a preliminary literature review. System leaders in two regions (North West and East of England) were interviewed.

The research reports a number of promising developments. The fund has encouraged the growth of local coordination mechanisms making better use of resources. It has also strengthened the role of systems leaders and enabled new leaders to develop their skills. There is goodwill in the system for the reforms that are being introduced, particularly the emphasis being placed on schools working together. The fund has enabled some areas to build on a legacy of initiatives like the city challenges. There were examples of work across borders where a legacy of system leadership work was helping develop that work in another region.

Some potential barriers identified included geographical separation of systems leaders and schools needing support; competing priorities for system leaders; aligning schools' planning cycles with demand for support and availability of resources.

The findings of this report and the examples of promising developments were used to inform the planning for the new Strategic School Improvement Fund

Review of Inspection grading Models

Associate: John Hamer, AlphaPlus Consultancy Ltd

Key findings

The purpose of this review was to draw together information and evidence on different models for grading the outcomes of school inspection, and the impact they might have on the behaviour of schools, and on other relevant stakeholders. The review provides a summary of the different approaches in operation across selected jurisdictions, with a focus on those regarded as having effective accountability systems, including England; and it reviews what is available in the research literature of the past 10 years on the effectiveness and impact of different approaches.

The review adopted a case study approach with the objective of selecting six jurisdictions (including England) which met the relevant criteria: they were deemed to be high performing; employed some form of school inspection grading; and there were research and other studies of interest on the impact of inspections emerging from those countries. The included jurisdictions were: Belgium (Flemish community), England, Hong Kong, Ireland, the Netherlands and New Zealand.

A limitation to the review has been that until recently, little high quality, peer reviewed, research work has been undertaken on the impact of school inspections. That is gradually changing, but still much of the research is on the impact and effects of inspection in general, and on schools judged to be failing, rather than on the specific issue of grading models that was the object of this review. As such, there remain areas which are largely terra incognita. Few studies were found which referred to the practice of expressing the outcomes of inspection in terms of a grade, and only one or two which considered it in any detail. This is, therefore, an aspect of inspection reporting and feedback that would warrant further investigation.

The findings will contribute to policy thinking in this area.

Review of the provision of support for parents around children and young people's mental health

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

Alongside the review of school-based support available to parents (AP2016/52), this project was commissioned to review the support available more widely for parents around children and young people's mental health. The aims of the review were to:

1. map the provision of support for parents/carers to support the mental health of their children, identifying the range and nature of provision and identifiable gaps in what is on offer, and
2. conduct an evidence review, examining the types of information and support parents/carers want, the most convenient ways for them to access it and where current gaps exist.

The review encompassed:

- A systematic online mapping exercise, exploring the scale and nature of support offered to parents/carers⁵ nationally, with evidence of effectiveness (where available)
- A literature review of existing evidence around the demand and preferences of parents in accessing support
- A review of provision in two geographical areas to explore local supply of provision, completed via online searching and telephone interviews with key representatives
- A review of peer support through use of forums and face-to-face support groups, completed via online reviews and telephone interviews with key representatives

The indicative and exploratory mapping exercise identified a range of support and resources for parents relating to children and young people's mental health. Overall, 459 different types of 'support' were identified across 158 organisations, primarily a mix of national and international, with a minority of regional and local resources identified. Many were general resources, relating to either all interested parties, all parents or across mental health conditions.

⁵ Whilst carers were not excluded from this research, parents were the prime focus since separate projects focus on provision of support for carers.

The support or resources found were predominately informative in nature, freely available and designed to improve knowledge about children's mental health issues and specific conditions. They generally took the form of websites or leaflets/booklets.

Several issues were identified through the mapping exercise:

- Difficulties in accessing face-to-face support
- Minimal access to peer support
- Lack of evaluation/evidence of efficacy
- Difficulties identifying resources for certain conditions

The literature review and interviews identified that parents prefer to access information and support in a mixture of formats, including searching online or posting on discussion forums, which are valued for initial information and advice. However, ultimately parents want to know who they can talk to direct, meaning that face-to-face and telephone provision is important. Stigma is the main barrier to parents accessing support; other barriers include the inability to travel to meetings, or a lack of ability or knowledge in accessing and using the internet for relevant searches. Nonetheless, social media is becoming an increasingly helpful tool for parents in receiving information and news.

