



Department
for Education

Norwich Opportunity Area Synthesis Evaluation

August 2022

Authors: Craske, J, Themelis, S, Blackett, A

Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	3
Future Considerations	5
1. Introduction	6
1.2 The Challenge	6
1.3 Evaluation Methodology	7
1.4 Method	7
1.5 Data and Analysis	8
1.6 Report Structure	11
2. Findings	12
2.1 Key Findings	12
Priority 1: Improve early speech, language, listening and communication	15
Priority 2: Raise attainment through targeted, evidence-based continuing professional development for teachers and stronger system leadership support...	19
Priority 3: Support children at risk of exclusion from school	24
Collaboration across Priorities 2 and 3	28
Priority 4: Give young people the information and support they need to move successfully between school, college, university and into work.....	30
3. Social Mobility via Place-Based Approach (RQ3)	34
3.1 Definitions	34
3.2 Impact of NOA on Social Mobility	36
4. Conclusions and Considerations for the Future	38
4.1 Conclusions	38
4.2 Programme Delivery (RQ1)	38
4.3 Perceived and Measured Progress (RQ2)	39
4.4 Place-based Approach to Social Mobility (RQ3)	40
4.5 UEA/OA Seminar	41
4.6 Considerations for the Future	43
References	45
Appendix: Selected project summaries	46
Annex.....	57
Summary of the data, material and process used in the synthesis evaluation report	57
List of all projects in their priority	61

Abbreviations/Acronyms

AP	alternative provision
CCC	Community Communication Champions
CCN	Communication Champions Network
CCT	Chartered College of Teaching
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfE	Department for Education
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EBPF	Evidence-Based Practice Fund
ELE	Evidence Leads in Education
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistants
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
FE	Further Education
FSM	free school meals
IOA	Ipswich Opportunity Area
NCC	Norfolk County Council
NEACO	Network for East Anglia Collaborative Outreach
NIC	Norwich Inclusion Charter
NOA	Norwich Opportunity Area
NTP	National Tutoring Programme
OA	Opportunity Area
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs Disability
SLCN	speech, language and communication needs
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SWERL	Supporting Wellbeing and Emotionally Resilient Learning
T&L	teaching and learning
TA	Teaching Assistant
UEA	University of East Anglia
WADADM	What a Difference a Day Makes

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Opportunity Areas programme was launched in 2017, with the aim of improving the social mobility for young people across 12 geographical areas facing substantial and longstanding challenges.¹ The programme adopted a place-based approach, which both identified a local area and devolved high-level decision-making to local leaders. This report presents findings from the synthesis evaluation of the Norwich Opportunity Area (NOA). The NOA programme was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) for three years (2017 to 2020), before it was extended for two further years (2021 to 2022).

This evaluation sought to:

- 1. Understand what the NOA did in trying to meet the original delivery aims set out in its delivery plan.**
- 2. Examine the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims.**
- 3. Explore what could be said about approaches that have seemed successful to improve social mobility via a place-based approach.**

Suffolk County Council commissioned the University of East Anglia to conduct a synthesis evaluation of the NOA during February 2022. The evaluation took place between March 2022 and June 2022. Specifically, documentary analysis and seven interviews with the Programme Manager and other stakeholders involved in the delivery of the programme were conducted between mid March and mid May (approximately eight weeks). The research team also attended multiple legacy groups and Network meetings, which provided additional context and an opportunity to speak to stakeholders about their understanding and experience of the NOA.

Key Findings

- **Evidence Base and Measured Progress.** The evidential base on which this evaluation draws does not allow for quantifiable, systematic and robust data to be obtained in relation to headline targets set out in the initial delivery plan and the degree to which they have been achieved.
- **Perceived Progress.** A key finding from interviewing stakeholders was the way the NOA programme had prompted softer changes, such as culture shifts

¹ DfE (2017). [Opportunity Areas](#). Policy Paper. 9 October 2017.

in ways of working. The programme has encouraged capacity-building and infrastructure that would enable ongoing improvements across several areas. At an individual project level, stakeholders felt they could demonstrate positive significant outcomes for beneficiaries (e.g. pupils, staff, parents and schools) as well as some tangible quantifiable progress in the data.

