Department for Education

Norwich Inclusion Charter project evaluation

Norwich Opportunity Area Intervention Level Evaluation Report

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Glossary of abbreviations

AP	Alternative Provision
CTD	Common Transfer Document
DfE	Department for Education
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant
EPIC	Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champion
FAP	Fair Access Protocol
FEX	Fixed Term Exclusion (term sometimes used for Suspensions)
FSW	Family Support Worker
IC	Inclusion Champion
ILE	Intervention Level Evaluation
LA	Local Authority
NHA	Nurtured Heart Approach
NIC	Norwich Inclusion Charter
OA	Opportunity Area
PCR	Pupil case review
PEX	Permanent Exclusion
SCBA	Social cost-benefit analysis
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
TA	Teaching Assistant

Executive summary

Key insights for future delivery

The following key insights should be taken in consideration for future roll-out:

Benefits and outcomes: Stakeholders, schools and families reported that the project contributed to positive benefits. They reported benefits including changes in school ethos and improved and calmer school environment. The stakeholders suggested that this improved pupil behaviour and attendance and reduced exclusions.

Core structures of the project worked to underpin the project and facilitate delivery:

- **Inclusion Charter concept:** The mutually agreed principles supported school leaders to focus on inclusion and meeting pupil needs between and within schools.
- **Independent facilitation role:** Having a central independent staff member to manage and enable cross-school networks, decision-making, funding applications and support delivery of agreed programmes of activity was important to the delivery of the project.
- **Inclusion Champions:** Having an individual with the responsibility to lead on the inclusion agenda within schools and developing networks was beneficial.
- **Networks:** The establishment of regular opportunities for inclusion-focused communication and collaboration amongst school leaders at the local level.

NIC funded interventions were targeted in 3 ways and were utilised flexibly by schools to address their different needs. These were:

- **Norwich schools developed school inclusion practices.** They revised behaviour policies; introduced inclusive culture approaches; trained staff; and accessed grants to support teacher and pupil mental health and wellbeing. Staff felt more confident in how they managed behaviour; used restorative and nurturing strategies to manage classes and individual pupils; and engaged pupils in a more self-reflective and supportive way.
- **Actions targeted at individual families and parents.** Effective actions included **development of alternative provision opportunities on school sites,** for example, dedicated nurture or therapeutic space; forest school activities; or vocational opportunities. **Family and pupil coaching was also valued as it** offered support for pupils at risk of exclusion, and facilitated communication between pupils, parents and schools.
- **Coordinated transition activities worked well:** Including agreed day and/or week across schools for transition events to take place; inter-school teaching staff visits;

curriculum bridging activities for pupils; and effective sharing of sensitive information about pupils.

Introduction

This report presents findings from the evaluation of the Norwich Opportunity Area (OA) Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC) project. The NIC project aimed to support schools in Norwich to reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions.[1] It was one of the five OA funded projects evaluated as 'intervention level evaluations' (ILE) by York Consulting on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

The NIC project established a multi-agency approach to working with children and families to maintain engagement in education, reduce school exclusions and be an exemplar of how a coordinated approach can work. It involved:

- **The development of, and commitment by schools to, an agreed Inclusion Charter**. Principles included the nomination of an inclusion champion within schools; inclusion featured in school development plans; timely sharing of transition information; and full engagement with the Norfolk Fair Access Protocol.[2]
- **Management, coordination and school collaboration.** This involved a dedicated Norwich-wide NIC project manager and various cross-school networks.
- **NIC funding to support interventions within and across schools**. The funding was used to: improve school inclusion practices; support families and pupils at risk of exclusion; and provide transition activities for pupils between primary and secondary school.

Evaluation aims and methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the NIC project in achieving its intended outcomes within Norwich. Intended outcomes (outlined within the NIC project logic model in Appendix B) were for: [3]

- **Schools** to embed the Charter, improve management of pupil behaviour, and develop multi-agency working.

[1] The Department for Education recognises that school exclusions are essential behaviour management tools for headteachers and can be used to establish high standards of behaviour in schools and maintain the safety of school communities. It supports schools to improve pupils' behaviour and reduce the likelihood of exclusion being necessary but recommends that schools and local authorities should not adopt a 'no exclusions' policy as an end in itself.
[2] A Fair Access Protocol is a mechanism to ensure that vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, are allocated a place as quickly as possible. Norfolk's managed move scheme requires schools to set up managed moves with advice from a Fair Access Team.
[3] A logic model is a one-page idea map showing how a project influences its participants to achieve outcomes. A logic model includes a concise description of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

- **Families** to be more positive and confident.
- **Pupils** to improve engagement and educational performance, with reduced levels of suspensions and permanent exclusions.

However, this research has not been able to quantifiably attribute changes in suspensions and permanent exclusions to the NIC project. This is due to challenges in identifying a robust comparator group and the disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Evaluation activities were conducted over 3 waves between January 2019 and May 2021. The research included: a document and data review, focus groups, online surveys, interviews, and case studies. The stakeholders interviewed included local authority (LA) representatives, school leaders, school inclusion leads and staff, teachers, intervention leads, pupils and families.

Key findings

Implementation and delivery

NIC project core features

Most primary and secondary schools in Norwich signed up to the Charter by November 2020. This framework was seen by school leaders and inclusion staff as pivotal in providing a focus on inclusion within and across schools in Norwich. School stakeholders also identified NIC project coordination structures, the independence of the NIC project team from schools, and dedicated funding as important to the NIC project's success.

Within this, the Inclusion Champion role was seen as important. This meant that there was an individual with responsibility for the individual schools in meeting the aims of the NIC project. Some primary schools did not have the resources to release staff from teaching in order to become an Inclusion Champion. When the NIC started funding the Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champion (EPIC) role this enabled more primary schools to engage.

The NIC funding pot enabled schools to access a range of interventions and training. Some flexibility in funding allocation allowed schools to tailor interventions to meet their specific needs and refocus easily, for example during COVID-19 interruptions. Lessons learnt from the early NIC project funding rounds included the need to ensure that interventions fit with individual school contexts; and that they incorporate requirements for sustaining activities within schools.

NIC project collaboration and networking

Greater collaboration between schools was one of the most notable achievements of the NIC project. This was achieved through the NIC developing: a Charter to support inclusion best practice; setting up networks and providing a neutral coordination role.

The different elements together were seen as enabling genuine connections and communications within and across schools. These networks provided forums for knowledge sharing, a collective approach to managed moves and the introduction of internal/ external exclusions.[4] Additionally, collaboration was fostered through the focus on a single issue (inclusion) and the individual pupils' needs. These collaborative relationships were also valued when schools were dealing with the immediate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes were reported as making a real difference for pupils' engagement and attendance at school.

NIC project intervention funding

The NIC funding pot enabled schools to access a range of support to improve: their school inclusion practices; family and pupil interventions, including alternative provision; and transition activities.

School inclusion practices

School inclusion practice support aimed to reinforce positive behaviours and early targeted support for pupils at risk of exclusion. This was through a whole-school approach underpinned by NIC funded staff training and development. The staff members reported that this had a positive impact with them feeling more confident in managing behaviour and using more restorative and self-reflective ways of managing behaviour.

In the 4th year there was a greater focus on emotional and mental health support. This was a response to the increased amount of social, emotional and mental health issues that arose for pupils during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

Family and pupil interventions

NIC project funding supported personalised planning and alternative provision (AP) for individual pupils at risk of exclusion. Stakeholders said these interventions resulted in improved self-confidence, reduced behaviour problems, and improved school attendance. In the fourth year, funding was re-focused to support more in-school (rather than out-of-school) AP. This was because the short periods of AP were seen as insufficient for many pupils and that on-site AP could lead to a smoother transition back to mainstream education.

[4] Senior leaders referred to short-term managed moves as internal/external exclusions. This is not DfE policy and further consideration is needed before it is implemented elsewhere.

Family and pupil coaching offered a joined-up approach to supporting pupils at risk of exclusion. Evidence demonstrated that for pupils this resulted in lower levels of anxiety, less disruptive behaviour, and improved attendance and engagement in class.

Pupil transition

The NIC project funded a transition project manager to enable effective transitions for pupils at risk of disengaging with education during the move from primary to secondary school. Information sharing and coordination between schools was an important aspect with activities focusing on this. School stakeholders said the transition activities led to more coordinated and positive experiences for pupils and parents.

There was positive engagement from schools with the transition activities, with commitment shown to continue to develop and embed transition activities. However, inconsistent communication within some schools regarding transition limited their opportunities to fully engage with these activities.

Benefits, outcomes and impacts

It is not possible to quantitatively attribute outcomes of the programme to the intervention. However qualitative evidence suggests that there were some positive benefits to schools, families and pupils because of engagement in the project.

School benefits, outcomes and impacts

Senior school leaders said improved school inclusion practices and coordinated approaches to managed moves and their alternatives (introduced through the NIC project) had resulted in fewer suspensions and permanent exclusions. These inclusive practices also supported schools in their preparations and response to the COVID-19 restrictions.

Inclusion staff and senior leaders said whole-school changes and staff development led to a considerable change in school culture and ethos. They felt this was evident in calmer environments and lower levels of disruption. Whilst considerable progress was made across many schools, others were at an earlier stage in their journey towards an inclusive ethos.

Family benefits, outcomes and impacts

Parents and school stakeholders identified some improvement in parenting approaches after NIC intervention. Likewise, school stakeholders reported that they had a better relationship between the school and parents.

Pupil benefits, outcomes and impacts

The combination of interventions funded through the NIC project have enabled pupils to develop confidence, improve behaviour and well-being, and re-engage with learning.

Several individual pupil stories demonstrate the link between these positive outcomes and the avoidance of suspensions or permanent exclusions.

Conclusion

There is qualitative evidence that the NIC style of support across schools in a locality can influence improved inclusion practices within schools. The key ingredients were greater partnership and collaboration, backed up by targeted interventions. Teachers and practitioners felt that levels of exclusion were lower than might have been the case, particularly linked to: school Inclusion Champion role; collective school approaches to pupil exclusions; staff training in restorative and trauma-informed approaches (Thrive practitioners and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants); and family and pupil coaching support. There were encouraging signs in some schools that changes and improvements would be sustained and embedded for the longer-term.

1. Introduction

This report presents findings from the evaluation of the Norwich Opportunity Area (OA) Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC) project. The project aimed to support schools in Norwich to reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions.[5] It was one of five OA funded projects evaluated as 'intervention level evaluations' (ILE) by York Consulting on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

The following terms are used regularly throughout the report:

Key Terms

The following terms are used in the report:

Alternative provision (AP). Education arranged outside of mainstream provision for pupils because of exclusion, illness, other reasons and/or to improve behaviour.

Exclusions. A headteacher can exclude a child from school if they misbehave in or outside of school. Where the term 'exclusions' is used on its own, this includes both of the following types of exclusion:

- **Permanent exclusion.** Refers to when a pupil is excluded and who will not come back to that school (unless overturned). These are sometimes referred as PEX.
- **Suspension.** Refers to when a pupil is excluded from a school for a set period of time before returning to the suspending school. A suspension can involve a part of the school day (e.g. lunchtime suspensions) and it does not have to be for a continuous period. These were previously known as 'fixed term exclusions' (FEX).

Fair Access Protocol (FAP). This is a mechanism developed by the local authority (LA) in partnership with all schools in their area. Its aim is to ensure that vulnerable children, and those who are having difficulty in securing a school place in-year, are allocated a school place as quickly as possible.

Inclusion Champion. A nominated inclusion lead within a school who knows every child at risk of exclusion and leads the school's strategy for improving inclusion. Typically, these were a senior school leader with teaching responsibilities (e.g. Deputy Head). A specific form of inclusion champion was the Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champions (EPICs). EPICs were funded by the NIC project in primary schools.

Managed move. This is a voluntary agreement between schools, parents or carers and a pupil, for that pupil to change school or education programme under controlled

[5] The Department for Education recognises that school exclusions are essential behaviour management tools for headteachers and can be used to establish high standards of behaviour in schools and maintain the safety of school communities. It supports schools to improve pupils' behaviour and reduce the likelihood of exclusion being necessary but recommends that schools and local authorities should not adopt a 'no exclusions' policy as an end in itself.

circumstances. A managed move to another school may be offered as a solution where a child has problems in their current school that cannot be resolved.

Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC). A set of principles that primary and secondary schools in Norwich sign-up to, to ensure that pupils at risk of exclusion are supported. This is sometimes referred to in the report as "the Charter". The original Norwich Inclusion Charter is included in Appendix A.

1.1. Context

In 2017, DfE launched a £72 million Opportunity Area (OA) Programme. It aimed to improve the life chances of young people in 12 local areas facing entrenched and widespread social, economic and cultural challenges. The OA programme was expanded in 2020 with an additional £18 million investment. The 12 OA locations represented a broad spread of coastal, rural and urban settings enabling an investigation of what works best to address the needs of young people across a range of communities.

The NIC project was introduced as part of the Norwich OA to address the theme of inclusion within and across schools. Exclusions in Norwich (primary, secondary and special schools together) had been systematically above rates in Norfolk and nationally since 2015.[6,7] Research has shown a link between school exclusion and social risk factors, with excluded young people more likely to be unemployed, develop severe mental health problems or go to prison.[8] It has also identified that multiple factors influence the level of exclusions at a school, such as the school ethos or focus on poor behaviour.[9] Likewise, several approaches have been shown to be effective at reducing exclusions including multi-school partnerships, whole-school approaches, and preventative targeted interventions.[10]

The coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, announced on the 24th of March 2020, presented a major challenge to the education system, unprecedented in recent history. Schools, communities, young people, and parents were compelled to adapt to a new way of working for which there was largely no blueprint. This placed increasing demands on service delivery with the need for greater organisational innovation and community resilience.[11] The COVID-19 restrictions, in particular the closure of schools and the need for social distancing, caused some delay and re-focus of some NIC project activities.

