**Norwich Opportunity Area**

Transitions

Development Tools

**Introduction**



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# Introduction

The resources in this tool are designed to be used to help school transitions leaders to conduct an evidence-based review of current support for transitions activities as well as planning for future development. The resources may be used in their entirety or focused towards particular areas of need and/or concern. This tool was developed as part of the evaluation of transitions activities for the Norwich Opportunity Area (Kirkman et. al., 2001a; 2001b). As a result, the areas for review are drawn from wider research literature as well as from the Norwich Opportunity area Goals set out in the Norwich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (Crown Copyright, 2017), and the Transitions Programme Core Aims (NOA Transitions group, 2019). Definitions of each area are given in the appendices. We have retained these areas for review in an amended order across the audit as they provide a consistent framework to take forward the areas of focus different for the NOA context. At the same time, we feel these will also be helpful and transferable for consideration by schools beyond this context.

 What follows is a guide that will help you to ask questions that might help you to see ‘what is going on’ a little bit more clearly and so you can spot the strengths and limitations of your activities and build on this understanding.

## Transition and transfer

Academic literature tends to use transition to connote changes in the lives of pupils in school. These may be internal to the school (such as changes of teachers, class moves, shifts in friendship groups) or external to school (changes in family circumstances, house moves, changes in health, changes in friends). In contrast, transfer is used to connote specific instance of Y6-Y7 school moves. However, the convention in the NOA is to use transition for both of these purposes. While this may be less specific, at the same time there are benefits as many ‘transfer’ (academic) projects, activities and structures are also helpful in supporting ‘transitions’ (academic) more generally. As a result, and keeping in mind the audience of this tool, we have adopted the NOA conventions and so transition and transitions will be used throughout this document.

## Audit methodology and some guidance on the process

We have taken the approach that an audit in this context should be a developmental process. Rather than presenting a standalone ‘point in time’ review, we took the view that an audit is a helpful part of a strategic development cycle that provides an understanding of ‘where you are now’ and ‘what you need to do next’. At the same time, we were also keen to avoid merely constructing simple checklists and tables; what Jelinek and Amar (1983, p1) called ‘corporate strategy by laundry lists’. As a result, we have reviewed a range of literature that considers different approaches to these evaluative questions (Where are we now? and What do we need to do next?) and have developed the methodology for this audit from these approaches.

### Methodology

Many different approaches to evaluation are suggested across the range of literature that encompasses business and management, strategic development, education, and public value. For example, Wilkes and Bligh (1999) suggest a typology of four approaches to educational evaluation: i) a student-oriented approach emphasises measurements of student performance (for example using test scores), ii) a programme-oriented approach evaluates performance in relation to overall aims or objectives and which often involves descriptions of specific activities. They suggest this approach ‘closes the loop’ of curriculum design by bringing together accounts of how each element contributes to the whole, iii) an institution-oriented approach is usually carried out by external organisations and focuses on evaluating quality for comparative purposes, and iv) a stakeholder-oriented approach examines the views of those involved and affected by the programme of education.

Another widely cited typology was identified by Scriven (1991) who suggests that Goal-Based Evaluation is an approach which focuses on the goals or clearly defined aspirations of a programme. He highlights that goal-based evaluation often doesn't question the merits of the programme goals and fails to attend to the cost effectiveness of activities. Furthermore, he suggests that goal-based evaluation frequently overlooks the positions of critical competitors, often does not search systematically for side effects or key ‘valid process parameters such as ethicality’ (1991, p67). In contrast he proposes Goal Free Evaluation as an approach which ‘involves a needs assessment of the impacted population’ and ‘direct comparison of it with the total effects of a program’, arguing that this then ‘yields an estimate of worth without reference to the goals’ (ibid, p68). In Goal Free Evaluation, the 'evaluator is not told the purpose of the program but enters into the evaluation with the purpose of finding out what the program actually is doing without being cued as to what it is trying to do’. (Ibid, p68). The logic of this approach suggests that that if the program is achieving its stated goals, then these show up in the process of data collection with participants. If they do not, scriven suggests the goals are irrelevant in practice.

A further influential approach is called Process evaluation. Moore et al. (2015) examine ‘Process evaluation’, suggesting it as a ‘an essential part of designing and testing complex interventions’ and emphasizing their view that this approach is ‘highly relevant’ to ‘research in other domains, such as health services and education’. They emphasise the importance of understanding the causal assumptions which underpin activities and suggest logic models as a helpful approach to revealing and clarifying these assumptions. Causal assumptions are the things we assume are going to lead to something else. They can come from social science theory, but complex activities are often also informed by other factors such as past experience or common sense. At the same time, they acknowledge the contested role of theory and the dangers both of neglecting theory before activity and of allowing theory to limit what gains our attention. In practice, a helpful way of addressing this issue is to try to make these assumptions or theories explicit so that any analysis or activity can take them into account (and look for alternative explanations or data that disagrees with these assumptions so we can ask ‘why?’ or ‘how might I be wrong?’). Moore et al. (*ibid.*) suggest three key questions that need to be asked in a process evaluation:

1. Implementation: what is implemented, and how?
2. Mechanisms of impact: how does the delivered intervention produce change?
3. Context: how does context affect implementation and outcomes?

