



Centre for Applied
Education Research



Alliance for
Life Chances

TACKLING INEQUALITIES FOR OUR CHILDREN

Bradford Opportunity Area

Lessons and
recommendations
for improving
social mobility



Introduction

The 2016-2022 period saw work on improving equity play out against the backdrop of a pandemic that reversed a decade of progress in reducing educational inequality. The impact of covid-19 will reverberate throughout our society for decades to come. The pandemic shone a light on the regional and national inequalities affecting our children and young people. It also amplified those inequalities and further disadvantaged our most vulnerable families (as described with sobering statistics in the Child of The North report¹ published at the end of 2021).

The pandemic hit Bradford hard. We have more children and young people growing up in poverty than in other parts of the country, and covid-19 disproportionately affected the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. Our schools have always played a major role in supporting children's health and wellbeing but they suddenly found themselves on the frontline in dealing with pandemic induced problems of food insecurity, poor mental health, and helping families in crisis. The response of the schools in providing urgently needed support to children, young people, and their families was incredible

throughout the pandemic and afterwards. The phenomenal work undertaken by the schools stands as testament to the dedication of our education professionals. I would also argue that the existence of the Bradford Opportunity Area (BOA) played a major role in helping schools and health services mitigate the worst of the impact on our children and young people (CYP).

The Department for Education (DfE) established the BOA to tackle the poor educational attainment and social mobility that existed across the Bradford District even before the pandemic. Over the last five years, the BOA partners have worked tirelessly to improve social mobility throughout the District. We benefitted immensely from Bradford hosting one of the world's largest studies of childhood – the Born in Bradford (BiB) project. Over the past decade, the BiB research team have inculcated a culture where policymakers and practitioners have started to try to base their decisions on the best possible evidence. The BOA partnership board decided to base its decisions on data, and to hardwire evidence and evaluation into its interventions from the outset. One of the first actions of the

The response of the schools was incredible throughout the pandemic

1. Pickett K., Taylor-Robinson D., et al (2021) The Child of the North: Building a fairer future after COVID-19, the Northern Health Science Alliance and N8 Research Partnership.



BOA was to establish a Centre for Applied Education Research that could connect our regional universities to schools, and provide a forum where organisations could work together and use evidence to drive a whole system approach to improving outcomes for children and young people.

This BOA identified four priority issues and embarked on the 42 projects described within this report. The golden thread that runs throughout these projects is the use and generation of evidence and a commitment to whole system approaches for tackling the complexities of social mobility. The BOA based their approach on the evidence showing that factors outside the school gates were critical determinants of CYP's performance within the classroom. We recognised that no single organisation could provide the holistic support needed to improve outcomes for children and young people and improve social mobility. BOA brought together partners from across the whole system (education, health, the local authority, business, research etc) to create a new way of working. This report captures the transformative nature of the resulting data-driven, whole-system approach to social mobility.

I would like to thank everyone who has

worked so hard with the BOA to improve outcomes for our children. Together we have laid a solid foundation, but we now need to use the lessons we have learned, and create the conditions where every child can thrive as we transition to the DfE's new Priority Area programme. In Bradford, we are looking to sustain and expand our work through an 'Alliance for Life Chances'. The hard work of implementing this report's recommendations must begin now, and I invite all organisations and individuals to add their shoulder to the wheel.

Anne-Marie Canning, MBE

BOA brought together partners from across the whole system

Summary statistics of Bradford Opportunity Area programme reach

PwC opened an office
in Bradford =

225

jobs created



662,625

Children and Young People impacted



1,866

BOA school interactions

200,000

Employer encounters delivered

Mental Health Support
Team =

800

staff/parents/young
people interactions

1,244

Evidence-based
interventions implemented

39

Schools improving by at
least one Ofsted grade



1,496

Teachers & Educational
Professionals activated



110

Schools participating in
research studies



180

Families
mentored



102

Parent Champions
activated

350

Parents
engaged



421

School Leaders
involved

569

Trainee
Teachers
inspired



13

Senior Staff
supported



73

Research Champions/
Fellows recruited



School Staff Wellbeing
Support Service =

321

engagements with online
services

6

Young people with
learning difficulties
secured employment



CAER weekly covid-19
support webinars =

>1000

attendees

Executive Summary

Background

In 2016, the Department for Education found that Bradford had one of the lowest levels of social mobility in the country. The Social Mobility Index report - produced in 2016 by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission - indicated that Bradford was a mobility 'cold spot' and amongst the worst performing Local Authorities. Data from the Department for Education also showed that educational attainment in Bradford was below the national average. In response to the data on social mobility and educational attainment, the Department for Education created the 'Bradford Opportunity Area'. The Opportunity Area was one of 12 areas identified within England that received additional investment to tackle the factors contributing towards poor social mobility. The BOA team identified key stakeholders across the district and invited these individuals to form a partnership board under the leadership of Anne-Marie Canning, MBE.

Priorities and key performance indicators

In its initial delivery plan, the partnership board identified four priorities for the Bradford Opportunity Area (BOA): (1) Strengthening school leadership and the quality of teaching; (2) Improving literacy in Bradford's primary schools; (3) Improving access to rewarding careers; (4) Using evidence and research to remove barriers to learning.

The BOA set the following three Key Performance Indicators to ensure progress within these priorities:

- I. *Twenty-five schools from the 61 schools across the district judged in 2017 as being 'Requires Improvement' or inadequate (or recently sponsored) to improve by at least one Ofsted grade.* The BOA achieved this target with over half (39) of these schools improving by at least one Ofsted grade since the start of the programme.
- II. *Every 11-18 year-old young person in Bradford to have at least four meaningful encounters with employers.* The BOA achieved this target with over 200,000

employer encounters delivered (equating to over four encounters per pupil in Bradford).

- III. *One hundred schools to participate in educational research activity by 2020/21.* The BOA achieved this target with 110 schools participating in school research studies.

One major achievement of the BOA was establishing the Centre for Applied Education Research² (CAER) in 2019. Since its creation, CAER has funded over 20 projects, and attracted more than £10 million of external funding.

2. <https://caer.org.uk/>

Synthesis report approach

This report collates published delivery plans, project plans, information monitoring sources, and evaluation reports concerning work overseen by the BOA over the last five years. We analysed the work of the BOA and identified 42 projects facilitated through the creation of the BOA. A number of these projects were the recipients of direct financial investment from the Department for Education, but it was notable that the BOA's convening role meant that its contribution was often to simply facilitate projects and help organisations obtain inward investment. The report provides thumbnail sketches of the 42 projects in terms of their goals, methods, learning generated, reach, and key achievements. These sketches provide an indication of the breadth and depth of activity within the BOA and serve as a useful guide to promising interventions.