[6] Norfolk CC data (2019) and DfE exclusion data (2019) covering state-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools
[7] Reference to exclusions includes both suspensions and permanent exclusions.
[8] *Ford T, Parker C, Salim J, Goodman R, Logan S, Henley W (2018) The relationship between exclusion from school and mental health: A secondary analysis of the British Child and Adolescent Mental Health Surveys 2004 and 2007, Psychological Medicine, 48 (4): 629-641.*
[9] *Gill K., Quilter-Pinner H., and Swift D. (October 2017). Making the difference: breaking the link between school exclusion and social exclusion. Institute for Public Policy Research.*
[10] *Gazeley L, Marrable T, Brown C, Boddy J (2013) Reducing inequalities in school exclusion: Learning from good practice. Falmer: University of Sussex. https://core. ac. uk/download/pdf/131354314. pdf.*
[11] Parents refers to parents or carers of pupils.

1.2. The Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC) project design

The Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC) project established a multi-agency approach to maintain pupil engagement in education, reduce suspensions and permanent exclusions and be an exemplar of how a coordinated approach can work. A target was set for the Norwich OA that by school year 2020 to 2021 the rate of suspensions and permanent exclusions will have reduced by two-thirds from the rate in school year 2016 to 2017.[12] This project was designed to help the OA meet this. The project involved:

- **The development of, and commitment by schools to, an agreed Inclusion Charter** (The Original Norwich Inclusion Charter in Appendix A)**.** Principles included the nomination of an inclusion champion and governor; development of an inclusion action plan; identification of pupils at risk; support for pupil transition; and participation in the Norfolk managed move fair access protocol (FAP).[13]

- **Management, coordination and school collaboration.** This was facilitated by a dedicated Norwich-wide NIC project manager and various cross-school networks. The latter included an Inclusion Working Group chaired by the local authority (LA); a secondary headteachers group; an inclusion champions network at secondary level; and an Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champions (EPICs) network.

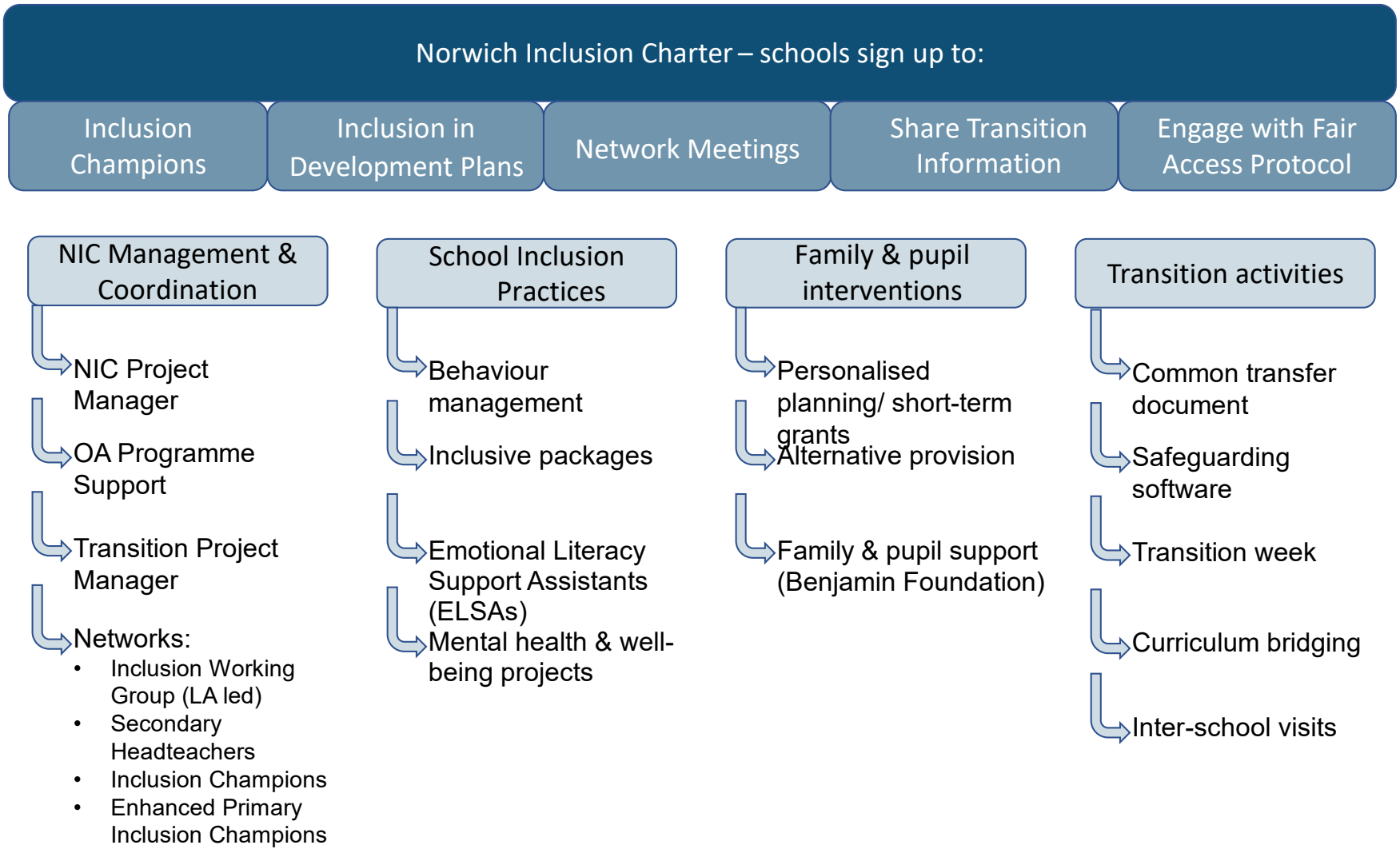
- **NIC funding to support interventions within and across schools**. The funding enabled schools to access those interventions that suited their specific needs. Interventions included those to improve school inclusion practices; support families and pupils at risk of exclusion; and provide transition activities for pupils between primary and secondary school.

Figure 1 overleaf shows these core components and processes involved in the NIC project.

[12] Norwich Opportunity Area: Delivery Plan 2017-2020 (gov.uk). Retrieved, on 29 September 2021, from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696825/Social_Mobility_Delivery_Plan_Norwich_FINAL_WEB.PDF.pdf

[13] All local authorities must have a fair access protocol and all schools and academies are legally required to take part in this. Norfolk's managed move scheme requires schools to set up managed moves with advice from the Fair Access Team who can advise on the next four nearest schools.

Figure 1: Norwich Inclusion Charter - project elements



NIC project delivery commenced in April 2018 (school year 2017 to 2018) with the project originally planned to operate over 3 school years to July 2020. In 2020, the project was successful in attracting additional OA funding for a 4th year (school year 2020 to 2021) and subsequently a 5th year (school year 2021 to 2022).[14] The 4th year activities were ongoing at the point at which this evaluation report was written.

1.3. Evaluation methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess implementation, delivery and the outcomes of the NIC project, including to:

- Explore engagement and progress with specific project activities and interventions.
- Identify the outputs achieved, good practice and lessons learnt.
- Consider the achievement of intended outcomes for schools, families and pupils.

The NIC project logic model in Appendix B summarises intended outputs, outcomes and impacts.[15] Intended outcomes were for:

- **Schools to** embed the Charter as a core part of their approach; improve management of pupil behaviour within schools; and develop a multi-agency approach to working with children alongside a coordinated, consistent and transparent process for encouraging engagement.
- **Families**, including parents and pupils, to be more positive and confident.[16]
- **Pupils** to improve engagement and educational performance in Norwich schools, with reduced suspensions and permanent exclusions.

The evaluation was conducted over 3 waves of activity:

- **Wave 1 (January to December 2019):** This focussed on the process of the NIC delivery model with some assessment of emerging perceived impacts. Evaluation activity included retrospective data collection at two timepoints – early in project delivery and then a one-year follow-up. Qualitative and quantitative data was collated from the LA, school and intervention stakeholders. This was via focus

[14] This evaluation focused on the activities and achievements resulting from the first three years of funding. However, delays linked to the COVID-19 pandemic meant that some funding was rolled over to the 4th year and as a result, some of our interviews included reference to activities delivered in this 4th year.
[15] A logic model is a one-page idea map showing how a project influences its participants to achieve outcomes. A logic model includes a concise description of inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.
[16] In this report parents refers to parents or carers of pupils.

groups, online surveys, interviews, intervention case studies, and document and data review.

- **Wave 2 (May to July 2020):** This explored how schools supported vulnerable pupils during the first coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown (March to July 2020) and considered the extent to which schools' commitment to the Charter had enabled this response. This wave included interviews with school leaders and inclusion leads across 6 primary and 2 secondary schools; intervention leads for 3 strands of project activity; and NIC project management staff.

- **Wave 3 (November 2020 to May 2021):** This assessed medium-term outcomes and perceived impacts arising from schools' engagement with the NIC and associated interventions. Evaluation activity involved in-depth telephone and virtual interviews with school leaders, teachers, inclusion staff, intervention leads, parents and pupils. It included 17 individual pupil case reviews (PCRs) which triangulated evidence across available data and interviews. These are included in Pupil case reviews in Appendix C.

Table 1: In-depth interviews across 3 waves

Task	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Interviews: LA and intervention leads	6	4	8
Interviews: primary and secondary schools	32	12	27
17 pupil case reviews (Wave 3 only)	-	-	27

Source: YCL research activity

Quantitative data collected includes local programme management data, unpublished Norfolk County Council data and national published data. Local programme data relates to project participants and financial information from March 2018 to July 2021. Norfolk County Council data related to suspensions and permanent exclusions from 2015 to 2019. National published data illustrates suspensions and permanent exclusions, and this data relates to September 2016 to July 2019.

1.3.1. Treatment of costs and benefits

This multi-method evaluation was designed to incorporate quantitative and qualitative methods and include a Social Cost-Benefit Analysis (SCBA). This would have involved comparing the treatment group of schools with a comparator group of schools with similar characteristics across Norfolk but that were not receiving similar support. Preliminary work was conducted to identify a set of comparator schools and refine the methodology. However, due to the following challenges it was decided that the SCBA would not be conducted:

- Issues with permanent exclusion data. This included lags in accessing data, the small numbers involved, and spike effects in particular schools.

- Questions over the similarity between Norwich schools and schools in other parts of Norfolk.

- Disruptions to data collection due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included suspension and permanent exclusion data and school performance measures (key stage 2 and key stage 4 results).

1.4. Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured to address the aims of the evaluation. Chapters 2 to 4 describe activities and achievements associated with **implementation and delivery**:

- **Chapter 2 - NIC project core features.** Schools' engagement with the Charter itself, inclusion champions, and the centralised management of the NIC project funds.
- **Chapter 3 – NIC project collaboration and networking.** School networking, collaboration and coordination introduced by the NIC project.
- **Chapter 4 – NIC project intervention funding.** School inclusion practices, support for families and pupils, and pupil transition activities.

Chapter 5 outlines the evidence of **outcomes achieved** from the NIC project taken as a whole. Unit costs for each element of the NIC project are also considered.

Chapter 6 provides **conclusions** from the evaluation and sets out **considerations for replication** of the NIC project model in other localities.

2. NIC project core features

This chapter describes the activities and achievements linked to the core underpinning features of the NIC project. This included the schools' engagement with the Charter itself, inclusion champions and the centralised management of the NIC project funds.

Key Findings: NIC project core features

- Most schools in Norwich had signed up to the Charter by November 2020.
- The Charter's framework and the inclusion champion role were identified by school leaders and inclusion staff as pivotal in providing a focus on inclusion within and across schools in Norwich.
- Factors important to success included NIC project coordination, the independence of the project team from schools, and dedicated funding. These enabled effective networking and clarity of vision for schools to improve inclusive practice.
- The NIC funding pot enabled schools to access a range of inclusive culture grants, alternative provision (AP), family and pupil interventions, and transition activities.
- Some flexibility in funding allocation allowed schools to tailor interventions to meet local needs; and a refocus of funding over the period of COVID-19 interruptions.
- Lessons learnt from initial NIC project funding rounds were the need to ensure that interventions fit and are sustainable within individual school contexts.

2.1. The Charter

The NIC project was designed to help primary and secondary schools to ensure that pupils at risk of exclusion were supported. This was based on the schools' commitment to the Norwich Inclusion Charter. The original Norwich Inclusion Charter (Appendix A) was a set of 10 principles that schools agreed to follow. This included each school having a nominated inclusion champion and access to funded support.

By November 2020, 94% of primary schools (34 of 36) and all secondary schools (9) in Norwich had signed the Charter.

Table 2: Norwich schools - Charter sign-up

	Number of schools in Norwich	Number of schools signed up to the Charter (by November 2020)
Secondary schools	9	9
Primary schools	36	34

Source: NIC project data, July 2021

After consultation with schools the Charter was updated in 2020. This reduced the principles from 10 to 5 as shown in the box overleaf. This change reflected a realisation by the NIC project team and networks that schools already included many of these principles within their development plans and that some could be combined.

Norwich Inclusion Charter: Revised Principles

1. A nominated **inclusion champion**, who knows every child at risk of exclusion and leads on a long-term strategy for improving inclusion in their school; working with an inclusion governor who understands the context of the pupils and the school policies and provides appropriate support and challenge.
2. Inclusion features in the school development plans to **reduce exclusions** for all children, identifying partnerships with other schools and agencies**.**[17]
3. Inclusion champion attends **half-termly Norwich Inclusion Champion Group Meetings and shares good practice** with partner schools.
4. **Share timely information between schools at all transition points**, about all children, such as existing support strategies, history, and profiles through a Common Transfer Document; and put support in place to make the transition successful.
5. When identifying pupils at risk of exclusion, alert the **school inclusion helpline, any relevant agencies** and fully engage in the **Norfolk Fair Access Protocol.**[18,19]

School stakeholders cited the framework of the Charter as a considerable success for the OA. It provided a focus within school on inclusion and inclusive practice, facilitating consensus and commitment around a shared challenge:

> "It helps to focus the senior leadership team on what we are doing for our children who are at risk of exclusion to ensure that we are doing everything we can and accessing the support of external agencies." *Primary headteacher*

> "As a headteacher, I ensured the Charter was shared amongst all staff so that they had a full understanding of what the aim was and that any work done with children was to achieve that aim within a bigger city-wide picture." *Secondary headteacher*

[17] 'Exclusions' refers to both suspensions and permanent exclusions.
[18] The school inclusion helpline is operated by the inclusion team at the Local Authority.
[19] All local authorities must have a fair access protocol and all schools and academies are legally required to take part in this. Norfolk's managed move scheme requires schools to set up managed moves with advice from the Fair Access Team who can advise on the next four nearest schools.