Parents have identified a range of information that they would find most useful:

- General information on mental health conditions, understanding them and how to provide early support if they have concerns
- Practical advice – how to deal with day-to-day issues, managing behaviour, coping with symptoms, managing a crisis
- Clear information about the referral process – e.g. having clear treatment pathways outlined to them
- Jargon, acronyms, terminology clearly explained

The research finds that while information is readily available for parents to help them identify and understand mental health problems, navigating the plethora of information on some conditions could be challenging for some parents. Whilst the mapping exercise identified many resources, due to the timing and nature of the research, it could not provide an exhaustive directory of resources and support for parents around children and young people's mental health. The research has however, provided an indication of where gaps in provision and research might lie and therefore priorities for further development.

The findings from this review are being used as part of a general policy review of availability of support for children and young people's mental health, and evidence gaps relating to provision and effectiveness. Findings are feeding into, for example, the development of a green paper on children and young people's mental health, and will

help inform decisions around Government funding of services to support parents with child mental health.

School-based support for parents regarding child mental health

Associate: Rebecca Brown - Lisa Anderson provided clinical oversight for the report.

Key findings

This report is intended to further understanding of what models of support exist to support parents with the mental health of their children that can be delivered through schools and colleges. It addresses the following questions:

1. What approaches can schools and colleges take to supporting parents and carers?
2. What evidence is there that these are currently used by schools and colleges?
3. How are these approaches best delivered?
4. What evidence is there of effectiveness of different models of support (including any assessment of acceptability of approaches to schools and/or parents)?
5. What are the key elements of effective school-/college-based support for parents/carers on children's mental health?

The methodology employed to produce this evidence review comprised a literature review of peer reviewed papers and searches of key organisations' websites. The literature review was then followed-up by a case study in one locality area.

This review is limited, in the main, to examples that are in the public domain. It is therefore likely that the approaches and programmes identified are not entirely representative of all programmes in existence. The majority of the approaches or programmes identified in the review involve parents by providing parental training in behaviour management techniques. Other identified approaches involve parents by: information sharing about mental health and where to get help, providing a whole-school framework for mental health promotion, or by the provision of school-based family therapy.

Over recent years there has been the development of whole-school approaches or frameworks that promote parental involvement as being central to improving and promoting emotional wellbeing amongst pupils. The whole-school approaches aimed at engaging with parents may be part of a general school ethos, or part a specific approach,

such as the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TAMHS), or the World Health Organisation's Health Promoting Schools framework.

A number of evidence-based school programmes have been developed both nationally and internationally that aim to involve parents in making improvements to children's emotional wellbeing. Parent training was the most common approach identified in this review, and can be grouped in the following way:

- Universal parent training programmes aimed at improving emotional wellbeing (e.g. Family SEAL, Families and Schools Together, Growing in Confidence, Together at School)
- Targeted programmes for primary schools (e.g. 1,2,3 Magic, Collaborative Life Skills Program, Family School Success)
- Targeted programmes for secondary schools (e.g. Coping Power, Family Check-Up, Working Things Out programme and the Parents Plus Adolescents Programme)

The review also identifies six key indicators of successful implementation of programmes or interventions. These are:

- Whole-school approach
- Multi-component design
- High quality implementation and fidelity
- Systemic, involving work with individuals, families, significant others and stakeholders
- Active parental engagement
- Consideration of family environmental factors and promotion of resilience

The research adds to our knowledge of what forms of school-based support for parents regarding child mental health exist, what is effective, for who, and in what circumstances. The study explores the effectiveness of universal programme, as well as targeted approaches for children with specific needs. However, the study also highlights that there are gaps within the evidence base, most notably for children with internalising, rather than externalising mental health needs, such as depression and anxiety, and the availability of evidence-based programme implemented within an English context.

The findings from this review are being used as part of a general policy review of availability of support for children and young people's mental health, and evidence gaps relating to provision and effectiveness. Findings are feeding into, for example, the development of a green paper on children and young people's mental health, and will help inform decisions around Government funding of services to support parents with child mental health.