Project themes

The 42 projects were thematically analysed and we identified eight major themes (methodological details reported in the

supplementary materials available on the Centre for Applied Education Research website³). We report the projects grouped according to theme: (a) Tailoring teaching in relation to cognitive skills (1 – 5); (b) Strengthening school leadership (6 – 11); (c) Improving access to high quality teaching (12 – 17); (d) Improving parental and community engagement with learning (18 – 21); (e) Enhancing career opportunities for children in Bradford (22 – 26); (f) Removing health barriers to education (27 – 32); (g) Creating SEND friendly schools (33 – 36); (h) Creating an ecosystem for evidence based education (37 – 42).

We hosted eight focus groups between April and May 2022, containing stakeholders from across the system, to capture the learning from the projects. The focus group findings showed that whilst there were considerable challenges to delivery and evaluation - owing mostly to the COVID-19 pandemic - the BOA has been responsible for an overall improvement in partnership working with improved collaboration between schools, the district health service, and the local authority. A full report of the focus groups is available on the CAER website, with key lessons provided in this report.

These sketches serve as a useful guide to promising interventions

3. <https://caer.org.uk/>



BOA methodology

The focus groups emphasised the whole system methodology adopted by the Bradford Opportunity Area. The figure below shows the ‘logic model’ that underpinned the BOA’s approach to achieving their vision of creating a school centred community to drive improved social opportunities across Bradford. The model provides context to the many projects

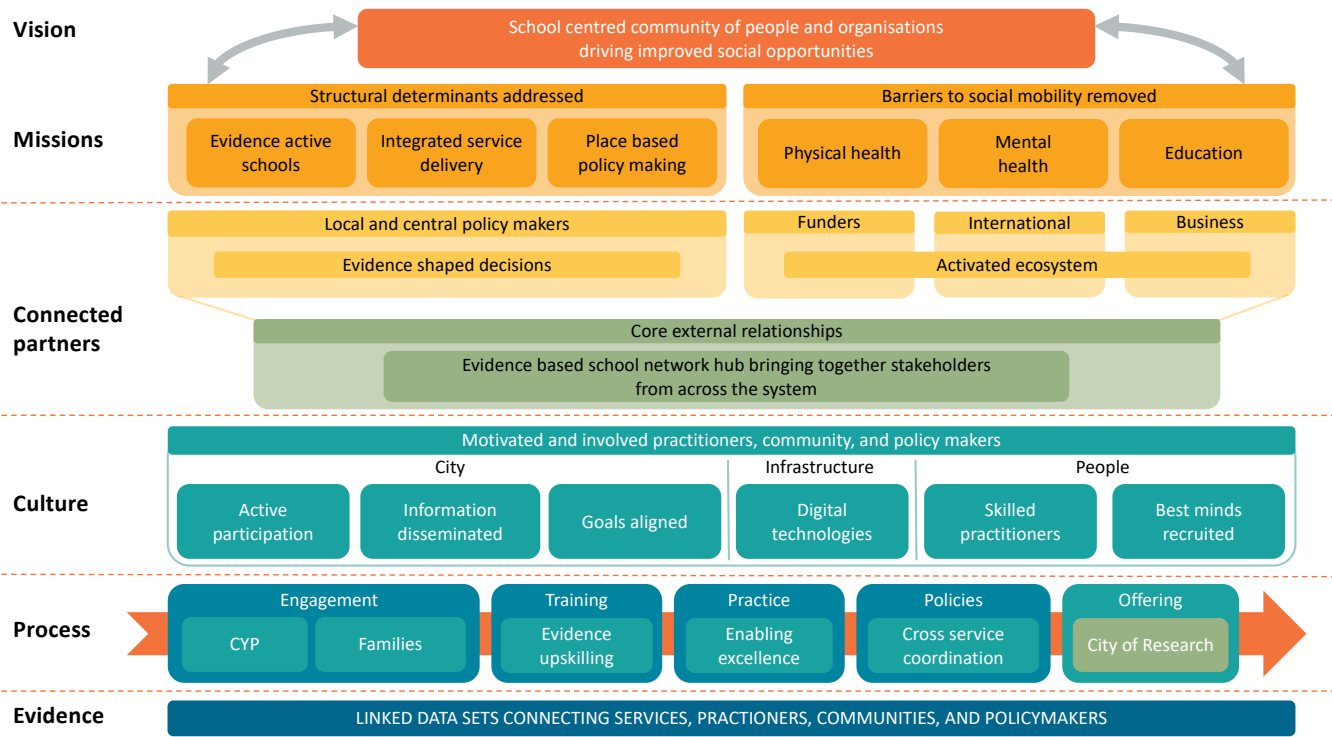
that sought to tackle ‘upstream’ determinants of social mobility (e.g., removing health barriers to education).

Conclusions

Place based funding opportunities - such as those provided through the Opportunity Area programme - are crucial for long-term improvements in social mobility. The focus

group testimony indicated that educational outcomes for children and young people across the Bradford district would have been considerably worse without the Opportunity Area funding and interventions. The evidence provided by these groups suggests that the BOA has laid a solid foundation for future whole system approaches to improving education and social mobility for the children and young people within the Bradford District and beyond. Nevertheless, there is great need to build on the platform created by the BOA to tackle the endemic problems facing children and young people within the Bradford District. This report describes the foundations laid by extant BOA projects, captures the lessons learned, and provides the resulting 12-point plan for improving social mobility. The evidence captured within this report will hopefully help the Alliance For Life Chances partnership board shape their decisions within the Department for Education’s new Priority Area programme.

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Bradford Institute for Health Research
Evaluation Team
Senior Scientist guidance from
Professor Mark Mon-Williams





Project Summaries



Tailoring teaching in relation to cognitive skills

"I think one of the things that has changed most over the last few years, particularly with our involvement with CAER through the Opportunity Area, is how much more focused we are on really thinking about what makes a difference to a child based on research".

Focus Group 1

1. Helping handwriting shine

Goal: Empower teachers to help children improve their handwriting using approaches normally used by occupational therapists or physiotherapists.

Method: The BOA supported an initial trial that the team scaled up to a Randomised Control Trial (Educational Endowment Foundation funded) carried out in 100 schools.