The Charter also provided a reference point for schools to work together to support pupils at risk of exclusion:

> "The Inclusion Charter totally changed the conversation around inclusion (and naturally exclusion). It stopped being about "I can't have this child anymore" to "right now we can't meet the needs of this child, are there any other schools that could help". It became a collective response to challenging behaviour rather than an 'out of sight, out of mind' either through permanent exclusion or a poorly managed move." *Secondary headteacher*

> A gold standard, providing unity and clarity for schools on where we are heading. Bringing schools together to agree to the principles of the Charter is a massive achievement. The fact that they are still engaged and committed is fantastic." *Project team member*

In the 4th year of the project, an online tool was developed for schools to both self- and peer-assess progress in relation to each of the 5 Charter principles. It was intended that this would help to maintain and sustain the inclusive practices developed across schools through the NIC project. As it was introduced in the 4th year of the project it is outside of the scope of this evaluation.

2.2. Inclusion champions

The involvement of inclusion champions was a key principle that schools agreed to when signing up to the Charter. An inclusion champion role in each school meant a key individual was responsible for leading the inclusion agenda within those schools.

> "[A success of the NIC project has been] having a specific inclusion champion within each school that has the oversight and responsibility for inclusion and can definitely connect with everybody within the organisation." *Secondary headteacher*

In the 3rd and 4th years of the NIC project, funding was allocated to support Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champions (EPICs) in 13 primary schools. This was in response to feedback from primary schools that they did not have the capacity to dedicate a staff member's time to develop and implement inclusion plans in their school. Funding enabled EPICs to have 1 day per week focused on the role, to attend inclusion plan training and participate in half-termly network meetings. A few experienced EPICs also agreed to mentor others in their roles. Example box 1 outlines how the EPIC role enabled focus on improvement and inclusion development plans within a primary school.

Example box 1 - Primary school EPIC role

The EPIC role included:

- Developing an action plan which linked the Inclusion Charter with the local context.
- Time set aside for the EPIC to directly support children and families of children at risk of exclusion. This included engaging with external agencies to remove barriers and support positive engagement.
- Reviewing the school's behaviour policy, in consultation with the school community, to increase consistency of support to learners.
- Funded training for the EPIC to become a Step On tutor and embed this approach across the staff team.[20]

Stakeholders said the inclusion champion role was also pivotal to schools working together and with the project team to share needs and barriers around inclusion.

> "I was able to use the time to coordinate work with colleagues in other settings, through our EPIC and inclusion champion networks, as well as further afield, delivering a seminar on the 'whys' and 'hows' of inclusion to pupil teachers at the Norfolk Teacher Training Centre." *EPIC*

2.3. Inclusion governors

Inclusion governors were existing school governors who took on an additional role at their school to meet the aims of the NIC project. Along with inclusion champions it was a role that schools agreed to when signing the original Charter.

Training was provided for 27 inclusion governors across 24 schools (19 primary and 5 secondary) in the 2nd year of the NIC project. Thereafter, the project team said it was a challenge to engage governors further in the NIC project. The role was also not included in the updated version of the Charter in 2020. This means that it is difficult for this evaluation to establish the impact of their role on schools' inclusion practices.

2.4. Project and funding management

The NIC project and funds were managed and coordinated by a central project team, led by a dedicated project manager. This team enabled the school networks, collaborative discussions and decision-making which underpinned the NIC project. They also

[20] A Step On tutor trains other members of staff in Norfolk Steps, which is the LA's approach to supporting positive behaviour across schools and care settings. It is a therapeutic approach which seeks to promote pupils' internal discipline through explicitly teaching them how to manage their feelings and behaviours.

facilitated a clear vision and direction for schools to improve inclusive practice. Stakeholders said the dedicated funding and the independence of the project team from schools were important to success.

> "Without a doubt, neutral brokerage and funding on the table has led to an improvement in collaboration." *Project team member*

> "There are some fantastic people that have and continue to lead the opportunity area – that has been a really rich resource." *Secondary headteacher*

The funding pot enabled schools to access a range of inclusive culture grants, alternative provision (AP), family and pupil interventions, and transition activities. The effectiveness of each element is discussed in Chapter 4.

For most of the funding, the project team drew up specifications and went out to market for providers of specific interventions. Schools were offered the opportunity to sign up to these agreed interventions. There was, however, more flexibility in the allocation of some funds. Schools could apply to access grants which enabled them to more closely tailor support and interventions to their school, family and pupil needs. For example, an Emergency Fund enabled schools to develop personalised interventions and responses for specific pupils.

The project team were able to refocus funding over the period of COVID-19 interruptions, for example, through the introduction of mental health grants to help maintain engagement in education.

> "We were able to pool resource for things like IT before the government launched their initiative and have used the funding to support the learning of pupils appropriately in an emergency way that we wouldn't have been able to do before." *Secondary senior leader*

There were some lessons learnt from the early NIC project funding rounds:

- There was a need to ensure that interventions delivered to schools fitted with individual contexts. A NIC project stakeholder said that a couple of schools had taken up an inclusive culture programme which did not fit strongly with their school (or Trust) ethos, and they were not able to adopt the approaches proposed.

- Delivery of interventions should also incorporate requirements for sustaining activities within schools, which was not always the case in the earlier funding rounds. One primary school leader commented that schools would have been better served and able to implement more sustainable change if these opportunities had been presented as 3-year funding packages, rather than yearly funding pots.

3. NIC project collaboration and networking

This chapter outlines the achievements resulting from the collaboration and coordination developed through the NIC project. The networks introduced through the project were an Inclusion Working Group, a secondary headteachers group, an inclusion champions network at secondary level and an Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champion (EPIC) network.

Key Findings: NIC project collaboration and networking

- Greater collaboration between schools was one of the most notable achievements of the NIC project. This was facilitated through the NIC project structures, including a dedicated project manager, coordination of funding and school networks.
- These collaborative relationships supported schools in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Senior leaders reported a transformation in how schools communicated with each other about meeting individual pupil needs. This was through discussion around the fair access managed move process and the introduction of a collective approach to internal/ external exclusions[21]. These changes were reported as making a real difference for pupils' engagement and attendance at school.
- During the 4th year, the NIC project team built on lessons and successes from NIC activities to share and support practice outside Norwich schools, including through the OA twinning programme with Great Yarmouth.

3.1. School networks and collaboration

Important elements of the NIC project that facilitated collaboration between schools included a dedicated Norwich-wide NIC project manager, inclusion champions in schools, and regular network meetings. School, NIC project and intervention stakeholders said these elements enabled inclusion staff and senior leaders to make connections, communicate and set the direction for inclusion within and across schools. They also provided the know-how and funding to tackle the issues identified.

The initial Charter, the refocus into 5 principles, and the peer-assessment tool were all developed with input from schools and wider stakeholders in Norwich (including the LA, school agencies and voluntary organisations). The collaboration established between schools was also appreciated by headteachers and senior leaders during the first COVID-19 lockdown (March to July 2020) when dealing with immediate needs regarding

[21] Senior leaders referred to short-term managed moves as internal/external exclusions. This is not DfE policy and further consideration is needed before it is implemented elsewhere.

school opening, tests for staff, health and safety and support for the most vulnerable pupils.

Stakeholders identified a series of specific benefits arising from the networks, as outlined in example box 2 overleaf.

Example box 2 - Benefits of networking

Some of the benefits of networking that were discussed in this research was:

- **Open discussions about why schools are excluding pupils** and how to improve practice; sharing ideas on different inclusive approaches; and learning from each other.
- The meetings **draw everything together in one place** – there is increased awareness amongst school stakeholders of the support and funding available to schools.
- Schools **share resources, ideas and good practice**; and take joint approaches to addressing specific pupil needs.
- Some schools have **worked jointly to access funds** for alternative provision; and to offer suspensions at an alternative school (rather than sending pupils home).
- School **inclusion staff are having more open and trusting conversations** about dealing with challenging children.
- Providing **peer support and supervision.**

Project and school stakeholders pointed to collaboration as one of the most notable changes from the NIC project. Respondents interviewed said getting secondary headteachers to engage with each other was a considerable achievement.

> "There is a focus on inclusion – everyone is pulling in the same direction. Collectively the group [senior leader network] have identified needs that have set the agenda for the Norwich OA project overall." *Project team member*

> "Previously there was a culture of mistrust and leadership not working together across schools in Norwich – all secondary heads now agree there is a sense of trust and open transparency achieved through the collaboration of central leaders and right the way down the system. It has cemented itself to the point where we all share our Improvement Plans as Heads." *Secondary headteacher*

The project team initially found it more difficult to get primary school networks together. Senior leaders said, however, that the 3rd and 4th year funding for EPICs had contributed to better networking at primary school level. Also, the project team were considering the re-introduction of cluster models to bring secondary and primary schools within a locality together to help address what some headteachers saw as a divide between primary and secondary schools.

3.2. Coordinated school responses to pupil needs

There was considerable improvement in how Norwich schools worked together to coordinate responses to individual pupils needs. Change was particularly evident in relation to the fair access managed move process at the secondary level.[22] Senior leaders described historic difficulties with coordination across Norwich schools.

> Norwich schools were very fragmented, headteachers did not meet regularly, and the baggage from academisation acted as a real barrier to managed moves and worked against children." *Secondary headteacher*

Subsequently, school and LA staff said a transformation had been achieved through the NIC project and networks. Respondents explained that more positive discussions made a real difference in the decision process and for the pupils concerned.

> "When discussing cases at the access panel, it is clear the schools in Norwich have discussed and tried a whole range of strategies for pupils already. The panel is well attended and places the children it needs to place. There is much better engagement from central area schools [Norwich and surrounding suburbs] than other areas regarding managed moves." *Local authority representative*

> "Colleagues across the city collaboratively solve problems around inclusion and help prevent pupils from getting to the point of permanent exclusion. Inclusion leads talk to counterparts in other schools about challenging pupils and broker a managed move agreement. This would not have happened in the past." *Secondary headteacher*

Stakeholders said the networks established through NIC were less successful at supporting the managed move process at primary school level in Norwich. Factors

[22] All local authorities must have a fair access protocol and all schools and academies are legally required to take part in this. Norfolk's managed move scheme requires schools to set up managed moves with advice from the Fair Access Team who can advise on the next four nearest schools.

influencing this included a lack of a formal LA access panel structure for primary schools; and some primary school perspectives of the managed move process as a last resort.

> "With the best will in the world, primary schools do so much to hold on to children but get to the point where they say they will permanently exclude them if we can't manage to move them, which is not how it's supposed to work." *Local authority representative*

Nevertheless, staff from a couple of primary schools did cite examples of their involvement with successful managed moves.

Through the networks, secondary schools also designed a new collaborative system of internal/ external exclusions – instead of sending pupils home for a suspension, pupils went to another school for a day (in their existing uniform). This ensured some learning took place and was a more effective deterrent for the pupils concerned. Senior leaders said it provided an extra layer of response for the schools and improved their management of the pupils concerned. The ability to support each other with internal/ external exclusions was mentioned by most secondary schools as key to reducing exclusion rates.

> "We have supported each other by adding a layer in before exclusion – the internal/external exclusions have had a big impact on pupils looking to turn things around." *Secondary headteacher*

3.3. Sharing exemplar practice

During the 4th year, the project team built on lessons and successes from NIC activities to share and support practice outside Norwich schools. An example of this was when the OA shared the Common Transfer Document (a document for schools to share transition information about pupils going from primary to secondary school) with the rest of the county. In addition, the project team developed some OA case studies which identified activities, good practice, lessons, and outcomes from the NIC project. These case studies included the Charter, inclusion champions and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs).[23]

At the time of the evaluation Norwich participated in the OA twinning programme.[24] As part of this the NIC project was shared with 7 secondary schools in Great Yarmouth to strengthen their inclusive practice and build positive collaboration across schools in the area.

[23] ELSAs is an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists designed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils from within their own resources. Teaching assistants are trained to deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional needs of pupils.
[24] For the 4th year, projects such as NIC were required to work with another locality (that they 'twinned' with) to share practice and support delivery of effective approaches developed through their project.

4. NIC project intervention funding

This chapter sets out activities and achievements resulting from NIC funded interventions. This includes those for school inclusion practices (4.1), families and pupils at risk of exclusion (4.2) and pupil transition from primary to secondary school (4.3).

Key Findings: NIC project intervention funding

School inclusion practices

- Norwich schools developed school inclusion practices. They revised behaviour policies; introduced inclusive culture approaches; trained staff; and accessed grants to support teacher and pupil mental health and wellbeing.
- A whole-school approach to inclusion was undertaken. This enabled schools to reinforce positive behaviour and target support for pupils at risk of exclusions. Staff felt more confident in how they managed behaviour; used restorative and nurturing strategies to manage classes and individual pupils; and engaged pupils in a more self-reflective and supportive way.
- NIC funding in the 4th year included a greater focus on ELSAs and offering mental health and wellbeing grants

Family and pupil interventions

- NIC project funding supported personalised planning and alternative provision (AP) for pupils at risk of exclusion. Stakeholders said this resulted in improved self-confidence, reduced behaviour problems, and improved school attendance.[1]
- In the 4th year funding was re-focused to support in-school (rather than out-of-school) AP. This included dedicated spaces on-site; nurture and therapeutic support; bushcraft and forest school activities; and vocational opportunities.
- Family and pupil coaching offered a joined-up approach to support pupils at risk of exclusion and facilitated communication between pupils, parents and schools. This led to lower anxiety levels, less disruptive behaviour and improved engagement.