They highlight that the focus of a process evaluation will change depending on the point in the life of an activity at which it is conducted. For example, at early stages process evaluation serves to develop understanding of how to optimise an activity design. In contract, during the later stages of a project the purpose of process evaluation shifts towards providing greater confidence in conclusions about effectiveness. Finally, a later stage involves evaluating the quality and quantity of what was delivered and understanding any lessons that can be learned that may be of value in other (similar or different) contexts.

### Guidance on the audit process

Taking the ideas discussed above together, we can see that adopting a variety of strategies might help to address some of the limitations of different approaches. For example, by looking at *what* and *how* processes work AND what *outcomes* are produced, or by examining *quality* as defined by goals AND *what* we might call less well-planned outcomes or ‘side-effects’. We are also keen to emphasise that the tool can be used at any time - at the start of programme of work, while things are going on and at a more formal point of review and planning. Also, the workbooks can be used together or in isolation and in any order. You will need to decide which are the priority areas and only you will know where you have the capacity and information needed to start.

# The audit process

To support your audit process, we have divided up the process according to four areas that draw together the aspects of good evaluation practice discussed above:

*Audit workbook 1: current context and needs*

**Aim:** identify areas of need and to generate evidence to help you to draw conclusions about these areas of need in relation to school transfer and transition in your school community.

**Do this:** before you compete any other workbook**.**

*Audit workbook 2: current Management structures, communication, and relationships*

**Aim:** understand who is involved in planning managing, running, attending, and evaluating your transition activities. It will help you to identify key individuals and groups whose views may be absent or over-emphasised by your current processes**.**

**Do this:** to consider how you might improve and extend your current provision.

*Evaluation workbook 1: current coverage*

**Aim:** understanding of the coverage of provision across the range of activities that you run. It will help you to identify areas of provision that would benefit from further development, or which require a disproportionate amount of the available resources.

**Do this:** if your transitions activities have been running for some time and you have a good understanding of the areas of need and the organisation of your transitions activities but want to improve or evaluate it.

*Evaluation workbook 2: current projects and outcomes*

**Aim:** to ‘drill down’ into the specific projects and activities that you use to support transitions and to understand whether they lead to successful outcomes. It will help you to identify areas that are high quality, and which are in need of review, development and/or replacement. You may find it helpful to ask staff who run the specific projects and activities to help with completing this step (one for each activity).

**Do this:** if your transitions activities have been running for some time and you want to focus on working with staff to improve these activities.

## How to use the audit tools

Before working through the workbooks, we suggest that you skim through the review areas and questions to gain an understanding of each area of focus. It is important that you see the questions below, and in the workbooks, as starting points, rather than comprehensive guides. In this way your thinking will not be limited to the content here. Our hope is that you will be inspired by what you find so that your activities grow beyond the limits of this exercise.

 **Consider:**

* You don’t have to use all the workbooks all at once. It is likely to be a more useful process if you choose the area and focus that is most useful for you to consider next before returning to more familiar areas for review at a later stage as time allows.
* Over time you can grow your understanding using different types of evidence to support your understanding.
* It’s a good idea, if you can, to work with someone else to complete this process. Discussion and collaboration tend to lead to a broader and more considered set of conclusions. You may ask different people to complete different steps in the workbooks and adopt a team-based approach to bringing this together.
* This is an ongoing process. Wherever you are on the journey - you can design and move to the next step by reflecting using these (and other) questions and tools.
* Please see this as a starting point - if you find a tool, question, approach, method, theory, etc. that is helpful then (think carefully about its usefulness and degree of authority first) feel free to add it in.

## Introduction to the workbooks

 It is important that you choose the workbook/s most appropriate for your current development needs. You can use one, two, three or all four workbooks as time allows. You can also use the workbooks in any order although you may find it easier to go through them in turn. You may choose to work through in turn or focus on a priority area that has been identified in your school strategic plan. The first part of each workbook supports data gathering to inform evidence-led decision making. The second part of each workbook will help you use the evidence effectively through careful analysis and action planning.

Within each workbook you will find:

1. A set of instructions for the workbook
2. A list of who may be able to help in finding the relevant data or completing the table grid.
3. A set of question that will help you to find evidence that is relevant to this workbook focus area
4. A set of tables that you can use to gather together the evidence you gather.
5. A planning grid that you can use to plan next steps.
6. A summary action plan grid that you can use to feed your action steps into school or department strategic planning.
7. A glossary of key terms for reference
8. Notes pages for you to record additional notes and ideas.

### Audit workbook 1 - current context and needs

 The aim of workbook one is to help you to identify areas of need and to generate evidence to help you to draw conclusions about these areas of need in relation to school transfer and transition in your school community.