Learning: Classroom-based handwriting interventions can help children with handwriting problems.

Reach: 103 schools, 371 pupils in Year 5 and 3,854 pupils in Year 2.

Key achievements: The project reported that traditional health service interventions can be

delivered in school to address health barriers to education.

In the Future: CAER will build on these foundations and generate further evidence on how to support schools to help children with handwriting problems (a significant issue that affects educational attainment).

2. Working memory in the classroom

Goal: Understand educational professionals' knowledge of supporting children with working memory (WM) difficulties and use this understanding to create support materials.

Method: A questionnaire allowed educators to define WM, provide estimates of its capacity and duration, outline their experiences in

teaching pupils with poor WM, detail their training on supporting WM difficulties, and highlight their knowledge of effective strategies.

Learning: Educators lack understanding of WM and need materials that can support tailored teaching to children with WM difficulties.



Reach: Over 1400 teachers and other UK educational professionals.

Key achievements: In collaboration with teachers and educational psychologists, a set of evidence-based, free-to-use materials for teachers and support staff were created. The materials provide key information regarding the nature of working memory, as well as clear, evidence-based suggestions on how to identify and support children with poor working memory in the classroom.

In the Future: CAER plan to disseminate the WM materials to help schools target support and increase the chances that children will achieve their full learning potential.

3. Assessing language skills in secondary school

Goal: Identify and support children experiencing language difficulties within the classroom.

Method: The team developed a novel, online, automated reading task to: (a) identify readers struggling at KS3 and (b) pinpoint the source of their difficulties. The team integrated the reading task with a battery of tests exploring: (i) children's narrative abilities; (ii) grammatical

competence; (iii) verbal memory; and (iv) EAL (English as an Additional Language) status.

Learning: Online reading tasks can provide schools with 'linguistic profiles' for KS3 pupils and enable targeted support for pupils with language difficulties.

Reach: 2 schools, 120 Year 7 pupils.

Key achievements: The team created tools that allow schools to identify and support children experiencing language difficulties.

In the Future: CAER will generate evidence on the impact of deprivation and EAL on language outcomes, and support evidence-based approaches to supporting children with language problems.

4. Improving typing skills in young people

Goal: Optimise training programmes that teach young people how to type.

Method: The team developed an online multi-week typing course for children and young people that measures typing ability and its sub-skills ('Turbo Typing'). Turbo Typing provides detailed analysis of how

children learn to type and can shed light on the relationship between typing skills and educational attainment, cognitive development, and mental and physical health.

Learning: Pupils with automated typing skills are able to pay more attention to content (rather than searching for keys and planning individual movements).

Reach: 1 school, 26 children.

Key achievements: The team developed a powerful tool for understanding how children learn to type.

In the Future: CAER will use Turbo Typing within longitudinal cohort studies (e.g., Born in Bradford) to provide evidence on how to accelerate the acquisition of typing skills in children and young people.

5. Physically active learning

Goal: Investigate the short-term impact of classroom ‘movement breaks’ and physically active learning on concentration, behaviour and learning.

Method: A meta-synthesis on the qualitative evidence on the implementation of physically active learning (PAL) and interviews with global PAL researchers, teacher trainers and teachers underpinning the curriculum.

Learning: There is robust evidence suggesting that physical activity during the school day can enhance learning outcomes.

Reach: 4 schools, 458 pupils.

Key achievements: The team generated evidence on the impact and implementation of physically active learning, and contributed towards the development of a European teacher-training curriculum for PAL.

In the Future: CAER will work with local, national, and international teacher training partners to develop virtual and face-to-face PAL training courses for student and qualified teachers.

Strengthening school leadership

“All leadership programs should be delivered with fidelity. There should be research based behind what we are doing and the City is absolutely in that place now. If the OA was to start again with us in that position, then it would be really exciting to do everything with a really robust evidence base, rather than just what we think is needed”. Focus Group 2

6. School Improvement

Goal: Improve the quality of schools, their leadership, governance, and teaching in the Bradford District, so that more pupils receive a high-quality education.

Method: The project delivery team provided a ‘school improvement support package’ to 20 schools with three primary schools added from January 2021 to help them recover from the impact of COVID-19. Each school was given £25,000 to support (i) intensive coaching support; (ii) peer support from securely ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’ schools to senior leadership teams to sustain improvement and enhance teacher quality through instructional coaching/deliberate practice (CPD). A number of ‘proven to work’ activities were deployed to improve



school standards, and support smaller projects designed by local educationalists to help education 'lockdown' recovery.

Learning: School improvement support packages can be highly beneficial.

Reach: 23 schools.

Key achievements: The schools: (i) identified foci for improvement; (ii) were matched to system leaders; (iii) identified priorities for improvement; (iv) identified and confirmed SLE support; (v) received anonymised action plans and interim reports for the headteachers.

7. School staff wellbeing support service (SSWSS)

Goal: Support the mental wellbeing of Bradford school leaders through: (a) facilitated peer-to-peer conversations; (b) offers of talking therapies; (c) group, individual, and online support.

Method: The scheme offered: (i) a central repository for documents to support pandemic related response and recovery; (ii) facilities for peer-to-peer contact; (iii) a talking therapy offer for leaders – accessed by a helpline; (iv) a training and group therapy offer for all schools;

(iv) school leadership support from Bradford MDC's Educational Psychology Team.

Learning: School leaders and school staff require support for their wellbeing.

Reach: 321 engagements with online services, 13 senior staff provided with counselling.

Key achievements: Establishment of a regular webinar series that ran frequently throughout the pandemic allowing peer-to-peer conversations and support, and connecting schools leaders with health experts. The webinars are now an established platform for schools in Bradford. A wellbeing support service was established and successfully delivered.

8. Bradford for Teaching

Goal: Attract the best teachers to Bradford and keep them in the District's schools.

Method: The team created Bradford for Teaching which used digital communication to promote Bradford as a place to train and build a career in teaching. Live events were utilised to engage with prospective teachers and citywide teaching professionals.

Learning: The project emphasised the need for active recruitment in disadvantaged areas.


Reach: 569 initial trainee teachers (not currently based in Bradford), 54 Bradford schools.

Key achievements: Bradford council commissioned Bradford for Teaching to develop a recruitment and retention strategy to provide a temporary guiding strategic framework.

In the Future: A whole-system discussion about attracting and retaining the teaching workforce is needed.