Primary to Secondary transition activities

- The NIC project funded a transition project manager to facilitate information sharing between primary and secondary schools and help prevent potential disengagement during this period of change for individual pupils.
- Activities included: a common transfer document; training for staff and pupil peer mentors; inter-school teaching staff visits; and curriculum bridging lessons. These led to more coordinated and positive experiences for pupils and parents.

- Schools positively engaged and showed commitment to further develop and embed transition activities. There was, however, inconsistent communication within some schools regarding transition which limited opportunities for full engagement.

4.1. School inclusion practices

4.1.1. Behaviour management

As part of the commitment to the Charter, most schools revised and/or tightened their behaviour policies and developed inclusion action plans. This supported a move away from negative punitive approaches to those that reinforced positive behaviour. Commonly, plans involved existing, or newly developed, pastoral management structures, teacher training and development, and the introduction of earlier and targeted support for pupils at risk of exclusion.

> "The first thing we did was look at our behaviour policy and redeveloped it to encompass a more restorative approach – to focus on the relationship with individuals, understanding how they choose to behave rather than putting in consequences. We then undertook work to redefine and refocus roles, strengthening the pastoral team and providing staff training." *Primary headteacher*

> "Our commitment to the Charter exposed our Behaviour Policy as no longer fit for purpose. It was an opportunity for us to completely revamp it to be more in line with a 'kind and caring' ethos. We now have a positive and inclusive approach; a strong team of pastoral managers who can develop personalised plans to ensure support is in place around the pupils; and have delivered staff behaviour training." *Secondary headteacher*

In some cases, school stakeholders felt they already had an appropriate behaviour management ethos within their school. In these schools, the staff development and intervention funding helped them to develop and sustain these practices further. Additionally, the inclusive practices developed helped schools to respond to needs and support vulnerable pupils through the COVID-19 lockdown periods.

Senior leaders identified positive changes in staff responses and engagement with pupils because of the policy and pastoral changes made. Staff were more confident in how they managed behaviour, language and attitudes. Staff also said that policies were more clearly focused on restorative approaches.

> "There is a change in language and approach across the school – previously we used traffic lights; now we understand triggers for

behaviour, log and track incidences, look for patterns, and link with safeguarding concerns." *Primary inclusion champion*

School leaders reported improved behaviour and a change in culture within school resulting from the changes they had made.

> "The introduction of the new Behaviour Policy, which is based around the principles of 'Punctual, Polite and Prepared', has had a tangible effect on low-level behaviours. The number of removals from lessons has dropped." *Secondary senior leader*

> "We are no longer dealing with children's behaviour in an extreme way – we used to chase pupils up and down the corridors to get them into class. The school is not recognisable in those terms anymore." *Primary headteacher*

4.1.2. Inclusive culture support

A range of 'Inclusive Culture' packages were offered through the NIC project with schools selecting the one that best suited their needs. 25 primary schools (69% of those signed up to the Charter) and 6 secondary schools (67% of those signed up) took up opportunities in the first 3 years. Table 3 outlines the take-up of the packages across the 4 providers.

Table 3: School take-up of inclusive culture support (project years 1 to 3)

Inclusive culture package	Number of primary schools (of the 34 signed up to the Charter)	Number of secondary schools (of the 9 signed up to the Charter)
Thrive	12	1
Pivotal	6	4
Norfolk Nurture	4	-
Achievement for All	3	1

Source: NIC project data, July 2021

The packages supported schools to review their inclusive practice approach and provided staff training and development, which could be cascaded throughout the schools.

> "Pivotal training was provided for all our staff, which resulted in a more restorative behaviour management approach across the school. We introduced the approach through our behaviour policy, and it is now part of our practice." *Secondary inclusion champion*

Interviewees reported a range of outcomes for their school including better staff confidence in managing behaviour and the offer of more restorative approaches. Many

schools went on to further develop their expertise through grants that provided additional continuous professional development (CPD) for staff.

> "Class teachers are dealing with things differently and better – it's about how you talk to children, showing that you do like them and care about them." *Primary headteacher*

Example box 3 outlines the activities the Thrive approach, which was the most common inclusive culture package that schools chose to take up.

Example box 3 - Inclusive culture package: Thrive

Thrive was a whole-school social and emotional approach to working with every child. It sought to work in a reparative way with those pupils causing concern; and through a 'right time' approach to meeting the social and emotional needs of all pupils. [25] The approach and training provided a tool to assess whole classes and to pick up those vulnerable pupils that staff had been less aware of.

NIC project funding for Thrive enabled in-depth training and support for licensed Thrive practitioners (staff within school); senior leader training; and teacher training to a wider group of staff. School staff and the Thrive coordinator said that where senior leaders championed the approach there was more success

There were some notable reported impacts for staff, schools and pupils:

"The Thrive practitioner understood the pupil's brain development and what is happening when things escalate – she has known how to respond and work with the pupil to help him re-engage so that he can start to hear and move away from deregulated behaviour."
Secondary school pastoral staff member

4.1.3. Emotional and mental health support

Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs)

ELSA is an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists designed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils within the schools' existing resources. Teaching assistants are trained to deliver individualised support programmes to meet the emotional needs of pupils.

In early 2020 the NIC project funded staff dealing specifically with pupils in Years 6 and 7 to train as ELSAs. This focused on wellbeing and resilience issues linked to transition. From June 2020 onwards, the project funded additional staff to train as ELSAs to support pupils across the school who experienced temporary or longer-term additional emotional

[25] 'Right-time' approaches encourage practitioners to understand individual strengths and needs and provide the right amount of advice and support to address those needs in the moment, helping to reduce the need for referral on or escalation of needs.

needs. This was a response to the increased social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues that arose for pupils during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

By June 2021, training had been delivered for 100 new ELSAs. In Norwich, these were located across 18 primary schools (53% of those signed up to the Charter), seven secondary schools (77% of those signed up), and specialist provision settings. In Great Yarmouth, ELSAs were in five of the seven twinning area secondary schools. Funding covered six days of training; ongoing clinical supervision and a group supervision model.

ELSAs helped to build capacity within schools to support the emotional needs of pupils. This helped address the needs of those pupils with SEMH needs that can exhibit behaviour concerns, low attendance or be at risk of exclusion.

> "The training has made me really stop and think about how I'm responding when something happens. It's impacted on the way I interact with children in the school and supported me to develop really positive relationships." *ELSA*

Schools reported that ELSA support was useful in providing pupils with the early help and support in schools that they needed. This was important because headteachers described that it was challenging for their pupils to access external therapeutic support. ELSAs could also provide a steppingstone to more specialist support when required.

> "We have had ELSA support in place for several years now, but with an ever-growing number of children experiencing SEMH difficulties, waiting time for support had become too lengthy. A grant from the Inclusion Fund has enabled us to train three additional members of staff as ELSAs." *Primary headteacher*

Schools with practising ELSAs reported that this support had resulted in improvements in attendance, a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents and improved SEMH for pupils. Feedback from ELSAs, teachers and pupils themselves pointed to improved relationships with peers, improved self-esteem, more talking about feelings and growth in social and emotional confidence. Summary box 4 below includes some examples of pupil benefits.

Example box 4 – Benefits of ELSA support

A Year 5 pupil had support from an ELSA and the Benjamin Foundation who both worked with him on anger management. [26] Whilst he still had moments where he reacted strongly to situations, he is generally much calmer now and able to concentrate more on his schoolwork. *Pupil case review D*

In another example, a pupil explained: "It had quite an effect on me because I was pushing everyone away at the start and I questioned it at first, but it really helped because I could get everything out and re-arrange it. It was nice to have someone who didn't just say I understand." Secondary school pupil

Mental health and wellbeing grants

As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 restrictions led to increased SEMH needs for pupils and COVID-19 bubble management reduced staff capacity to support these pupils.[27] As a result, the NIC funding in the 4th year placed a greater focus on continuing to fund ELSAs and offering new mental health grants. The grants supported teacher's and children's mental health and wellbeing. 27 primary and 2 secondary schools were awarded funding. Once established, the plan was for learning to be shared with all schools and stakeholders.

Projects included staff supervision, mental health first aid training, peer coaching, play and art therapies, counselling, and sensory and attachment interventions.

> "One of our teaching assistants started drawing and talking therapy with a boy experiencing some trauma at home – she is already seeing a positive change; he's always talking about things and is starting to process some of what he is experiencing." *Primary headteacher*

4.2. Family and pupil interventions

This section summarises activities and achievements arising from interventions directly supporting individual families and pupils.

4.2.1. Personalised planning

Schools were able to access one-off NIC grants to enable immediate responses for pupils at risk of exclusion. These were accessed by 18 primary schools (53% of primary schools signed up to the Charter) and 2 secondary schools (22% of secondary schools

[26] A charity that provides accommodation and emotional wellbeing support for children and young people across Norfolk and Suffolk.
[27] During the COVID-19 pandemic schools sought to mitigate the risk of potential transmission by limiting contact between classes and/or year-groups of pupils and staff, which were called bubbles.

signed up). Grants were used for one-to-one support, external expertise and/or specialist support. School inclusion staff described how these had underpinned personalised planning for individual pupils. An example is included in example box 5.

Example box 5 – Pupil case review: personalised approach

An individual plan was developed for this pupil. NIC funding enabled the school to construct a new teaching block and consider specialist provision to specifically meet this pupil's needs. Alongside this a Parent Support Advisor worked with the pupil's mum and the school to implement various behaviour strategies which mirror approaches adopted at home to help keep rules consistent. *Pupil case review H*

4.2.2. Alternative provision

For the 2nd and 3rd years of the NIC project, several providers were selected to offer short-term alternative provision (AP).[28] During this time, pupils were referred by 18 primary schools (53% of primary schools signed up to the Charter) and 7 secondary schools (78% of secondary schools signed up). In some cases, the providers delivered on school sites. A breakdown in the types of alternative provision provided over this period is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Alternative provision for pupils (project years 2 and 3)

AP type	Primary schools	Secondary schools
Onsite AP offered	5 schools	2 schools
Offsite AP offered	15 schools	7 schools
Pupils accessing offsite AP	66 pupils (from 8 schools)[29]	226 pupils (from 7 schools)

Source: NIC project data, July 2021

Schools valued the opportunity to access AP. Individual pupils were supported to improve self-confidence, reduce behaviour problems and increase school attendance.

> "The GroWild programme gave this pupil focused attention and allowed her to be successful in a way she could not be in the mainstream classroom – through drawing and other skills. The pupil flourished in Year 6, engaged much more in lessons and gained confidence. Teachers commented that she left school in a very strong position." *Primary school pastoral staff member*

> "Positive changes in wellbeing were reported for pupils attending ACE – these included being more trusting of others, being more

[28] The providers included Open Youth Trust, St Eds, ACE, GroWild, Goldcrest and Noise Solutions.
[29] Data is only available for pupils participating in eight of 15 primary schools that accessed AP.

> settled at school, feeling happier and being more confident."
> *Secondary school pastoral staff member*

Several school stakeholders said that the off-site 6-week AP courses were often too short. Whilst short-term improvements were observed for pupils, this was not always sustained when they were back in school. In one case, the school inclusion champion referred the same pupil 3 times to ensure that they benefited from a longer period of support.

> "One of our pupils accessed Grow Wild three times as the 6-week programme on its own was not sufficient to support the pupils we are referring". *Secondary Pastoral Manager*

Pupils were also better prepared for full integration back into mainstream learning when AP providers offered ongoing engagement and follow-up.

Building on the feedback regarding off-site 6-week AP courses in the 4th year, the NIC project team re-focused the funding to support more in-school (rather than out-of-school) AP opportunities. This change was intended to enable pupils to benefit from the AP whilst also supporting pupils back into mainstream provision. This, it was hoped, would achieve more sustainable pupil benefits.

8 schools received 4th year on-site AP grants. Examples included dedicated spaces on-site; nurture and therapeutic support; outdoor bushcraft, forest school activities; and vocational opportunities. Reciprocal arrangements with other schools were also included in some of the funded activities. One school with existing in-house provision identified significant outcomes for pupils:

> "Without the nurture centre [a dedicated space for pastoral support on-site at school], this pupil would have been in out-of-school provision. It boosted the boy's confidence, he engages with a wider range of teaching staff than before." *Primary inclusion manager.*

4.2.3. Family support

The NIC project funded the Benjamin Foundation to offer families a bespoke "Pathways to Inclusion" plan. [30] This offered a joined-up approach to support pupils at risk of exclusion and helped to facilitate communication between pupils, parents and schools. Each plan included a mix of coaching for parents, counselling sessions with pupils (around 6 half-hour sessions per pupil), home visits, multi-agency meetings and signposting to other support.

Referrals were made by schools to support individual pupils at risk of exclusion. By December 2020, a total of 204 pupils and their families had been referred from 30

[30] Benjamin Foundation is a charity that provides accommodation and emotional well-being support for children and young people across Norfolk and Suffolk.

different schools. As of December 2020, 170 were recorded as closed and of these 133 were regarded as successful interventions.[31]

Schools, parents, and pupils were positive about the outcomes being achieved through Benjamin Foundation support:

> "Benjamin Foundation have been amazing, I would just like there to be lots more. We've had very positive results from them." *Secondary school head of year*

The family support workers tailored counselling and support approaches to the individual pupil and family needs. Examples of outcomes for pupils are provided in example box 6 overleaf.

Example box 6 – Benefits of family support

The sessions gave this pupil an opportunity for some one-to-one attention, someone to listen to him and some quiet time away from his class. His teacher commented that she "didn't know what the family support worker did during the sessions, but he came back to class a much more relaxed and happier boy". Pupil case review J

This pupil was receptive to the support, reflective and took on board strategies well. The school SENCO commented that he was not coming to the attention of everyone anymore and that he had been stopped in his trajectory towards exclusion – "definitely not at much risk now". At home, his mum commented that he can now explain how he is feeling and why. *Pupil case review D*

Factors critical to success included: a focus on developing relationships; providing emotional wellbeing support for young people; facilitating communication between key players; adapting to individual circumstances and having the Nurtured Heart Approach at the centre of the support delivered.[32]

> "I have built a good relationship with mum who struggles to remain positive at times. Advising her on managing her anxieties and stress levels, and generally being an ear to listen to her concerns." *Family support worker*

> "This taught me how to do things differently – provided me with new strategies to managing the kids at home. It also provided me with the

[31] 23 families failed to engage, 2 were excluded, 3 moved out of catchment, 1 young person failed to engage and 6 were found to be unsuitable referrals.
[32] The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) is a philosophy for creating healthy relationships with the people in your life. Originally created by Howard Glasser in 1992, NHA approach focuses on individual skills and qualities and promotes 'inner wealth', looking at what is right rather than what is wrong, and ensuring clarity of rules and consequences.