School Improvement and the Role of Ofsted

Associate: Sarah Gibson, CooperGibson Research

Key findings

A small-scale qualitative research study with schools was carried out to understand schools' self-improvement journeys, what are the key lessons learned, and where/if further support for schools may be appropriate.

A case study approach was taken. Twenty-two in-depth telephone interviews were conducted across ten schools. Interview participants included the headteacher/Executive Director for each institution, plus at least one other with an external perspective such as a School Improvement Officer (SIO) or Governor. The sample included an equal mixture of schools showing or not showing improvement in pupil achievement (including disadvantaged pupils) between 2013 and 2015. Full case studies were developed for schools that involved at least two interviewees.

- Schools generally identified common areas for improvement: improving pupil outcomes/attainment, quality of teaching and learning, standards of leadership and governance, behaviour and wellbeing, and supporting additional needs such as SEND pupils and for those in disadvantaged areas.
- Identifying issues for improvement tends to be an internal activity, either highlighted through the outcomes of Ofsted inspections or via self-evaluation activities undertaken internally by school leadership teams (SLTs).
- All schools, regardless of type or rating, were working to address Ofsted outcomes and improve aspects of their provision. The most common self-improvement activities tended to focus on sharing good practice, leadership development, teacher training/CPD and implementing whole-school strategies.
- Both formal and informal school networks were highlighted throughout the interviews as being very valuable to school self-improvement, either those developed externally or internally.
- As several schools participating in the research had above-average proportions of pupils who were eligible for Pupil Premium, they had implemented a variety of strategies to address the specific needs of these pupils and raise attainment across these cohorts.
- The key barriers to self-improvement were perceived to be the pressures of the inspection process; budgetary constraints; teacher recruitment (both in terms of quantity and quality of potential recruits); changing systems (e.g. curriculum,

specifications and policy); and complex social issues or emotional problems experienced by young people and their families.

Several key lessons appeared to have been learned, including:

- The value of peer support and sharing good practice among the teaching and leadership workforce (both internally and externally)
- Feeling supported and guided by external agencies, rather than 'done to' or being told by others what actions a school should be taking
- The need to remain outward-looking, both in inviting external input to school improvement but also through developing a culture of openness among staff. This allowed staff to feel able to ask for help or to address errors/issues effectively when they are identified
- The importance of consistent, visible and confident leadership, both in senior and middle leadership roles
- The potential for using holistic approaches to self-improvement, with activities embedded into whole-school strategies such as raising pupil outcomes in literacy/numeracy
- The value of involving a wide range of external partners on a consistent basis through the self-improvement journey.

The findings have provided a useful insight and will inform future school improvement policy.

Literature review 2: subject-specific and general pedagogical knowledge of teachers

Associate: Tony Munton, The RKT Ltd

Key findings

This literature review was commissioned by DfE as part of our supporting role for the Teaching Schools Council, in their work for the Review of Effective Primary Teaching Practice (Keeble Review). It was presented to the Teaching Schools Council on 29 July 2016.

Its purpose was to identify and summarise all relevant research at that time which considered the relative importance to primary teaching practice of: subject knowledge; subject specific pedagogy and; knowledge of pedagogy.

- Identifying impact of individual behaviours that make up effective pedagogy is complex, and remains largely unexplored by rigorous empirical research.
- Subject-specific and general pedagogical knowledge are important elements of effective pedagogy as defined by enhanced learning outcomes. However, they are part of a complex system of behaviours, attitudes and beliefs that go to make up effective pedagogy. That complexity makes it very difficult for research to address questions concerning necessary thresholds or improvements one could attribute specifically to one or the other.
- Evidence for the impact of subject-specific and general pedagogical knowledge on pupil performance at primary level specifically is generally implicit rather than explicit. However, those implicit relationships are evident in different models of effective pedagogy at the primary phase.
- The current evidence for the impact of subject-specific and general pedagogical knowledge on pupil performance at primary level is broadly consistent across subject areas.
- A small subset of studies looked at made reference to professional development in the area of pedagogical practice. That evidence suggests teachers' value professional development that includes elements of classroom-based training.
- There is not sufficiently good quality evidence in the work we have reviewed to take a definitive view on whether different international approaches to specific elements of pedagogical practice are responsible for producing different impacts as measured by educational outcomes for children.
- To establish definitive answers to the question of how constituent elements of effective pedagogy contribute to pupil outcomes would require studies specifically designed to test the proposition robustly;
- Developing evidence about optimum approaches to effective training in the constituent elements could be helpful;

The Teaching Schools Council has potentially an important role to play in setting out a research agenda to further explore effective pedagogy.