9. Leadership masterclasses

Goal: Create bespoke masterclasses for aspiring and new headteachers. These professional development opportunities brought together leaders from across the district in strengthening their expertise as well as providing invaluable opportunities to collaborate and network.



Method: Exceed Institute ran ten masterclasses between 2018 to 2021. Each workshop focussed on a specific theme, (e.g., Raising standards, improving social mobility; Successful and Difficult Conversations).

Learning: The masterclasses were reported to be useful, with pandemic specific material helping leaders to refocus on shaping the culture of their schools by revisiting its purpose, strategic goals, and leadership schools.

Reach: 421 school leaders.

Key achievements: 100% of participants surveyed stated the training was of 'good' or better quality and that learning would/has improved professional practice in their school or organisation.

10. Coaching and mentoring for the post-lockdown return

Goal: Help leaders focus on: (i) the needs of their children and school and the effective implementation of change; (ii) avoiding isolation; (iii) 'recovery' as some 'normality' returns.

Method: The team identified and recruited experienced school/trust leaders with the capability to be excellent coaches. The team offered training and support to develop the capacity of leaders to refocus on school improvement and wellbeing following the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Learning: School leaders reported that they found the coaching sessions as being useful, engaging, and helping understanding. Common themes included confidence and self-doubt, the value of relationships and trust, being more effective, and seeing the bigger picture.

Reach: 26 schools.

Key achievements: 90% of participants reported a positive impact on school leadership skills.

11. Early Years Transition

Goal: Enable schools and early year settings to promote higher levels of attendance, punctuality, and parental engagement for children aged five years and under following the pandemic.

Method: The team created the Early Years Transition project to support EYFS leaders and practitioners to implement improvement planning for higher uptake of the free early education offer for 2-3 year-olds, and better attendance in Nursery and Reception classes.

Learning: The 'ask an expert' process generated excellent feedback from participants.

Reach: 208 schools a (universal offer).

Key achievements: Schools and early year settings reported an improved understanding of children's learning needs. Parents and carers reported feeling more confident in supporting the learning and health needs of the children.

Improving access to high quality teaching

“30+ schools have gone from ‘Requires Improvement’ or worse to a good or better judgement by Ofsted and teaching has got better in those schools”.

Focus Group 3

12. English and maths catch up tuition

Goal: Provide catch-up tuition to disadvantaged students studying GCSE English or Maths.

Method: Students received one hour per week tuition in small groups (n = 3) with a trained Get Further tutor. The programme consisted of 25 sessions for each group over the academic year 2020/21, starting after the October half term and continuing until the May half term.

Learning: Programme delivery was improved by running a programme ahead of the November exams; working closely with the college to ensure session times were included in student timetables from the beginning of the academic year; and gamifying attendance (rewarding session attendance).

Reach: 88 students enrolled.

Key achievements: Teachers reported that students grasped concepts and developed understanding in topics they had previously found difficult. Of the students receiving tutoring, 62% improved by at least one grade compared to their previous highest grade in maths, and this increased to 73% for students who received 10 sessions or more.

13. Literacy support

Goal: Improve the proportion of children meeting the expected level of development for speaking, writing, and reading (which, in 2016, were 2-3% points lower than the national average).

Method: The team provided schools with £22.5k to focus on a school selected area of the primary literacy curriculum.

Learning: Schools reported that delivering the Read Write Inc scheme via live or pre-recorded lessons had a positive impact on

parental engagement, as parents were able to support delivery.

Reach: 31 schools, 11,000 children.

Key achievements: The schools reported that more children engaged in home reading; KS2 pupils who did not pass phonics screening at the end of KS1 received extra support; schools obtained high quality resources for guided reading lessons (e.g., Read Write Inc).



14. Secondary school transition

Goal: Help Year 6 pupils develop the key literacy skills that support transition into secondary school.

Method: The team gave Year 6 children a copy of *Boy87* – a book about a young refugee's struggle for survival. Schools delivered the book towards the end of the academic year as an attempt to re-engage children with their end of primary school curriculum. Children then produced a portfolio of work linked to the text, which they shared with their secondary school during transition day.

Learning: Schools can work together on a shared project building on prior learning to aid transition to secondary school.

Reach: 156 primary schools, 8000 Year 6 children.

Key achievements: Schools reported that pupils deepened their understanding of British Values and felt empowered to promote being part of Bradford. Teachers worked collaboratively to produce a range of high-quality resources, building on pedagogical approaches supported by the EEF.

In the Future: Schools can build on the legacy of partnership working on teaching and learning initiatives to benefit all pupils across the district.

15. KS2 science support (Northern Star)

Goal: Build science capital and self-efficacy in disadvantaged Year 10 and Key Stage 2 pupils to provide a foundation of success from which to progress and build aspiration.

Method: A suite of primary and secondary student support with sustainability and impact magnified through simultaneous teacher CPD

and/or parental engagement. The support was delivered through small group learning experiences designed and delivered by expert science teacher consultants.

Learning: Key insights were gained into how to best engage with parents and schools in challenging circumstances, for example ensuring training was delivered by someone familiar and trusted.

Reach: 30 primary schools, 10 cohorts of Year 9/10/11s across 8 secondary schools; 1700 pupil packs distributed to 50 Key Stage 2 classes.

Key achievements: Anecdotal evidence was consistently positive. A foster parent of one child in care praised the project and the opportunity it gave the child to access small group tuition. Primary science packs were popular with local schools who signed up to deliver.

16. Wrap around support to encourage engagement with tuition

Goal: Provide holistic support to Year 11 students to improve their engagement with

learning and increase their likelihood of achieving a pass in GCSE maths.

Method: Schools identified Year 11 students at risk of failing their maths GCSE. The team provided schools with a small grant, and support to spend the funds on support to improve engagement with learning (targeting capability, opportunity, and motivation). The students were offered holistic support tailored to their needs and the University of Bradford provided 12 sessions of maths tuition, outside school hours, delivered by qualified tutors.

Learning: Schools can be unaware of barriers to engagement with learning which lie beyond the school gates. Undergraduate tutorial programmes can benefit the student tutors.

Reach: 6 schools within deprived neighbourhoods.

Key achievements: The schools were able to use the grant funding in an evidence-based way to help Year 11 students engage with learning and obtain additional tuition.

In the Future: Whole system approaches to providing additional tuition to children from disadvantaged families can be scaled up if the final evaluation shows the approach improves performance in GCSE maths.

17. Digital and remote education

Goal: Provide pupils with portable devices to reinforce learning in the home environment and support social mobility in disadvantaged communities.