> opportunity to meet new people and talk to others in a similar situation." *Parent*

Pupils, parents and some school staff also expressed a desire for the family support provided by the Benjamin Foundation to be longer-term than that offered via the NIC (which included around 6 half-hour counselling sessions for pupils). This is highlighted in the following quote from a parent:

> "The key thing I would like done differently is the amount of time available – I think there should be more hours available so that it can go further." *Parent*

The delivery of family support was impacted during periods of national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In a couple of cases, schools and family support workers said they would be back to square one once they were able to begin face-to-face engagement again. This was because being at home during lockdown impacted negatively on the pupils' mental health and gave mixed messages about requirements to attend school.

4.3. Pupil transition

A key principle of the Charter was a commitment to share information across schools to support pupil transition from primary to secondary school (and other transition stages). It underpinned the maintenance of inclusive approaches and helped prevent potential disengagement over this period of change for pupils. The NIC project funded a transition project manager for Norwich who facilitated the following:

- Development of a Common Transfer Document (CTD). This enabled efficient sharing of sensitive information about pupils going from primary to secondary school.
- Introduction of consistent safeguarding software across schools.
- Training for staff and pupil peer mentors for Year 7 pupils in secondary schools.
- Inter-school visits for teachers from secondary to primary and vice versa to help them understand the curriculum and learning across transition years.
- An agreed transition week across schools for all transition activities to take place.
- Curriculum bridging lessons and materials for Maths and English to help pupils prepare for transition.
- Young Minds – an initiative providing support for families and staff development to improve resilience for targeted Year 6 pupils in primary school.

Table 5 shows the numbers participating in each activity.

Table 5: Transition activities – numbers participating

Transition Activity	Number of primary schools participating	Proportion of Norwich primary schools signed up to the NIC	Number of secondary schools participating	Proportion of Norwich secondary schools signed up to the NIC
Common Transfer Document	-	-	6	67%
Consistent safeguarding software	31	91%	-	-
Training for staff and pupil peer mentors	-	-	8	89%
Inter-school visits for teachers	14	41%	5	56%
Curriculum bridging lessons and materials	5	15%	3	33%
Young Minds	9	26%	-	-

Source: NIC project data, November 2020

Base: 34 primary schools signed up to the NIC and 9 secondary schools signed up to the NIC in November 2020. Note: there are 36 primary schools and 9 secondary schools in Norwich.

Some important pieces of work planned for delivery during the summer term 2020 were delayed (because of the COVID-19 pandemic) and adapted. Young Minds, peer mentoring, curriculum bridging resources and transition week activities were reformulated through virtual options. The NIC project also accessed and allocated summer activities for those children at risk of disengaging with the school at the transition point. Examples included summer tutoring, food and family activities.

There was positive engagement from schools with transition activities, with continued engagement during the lockdown period. Feedback was positive and demonstrated interest from the schools to continue to develop and embed transition practices.

> "Transition is on the agenda in a way that it wasn't before – schools are thinking about what transition looks like and that it is more inclusive than just one person doing it." *Transition Project Manager*

The example box 7 below outlines some achievements from the transition work.

Example box 7 – Transition activities: achievements

[Source: Norwich OA secondary headteachers summary report, November 2020]

- More coordinated and positive experiences for pupils and parents through:

1. One day for transition across Norwich Schools, rather than lots of different days.
2. Streamlining open evenings, careers options, virtual tours.
3. Common information sharing.

- The CTD was used to support Year 6 to Year 7 transition. Schools said it enabled them to share and disseminate information well in their schools.
- Teachers participating in the English curriculum bridging project reported that resources were well-differentiated across pupil needs and easy to use. Secondary schools said the project worked well for pupils and one school provided data showing pupils had engaged well with the bridging topic.
- Teachers said the summer tutoring interventions had a positive impact on both the academic achievement and wellbeing of participating pupils. However, engagement was low with many pupils failing to continue their programme.
- Summer schools for Year 6 pupils helped to settle the new cohort and teachers said it was better than a short transition day.

There was some inconsistent communication within schools regarding transition:

> "Transition is one of these things handled by a great number of people and they never talk to each other." *NIC project stakeholder*

This did, at times, limit opportunities for schools to engage fully in transition activities. The Transition manager also said it could be difficult to get schools to think about transition as an all-year agenda. These difficulties were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic as schools necessarily focused on vulnerable pupils, home learning and post-lockdown arrangements.

5. Outcomes from the NIC project

This chapter outlines evidence of the perceived outcomes achieved from the NIC project. This is in relation to:

- Reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions (the Norwich OA target).
- Intended outcomes for schools, families and pupils (see NIC project Logic Model in Appendix B).
- Unit costs for each element of the NIC project.

As discussed in Section 1.3.1, the planned analysis to quantitatively assess the impact of the NIC project on suspensions and permanent exclusions could not be completed. Preliminary work identified several challenges for interpretation of comparative data. Additionally, the data was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot comment on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on behaviours. As a result the findings presented on NIC project outcomes are ascertained primarily through qualitative research and project management information.

Key Findings: Overall outcomes resulting from the NIC project

- It is not possible to quantifiably attribute changes in suspensions and permanent exclusions to the NIC project. Senior school leaders reported that improved school inclusion practices and coordinated approaches to managed moves (introduced through the NIC project) had resulted in fewer suspensions and permanent exclusions.
- Inclusion staff and senior leaders believed that whole-school changes and staff development led to considerable a change in school culture and ethos, evident in calmer environments and lower levels of disruption.
- Parents and school stakeholders identified some improvement in parenting approaches and in the relationship between schools and parents.
- The combination of interventions funded through the NIC project were reported as having enabled pupils to develop confidence, improve behaviour and well-being, and re-engage with learning. Several individual pupil stories supported the link between these positive outcomes and the avoidance of suspensions or permanent exclusions.

5.1. Reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions

Due to COVID-19 we cannot say whether the NIC project has met its target of reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions by two-thirds by school year 2020 to 2021. To provide a wider context, however, the following discusses data for exclusions nationally

and in Norwich for the 3 full school years prior to data being affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nationally, between school years 2016 to 2017 and 2018 to 2019, permanent exclusions were constant at around 10 per 10,000 pupils (permanent exclusions rate of 0.1). However, suspensions rose from 476 per 10,000 pupils (suspension rate of 4.76) to 536 per 10,000 pupils (rate of 5.36).[33]

During the same period, in Norwich there was a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions, but a rise in suspensions. Specifically:

- Permanent exclusions rate reduced from 36 per 10,000 pupils (permanent exclusions rate 0.36) to around 21 per 10,000 pupils (rate of 0.21).
- Suspensions rose from 610 per 10,000 pupils (suspension rate of 6.10) to 974 per 10,000 pupils (rate of 9.74).

However, these should be treated with caution due to the smaller headcount in Norwich. Table 6 shows the number of pupils who were suspended or permanently excluded within the Norwich Local Authority.

Table 6: Suspensions and permanent exclusions in Norwich schools 2016 to 2019

Measure	2016 to 2017	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019
Number of permanent exclusions	61	33	36
Number of suspensions	1023	1126	1683
Headcount in Norwich LA	16,770	17,038	17,276

Source: Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England (Academic years 2016 to 2019). Retrieved from: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england/2019-20

Note: Contains all school types (primary, secondary and special).

In the first year of the NIC project (school year 2018 to 2019) several schools saw an increase in suspensions. Some senior leaders said this reflected a tightening of behaviour policies which have also been more consistently applied.

> "There is a notable increase in the number of FEX instances … as we continue to drive up high standards of behaviour in the academy and reduce instances of low-level disruption to continue raising standards of high-quality teaching and learning." [34] *Secondary senior leader.*
>
> "The school behaviour policy changed significantly, which enforced high expectations of all pupils. This change led to an initial spike in

[33] Suspensions and permanent exclusions in England (gov.uk). Retrieved from: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england/2019-20
[34] Schools often use the term fixed-term exclusions (FEX) to mean suspensions.

exclusions as pupils adjusted to the new expectations." *Secondary senior leader.*

However, in Autumn Term 2019 (the 2nd year of the NIC project and before the COVID-19 pandemic) there was a reduction in the number of suspensions in Norwich schools when compared to Autumn Term 2018. School leaders reported improved behaviour around school led to this reduction. They said this was enabled through the internal inclusion practices they had developed in line with the Charter, and the coordinated approaches taken to managed moves.

> "We have seen consistently declining FEX and PEX.[35,36] This has resulted from our use of the Pivotal approach and a "repair" culture, the introduction of a funded SEMH mentor, and the increased use of external agencies such as the Benjamin Foundation. Collaboration between schools to avoid fixed-term exclusions also made a key difference." *Secondary headteacher.*

> "In 2018/19 the school began the close work with other Norwich secondary schools and suspended pupils to other schools instead of FEXing them. This, combined with a consistent behaviour policy, has reduced FEX figures further." *Secondary inclusion champion.*

> "We have had no PEX in the last three years, and only five children have been subject to FEX this year. We have a bigger toolkit for preventing exclusions, are more open to managed moves and feel supported through the community and networking." *Primary headteacher.*

The Local Authority has also credited the coordinated approaches with reducing the number of harder to place children, and therefore exclusions.

> "There are fewer hard to place children that the access panel deals with now – it has improved an awful lot; and prior to COVID there was an overall decrease in exclusions across Norwich". *Local Authority representative*

5.2. School outcomes

Intended outcomes from the NIC project for schools included the Charter being embedded as part of the school's approach, improved management of pupil behaviour and a multi-agency approach to working with pupils at risk of exclusion.

[35] Schools often use the term fixed-term exclusions (FEX) to mean suspensions.
[36] PEX = permanent exclusions.

Stakeholders commented on the considerable change in school culture and ethos resulting from the inclusive practices introduced through the NIC project. This included calmer environments, lower levels of disruption, and a greater focus on understanding and engagement with pupils.

> "Rather than reprimand, we help pupils to figure out what they can change – we have a set of strategies to use in the classroom, and clearly outlined next steps if they are not working". *Primary inclusion champion.*

> "There are now lower levels of disruption in lessons, and misbehaviour in corridors and at social times has also decreased. Homework completion has increased." *Secondary inclusion champion.*

The inclusive ethos resulting from the whole-school changes and staff development delivered via the project underpinned school responses during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Inclusion staff said that specific inclusive practices were important to prepare for school closures (March to July 2020). Involvement with NIC interventions meant they were also aware of the inclusivity issues and well versed in approaches (such as Thrive and ELSAs) to support pupils and families.

As discussed in chapter 3, another important outcome resulting from the NIC project is improved collaboration and networking across schools. This has led to a more consistent ethos towards inclusion in Norwich and shared support for keeping pupils in education.

5.3. Family outcomes

The NIC project intended to enable families to be more positive and confident specifically when supporting pupils with school attendance, engagement and transition. The Benjamin Foundation provided the family level interventions for the NIC project.

Parents and family support workers reported a positive change in parenting approaches resulting from parents' engagement with the family support provided.

> "The Nurtured Heart programme helped mum learn how to help her son come to terms with his emotions; and helped her realise she was not the only one struggling". [37] *Family Support Worker*

[37] The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) is a philosophy for creating healthy relationships with the people in your life. Originally created by Howard Glasser in 1992, NHA approach focuses on individual skills and qualities and promotes 'inner wealth', looking at what is right rather than what is wrong, and ensuring clarity of rules and consequences.

> "The Nurtured Heart approach has helped me to 'reset' as a parent, and realise, that when you get weighed down with lots of negative energy, taking a step back, you can see the positives." *Parent*

Additionally, school stakeholders reported that the new strategies put in place as part of the NIC project improved the relationship between schools and parents.

> "Parents who may in the past have been classed as difficult parents have now recognised that we put an awful lot of energy and love in to help their children succeed. We still get some saying we are not doing anything near enough for their child but there tend to be fewer of these." *Primary headteacher*

5.4. Outcomes for pupils

The NIC project sought to enable more positive outcomes for pupils at risk of exclusion. This included pupils being more positive and confident at school, leading to improved engagement and educational performance. This, in turn, was intended to support a reduction in suspensions and permanent exclusions, including for pupils with SEND.

As highlighted in Chapter 4, the NIC project funded a series of interventions that have resulted in positive outcomes for pupils in terms of confidence and engagement at school. Training for teachers and support staff in restorative approaches (such as Thrive and Emotional Literacy Support Advisors (ELSAs)) have enabled staff to work with pupils in a reparative way, directly supporting their social and emotional needs. Through better understanding of pupils' needs and brain development, staff have guided pupils to re-engage and move away from de-regulated behaviour.

Personalised planning approaches and individual pupil counselling (via the Benjamin Foundation's Pathways to Inclusion) directly supported individual pupils with, for example, anger management, emotional and well-being support. Opportunities provided through alternative provision developed pupils' confidence, trust, engagement and well-being.

School staff, pupils and parents highlighted a range of specific examples of how the amalgamation of these approaches have achieved change and outcomes for pupils. Example box 8 includes examples from pupil case reviews.

Example box 8 – Improved pupil engagement and behaviour

The whole school inclusive approach, input from the pastoral manager and Thrive practitioner have been important in supporting changed behaviour, engagement in learning and safety awareness for this pupil. *Pupil Case Review A*

The consistency of approach (an inclusive and restorative ethos) adopted by the Head of Year (who had ELSA training) and the family support worker (from Benjamin Foundation) were important factors in the effective support of this pupil – he had improved strategies for managing in class, was more engaged in learning and less disruptive. *Pupil Case Review E*

As shown in example box 9, several individual pupil stories also supported a link between these improved behaviours and engagement in learning with the avoidance of suspensions or exclusions. This is also seen in the quote below from one of the inclusion champions.