**Audit workbook 1 action steps**

* **Step 1: contextual information.** This step helps you to create an evidence-based understanding of your current context in a holistic way.
* **Step 2: years six and seven.** This step helps you to create an evidence-based understanding of your current context focusing specifically on the transfer from year six to year seven.
* **Step 3: Bringing it together.** This step is to help you to make judgements about provision for the needs identified in your contextual analysis, set priorities and draw these priorities together in a way that identifies realistic opportunities for development.
* **Step 4: planning.** This will step help you to develop a set of actions that will guide the continuation and development of any existing provision and that will support the growth of new provision.
* **Step 5: summary action plan.** In this step, you will pull out the key aspects of your planning that need to be communicated to a wider audience. This step provides the overview of the capacity needed for implementation, as well as monitoring (and potentially reporting) deadlines.

**Who can help?** As you complete this booklet you may find it helpful to draw on the following people for the answers to some questions:

* School headteacher
* School deputy headteacher
* School assistant headteacher
* School data manager
* School governors
* SEND coordinator
* Y6 lead / Year 7 lead
* School admin team
* Local council children’s services
* Local council admissions team.
* Parents

### Audit workbook 2 - current management structures, communication, and relationships

The aim of workbook two is to help you to understand who is involved in planning managing, running, attending, and evaluating your transition activities. It will help you to generate evidence to help you to draw conclusions about strengths and gaps in your provision and will help to identify key individuals and groups whose views may be absent or over-emphasised by your current processes.

**Audit workbook 2 action steps**

* **Step 1: management structures.** This step will help you to create an evidence-based picture of your current context and is about who manages activities, how you make sure they are effective and how you ensure that they are continually improving. The intention is to help you to understand your school context and to think about areas of need and development that you may or may not have considered before.
* **Step 2: communication and relationships.** The most successful projects and interventions have a high degree to collaboration between different people who represent different groups. Alongside this, clear and multiple channels of communication are essential ingredients of successful projects and interventions. This step will help you to consider where and how you can improve collaboration, representation, and communication.
* **Step 3: Bringing it together.** This step is to help you to make judgements about the effectiveness of your transitions management structures, communication and relationships. In this step you will be guided to set priorities and draw these priorities together in a way that identifies realistic opportunities for development.
* **Step 4: planning.** This will step help you to develop a set of actions that will guide the continuation and development of existing management structures, communication, and relationships and that will support the growth of new provision.
* **Step 5: summary action plan.** In this step, you will pull out the key aspects of your planning that need to be communicated to a wider audience. This step provides the overview of the capacity needed for implementation, as well as monitoring (and potentially reporting) deadlines.

**Who can help?** As you complete this booklet you may find it helpful to draw on the following people for the answers to some questions:

* School senior leadership team
* School data manager
* School governors
* SEND coordinator
* School teaching staff
* Wider school staff
* School pupil council
* Primary/Secondary link staff
* School admin team
* Pupils
* Parents

### Evaluation workbook 1 – current coverage

The aim of workbook three is to bring together an understanding of the coverage of provision across the range of activities that you run. It will help you to generate evidence to help you to draw conclusions about strengths and gaps in your provision and will help to identify areas of provision that would benefit from further development, or which require a disproportionate amount of the available resources.

**Evaluation workbook 1 action steps**

* **Step 1: activity coverage.** This step will help you to draw together an evidence-based picture of your current activity coverage (areas on which you focus your transitions activities). This step draws attention to the key areas of challenge and opportunity when developing effective transitions support activities.
* **Step 2: Bringing it together.** This step is to help you to make judgements about the effectiveness and gaps in your current suite of transitions activities. In this step you will be guided to set priorities and draw these priorities together in a way that identifies realistic opportunities for development.
* **Step 3: planning.** This will step help you to develop a set of actions that will guide you in addressing gaps in current provision and that will help you to focus efforts to improve existing provision.
* **Step 4: summary action plan.** In this step, you will pull out the key aspects of your planning that need to be communicated to a wider audience. This step provides the overview of the capacity needed for implementation, as well as monitoring (and potentially reporting) deadlines.

**Who can help?** As you complete this booklet you may find it helpful to draw on the following people for the answers to some questions:

* School senior leadership team
* School governors
* SEND coordinator
* Primary/Secondary link staff
* School pupil council
* Department/Curriculum leads
* School teaching staff
* Wider school staff
* School pupils
* Parents
* School data manager
* School pastoral leads
* School counsellor
* Local council children’s services
* Local children’s agencies
* Local council admissions team.

### Evaluation workbook 2 - Current projects and outcomes

The aim of workbook four is to ‘drill down’ into the specific projects and activities that you use to support transitions and to understand whether they lead to successful outcomes (planned and/or unplanned), how they work, what support is needed and who is involved. **This workbook is designed to be used once for each project or activity that you run.** It will help you to generate evidence to help you to draw conclusions about strengths and weaknesses of different activities and will help to identify areas that are high quality, and which are in need of review, development and/or replacement. You may find it helpful to ask staff who run the specific projects and activities to help with completing this workbook (one for each activity).