Method: Exceed Academies Trust collaborated with CAER, Jigsaw 24, and school leaders to codify the process of deploying iPads on a one-to-one basis via parental contributions in a disadvantaged community. Participants undertook training with experts and met with schools nationally to develop their understanding and awareness of best practice.

Learning: The scheme can be low cost (~£14 per month per device) if the school/trust manages the process effectively and avoids passing on costs to parents (in other parts of

the country schools charge parents upwards of £25 per month). Financial pressures on families make implementing a parental contribution scheme difficult.

Reach: 1 school, 30 children.



Key achievements: The team codified the process and produced documents outlining the minimum costs (available to schools and trusts looking to implement such schemes). The team purchased a set of iPads for the school's use. Students continue to use the iPads daily and this has transformed teaching and learning, as reported in the school's 2022 Ofsted inspection.

In the Future: Whole system approaches need to be adopted to tackle the digital divide (see Project 22 on Digital Makers).

Students continue to use the iPads daily and this has transformed teaching and learning

Improving parental and community engagement with learning

"You can teach children more effectively when they come into school ready and able to learn, and schools are able to do that when they better understand home-school circumstances and have programs in place enable parents to feel empowered to create their own role in supporting home learning".

Focus Group 4

18. Data-driven place-based approaches to improving outcomes for children (Act Locally)

Goal: Use connected datasets to create holistic maps of disadvantaged areas that can empower communities, support local schools to engage with a range of service providers, and enable tailored policymaking.

Method: A series of data science projects generated accessible results showing the interactions and intersections between multiple factors affecting children and young people. The results were used to develop a methodology (Act Locally) that connects local schools and creates an anchor institution

network capable of supporting multi-agency responses to vulnerability. Act Locally brings together practitioners from across different services (health, education, policing etc) to co-produce interventions with the community.

Learning: Schools can act as invaluable anchor institutions within disadvantaged communities.

Reach: 10 schools.

Key achievements: The development of a powerful methodology for place-based working, and the creation of partnership convening groups in three localities in the Bradford District.

In the Future: Act Locally could allow place-based policymaking within all wards across the Bradford District.

19. Parental engagement survey and support

Goal: Identify strengths and areas of primary and nursery school provision that might benefit from further investment via a parental engagement survey.

Method: The Exceed School Improvement team developed the survey taking into consideration the EEF's 'Working with parents to support children's learning' 2019 guidance report. The team provided enhanced support (£7,000 grants) to introduce research- and evidence-informed practice in schools with low scores in the parental engagement survey. Head teachers and Parent Involvement Workers from schools that scored highly in the survey provided system leader support. The heads supported the eligible schools to review their practice, develop an action plan, and introduce enhanced ways of supporting parental engagement.

Learning: Parental engagement in schools should not be measured with unmoderated self-evaluation. Reach: 128 nursery and primary schools.

Key achievements: An interactive online map was created using the survey data to highlight

hot- and cold-spots of parental engagement activity for future investment guidance. An average improvement of 33.1% in parental engagement was reported between summer 2019 and autumn 2020 on four of the EEF recommended metrics in the schools receiving enhanced support.

20. Parents as partners in learning

Goal: Engage parents in learning to build their knowledge and confidence in order to support improvements in children's school attendance and attainment in the longer term.

Method: The team designed and delivered three community-based projects with schools to help target the families of pupils with poor literacy and low attendance. One strand of work used parent champions to engage the hardest to serve families. A second strand involved a schools-focused project establishing a baseline of parental engagement across the city, as well as gauging and promoting adoption of EEF best practice in school-based parental engagement.

Learning: Community-based projects can help parents become involved in their

Schools reported improved engagement with parents who were previously hard to serve

children's education and encourage families to spend quality time together. Parental engagement schemes can help reduce conflict and long-standing feuds amongst families and widen a family's social group.

Reach: 6 schools, 180 families, 102 Parent Champions, and 350 parents.

Key achievements: The team recorded a rise in the parents' self-reported confidence, capability, wellbeing, training, and commitment. Schools reported improved engagement with parents who were previously hard to serve.

21. National school breakfast programme

Goal: Help establish schools breakfast clubs to provide children with a healthy, sustaining start to the school day (improving their ability to learn and thereby raise their educational attainment).

Method: The team assessed the eligibility of schools following submission of an application (the criterion was and was at least 35% of pupils being eligible for Pupil Premium).

Learning: Schools providing a free, nutritious breakfasts report boosting the reading, writing and maths skills of Year 2 pupils by an average of 2 months' progress per year (compared to pupils in schools with no such breakfast provision).

Reach: 108 primary schools.

Key achievements: Provision of a free, nutritious breakfast to children in disadvantaged schools.

Enhancing career opportunities for children in Bradford

"I am very confident that the OA has made a tangible change within five years and has set some significant changes in the future directions. I think it would be right for the OA to get credit as an agent for change for how Bradford works on some of the challenges around enhancing career opportunities".

Focus Group 5

22. Digital Makers

Goal: Digitally upskill Bradford's young people, bridge the skills gap, and promote innovation.

Method: Deliver a comprehensive programme designed to equip young people with the knowledge needed to thrive in digitalised society by: (i) understanding the digital divide; (ii) establishing a 'What Works' centre for digital education; (iii) tailoring the digital education offer to locality.

Learning: Digital education approaches need to be tailored to the communities within which schools are located.

Reach: 38 secondary schools, 30,000 young people.

Key achievements: A partnership was formed to ensure Bradford is digitally prepared by empowering its youth to effectively access the digital world and support the development of the leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

In the Future: Digital Makers will work with Age of Wonder (see Project 39) to digitally upskill the next generation

23. Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) office in Bradford

Goal: Encourage and provide opportunities for young people to get experience of the workplace and access rewarding careers.

Method: Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) and Bradford Opportunity Area collaborated and

resulted in the opening of a new PwC office in Bradford, designed to attract young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the district and improve access to quality careers for those young people.

Learning: PwC's Bradford office has added 225 (with more planned) professional, high quality jobs in the heart of Bradford.

Reach: 225 people from Bradford employed.

Key achievements: PwC's presence in Bradford has introduced a key cornerstone employer with a strong social mobility ethos. The company has established links with the city's schools and colleges, and is supporting a technology degree apprenticeship with the University of Leeds.

24. Essential life skills training

Goal: Empower children with essential life skills, such as teamwork, resilience, confidence and leadership.