The findings of the literature review informed the final Keeble Review report, which was published by the Teaching Schools Council on 2 November 2016.

Transgender Awareness in Children & Families social worker education

Associate: Heather Rolfe, National Institute of Economic and Social Research

Colleague: Nathan Hudson-Sharp

Key findings

This research was commissioned on the back of the Government's 2016 commitment to ensure all public sector professionals receive adequate training on transgender issues, following the Women and Equalities Select Committee (WESC) report on Transgender Equality. The WESC report highlighted significant levels of inequality experienced by transgender people across a range of policy areas. Recommendation 34 from the WESC report stated *'We have heard worrying evidence about some social workers' lack of knowledge on gender variance. The Government should seek to address this through formal training as a matter of urgency'*. As part of its response to the WESC report, the Government committed to commission a study to ascertain the adequacy and consistency of knowledge on gender variance in initial social work training and continuous professional development (CPD) to provide evidence on whether additional training materials should be made available in the future.

The research comprised three stages: a rapid evidence review; a content analysis of a sample of HCPC approved social work courses; and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in social work education, organisations that provide support to the transgender community, representatives of Higher Education Institutions, and representatives of child and family social work teams working with Local Authorities across England.

The overall finding of this research is that transgender awareness is an area in need of development within the child and family social work profession, with the evidence clearly indicating a demand for additional training materials. Both the findings of the rapid evidence review and primary research contained in this report demonstrate that although there is some evidence of good education, training and practice within the profession, it is inconsistent. As such, many child and family social workers' understanding and knowledge of gender identity and gender variance would seem to be insufficient. This results in trans and gender variant service users and their families having poor experiences and subsequent gaps in service provision.

These findings, however, are framed within an acknowledgement of the pressures that the child and family social work profession currently face. Long-standing issues regarding recruitment and retention, high rates of work-related stress, high turnover, high vacancies rates, increasing caseloads and declining resources present potential obstacles to

achieving a better awareness of transgender issues. This is further compounded in the context of extensive and ongoing reform, which currently presents unanswered questions regarding curriculum content, guidance regarding professional values and ethics and the overall regulation of the profession.

Given the identification of pockets of expertise in regard to transgender issues in the social work profession, progress would arguably likely to be achieved simply by sharing resources already developed. Nevertheless, many of these resources are suggested to be non-social work specific. To develop resources that are social work specific would seem favourable, given the vital role child and family social workers have in the supporting trans or otherwise gender variant children and young people, and their families.

Underpinning this potential process, however, is the finding that the evidence base on the nature of and experiences of the transgender population continues to be poor; hampered by data and sampling difficulties in regard to gender identity. The lack of transgender-specific social work research deprives the profession of an evidence base on which to develop best practice, as is the case generally with transgender service provision. Broader investment in better understanding the experiences of the transgender population would therefore seem beneficial, in order to ensure the needs of this often vulnerable group are sufficiently met.

We will be using the findings to decide how transgender awareness can be improved in child and family social work settings.

Literature Review: Effective Deployment of a school Workforce

Associate: Paul Armstrong, University of Manchester

Key findings

This research comprised a literature review of the evidence on the effective and efficient use of schools' workforces. It aimed to update the workforce elements of the Department's 2013 *Review of efficiency in the schools system*.

The results showed that evidence relating to workforce deployment remains limited. Schools often approach staff deployment in context-specific and individualised ways, making it difficult to identify models of best practice in this area.