**Evaluation workbook 2 action steps**

* **Step 1: project details.** This step will help you to draw together the information needed to create an evidence-based picture of your current projects.
* **Step 2: Bringing it together.** This step is to help you to make judgements about the effectiveness of your transitions projects and areas for development. In this step you will be guided to set priorities and draw these priorities together in a way that identifies realistic opportunities for development.
* **Step 3: planning.** This will step help you to develop a set of actions that will guide the continuation and development of your current projects and that will support the growth of new provision.
* **Step 4: summary action plan.** In this step, you will pull out the key aspects of your planning that need to be communicated to a wider audience. This step provides the overview of the capacity needed for implementation, as well as monitoring (and potentially reporting) deadlines.

**Who can help?** As you complete this booklet you may find it helpful to draw on the following people for the answers to some questions:

* School senior leadership team
* School governors
* Transitions project leads
* SEND coordinator
* Primary/Secondary link staff
* School pupil council
* Parents
* Department/Curriculum leads
* School teaching staff
* Wider school staff
* School pupils
* School data manager
* School pastoral leads
* School counsellor
* Local council children’s services
* Local children’s agencies
* Local council admissions team
* School admin team

## Using and recognising different types of evidence

It is important to understand how and why different types of data are important and how they can be used as this helps to bring rigor to decision making. When using evidence, it is important to pay attention to the *type* of evidence you are using, the *scope* of the evidence you are using, and the *nature* of the evidence you are using.

 **Consider:**

You need to know what the best course of action is, but you also need to know how you might be wrong! For example, we can know about things that have affected students’ attainment previously, but we cannot know for sure about the things that will affect them in the future. As a result, all planning involves making some assumptions about what might happen and what are the most important things to consider. Very often, the difference between a good plan that works and a plan that doesn’t achieve very much is the degree to which the planning process takes full account of the information that can be accessed and understood before the next actions are decided.

### Types of data

We can use a large variety of data collection methods when learning about, exploring, assessing, or evaluating things. These ‘methods’ can lead to different types of ‘data’. The Type of data tells you something about whether it can be used to explain (qualitative) or predict (quantitative). *Qualitative* data is concerned with meaning and the ‘quality’ of responses. In contrast, *quantitative* data is concerned with ‘quantity’ or statistical measurement. *Qualitative* data is most often used to describe and explain and to generate theory that may hypothesise a cause and effect. It is less likely to lead to models that can be used to predict, or which can be applied across large populations. It is concerned with investigating topics in depth (Willig, 2008). *Quantitative* data is more often used (at least when it is done properly) with large data sets and ‘populations. Quantitative data is used to describe ‘trends’ or ‘distributions’, and to test hypotheses theories or models. Unfortunately, quantitative data is often misused and is easy to misunderstand or misrepresent. For example, if we were to say that ‘most teenagers need exactly 9 1/4 hours of sleep (see Nationwide Children’s Hospital 2021). Well, ‘most could mean anything from 50.5% to 99% of teenagers! Plus, even if the study found that 66% of teenagers need exactly 9 1/4 hours of sleep then that means that one in three do not (and they may need more or less). So, when it comes to using quantitative evidence, it is really important that we are clear about what are ‘trends’ in the data, ‘gaps’ in the data what ‘most’ means, who is included ands who is excluded and how big our sample size is (because small sample sizes are usually not statistically significant).

### The scope of data

 When assessing the relevance of evidence to your context, it is important to consider its *scope*. The scope of evidence is the extent to which it tells you about the thing you are interested in. For example, if you are looking at evidence that is from *last* year, you need to make an assessment of what and whether it can tell you about circumstances *this* year. If you have evidence stretching back over the last few years indicating a *trend,* this islikely to provide better evidence of what might be happening over time, including this year. Therefore, we could say that this evidence stretching back over a three-year period has more scope to inform your planning for *next year*. For this reason, it is important to consider the age and period of time over which the evidence was generated. In addition, it is important to consider ‘who’ the evidence is about; this is known as the ‘*population’* or *‘sample’*. When considering your evidence, you will need to make some decisions about how reasonable it is to use this evidence in your decision-making process and how much ‘weight’ or ‘authority’ to give this evidence.

 **Consider:**

If you are considering evidence about the attainment of a year group of sixty students over three years, you will need to consider the extent to which the three-year ‘trends’ visible in the evidence tell you about questions related to teaching or teachers, learning or learners, other environmental factors such as illness or social needs, changes in reporting processes or other factors. On the other hand, if you are considering some evidence about pupils who have special educational needs to disabilities, you may need to ask yourself ‘to what extent will this student’s needs remain consistent?’. Or, perhaps a better question for planning, you may need to ask, ‘to what extent do these needs represent needs that we will need to consider into the future?’

### The nature of data

 The nature of a piece of evidence relates to how it was gathered. A key part of this is identifying the ‘method’ used to gather data. Different methods provide data which are based on assumptions about the way that the world works. When considering the nature of evidence, it is important to reflect on the senses involved and the assumptions involved in drawing the conclusions. Who was involved and how? Thus, it is important to consider the *nature* of the evidence that you are using so that you can make informed decisions about how what to do next, and so you are more aware of the assumptions behind the conclusions that you are drawing.