Method: Funding supported the implementation of programs both inside and outside of school hours to develop essential life skills.

Learning: Programme reported to be effective

at increasing the essential life skills of children and young people.

Reach: 208 schools (universal offer).

Key achievements: Young people reported beneficial outcomes relating to confidence, resilience, building relationships, and social and emotional intelligence.

25. Raising aspirations in primary school children (Bradford Primary Careers)

Goal: Enable primary schools in Bradford to improve their careers education, raise pupil aspirations, and tackle career stereotypes.

Method: Two linked elements of delivery - Networking events and the Aspiration Fund. Networking events aimed to build effective, sustainable networks with businesses and educational providers. The Aspiration Fund aimed to remove the financial barriers to Bradford primary schools in disadvantaged areas by delivering aspiration events.

Learning: Careers related learning reported to have become the "norm" in narrative with schools. Schools reported to understand the

importance of starting early to raise awareness of the different career sectors and essential skills development.

Reach: 68 schools, 3,847 children.

Key achievements: A self-assessment tool was developed to support schools in developing best practice for careers related learning (CRL). Creation of a new post to be permanent within the Careers and Technical Education team and wider department.

26. Helping young people with learning difficulties obtain jobs

Goal: Help young people with learning disabilities gain the necessary skills to secure meaningful, paid jobs.

Method: The BOA funded Project Search to help young people with learning disabilities access technology, understand how to search for jobs and learn key skills (e.g., CV writing), learn how to conduct themselves in interviews, and understand how to retain employment.

Learning: The original curriculum provided a good basis for support but students noted the need for them to help shape the program in future years.

Reach: 6 students with learning disabilities.

Key achievements: 100% of interns were reported to be “work ready” at the end of the program, with 66% successfully gaining employment.

Removing health barriers to education

“I think really the most important thing that the Opportunity Area did was to say ‘we need to bridge that divide between health and education’.” Focus Group 6

27. Supporting schools and parents to help pupils get and wear glasses (Glasses in Classes)

Goal: Ensure all children receive vision screening in schools, and free glasses where needed.

Method: Children’s eyesight was screened in school and those with poor eyesight, but who did not currently wear glasses, were identified. A randomised control trial was conducted, in which the children identified in the intervention group were given two pairs of glasses; one to keep in school and one to take home. In the control group, if a child was identified, a letter was sent home sharing this information, but no further action was taken (comparable to what happens in usual practice). Outcomes measured included fidelity and academic attainment.

Learning: Schools are well positioned to support children in obtaining and wearing their glasses.

Reach: 100 primary schools.

Key achievements: Preliminary findings demonstrated this approach to be feasible and effective.

In the Future: The programme is being delivered in other Opportunity Areas.

Preliminary findings demonstrated this approach to be feasible and effective

28. Supporting Understanding of Children's Communication, Emotional and Social Skills (SUCCESS)

Goal: Use routinely collected educational data to expedite the identification of children within schools who would benefit from additional support.

Method: The CAER undertook a pilot study which screened pupils using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile to identify pupils 'at risk' of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASC). Data were shared between healthcare and education sectors to facilitate support plans for children identified.

Learning: The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile can be used to help identify neurodevelopmental problems including ASC. Information sharing between health and education facilitated more timely assessment and support.

Reach: 10 primary schools, 600 pupils.

Key achievements: A new autism and neurodiversity strategy for the District of Bradford has been developed. Preliminary

findings report this approach to be feasible and effective.

In the Future: The programme will be offered to the 12 local authorities that host Opportunity Areas.

29. Mental health support teams in schools

Goal: Provide in-school mental health support workers to facilitate improved socioemotional outcomes.

Method: The support was developed and designed using data from Born in Bradford and CAER to ensure that the schools and children in most need were targeted alongside researching most effective approaches.

Learning: School-based interventions for mental health are feasible and effective.

Reach: 49 schools (spanning primary to college), 800 staff/parents/young people, 1244 evidenced-based interventions implemented.

Key achievements: The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) provided evidenced-based interventions to pupils and/or their parents/caregivers who were struggling with

mental ill health. Support plans were co-produced solutions with teaching staff to ensure feasibility.

In the Future: Bradford has been allocated a further three MHSTs to enable the district to offer this additional support to 52% of the child population by 2025.

30. Improving oral health ('Brush', 'Bright' and 'Toothpaste')

Goal: Improve the oral health of young people.

Method: Tested an implementation toolkit to increase uptake and maintenance of tooth-brushing clubs in nurseries and primary schools. Tooth brushing reminder text messages were sent twice a day to secondary school teachers.

Learning: Schools are essential in supporting healthy oral behaviours, such as tooth-brushing.

Reach: 5040 children and young people.

Key achievements: A support package was designed to facilitate good oral health habits for children with autism.

In the Future: The findings will inform Department for Education statutory guidance on health education, and national guidance on oral health support for children with autism.

31. Fundamental movement skill screening in schools (FUNMOVES)

Goal: Develop a school-based screening tool to identify children with poor fundamental movement skills who may benefit from additional support.

Method: A systematic review identified commonly measured fundamental movement skills. An online questionnaire explored teacher perceptions of the feasibility of screening these skills in schools. FUNMOVES was then co-produced with teachers, using rigorous statistical analysis and teacher reflections.

Learning: FUNMOVES enables teachers to evaluate the fundamental movement skills of a whole class within an hour, using resources readily available in schools. School-based screening of these skills is feasible and effective for identifying children with additional needs.

Reach: 5 schools, 1095 children, 96 teachers/teaching assistants trained.

Key achievements: Schools have been empowered to identify children with poor fundamental movement skills.

In the Future: The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) have funded a project which will begin to create a normative database for Bradford.

32. Accelerated learning of playground skills (The ALPS)

Goal: Empower teachers to improve children's fundamental movement skills using evidence-based physiotherapy approaches.

Method: A systematic review was undertaken to understand the most effective physiotherapy activities for improving fundamental movement skills. Researchers

co-produced a manual of these activities with schools for teachers to trial with their pupils.

Learning: Manualised physiotherapy activities can be implemented by teaching staff.

Reach: 7 schools.

Key achievements: Schools have been empowered to improve the motor skills of children.

In the Future: Activities in the Alps manual will be mapped to FUNMOVES (see Project 31) to enable tailored support for children with fundamental movement skill difficulties.