> "There are several pupils who would not be in school without the successful managed move or personalised plans that they had been able to put in place." *Secondary inclusion champion*

Example box 9 – Reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions

According to pastoral staff, this pupil came "a huge distance" since Year 7. There was a significant reduction in behaviour incidents, with only one since September 2020 and no suspensions since early 2020. *Pupil Case Review A*

This pupil's behaviour in lessons and school improved over the period of support. The number of negative behaviour points and detentions received reduced considerably (from more than 100 behaviour points in the two months prior to Benjamin Foundation support to less than 40 in the 3 months over which support was delivered). There were subsequently no more suspensions (compared with 2.5 days in the two months prior) and the pupil received many more achievement points. *Pupil Case Review E*

This pupil was going down a path that could have led to exclusion. According to the inclusion champion, he was stopped in the trajectory towards exclusion. *Pupil Case Review D*

This Year 6 boy had several suspensions and was often very disrespectful to staff. Following support, he had no suspensions throughout Year 6. *Pupil Case Review I*

5.5. Unit cost analysis

Total project funding for the first 3 years was £1,365,087. Whilst this was originally for expenditure up to July 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic (from March 2020) resulted in inevitable delays in planned project activity. Consequently, the project received rollover funding for delivery into the school year 2020 to 2021. In addition, a further £750,000 of funding was allocated for this 4th project year. The project team focused this funding and activity on responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and developing approaches to maintain the inclusive practices achieved.

Unit costs (cost of an intervention per school or pupil receiving it) were reviewed for elements of the project where data was available. Table 7 shows the numbers accessing NIC project activities and Table 8 shows the unit costs.

Table 7: Numbers accessing the NIC project activities

Project activity	Number of primary schools accessing	Number of secondary schools accessing	Number of pupils accessing	Number of families accessing (successful)	Number of staff trained or supported
Project management	34	9			
Charter On-Line Assessment Tool	34	9			
EPICs	10				
Governor Training & School Visit Fund	19	5			27
Inclusive Culture Programmes	25	6			
ELSAs	13	2			78
Alternative Provision (Onsite and Offsite)	18	7	292 [38]		
Inclusion Culture Grant Fund	7	4			
Primary Exclusion Intervention Fund (Emergency Fund)	7				
Parenting Support Programmes	20	4		170 (133)	
Behaviour Support Programmes	14	2			
Transition Activities	20	7			

Source: NIC project data, July 2021.

[38] Pupil numbers are only available for offsite provision. The 292 pupils come from 15 schools.

Note: funding data is for project years 1-3, including spend rolled over to project year 4. Project spend between January to March 2021 is forecasted from December 2020.

Table 8: NIC spend and unit costs for initial 3-year funding (Expenditure March 2018 to July 2021) [39])

Project activity	Funding	Unit cost per school	Unit cost per pupil	Unit cost per staff member
Project management	£137,980	£3,209		
Charter On-Line Assessment Tool	£35,000	£814		
EPICs	£82,124	£8,212		
Governor Training & School Visit Fund	£6,026			£201
Inclusive Culture Programmes	£143,308	£4,623		
ELSAs	£27,170	£1,811		£348
Alternative Provision (Onsite and Offsite)	£255,558	£10,222	£496	
Inclusion Culture Grant Fund	£134,202	£12,200		
Primary Exclusion Intervention Fund (Emergency Fund)	£22,598	£3,228		
Parenting Support Programmes	£212,857	£8,869	£1,252 to £1,600	
Behaviour Support Programmes	£84,710	£5,294		
Transition Activities	£223,550	£8,280		

Source: NIC project data, July 2021.

Note: funding data is for project years 1-3, including spend rolled over to project year 4. Project spend between January to March 2021 is forecasted from December 2020.

[39] January to July 2021 forecast spend at December 2020.

5.5.1. Detailed breakdown of the unit costs

The unit costs for the NIC are below. Unless otherwise stated they are the unit cost for the full project (3 years) rather than per year:

- **Project management has a cost of £3,200 per school accessing the NIC**. This would cover the administration, marketing, conference, and evaluation costs. It cost totalled £138,000 over the first three years. This represents just over £3,200 per school engaged (34 Primary and 9 Secondary schools in Norwich have signed the Charter), or £1,070 per school per annum.

- **The Charter has no direct unit cost for the OA.** Initially, there were no direct funded costs from the NIC project for the Charter itself. Indirect time costs are not factored into this analysis but would include time spent by school and LA stakeholders to engage with the NIC and attend network meetings.

- **The online assessment tool has a unit cost of** £814 per school accessing the NIC. In the fourth year, £35,000 was allocated to develop an online tool for schools to self- and peer-assess their schools progress towards meeting the Charter principles and improved inclusion. The unit cost is based on each school signed up

- **Inclusion Champions**: Most inclusion champions were not directly cost the NIC project. In the third (2019 to 2020) and fourth (2020 to 2021) years, funding was allocated for **EPICs** in primary schools. Ten schools were funded in the third year, with an average of just over £8,000 per school (£82,000 in total). Funding in the fourth year was allocated for 13 schools, an average of £12,000 per school (£150,000 in total).

- **Inclusion governors:** Training was provided for 27 inclusion governors across 24 schools in the second year of the NIC project (2018 to 2019), at a cost of just over £200 per governor.

- **Inclusive Culture Programmes**: These included several providers - Pivotal, Thrive, Nurture Network and Achievement for All. They involved 25 primary schools and six secondary schools. In total just under £150,000 was allocated. In addition, some schools took up Inclusive Culture Grants (£134,000 in total) designed to support them to meet the principles of the Charter. Costs per school varied according to the package selected.

- **ELSAs**: £27,000 was allocated for ELSA training, communication and processes during the third and fourth project years. During 2019 to 2020, 48 teaching and support staff were trained as ELSAs in NIC schools. An additional 30 (from 15 NIC schools including 2 secondary) signed up by November 2020.

- **Alternative provision (AP):** £256,000 was allocated to onsite and offsite alternative provision over the first three project years. Costs varied with an average

of £10,000 per school (across 25 schools). We only have data for number of pupils accessing off-site provision from 15 schools, with unit costs averaging just under £500 per pupil.

- **Parenting support programmes:** 170 families were supported through the Benjamin Foundation Pathway to Inclusion programme, 133 were regarded as successful interventions. This gave a unit cost of £1,600 per pupil successfully supported.

- **Transition**: Around £225,000 was spent or allocated between 2018 to 19 and 2021 to 22 on transition activities.

Placing the pupil unit costs for AP and parenting support in context, the cost per year of a permanent exclusion was £12,007.[40] More research would be required to check if these pupils would have become permanently excluded and whether they avoided this adverse outcome because of the NIC project interventions.

[40] Source: Unit Cost Database: Greater Manchester Combined Authority. 2019 prices. Accessed 1/9/21

6. Conclusions and considerations for replication

6.1. Conclusions

The Norwich Inclusion Charter provided a strong foundation for the NIC project. The agreed set of principles coupled with the collaborative structures put in place underpinned the change in inclusive practices across schools. The networks brought headteachers and senior leaders together for meaningful discussions and problem-solving. Funding was used to build capacity within schools to develop inclusive practices and for pupils and their families to access personalised support.

The NIC funding enabled access to a mix of interventions to meet individual school and pupil needs. Some elements evolved in response to trends identified through the NIC networks. This included a refocus of AP from offsite to onsite provision to support more sustainable pupil outcomes aligned with mainstream provision. Likewise, funding was introduced for EPICs when primary schools couldn't commit the resource needed for inclusion champions.

A range of activity was undertaken across primary and secondary schools to develop inclusive practices. These were generally steeped in:

- Building a culture of restorative approaches, moving away from punitive behaviour management policies towards understanding triggers and behaviours as an expression of need.
- Working collaboratively to solve problems around inclusion and help prevent pupils from getting to the point of permanent exclusion.
- Drawing on a range of strategies and interventions to develop personalised plans to help meet the needs of individual pupils.

Whilst considerable progress was made across many schools, others were at an earlier stage in their journey towards an inclusive ethos. A couple of Norwich primary schools had not yet engaged nor signed up to the Charter at the time of writing.[41]

The COVID-19 pandemic delayed some planned NIC project activities. However, inclusive changes developed via the project also supported school responses to the COVID-19 disruptions.

Much of the progress and achievements arising from NIC supported strong conditions for sustainability. The development of an online self- and peer-assessment tool, focused on the Charter, aims to provide an accountability structure beyond the life of NIC project funding. Maintaining and sustaining inclusive activities was a significant theme built into

[41] Summer 2021

the funding allocation process over fourth project year, particularly for the grants supporting in-school AP. Schools were required to plan effectively for sharing access to resources across partner schools; as well as how interventions would continue to operate after the funding period.

There is qualitative evidence that the NIC style of support across schools in a local authority can influence improved inclusion practices within schools. Improvements come from the greater partnership and collaboration, backed up by targeted interventions. There were encouraging signs in some schools that changes and improvements would be sustained and embedded for the longer term. However, resourcing of interventions would remain a challenge.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to address quantitatively whether the resulting changes from the NIC project generated a level of improvement greater than would otherwise be achieved. This is due to the constraints associated with conducting a more quantitative or experimental impact assessment. Nevertheless, qualitative evidence supports the view that suspensions and permanent exclusions would have been higher without the NIC project. Specific examples were given where pupils were retained within a school where they might have otherwise been excluded or moved to external AP. Collaborative work around managed moves resulted in better experiences for pupils and families.

6.2. Considerations for replication

There were several successful core elements of the NIC model that could be considered for replication in other areas, including:

- **The Inclusion Charter:** school leaders to a set of agreed principles focused on inclusion and meeting pupil needs. This can then lead to proactive collaboration between schools around exclusion and managed moves.
- **Inclusion Champions:** Identify individuals to lead the inclusion agenda within each school; and to coordinate and work with counterparts in other local schools to share resources, problem-solve and support needs-led decision-making for pupils most at risk.
- **Networks:** Establish regular opportunities for inclusion-focused communication and collaboration amongst school leaders at the local level.
- **Independent facilitation role:** Identify (and fund) an individual(s) to manage and enable cross-school networks, decision-making, funding applications and support delivery of agreed programmes of activity.

In addition, **access to the NIC online assessment model** (or a version adapted to local needs) could enable schools in other areas to assess their existing inclusive practices and identify potential ways in which they can improve.

Specific interventions and activities delivered as part of the NIC project have also supported more inclusive school practices; coordinated and positive engagement of pupils and families; improved pupil engagement and behaviour; and prevented pupil exclusions. Those that could be considered for replication elsewhere include:

- **Staff training in restorative and trauma-informed approaches** including, for example, Thrive practitioners and Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs).
- **Development of AP opportunities on school sites** that can be aligned to supporting pupils back into mainstream provision. For example, dedicated nurture or therapeutic space; outdoor bushcraft and forest school activities; or vocational opportunities.
- **Family and pupil coaching** offering support for pupils at risk of exclusion, and facilitating communication between pupils, parents and schools.
- **Coordinated transition activities**, including agreed day and/or week across schools for transition events to take place; inter-school teaching staff visits; curriculum bridging activities for pupils; and effective sharing of sensitive information about pupils.

The collective school approach to internal/ external exclusions, where pupils are required to attend a neighbouring school for their suspension period, showed some promise in the NIC project. However, this is not DfE policy and further consideration is needed before it is implemented elsewhere.

Appendix A: The Original Norwich Inclusion Charter

Model: Schools are invited to sign up to the Norwich Inclusion Charter and agree to:

1. Elect an inclusion champion and an Inclusion Governor
2. Develop an Inclusion School Action Plan
3. Attend Inclusion Champion Group Meetings (monthly) and Best Practice Network Conferences (termly)
4. At transition points share information with other schools
5. Develop a Behaviour Policy
6. Identify pupils at risk of exclusion at an early stage
7. Alert the school inclusion helpline when pupils are at risk of exclusion (source of advice and information)
8. Share the pupils and family inclusion helpline with parents of pupils at risk of exclusion (source of advice and information)
9. Agree to encouraging parents/carers not to take pupils off-roll/home educate/move during a Key Stage
10. Participate in the Norfolk managed move fair access protocol

Funding: nominally an average of £34,500 per school (although in practice the amount per school will differ).

School level: primary and secondary schools.

Target: 50 schools signing up to the NIC (100% of all schools in Norwich)

Aim: to reduce the rate of fixed-term and permanent exclusions in primary and secondary schools in Norwich by two-thirds by school year 2020 to 2021.