 **Consider:**

A pupil smiles after a teacher makes a funny statement…

Observations assume that we can ‘see’ and ‘hear’ about things in order to draw conclusions. However, what is seen and heard depends on the perspective of the person doing the observation and they can’t see inside the head of the people/person they are watching. So, there is room for misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

Is the pupil is smiling because of the joke made by the teacher, because the end of the lesson is near or for some other reason?

Interviews, on the other hand, try to understand by ‘listening to’ and ‘speaking’ with others in order to understand and draw conclusions. Does the student tell the teacher they were smiling at the joke, because the end of the lesson is near, or some other reason?

Written assessments and questionnaires try to understand by asking others to respond to questions without the opportunity for discussion. This detaches the person asking questions from the person responding and so introduces perhaps a greater likelihood of misunderstanding. If we ask enough people or collect enough assessment results, then we can start to see trends in what larger groups are doing or reporting. It is also important to remember that people will answer questions in different ways depending on their state of mind at the time.

### Using evidence of a diverse nature: ‘triangulation’

‘Triangulation’ means the use of two or more methods of data collection. It comes from the same idea ‘triangulating’ a position on a map by position by using two or more landmarks. By using the exact bearing or direction of each landmark relative to your location, you can identify on your map where the lines cross - and that is where you are standing. In a similar way we can use two or more methods to collect data and then draw sound conclusions (our position) in relation to ideas in these different forms of data that are in common, or which intersect. Two different types of evidence that point to the same conclusion is a good starting point for a conclusion. Three is even better. The figure opposite illustrates that you are more likely to be draw sound ‘evidence-based conclusions’ if you use multiple types of data.

The more our methods of data collection contrast with each other, the more confident we can be in our conclusions if the data is telling us the same thing. For example, we can have *more* confidence of understanding in-depth at a small scale if a review of documents, focus group interviews and observation data all agree that something is the case than if just a questionnaire or pupil statistical outcomes suggest something notable (Cohen et al., 2018 p141). Even better though if your statistics, interviews, and observations all point to the same conclusions!

As you go through your audit and evaluation processes and use this tool, try to find three pieces of contrasting evidence to support conclusions you draw or assertions you make.If you can’t, that’s still fine…but then you also need to be aware that your confidence in your conclusions should be moderated accordingly.

 **Consider:**

When seeking to understand the details of complex human behaviour, single methods such as an observation, a survey or a written test that may be effective in the physical sciences are too restricted to provide the information needed to form well-developed inferences. For example, we know that when we observe, we are more likely to ‘see what we are looking for’ or have a *perceptual bias* - when motivation influences our perception, and a *response bias* - when we report seeing what we want to see (Leong et al., 2019). Using multiple-methods or ‘triangulating’ our forms of data is an important way to generate conclusions in which we can have greater confidence.

### And in the real world…

It is really important to understand that we don’t and can’t always have access to (or time to create) really robust evidence on which to draw. Sometimes all we have is anecdotes, word of mouth, meeting discussions, minutes, post-it notes, notes in a planner…. This is still evidence (yes – you read that correctly)! We could call it ‘weak’ evidence. This doesn’t mean it is wrong or bad, just that it is not like the strong evidence that might be generated through a series of focus groups with appropriate analysis. Robust social-science research that allows us to draw rigorous conclusions is great – but it’s not your day job. So… don’t be afraid to use other weaker forms of evidence if you can’t find existing strong evidence or use any of the methods noted above. The important thing is that you temper your conclusions accordingly. Conclusions based on weak evidence are less likely to be accurate and more likely to miss important ‘pieces of the puzzle’. So when considering evidence, it’s important that we use different types of data and that we take care to understand the limitations of the types of data we are using.

### Specific methods of data collection

In the following section you will find brief introductions to seven different forms of evidence: interviews, focus groups, observations, analysis of documents and artifacts, reflective journals, questionnaires, and secondary data. These will help you to think about the type, scope and nature of the evidence that you are gathering so you can draw evidence-informed conclusions. At each point in the process consider ‘what can this evidence tell me?’, and ‘what are the limits of this evidence?’ All methods of data collection have strengths and limitations which are noted. We also comment on how you might choose to analyse the data and highlight the key things to consider.

**Method: focus groups**

Focus groups are discussions between a small number of specially selected participants. They are usually facilitated by someone who does not know the participants. Topic guides, prompts, questions, or scenarios may be used to facilitate the discussion. It is useful to record focus group discussions as it is difficult to take notes while facilitating the discussion.

Strengths:

* Help to develop understanding of complex issues from multiple perspectives in a short space of time
* Can be a rich source of data
* Help to answer what, why and how very well
* Helpful for developing understanding of why and how different groups hold different views
* Can empower the interviewee
* Allow topics to be explored in depth.
* Helpful interactions can occur between group members which prompt further discussion.