Schools have been empowered to improve the motor skills of children

Creating SEND friendly schools

“The neurodiversity profile has enabled us to facilitate work between services that would normally only be available post-diagnosis”. Focus Group 7

33. Creating a school-based screening tool for neurodiversity

Goal: Empower schools to identify children with neurodiversity and provide tailored support.

Method: Rapid reviews were used in conjunction with Educational Psychologist and Academic expertise to develop strengths-based assessment criteria to identify children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Developmental Coordination Disorder. Children identified as ‘at risk’ of these conditions will receive a tailored support plan to help both the school and the child’s family support their needs.

Learning: There is a large appetite for greater support for children with neurodiversity in schools. Teachers and families were highly engaged with this research and wanted to help make schools more neurodiversity friendly.

Reach: 19 primary schools.

Key achievements: Healthcare professionals, educational psychologists, academics and schools were able to collaborate to improve outcomes for children with neurodiversity.

In the Future: A neurodiversity profiling tool will be provided to all schools across the Bradford District.

34. Digitally acting together as one (Data 1)

Goal: Create data tools to identify children with multiple vulnerabilities.

Method: Pseudonymised data from health, education, social care, community services and emergency services were linked using the Connected Bradford database.

Learning: Linking pseudonymised data was challenging due to the lack of a common identifier across datasets. There are optimal strategies for data-matching across datasets.

Reach: All citizens within the Bradford district.

Key achievements: Place-based approaches to data analysis are being used effectively to identify needs and target support.

In the Future: Data tools will be developed to identify and support need earlier.

35. Data 1: Autism

Goal: Create a data tool that will enable timelier identification of undiagnosed autism.

Method: Pseudonymised health, social care and education data linked within the Connected Bradford database.

Learning: Using data from linked datasets to clear the queue of children on waiting lists for autism assessments is feasible. This will inform the creation of additional data tools that can identify children with other vulnerabilities.

Reach: All children at risk of autism within the Bradford district.

Key achievements: Linked data has enabled waiting lists for autism diagnoses to be shortened, thus expediting multi-agency support.

36. Evaluating the impact of preterm birth on childhood development

Goal: Investigate the impact of preterm birth on school readiness

Method: The relationship between a child's degree of prematurity at birth, and their likelihood of showing a "Good Level of Development" on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) was explored.

Learning: Data revealed that children born more prematurely were less likely to show a "Good Level of Development" on the EYFSP. This is exacerbated in children born prematurely in the summer months who were 'doubly disadvantaged'. These children were at highest risk as their earlier birth led to them also being amongst the youngest in their class.

Reach: 10,390 children.

Key achievements: Regional school admissions policies and guidance for parents on delayed school entry have been updated.

Creating an ecosystem for evidence-based education

"The research champion programme of upskilling and training teachers to do evaluations in schools and then becoming an advocate for research in schools, built resources for research and evidence-based approaches in schools".

Focus Group 8

37. Promoting evidence informed approaches to education (Evidence Active Network)

Goal: Incorporate evidence into education.

Method: The Evidence Active Network was developed, which brings together schools and organisations across Bradford to develop evidence-informed practice. Bradford's Research Champions have a role in exploring, implementing and evaluating the use of research evidence in their settings, and raising the profile of evidence.

Learning: Sustained professional development for school-based researchers enables improved access to the school and HEI-led research base, better implementation, changes to school leadership cultures and improved outcomes for children.



Reach: 65 schools, 73 research champions/fellows.

Key achievements: Schools have been empowered to research and implement robust, evidence-based interventions, and understand how best to improve teaching practices.

38. Classroom Air Cleaning Technologies (CLASS-ACT)

Goal: Assess the feasibility and efficacy of using air filters to mitigate the airborne transmission of the COVID-19 virus within schools.

Method: Two types of air cleaning technologies will be trialled: (i) Portable high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters (ii) Upper-room ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (ur-UVGI) technologies

Learning: There are multiple feasibility barriers in schools to hosting air cleaning technologies in schools.

Reach: 30 primary schools.

Key achievements: Two articles provided national guidance on ventilation and the use

of air cleaning technologies in classrooms (both published in the Times Education Supplement). The work is informing government policy on the use of air cleaning technologies in schools.

39. Born in Bradford and Age of Wonder

Goal: Capture the journey through childhood for the Born in Bradford (BiB) cohort and their progression through adolescence (Age of Wonder).

Method: Information collected from young people including biological samples and self-reported physical and mental wellbeing. Age of Wonder will work with secondary schools to embed the research into the curriculum.

Learning: Children and young people have enjoyed being citizen scientists and have felt empowered through having their voices heard.

Reach: 16,000 children.

Key achievements: Priorities were co-produced with young people and schools to ensure the research aims and questions are improving the wellbeing of the City.


In the Future: 30,000 children will be tracked through their adolescent years.

40. COVID-19 school support expert webinar series

Goal: Bring together health and education professionals to enable tailored solutions to issues faced in schools through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method: CAER hosted weekly webinars where public-health experts presented the latest guidance.

Bradford has benefitted hugely from the establishment of a multi-sector meeting space



Learning: Public health messaging directly to school leaders and teachers can enable schools to tailor their responses to challenges experienced by their school. School leaders and teachers should co-produce public health information targeted at schools.

Reach: Over 1000 people attended the webinars.

Key achievements: Bradford has benefitted hugely from the establishment of a multi-sector meeting space that allows partnership approaches to supporting learning and health outcomes for children.

In the Future: CAER will provide regular expert webinars.

41. 50 Things To Do Before You're Five

Goal: Help every child reach important health, learning and wellbeing milestones.

Method: The 50 Things To Do Before You're Five initiative was developed. This provides 50 low, or no-cost ideas for engaging children under five years-old via an app, website and social media campaign.

Learning: This programme can improve infant health by establishing healthy habits, school readiness, parental confidence in engaging in family learning, early language and communication skills, engagement in outdoor play and learning, and fine and gross motor skills.

Reach: 600,000 children.

Key achievements: There are 50 Things offers in 18 areas in England.

42. Creating Active Schools

Goal: Develop whole-school approaches to physical activity as recommended in global and UK policies as a best investment to reduce inactivity. Active children have been shown to 'stay on task' with the commensurate benefits to learning.

Method: The Creating Active Schools (CAS) profiling tool was constructed using a process of iterative development with partner schools and wider stakeholders. The CAS implementation model builds local communities of practice and supports schools to embed evidence-based provision through auditing current provision, action planning, and online CPD.

Learning: Whole school approaches can create organisational and cultural change that improves opportunities for physical activity across the school day.