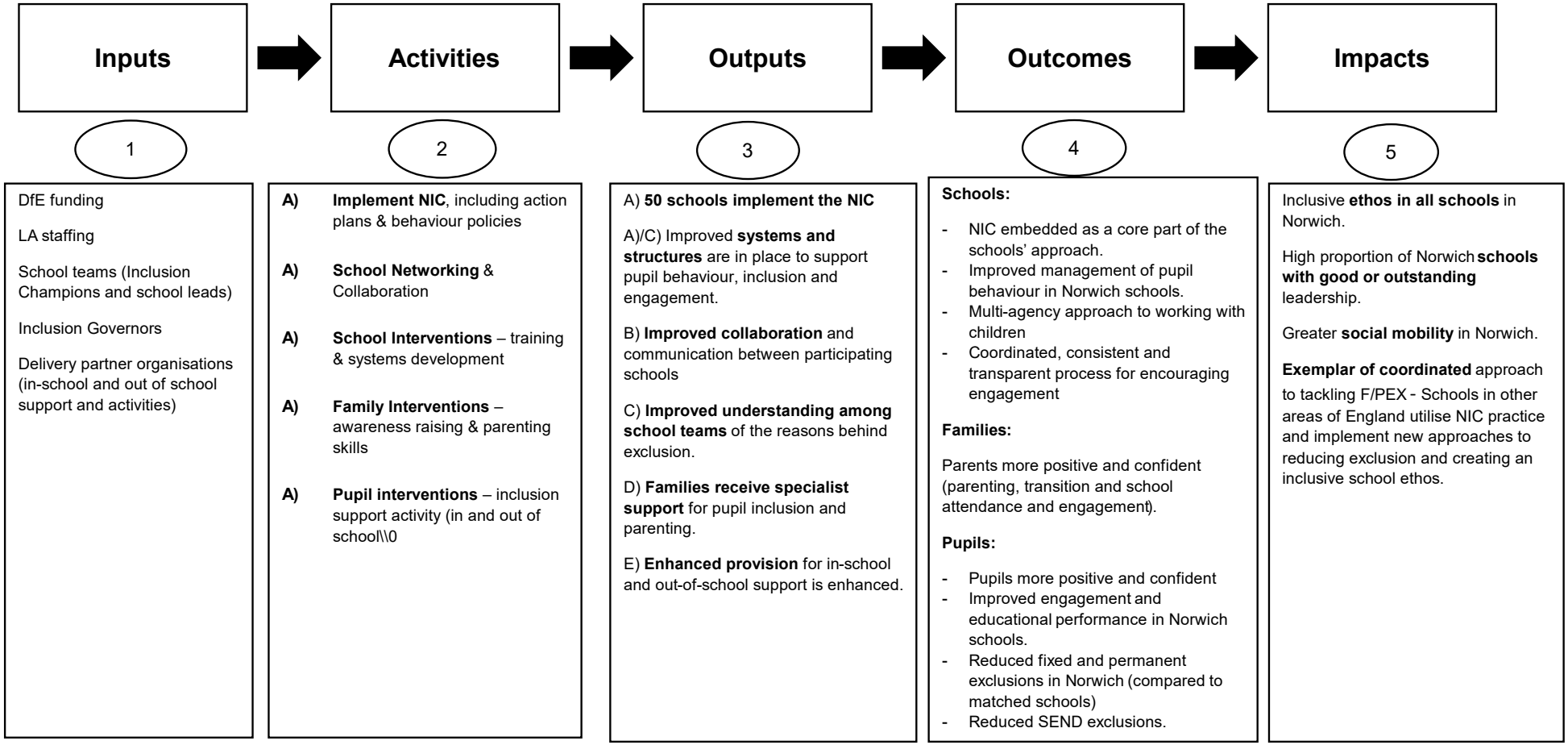
Timescale: launched in February 2017 and agreed in February 2018 as an OA project that fits with Priority Three of the Norwich Opportunities Area. Project delivery commenced in April 2018 and the first inclusion champion meeting took place in June 2018. The project is planned to operate until July2020.

Appendix B: Norwich Inclusion Charter project logic model

Figure 2: Norwich Inclusion Charter project logic model

The NIC logic model

The aim of the NIC programme is to – establish a multi-agency approach to working with children and families to maintain engagement in education; establish a coordinated, consistent and transparent process for encouraging engagement for children at risk of exclusion; reduce the scale of the problem between school exclusion and social exclusion by significantly reducing the number of fixed and permanent exclusions in Norwich; and be an exemplar of how a coordinated approach to tackling fixed and permanent exclusions can work in a local area.



Logic model as text:

The inputs lead into the activities then outputs, outcomes and finally impacts.

Summary

The aim of the NIC programme is to – establish a multi-agency approach to working with children and families to maintain engagement in education; establish a coordinated, consistent and transparent process for encouraging engagement for children at risk of exclusion; reduce the scale of the problem between school exclusion and social exclusion by significantly reducing the number of fixed and permanent exclusions in Norwich; and be an exemplar of how a coordinated approach to tackling fixed and permanent exclusions can work in a local area.

1. Inputs

The inputs were:

- DfE funding.
- LA staffing.
- School teams (Inclusion Champions and school leads).
- Inclusion Governors.
- Delivery partner organisations (in-school and out of school support and activities).

2. Activities

The planned activities were:

a) Implement NIC, including action plans & behaviour policies.

b) School Networking & Collaboration.

c) School Interventions – training & systems development.

d) Family Interventions – awareness raising & parenting skills.

e) Pupil interventions – inclusion support activity (in and out of school).

3. Outputs

The outputs were:

- 50 schools implement the NIC (linked to activity a).

- Improved systems and structures are in place to support pupil behaviour, inclusion and engagement (linked to activity a and c).
- Improved collaboration and communication between participating schools (linked to activity b).
- Improved understanding among school teams of the reasons behind exclusion (linked to activity c).
- Families receive specialist support for pupil inclusion and parenting (linked to activity d).
- Enhanced provision for in-school and out-of-school support is enhanced (linked to activity e).
- AP activities are delivered through appropriate system leader support.

4. Outcomes

The expected outcomes for schools:

- NIC embedded as a core part of the schools' approach.
- Improved management of pupil behaviour in Norwich schools.
- Multi-agency approach to working with children
- Coordinated, consistent and transparent process for encouraging engagement

The expected outcomes for families were:

- Parents more positive and confident (parenting, transition and school attendance and engagement).

The expected outcomes for pupils included:

- Pupils more positive and confident
- Improved engagement and educational performance in Norwich schools.
- Reduced fixed and permanent exclusions in Norwich (compared to matched schools)
- Reduced SEND exclusions.

5. Impacts

The desired impacts were:

- Inclusive ethos in all schools in Norwich.
- High proportion of Norwich schools with good or outstanding leadership.

- Greater social mobility in Norwich.

- Exemplar of coordinated approach to tackling F/PEX - Schools in other areas of England utilise NIC practice and implement new approaches to reducing exclusion and creating an inclusive school ethos.

Appendix C: Pupil case reviews

Pupil case review A

Context and needs

This case involves a Year 10 boy who struggled to maintain attention in class, was regularly removed from class during Year 7, and often displayed extremely unsafe behaviours. The pupil has experienced significant trauma in his past and has a range of EHCP requirements including dyslexia, colour blindness, and genetic issues resulting in behavioural problems. Incidents in Year 8 and 9 resulted in several suspensions with two significant ones resulting in EHCP review meetings and school consideration of whether they could continue to meet his needs.

Support and interventions offered

The pupil has been supported through the school's inclusive practices, including:

- Development of a **detailed risk reduction plan and pastoral support plan** – shared with teaching staff, including for example consistent scripts for teaching staff to use in situations in class with this pupil.
- A **pastoral manager** who has developed a relationship with the pupil from Year 7.
- Identified ways to provide **additional help and break up the day for this pupil.** This has included alternative provision, including three referrals to Grow Wild; and physical therapy through Sensi.
- Support from a **Thrive trained Learning Support Assistant (LSA),** who is with the pupil now in almost every lesson (supporting the needs of 3 or 4 pupils in the class).
- The **LSA has Thrive profiled the pupil**, knows when he will need a brain break from lessons, and provide some activities to help re-regulate him.

Successes and challenges

The range of support in place in the school has been significant and has contributed to improvements for this pupil. General maturing from the pupil, as well as other factors such as the benefits, in this case, of the COVID restrictions, have played their part in achieving this change. Nevertheless**, the whole school inclusive approach, and input from the pastoral manager and Thrive practitioner have been significant in supporting changed behaviour,** engagement in learning and safety awareness for this pupil. Significant factors supporting change include:

- **The positive relationship developed with the pastoral manager** who has been able to regularly touch base with the pupil, collect him from classes as necessary, and spend time discussing incidents, the importance of borders and boundaries, and helping to understand unsafe behaviours.

- **The role of the Thrive trained LSA** has been significant – she has understood his brain development, and what is happening when things escalate; and known how to respond and work with the pupil to help re-engage his brain so that he can start to hear and move away from deregulated behaviour. The LSA can identify points and take the pupil out of class if she recognises, he is starting to disengage.
- The **Thrive approach itself** has helped to sustain and support positive change within the school for this pupil and others – *"it has been incredible – more opportunities like this would help us sustain pupils in school"*. The Thrive work has helped with emotional development and recognition, helping the pupil to name and understand his emotions in different circumstances.
- **Grow wild** has been a positive experience, offering something different and providing the pupil with building blocks to manage his responses;
- The pastoral manager has a **good relationship with the pupils' parents,** who themselves are very supportive and cooperative.
- **Lockdown restrictions** have, in this pupils' case, positively contributed to **smaller classes and more one-to-one attention** available for the pupil, making it easier for him to abide by appropriate borders and boundaries.

In this case, the pupil was able to access Grow Wild three times which was beneficial as the school inclusion manager felt that the **6-week programme on its own is not sufficient and is too short to support the pupils referred** and provide time to develop the building blocks required.

Outcomes

The pupil has **"come a huge distance since Year 7"**. There has been a **significant reduction in behaviour incidents**, with only one since September 2020 and **no suspensions since early 2020**. The school staff have observed a clear improvement in the pupil's ability to understand safety, borders, and boundaries.

The pupil's **engagement in lessons has *"most definitely improved"*** with some significant achievements in particular subjects. He probably takes more frequent breaks out of class than in the past, but these are managed, and he comes back quicker and more engaged as a result.

There has been a consistent and continued **improvement in the pupil's emotional recognition**, though work is ongoing. He has also matured, is more aware of borders and boundaries and is more in control and forward-thinking – considering the outcome of what he is doing and changing it, rather than reflecting on it afterwards.

Those consulted felt that the **progress and outcomes are currently being sustained.** They felt it is difficult to be certain with a pupil who has experienced the level of trauma they have in the past, but there are regular check-ins and constant engagement with parents who are very supportive.

Pupil case review B

Context and needs

This case concerns a Year 9 girl who during Years 7 and 8 exhibited low-level behaviour concerns, was unhappy and demonstrated some lack of engagement with school and learning. During Year 9, her behaviour has escalated with higher levels of disengagement, incidences of wandering around the school site, truanting, and she has had some suspensions. She has previously experienced early year trauma.

Support and interventions offered

During Year 7, this pupil was referred to the **Boost project, which focused on building relationships and self-esteem**. This was a positive experience for her, which was lacking in a lot of her life.

In Year 8, she participated in two 6-week **Grow Wild activities**, and really enjoyed these – being outside, doing something different, running around was helpful for her.

The pupil has a **positive behaviour management plan,** and during Year 9 the Inclusion Manager has worked with her through the **Thrive approach**. She has profiled the pupil and shared findings with other inclusion staff. This means, if the pupil comes to them in the dysregulated state, they have a plan of activities to choose from. They also have reward times and approaches built-in (for example, the opportunity to play games with the inclusion staff if improvements are shown).

Successes and challenges

Engagement with the **activities during Year 7 and 8 helped to settle** the pupil a little in school. However, the impact of the Covid-19 **lockdowns** on this pupil was significant; her relationship with her Mum was subject to some strain, and other personal issues were **impacting** her emotional wellbeing. These factors have **contributed to increased negative behaviour incidences** and disengagement during Year 9.

The Inclusion Manager established, linked to these external factors and some incidences in school, that the pupil struggles with **repair and moving on**. This is **a key theme** she plans to work with her on through a Thrive centred approach to engaging with her.

The Inclusion Manager feels that **longer interventions**, such as Grow Wild, as well as **training for more staff (in the Thrive approach),** would be beneficial to support this pupil, but also more widely across the school and pupil body.

Outcomes

The Inclusion Manager had **started to see some positive effects from the behaviour plan and Thrive approach** and the pupil had started to come to the Inclusion area rather than wandering around the school site. However, family life and personal circumstances are continuing to impact

this pupil's behaviour and engagement with school; and with re-entry into Covid-19 lockdown after Christmas, there are some concerns that the pupil's emotional health and engagement may have worsened over the period. The plan is to continue with Thrive once the pupil is back in school, to re-profile and take it from there.

Pupil case review C

Context and needs

This case concerned a high-achieving girl in Year 9 who experienced issues with anxiety and self-esteem. She was the highest performing pupil in Year 9 with lots of responsibilities (including being a prefect) and struggled with the pressure associated with this. The pressure to do well impacted her confidence and self-esteem (which before the intervention, she rated as a 2/10), as well as exacerbating issues with her friends at school. The pupil experienced frequent anxiety attacks and breakdowns because of things not going her way – for example getting problems wrong in a maths class – which impacted her ability to engage fully in school.

Support and interventions offered

This pupil received weekly counselling from a **Benjamin Foundation Family Support Worker.** The sessions began with a catch-up about the previous week – for example, discussing any anxiety-inducing incidents and how these could be handled differently next time – before moving onto more general topics such as learning how to recognise triggers and strategies for stepping away from stressful situations. The worker also introduced a diary for the pupil, asking her to note down what she liked about each day. As the pupil says, this "really helped me to focus on things that I like about myself and the positives".

Successes and challenges

The pupil benefitted from counselling sessions as they provided the space to talk through issues with someone she trusted – *"[There was] another person who knows me and cares for me. . . like having a guardian angel*". Having this dedicated time to talk through issues enabled the pupil to deal with issues ranging from family, friends and school, and think more positively about her life. At the height of the intervention's success, the pupil rated her self-esteem/confidence as a 9/10. The success of the intervention was echoed by her mum, who said the pupil seemed happier at home and better able to deal with her anxiety.

The intervention also supported the pupil in developing strategies to alleviate some of her anxieties, for example, techniques for strengthening friendships by not 'smothering' her friends if they don't reply to calls or messages quickly. The family support worker also encouraged the pupil to drop out of extra-curricular activities that were causing additional stress, which reduced her activity levels to a more manageable level.

Despite the successes in support, the pupil was deeply affected by the second Covid-19 lockdown. Her main issues included family-related problems, an increase in workload, and friendships becoming strained due to the lack of contact. For this reason, she would have liked

the Benjamin Foundation sessions to continue post-lockdown, especially in a flexible format where support could have been accessed whenever it was needed.

Outcomes

As a result of the intervention the pupil was better able to manage her anxiety and identify positive attributes within herself, thus improving her confidence and self-esteem. Despite the successes of the intervention, the pupil struggled a lot with family issues over the second Covid-19 lockdown and would now rate her self-esteem/confidence at a 5 (having been at 2 before the intervention and 9 at the height of its success). She has also struggled with an increased workload over lockdown as well as friendships becoming strained.