Limitations:

* Time consuming (to conduct and transcribe)
* Danger of bias
* Can be challenging to discuss sensitive topics
* Can be affected by existing relationships and power dynamics (e.g., pupil-teacher, line manager-report to)
* Ideas can be misinterpreted or misunderstood

Analysis:

* Usually involves looking for key words or ideas
* Usually involves reading transcripts several times
* Usually involves extracting key phrases that capture key ideas
* Can involve organising themes, exploring their relationships with each other, and identifying patterns in the data.

Be aware that:

* It’s better to include people with similar levels of power as this helps participants to participate more fully.
* Facilitators need to ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to express their views.
* The facilitator should always be neutral.
* Focus groups tend to work well when participants are comfortable with speaking in a group situation

**Method: interviews**

Interviews are often used to collect qualitative data. They can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. Structured interviews ask only a set list of questions. Semi-structured interviews contain a list of questions and topics but allow for a greater degree of flexibility so ideas can be explored more fully. Unstructured interviews may use prompts and allow the interviewee to guide the conversation much more. Interviews can be carried out in person, online, or via telephone.

Strengths:

* Help to explore complex ideas in-depth and from a specific perspective
* Can be a rich source of data
* Help to answer what, why, and how very well
* Can lead to new ideas and fresh perspectives emerging
* Can help to empower the interviewee

Limitations:

* Time-consuming (to conduct and transcribe)
* Danger of bias
* Respondents can go ‘off topic’ and waste time
* Can be affected by existing relationships and power dynamics
* Ideas can be misinterpreted or misunderstood

Analysis:

* Usually involves looking for keywords or ideas
* Usually involves reading transcripts several times
* Usually involves extracting key phrases that capture key ideas
* Can involve organising themes, exploring their relationships with each other, and identifying patterns in the data.

Be aware that:

* The interviewer can change the order of the questions depending on the situation.
* ‘Leading questions’ can bias the data.
* Indicating to an interviewee that a certain type of answer is the ‘right’ one can bias the data.
* It is good practice to discuss confidentiality issues and ask interviewees to read and sign a consent form.
* Interviews can be tiring for interviewers. Try not to organise more than 2 in a day.

**Method: analysis of documents and artifacts**

Project work often leads to ongoing physical or digital ‘outcomes’ or ‘products’ of the activity. These may be documents (for example meeting minutes or reports), pictures (for example drawings or photographs), objects (for example models, sculptures, environments, or other outcomes (for example music, drama a sport group or a regular meeting). These ‘artefacts’ can be helpful in that they reflect something of the activity that has gone into making them and often represent ideas in non-verbal ways.

Strengths:

* Can be especially helpful when seeking to understand the views of underrepresented populations or groups who struggle to engage with more formal (and often verbal) methods of data collection.
* Useful as prompts for further discussion
* Can be a rich source of data
* Can lead to new ideas and different perspectives

Limitations:

* Ideas can be misinterpreted, misunderstood and indistinct
* Often needs to be used in conjunction with a second method
* This type of data is often viewed as less useful or ‘robust’. However, this is a contended perspective, and many argue that this perspective decreases the agency of those already least represented.

Analysis:

* Usually involves looking for key ideas
* Usually involves viewing from multiple perspectives
* Hard for non-specialists
* Can involve organising themes, exploring relationships, and identifying patterns.

Be aware that:

* Interpretation is likely to be from a particular perspective
* Data collection and storage can be challenging as it may change the format of the artifact (e.g., a picture or video recording is not the same as the ‘live’ artefact).
* Use with an additional method of data collection (e.g., as a prompt for discussion) to realise the full value of this method

**Method: observations**

Observations can be used to collect qualitative and quantitative data and are frequently used to review educational activities. They may be unstructured or use prompts to gather qualitative data. An observation schedule may also be used which can generate either qualitative or quantitative data depending on the questions being asked in the observation schedule. They can be used to examine events as they happen in real life, rather than in a controlled environment. They may be carried out by a participant in the activity or by an ‘observer’ who does not participate in the activity. Video can be a helpful tool in recording observations.

Strengths:

* Offers rich insights into how things work in practice
* Helps to explore complex ideas in depth and from a specific perspective
* Can help to share good practice
* Often helpful for ‘how’ and ‘who’ questions
* Structured observations are less time consuming and provide more focused results
* Naturalistic or unstructured observations can lead to new understanding emerging

Limitations:

* Participants behave differently when they know they are being observed
* May be time consuming to conduct
* Observations are often only possible on a small-scale. This limits the transferability of findings.
* Video observations limit what is seen to a particular vantage point

Analysis:

* May involve qualitative or qualitative data
* Analysis of qualitative data usually involves looking for key words or ideas, organising themes, exploring relationships, and identifying patterns in the data.
* Analysis of quantitative data usually involves descriptive statistics (describing the basic features of a data set through tables, charts, and graphs) as sample sizes are rarely large enough for more complex (inferential) statistical analysis and this requires specialist expertise.