There are, however, bodies of evidence about the effective and efficient deployment of staff to some roles. These include:

- The employment and deployment of teaching assistants. Research in this area suggests that the effective deployment and development of skilled teaching assistants is more important (both for pupil outcomes and efficiency) than having teaching assistants in every classroom.
- School financial and organisational management. There is evidence to suggest that groups or clusters of schools, operating within relatively close geographical proximity, can share a school business manager (SBM) and other elements of their organisational and financial management without any obvious adverse impact on student outcomes.

The review found gaps within the literature and knowledge, which include:

- Evidence of how and why schools make decisions surrounding the employment and deployment of their staff overall. The small volume of evidence that exists in this sphere suggests that such decision making is variable between schools and done on a very individualised basis.
- Evidence into the means by which schools design their staffing structures to determine the right blend of teaching and support staff. What research there is indicates that even amongst schools considered to be effective and efficient there is a lack of consistency in their approach to workforce design.

Further findings include:

- The evidence from a number of research studies exploring system level efficiency between countries reinforces the message from the Department's 2013 *Review of efficiency in the schools system* and other subsequent reports: that there is space for the English school system to operate more efficiently.

The research suggested recommendations following on from the literature review, including:

- Though the notions of 'education' and 'business' are sometimes considered unnatural bedfellows, schools in England are small to medium size not-for-profit businesses with considerable budgets and organisational and financial autonomy. If schools are to operate more efficiently then there are almost certainly lessons to learn from the field of business management, including how to manage finance, change, knowledge, and resources, including staffing.
- Schools that are known to be financially effective and well organised should be encouraged to share best practice and held up as beacons in the same way as educationally effective schools.

- Schools need to ensure they deploy, manage and develop their teaching assistants appropriately with a clear focus on the quality rather than the quantity of this cohort of the workforce. There now exists a robust, evidence-informed body of research that explains how this can be achieved.
- Schools should look to collaborative models of organisational and financial management (e.g. shared SBMs). The evidence suggests that such models, when appropriately employed with a suitably qualified incumbent, can be a very effective means of achieving financial and workforce efficiency.

The evidence from this literature review is informing the Department's continuing development and implementation of school workforce deployment policy. This includes reviewing existing departmental support for schools on teacher deployment, and proposals for future research.

Published projects

Many 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 May 2016

Title	Summary	Date
Social work teaching partnerships programme pilots: evaluation	This report discusses the effect of the pilot partnerships on initial social work training and continuing professional development (CPD) for qualified social workers.	May 2016
Linking ITT and workforce data: (Initial Teacher Training Performance Profiles and School Workforce Census)	This report tracks Initial Teacher Training (ITT) trainees through their training and into the state-funded workforce.	July 2016
Using a consistent identifier - education and children's services	This research report examines the possible effects of imposing new duties under the Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015.	July 2016
New Belongings Programme Evaluation	Independent evaluation of a programme looking to improve services for young people leaving care.	October 2016
Supporting entry and level 1 students in post-16 institutions	Study of effective practice in supporting students studying for a qualification at level 1 or below in post-16 institutions.	November 2016
Child Sexual Exploitation Support in Childrens homes	The support provided to children placed in residential care who have experienced, or are at risk of, child sexual exploitation.	December 2016
Local Authority use of secure placements	How local authorities use placements for children in a secure setting.	December 2016
Childminders views on funding early education	Study of childminders' views of funded early education.	January 2017

Title	Summary	Date
Alternative provision: effective practice and post-16 transition	Research into best practice for raising attainment and aiding transition to post-16 destinations for young people in alternative provision.	January 2017
Case Studies of behaviour management practices in schools rated outstanding	Research into behaviour management practices in schools as part of the evidence for the Tom Bennett 'Independent review of behaviour in schools' .	March 2017
The impact of abuse and neglect on children; and comparisons of different placement options	A review examining the effects of abuse and neglect on children, and whether different placement types affect their outcomes.	March 2017
High Potential Senior Leaders programme evaluation: Impact analysis	A multi-method evaluation considered the effectiveness and impact of the High Potential Senior Leaders programme on both the leaders participating and the schools they are working in.	June 2017
Employer skills' and 'Employer perspectives' surveys: review	Independent research summarising users' and experts' views on the 'Employer skills' and 'Employer perspectives' surveys.	June 2017

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



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