Pupil case review D

Context and needs

This case refers to a pupil who was initially referred in Year 4 (he is now in Year 5). The pupil had difficulty controlling his anger and maintaining appropriate boundaries with other pupils. He also struggled with paranoid thoughts, often believing that other children are talking about him, which caused him to become angry and upset. Due to his angry outbursts and additional needs (including autism and ADHD), the pupil was well known to school PSAs, and without intervention, was on a trajectory towards exclusion.

Support and interventions offered

The pupil received 8 sessions with a **Family Support Worker at the Benjamin Foundation.** Work primarily focused on exploring the pupil's angry outbursts in more detail - for example, recognising triggers for anger, trying to pause before reaching full outbursts, and working out strategies for releasing anger in a safe way. To help with this the worker introduced stress balls, colouring exercises, and metaphorical activities to help work through anger (such as a dartboard to help with visualising the target of the anger and using an 'anger thermometer' scale each week to measure his feelings). This enabled both the pupil and the worker to track how his mood changed from session to session, highlighting which areas needed working on.

The pupil was offered the **Nurtured Heart** programme, but the family were not able to attend the sessions.

Successes and challenges

Before the intervention, the pupil was not able to explain his reaction to events, saying "It made me angry [but] I don't know why". However, because of the support from the Benjamin Foundation, he became able to recognise the warning signs of his anger, better explain how he felt, avoid acting on impulse and find safer ways to respond to difficult situations. This is a marked difference from referral when he was on the trajectory towards exclusion for difficult behaviour.

The intervention has hugely benefited the pupil's ability to manage his anger, but he still struggles to manage these outbursts on occasion. For example, if he can anticipate feeling angry and catch this early, he is able to utilise the techniques and strategies developed with the Family Support Worker and calm down. However, if he is taken by surprise and feels angry, he finds this harder to control and subsequently finds it challenging to calm down - this may relate to his diagnosis of autism, as individuals with ASD can struggle with changes in routine.

Outcomes

A key outcome is the pupil's ability to manage his behaviour, having learned skills in mood recognition and impulse control. His file has now been closed to the Benjamin Foundation, highlighting that support is no longer needed. The school have been advised that they can re-refer the pupil to the service if needed.

The school note that the pupil no longer comes to the attention of PSAs often, suggesting that he is now able to manage his anger. Because of this, he is no longer on the trajectory towards exclusion.

While those involved with the intervention are happy with the outcome, both the pupil's parents and school workers have some concerns about his place at high school and whether it will be suitable given his additional needs. To address this, the school are looking to secure an EHCP before he leaves Year 6 – this will ensure support is in place and the pupil's needs are met at his secondary school.

Pupil case review E

Context and needs

This case involves a Year 8 pupil with challenging behaviour. Described as cheeky, the pupil was often sent out of class with numerous detentions. He was also linked to some serious incidents within the school (including damage to property and physical harm to others) resulting in suspensions, for which he didn't accept responsibility. At home, the pupil did not have a positive male role model and consequently struggled to form relationships with male figures.

Support and interventions offered

The school has supported the pupil through its inclusion practices, which involved a **Behaviour Support Plan** put in place by the Head of Year, referral to Benjamin Foundation and an additional mentoring scheme.

The **Head of Year, who is ELSA trained**, provided a space for the pupil to complete his work, reflect on his behaviour and take a breather. He was also given a time-out card to help manage his behaviour and feelings when in class. The Head of Year also spoke regularly with the pupil's parent.

A **Benjamin Foundation Family Support Worker** met with the pupil six times, providing an opportunity for the pupil to talk about issues at school and his aspirations/plans. The Family Support Worker suggested strategies and approaches the pupil could use to calm down, manage his behaviour, and techniques for avoiding difficult situations. A **second mentor**, from a different scheme focusing on life skills, also started working with the pupil towards the end of the Benjamin Foundation support.

Successes and challenges

The **consistency of approach (an inclusive and restorative ethos) adopted across those involved** has been important to effectively support this pupil. The Head of Year thought that with her ELSA training, she and the Benjamin Foundation support worker were "singing from the same hymn sheet" and so they were "working in harmony" to encourage and support change for this pupil.

The Benjamin Foundation Family Support Worker developed a very **positive rapport and relationship with the pupil** - "He spent time getting to know me, for example, using some dice with questions such as "do you like to travel". The sessions provided the pupil with the unique opportunity to "talk and be listened to" with/by an adult for up to an hour every week. The pupil appreciated this, engaged well, and looked forward to the sessions every week. The sessions gave the pupil the chance to "talk about what was going on in his life" - he really "benefited from the one-to-one time and counselling environment".

The Family Support Worker highlighted the **short-term nature of the Benjamin Foundation support,** and that the pupil would need ongoing reminders and reassurance after the intervention had ended. He felt the feedback from BF to the school was important in supporting this sustainability.

The Head of Year is **uncertain about the impact of the second Covid-19 lockdown on the pupil** – he has not engaged so well with learning during this period and there is some concern that he may "go back to his old ways" when they return to school. They are hoping, however, that 2 or 3 more sessions with the Family Support Worker will help to reinforce the work completed pre-lockdown.

The pupil would **benefit from some additional sessions from Benjamin Foundation**, to help with the transition to Year 10 and to reinforce the work that has been previously completed.

Outcomes

The pupil **responded positively to the Benjamin Foundation support and took on board strategies to improve** his actions and responses. He would often comment to the Head of Year that the Family Support Worker "had said that" when she suggested how he could approach a particular situation. He also commented that he was "not giving in to peer pressure as much and other pupils' were not goading him as much".

The **pupil's behaviour in lessons and school has improved over the period of support**, evidenced by a reduction in the number of behaviour points and detentions received (from more

than 100 behaviour points in the two months prior to Benjamin Foundation support to less than 40 in the 3 months over which support was delivered). In addition, the pupil has had no further suspensions (2.5 days in two months prior) and received a greater number of achievement points. Towards the end of the Benjamin Foundation support, **many of the pupil's teachers were also commenting on his improved behaviour in class**. The Head of Year got very positive feedback including "what have you done to him, he is brilliant in class – engaging and positive".

Pupil case review F

Context and needs

This case concerns a pupil who refused to attend school due to anxiety and complex emotional needs. The pupil and his mum had a strained relationship due to his refusal to attend school, exacerbated by incidents where she would 'trick' him into attending and he would run away. At the time of referral, the pupil's mum felt the school, specifically the SENCO, were not adequately supporting her son. School and support workers believed that the child had ASD, but a diagnosis had not yet been made.

Support and interventions offered

This pupil received weekly counselling from a **Benjamin Foundation Family Support Worker.** During these sessions, the pupil was either encouraged to talk about his emotions (what worried him) or to play games to take his mind off anxiety-inducing situations.

Mum attended the **Nurtured Heart** programme which helped her develop a praise-led approach for parenting her son. During the intervention, the pupil's Mum developed skills in communication and building trust within a relationship. She identified that it would be helpful for her son to explain what was wrong (either verbally or otherwise) and met with other parents in a similar situation to her own. The sessions also helped to improve her self-confidence.

Successes and challenges

The pupil benefitted hugely from the one-to-one support but still has anxiety about attending school and has trouble in expressing his emotions. There are still days where he refuses to attend school, but these are much less frequent than before the intervention.

The pupil's mum enjoyed the Nurtured Heart programme. She felt it taught her more about her son's emotions while also providing her with strategies to help her son better deal with his feelings. This has led to a more positive relationship between the mum and the pupil – mum now feels more confident in reassuring him and properly managing his behaviour.

Some external challenges have meant the case is not a 100% success story. For example, the intervention was interrupted and resumed several times due to the second Covid-19 lockdown, meaning support delivery was somewhat splintered. The support worker noted their frustration that at times, this felt like the case was going back to square one.

The pupil's mum also expressed annoyance at the time taken for support to be put in place, critiquing the school and the council for the delays in delivering the pupil's EHCP. She believed the Benjamin Foundation was the only service with a quick turnaround.

Outcomes

As a result of the intervention, the pupil now has far fewer days of school refusal. Although his anxiety is still high at times, he can attend school, sometimes even leaving with a smile on his face. The pupil benefitted from the one-to-one support offered and the school have referred him for more counselling through Point 1. However, the pupil's mum is nervous about the wait time for services, claiming they have 'months and months' to wait before these sessions start. The pupil also now has an EHCP in place.

A key outcome of this case is the mum's increased confidence and ability in parenting her son, particularly in managing his complex needs. Through the Nurtured Heart programme, she was able to meet others in a similar situation to herself and learn strategies for behaviour management. This has drastically improved her relationship with her son, and they now have a much stronger bond than when compared to the start of the intervention.

Pupil case review G

Context and needs

The Year 4 pupil in this case had received many forms of support over a 3-year period due to his aggressive outbursts in class. He predominantly struggled with outbursts, quickly reacting with aggression in a variety of situations, which caused disruptions in lessons. When disruptions became too frequent or loud, he would be taken to the deputy head's office, where he would have some quiet time to complete his work. Teachers were aware that these outbursts were not malicious in nature – when challenged about his behaviour he would cry, knowing it was wrong, but feeling unable to change it. The pupil also struggled with low-level disruptive behaviour and disengagement from learning. While his behaviour was largely manageable and not considered 'high end' by teaching staff, he was still on the path to exclusion without interventions being put in place.

Support and interventions offered

To assist with his anger management and regulation, the pupil was offered support from **Grow Wild**. The active and focused nature of the intervention was incredibly useful for this pupil, who benefitted hugely from the support. The Grow Wild team even used him as a role model during the intervention, which greatly boosted his self-esteem. In addition, the pupil was offered **counselling from the Benjamin Foundation** and a full programme of support from **ELSA.**

The pupil's family received support from a **Parent Support Advisor** which they found to be beneficial. His parents are together but have different approaches to parenting – Dad distances himself from the school while Mum tries to keep the pupil actively engaged in school; prompting mixed messages about the importance of attendance. Having a worker who encouraged them to

work together and with services, rather than at loggerheads and against authorities, was highly useful for the family.

Successes and challenges

The Parent Support Advisor fostered a better relationship between the pupil's parents, and they are both now more supportive of the strategies implemented by the school to improve their son's behaviour. They also adopted several strategies from school into the home setting.

As a result of Grow Wild, ELSA and the Benjamin Foundation, the pupil is better able to regulate his anger and express his emotions. Though there is room for progress, the pupil's behaviour has improved, and he is mostly learning in the classroom rather than in the deputy head's office or nurture unit. In addition, his risk of exclusion has now been severely reduced.

The school noted that a key success from this project was quick access to various types of NIC support without the barrier of funding. Doing this meant the school were able to offer support more quickly than might have been the case without the NIC funding.

Outcomes

Without intervention, the school believes that this pupil may have ended up in the nurture centre. However, the NIC interventions have supported him in learning behaviour management strategies, and consequently, he has fewer angry outbursts with a drastically reduced risk of exclusion. There is evidence of sustained outcomes because of collaborative working between the school, the pupil's parents and the various services, but all are nervous to see whether these will remain embedded after the lockdown.

Pupil case review H

Context and needs

This Year 1 pupil was on a reduced timetable due to challenging and disruptive behaviour in class - he would frequently interrupt lessons and disturb other pupils. He had previously had a couple of suspensions and his high level of need meant he was at risk of full permanent exclusion. Although he had a good relationship with his mum, she was initially defensive and combatant with the school, arguing that 'he needs to be here all day'. The pupil behaves well at home, especially when compared to his disruptive manner at school, leading the mum to fight against the school's perception of her son's behaviour.

Support and interventions offered

Because of his disruptive behaviour, the pupil accessed on-site alternative provision full time. However, the NIC funding allowed the school and LA to identify a better pathway for his future. A new block which can support his needs is currently under construction and the school is having ongoing discussions about the introduction of specialist provision tailored to his needs.

A Parent Support Advisor worked with the pupil's mum to get her 'on side' with the school instead of resisting their efforts to help. Through their support, the mum now realises that the school staff understand her son's needs, and most importantly that what they are implementing is in his best interests.

The school considered the Grow Wild intervention but felt that the pupil was too young and volatile to leave the school – they feared he would run away from the support, and it would therefore be unsuitable.

Successes and challenges

With the focus of working inclusively, school staff have been able to work with the mum to have higher quality conversations and ultimately achieve better outcomes for the pupil. The pupil's mum feels that the teachers have worked hard, saying "I can't fault them".

The school have implemented various behaviour strategies which mirror the approaches adopted at home to help keep rules consistent and aid the pupil with his behaviour. For example, they use countdowns to mark when behaviour needs to change and try to focus the pupil on making good decisions. This, in part, helped the mum see they were on her side, and went some way in reducing her antagonism towards the school. The school have also worked on positive scripting – for example 'kind hands' rather than 'don't hit' or 'kind words' rather than 'don't swear' – to encourage positive actions.

Another strategy has been the introduction of Lego therapy to help him with turn-taking, social skills, and familiarity with positive language. This has also improved the pupil's ability to listen to staff members, express himself, and understand the impact of his behaviour. In the most recent term, he had begun to spend short periods of time back in the classroom, but still spends most of the learning within the on-site alternative provision.

Although the school have developed these strategies to boost inclusion and encourage good behaviour, ultimately, they see themselves as providing a space for the pupil until they can organise the correct level of provision for his needs. They recognise that the pupil will need full-time SEMH Specialist Resource Base support, which is beyond CAMHS (he has already received 0.1 support from CAMHS). The school is helping the pupil's mum apply for the EHCP.

Outcomes

Despite the successes of the intervention, the pupil does not respond well to adults, and ultimately the school is searching for a more appropriate school for his needs. The pupil's mum, now 'on side' with the school, believes they have persevered well, saying: "They are finding a way to get through to him by trying different things…they are very patient".

Without full-time access to the on-site alternative provision, many teachers feel the pupil would have ended up at out-of-school provision. However, because of the NIC support, the pupil's confidence has grown hugely, especially in Maths. He now engages with a wider range of teaching staff than he did before, as he has become close with a particular TA who helps him with lessons.

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