Be aware that:

* Care much be taken to ensure that non-specialists do not make judgments about specialist activities (for example non-teachers observing teaching and learning) as they do not have the skills to ‘see’ what is relevant.
* Data from structured observations is easier and quicker to analyse as it is quantitative. However, structured observations restrict what is seen to what is already known.
* Data from unstructured observations can be difficult to record and analyse. Reflective conversations with participants are often useful complements to observations.

**Method: questionnaires**

A popular and quick way of gathering qualitative and quantitative data from large samples of people is through surveys and questionnaires. They can be carried out on paper or online and in person or at a distance (online or by mail).

Strengths:

* Large amounts of data can be gathered quickly and easily
* Allows comparisons to identify differences between groups and subgroups
* Easier to ensure anonymity

Limitations:

* Do not allow for in-depth exploration of ideas
* Room for misinterpretation of questions
* Paper-based surveys are time consuming to analyse/enter data for analysis and introduce greater potential for human error in data entry
* Less helpful where there are literacy challenges
* Can be time consuming to complete

Analysis:

* May involve qualitative or qualitative data
* Analysis of qualitative data usually involves looking for key words or ideas, organising themes, exploring relationships, and identifying patterns in the data.
* Analysis of quantitative data usually involves descriptive statistics (describing the basic features of a data set through tables, charts, and graphs) as sample sizes are rarely large enough for more complex (inferential) statistical analysis and this requires specialist expertise.

Be aware that:

* Avoid leading questions (questions that promote a particular answer for example ‘How much did you enjoy the activity?’ - assumes they enjoyed it!)
* Open questions can be used to generate qualitative data
* Many questionnaires receive a low response rate, and the responses are not representative (you only hear from people who care enough about the issue to complete and return the questionnaire).
* If possible, it is better to adapt a questionnaire that has been used for similar purposes and has been demonstrated to be reliable and valid.

**Method: reflective journals**

A reflective journal is a record of the progress and process of an activity. It details the activity and provides an opportunity for reflection on the experience. They can be used by participants and leaders as both will offer different insights over time. There is no right or wrong way of constructing a journal but are often electronic (video diaries or written blogs) or written in a ‘log’ format with visual ideas pasted into scrapbooks alongside written details.

Strengths:

* Are helpful in themselves as part of a developmental journey
* Can be a rich source of data
* Can lead to new ideas and different underrepresented perspectives
* Often helpful for ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions
* Offers rich insights into how things work in practice

Limitations:

* Can be challenging for less literate students to access (although video and image can mitigate this)
* Time consuming (to make and analyse)
* Ideas can be misinterpreted or misunderstood

Analysis:

* Usually involves looking for key ideas
* Usually involves reading/viewing several times
* Can involve organising themes, exploring relationships, and identifying patterns.

Be aware that:

* Interpretation is likely to be from a particular perspective.
* Data collection and storage can be challenging as it may change the format of the artifact (e.g., a picture or video recording is not the same as the ‘live’ artefact).
* These can be very personal documents and so informed consent to view for audit purposes is paramount.

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**Method: secondary data**

Secondary data is information that has already been collected or generated for a different purpose. For example, student grades, reports, or demographic data.

Strengths:

* The data already exists so time consuming fieldwork is unnecessary
* Large sample sizes may be easily accessible
* Often provides information about groups that other methods of data collection will miss (for example people who won’t fill in a questionnaire).

Limitations:

* Some data may be confidential
* Data may be stored in a way that makes the data hard to access
* Data may be captured in different ways or using different scales across different populations
* May be inaccurate or old (with no way of checking)

Analysis:

* Analysis of quantitative secondary data usually involves descriptive statistics (describing the basic features of a data set through tables, charts, and graphs) as sample sizes are rarely large enough for more complex (inferential) statistical analysis and this requires specialist expertise.
* Analysis of qualitative secondary data usually involves looking for key words or ideas, organising themes, exploring relationships, and identifying patterns in the data.

Be aware that:

* Extra permissions may be needed to use these data.
* A data collection template which outlines the data and format required is often used to assist with the data collection process.

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# Appendix - Research-based definitions

As you work through your auditing processes, it is good to have a clear set of definitions. Clear and shared definitions help to support informed conversations and help to avoid misunderstanding and disorientation. They can also help you to search for and find useful resources and information which will help with your future planning and decision making. The following section lists some helpful terms that are drawn from the literature on transitions and related areas, and which you are likely to use in your audit processes. They are presented in alphabetical order.

#### Academic and behaviour understanding

 Also called ‘social competence’, involves acceptance into social contexts (peer, classroom, school) and leads to feelings of self-determination. For example, to gain approval from teachers or peers, to cooperate with classmates or to meet a standard of achievement (Wentzel, 2003; Bailey & Baines, 2012).

#### Building inclusive shared values and positive relationships

 Inclusive values and systems at whole-school level (starting at ‘the top’) has been recognised as a significant factor impacting on exclusions and key factors of these ‘inclusive’ systems include caring school staff who attend to child and parent concerns, compassionate teachers who are able to perceive and support peer relationships and strong external support networks (Cole et al., 2019; Coffey, 2013; Topping, 2011 Hamm et al. 2011).