Reach: 400 schools.

Key achievements: CAS has been rolled out regionally and has informed Sport England's approach to improving children's physical activity.

Lessons learned

The evidence clearly shows that the Bradford Opportunity Area (BOA) partnership board met their aims and objectives (as indexed through the KPIs identified at the start of the programme). The eight focus groups (involving a wide range of stakeholders) echoed this quantitative conclusion within the qualitative component of the programme evaluation. The combined evidence confirms the great potential of place-based education strategies that engage with a wide range of District stakeholders. The focus groups identified the key lessons learned over the last five years. A common theme was the urgent need to exploit this learning and build on successful BOA projects. The groups all expressed concern that gains made through the BOA were at risk if policymakers did not take pre-emptive action. The 12 recommendations in this report capture the consensus around the necessary next steps.

Conversations around collaboration and partnerships were central in all of the focus groups. Stakeholders judged the BOA as being highly effective in connecting organisations, but suggested future work needs greater community engagement at all levels. The groups highlighted the benefits accrued by schools working together regardless of affiliation, and gave examples

of educational establishments acting as advocates for families and communities. Likewise, the groups identified benefits arising from improved multi-agency working and the closer connections created between health and education. The pandemic played havoc with the BOA's original plans but underscored the benefits of greater partnership working. The groups strongly recommended that the cross-organisational connections built up through the BOA are sustained and expanded.

The groups provided examples of effective integrated projects created through a shared culture of evidence use, and described a virtuous cycle of research informed learning. University academics played an important role in helping practitioners understand the factors that affect childhood outcomes. All stakeholders – including schools, nurseries, the local authority, health service providers, and others – benefitted from cutting-edge knowledge generation, including data science insights. One reason suggested for the BOA's success was its ability to draw on evidence from the Born in Bradford project. In particular, the insights provided from connected routine datasets on the intersections and interactions between education and health were judged invaluable. Stakeholders argued that use of connected data and wider access to linked

Gains made through the BOA were at risk if policymakers did not take action



“Simply improving school leadership per se does not address the causal problems”

records is a priority for future social mobility strategies.

The groups provided testimony on the dividends yielded through targeting support to the most disadvantaged areas. Future policies must reflect the evidence suggesting that simply improving school leadership per se does not address the causal problems underpinning educational inequality. The BOA showed that a whole system approach (removing physical and mental health barriers to education) was required to level up opportunities. Parental engagement and business involvement (e.g., PwC opening an office in Bradford) were critical components of success within the BOA's projects.

The BOA's work through the pandemic showed that schools are good at offering practical, evidence-informed responses to the mental health impacts of adversity, from bereavement and loss through to social isolation. However, the pandemic also revealed the pressures experienced by school staff and the need for wellbeing services of the type provided to school leaders by the BOA. The evidence suggests a need to build resilience in education staff, limit burnout, and improve job satisfaction.

The groups praised the BOA's work around improving pathways for children with undiagnosed autism. The work underway to create an electronic tool that can empower schools to identify and support neurodiversity (and trigger earlier interventions) was particularly welcomed. There was consensus that the support provided by educational establishments must be better integrated with other family support services, place based and structured to promote equality of access and effective safeguarding.

All groups highlighted the benefits of considering the wider determinants of social mobility rather than a return to a traditional single perspective focus on educational attainment. The BOA programme revealed the value of dedicated resource allocation for social mobility, and the need for sustained funding. The problems associated with short-term investment cycles and allocation of funds at short notice were experienced through the lifetime of the BOA and need to be avoided in the future.

A 12-point plan to improve social mobility

1. **Place schools and nurseries at the heart of efforts to improve outcomes for children and young people.** We should support schools to play their role as anchor institutions within communities. Schools must be empowered and resourced to provide the holistic support needed to ensure all children gain the health and social mobility benefits of education.
2. **Create a formal 'social mobility' partnership between major organisations.** We must recognise that no single organisation has the capacity or capability to provide the holistic support needed for healthy childhood development (especially within our most disadvantaged communities). A 'whole system' leadership team would allow effective pooling and targeting of resource, efficient operational alignment, and a coordinated strategy.
3. **Convene a senior partnership board to provide clear accountability, authority, and strategy.** A board is needed to provide a 'critical friend' forum for cross-organisational challenge, and drive coordinated and connected responses to the complex problems affecting children and young people.
4. **Put 'Research & Development' at the heart of strategy and delivery.** There needs to be a push towards evidence-based education. Universities must fulfil their civic responsibilities and support partners to base decisions on the best available evidence (e.g., around school improvement). Rigorous evaluation (quantitative as well as qualitative) needs to underpin every intervention.
5. **Remove artificial barriers to information-sharing that work against children's best interests.** We must use connected routine datasets (e.g., Connected Bradford) to understand the intersections and interactions between public services, and create tools that can identify needs early and allow genuine multi-agency work.
6. **Allow information to flow effectively within and between sectors.** We need to ensure that important information on a child is available to all relevant organisations. We need to share this information longitudinally (e.g., at the transition points between nursery, primary and secondary).

We should support schools to play their role as anchor institutions within communities



We must give frontline professionals the freedom and support to connect and act together

7. **Adopt place-based approaches that prioritise deprived localities.** We should create geographically defined school networks (independent of academy affiliation) that can work together to engage with local communities and co-produce approaches to community priorities. These approaches should involve local businesses and ensure that schools are supported to engage efficiently with employers.
8. **Make a reality of multi-agency working.** We must give frontline professionals the freedom and support to connect and act together. We need to connect health, education, social care, voluntary and policing services so that we can address the needs of a family in a coordinated fashion.
9. **Support staff in educational settings.** We need to empower and upskill teachers (e.g., in improving mental health and tailoring teaching to a child's cognitive abilities). This needs to start in teacher training. We must recognise the pressures on educational staff and protect their mental wellbeing.
10. **Use educational settings to initiate earlier interventions.** Schools – in partnership with other services – can facilitate effective engagement with children and families, and offer early support (sometimes avoiding the need to take vulnerable families into unfamiliar settings).
11. **Develop integrated pathways of support.** We need to decrease the current and perceived need for diagnosis to unlock help, and enable school and 'early years' staff to work with other professionals to identify early indicators of risk and vulnerability and provide evidence based support.
12. **Provide the funding that allows this plan to become a reality.** We need processes for awarding and administering funds that support long-term projects and avoid a 'rush' in grant applications and spend.



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