#### Clear shared and enacted policy

 Co-creation and co-design of policymaking ‘in partnership’ with stakeholders (school leaders, local authorities, parents, leaders, teachers), are more likely to result in a high degree of consensus and support (McCluskey et al., 2019; Cooper, & Tiknaz 2007).

#### Continuous professional development and support (CPD) for teachers

 Training and/or support through courses, ongoing learning programmes or specialist provision to enhance the quality of teaching and/or relationship building skills (Bailey & Baines, 2012; Cole et al., 2019).

#### Disadvantaged pupils

 Disadvantage in the English school system is currently defined in relation to whether someone has ever had free school meal (FSM) eligibility over a six-year period is the measure. This is a socio-economic measure and while there are some students who are not identified by this measure, recent studies suggest that its predictive power is only mildly lower than other potential measures. Vulnerable children as defined as those who i) are assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child, ii) have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan, iii) have been identified as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or local authorities (Ilie, Sutherland and Vignoles, 2017; DfE, 2021).

#### Fixed term and permanent exclusion

 In 1986 in the UK, ‘fixed-term’ and ‘permanent’ exclusions were introduced as a last resort to remove a pupil from a school if they had been persistently or severely deviating from the school’s behaviour policy (Education Act, 1986). A fixed-term exclusion may last for hours or days for a maximum of 45 days in an academic year. A permanent exclusion removes the child or young person (CYP) from the school’s roll or transfers them to an alternative provision such as a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) (DfE, 2012; Messeter and Soni, 2018).

#### Focused support at different levels: whole-school, group, individual

 A range of support and interventions that target individuals, groups of students and whole-school level provide for different student needs. Targeted interventions for particular identified individuals are also suggested (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008; McGee et al., 2003; Pratt and George, 2005).

#### Local and school level support

 Support from partners/collaborators within the community is significant in supporting individual schools, promoting consistency between schools and for drawing together and sharing regional expertise and intelligence (Evangelou et al., 2008; Galton et al. 1999).

#### Multi-agency collaborative support

 Collaboration between the local authority, schools, external agencies, parent, and pupils is particularly significant in relation to the likelihood of successful interventions to support transfer, transitions and to prevent subsequent exclusion (McCluskey et al., 2019; Evangelou et al., 2008).

#### Organisational/administrative support

 Positive relationships and good communication channels before, during and after transition key and teachers play a critical role. Regular information sharing including concerning individual children is an indicator of strong practice (Coffey, 2013; Chedzoy and Burden, 2005).

#### Parent/carer engagement in transition processes

 Also sometimes referred to as ‘parental involvement’. Falls into three categories: direct participation, academic encouragement, and expectations for attainment (Chen and Gregory 2009).

#### Psychosocial support

 Psychological support with the social aspects of transfer. For example, making friends, maintaining friendships, fitting in, managing the fear of getting lost, avoiding being victimized (Chedzoy and Burden, 2005, Tobbell and O’Donnell, 2013; Anderson et al., 2000).

#### Student attainment

 Grade outcomes of academic measures, equivalent to GCSEs at aged 15/16 and A-Levels at aged 17/18 in England and Wales. While statistically problematic at the level of the individual, attainment is often measured against predicted individual trajectories using data trends and normal distribution curves towards these outcomes. ‘*Attainment’* is used in contrast with ‘*achievement’* which connotes students’ wider growth and development that may remain unmeasured or which may be impossible to assess in a formal way (West, et.al. 2010; Leckie and Goldstein, 2019).

#### Student resilience and behaviour

 Resilience is a dynamic process contingent on internal and external factors that leads to successful adaptation in challenging circumstances. Behaviours are manifest in teacher-student and student-student interactions, framed by whole school, classroom, individual and personal factors (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2008, Chaplain, 2003).

#### Student voice/involvement in decision making

 This is an aspect of transfer that appears to be more neglected. However, there is significant and growing evidence of the importance in involving all stakeholders as equal partners in interventions and the need to communication with pupils rather than about them (van Rens et al., 2018).

#### System leadership support

 Support for leaders to move towards a leadership approach through which they: a) facilitate conditions that enable others to foster social change b) see the ‘whole system’ c) use reflection and dialogue to move the focus from reactive problem solving to building futures (Senge, 1995; Senge, Hamilton and Kania, 2015).

#### Transfer and transition

 These terms are sometimes used interchangeably. However, more focussed usage employs ‘transfer’ to refer to the move from one school to another and ‘transition’ to refer to other moves such as from one year group to the next within a school or personal changes such as house moves or new carers Galton et al. 1999; Reynolds, Miller and Weiner, 2003).

#### Value

 ‘Public value’ can be defined as delivering services, achieving social outcomes, and maintaining trust and legitimacy. In this context this can be thought of as i) delivering transitions projects, ii) achieving the priorities and targets of NOA, ii) maintaining engagement from pupils, parents, teachers, and school leaders (Moore, 1995; Mintrom and Luetjens, 2017).

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