- **Legacy and Sustainability.** The Partnership Board and programme leadership have worked to ensure some NOA projects have a good chance of being sustainable once OA funding ends. Where they fit, some of these legacy assets are currently being adopted into the County Council frameworks. Some legacy work will sit outside the Norfolk County Council. Some large-spend projects, such as Communication Champions, have already started to be rolled out across the county. Responding to the DfE's request for OAs to share their learning and 'twin' with new areas, the NOA has started to cascade successful projects across the priorities with Greater Norwich, Great Yarmouth and some parts of the Breckland District.
- **Partnerships and Collaboration.** This evaluation points to significant positive changes in the way working practices developed between educational settings and multiple local stakeholders because of the NOA programme. This involves relationships amongst different schools, including between primary and secondary schools. There has been strong engagement and collaboration amongst practitioner networks, which has enabled good practice to be shared and joint solutions to be pursued. For many stakeholders, this collaborative focus has increased collective responsibility.
- **Coronavirus (COVID-19).** The flexible and responsive design of the NOA programme helped to mitigate against some of the disruption to pupils' learning during COVID, with examples of positive outcomes on pupil engagement and reintegration back into the classroom. The inclusive ethos resulting from the whole-school changes and staff development delivered via the NOA underpinned school responses during the COVID-19 lockdowns. There was a feeling amongst stakeholders that uptake of some NOA provisions was higher and more successful than some national schemes, such as the national tutoring programme.
- **Social Mobility via a Place-Based Approach.** Broad lessons have been learnt about tackling social mobility through a place-based approach. Key stakeholders have drawn attention to the sense of local identity and ownership that has been forged through working with the NOA programme. Practitioners have been empowered to become leaders in their area of work through the chance to access support, training, new ideas and opportunities, lead new initiatives and tailor projects to their own schools. Moreover, some stakeholders noted that the fact the OA was focused on Norwich meant that

there was a higher engagement and focus than there might have been if the programme had included the whole of Norfolk. The OA programme was positioned outside the Local Authority. This was perceived by several of the NOA team as allowing the programme to work as an independent and objective facilitator, to secure a stronger sense of co-ownership amongst local partners, potentially improving project outcomes.

Future Considerations

This evaluation outlines several considerations regarding future interventions, project evaluation and legacy planning. This discussion can be found in [chapter four](#) of this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Policy Context

Norwich was designated one of the 12 Opportunity Areas (OAs) in England, because of its low social mobility rates and relatively high concentration of disadvantage amongst children and young people. The programme was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) initially for three years (2017 to 2020) before being extended for a further two years, that is to say until 31 August 2022. Overall, £8,759,479 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to support work across four priorities:

Priority 1 – improve early speech, language, listening and communication.

Priority 2 – raise attainment through targeted, evidence-based continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers and stronger system leadership support.

Priority 3 – support children at risk of exclusion from school.

Priority 4 – give young people the information and support they need to move successfully between school, college, university and work.

1.2 The Challenge

The high level of multiple deprivations in the Norwich local authority area has resulted in many people being excluded from, or on the margins of, economic activity. This harms children's prospects, including low attainment and a relatively high number of young people classified as Not in Employment, Education, or Training. The extent of deprivation in relation to education, skills and training is particularly severe, affecting more than one-third of local residents in the Norwich local authority area. Norwich ranked 323 out of 324 districts in the Social Mobility Index, which compares the chances that a child eligible for free school meals (FSM) will do well at school and get a good job. This position was largely influenced by poor educational performance amongst disadvantaged children, performance of all pupils at the age of 11 and a low proportion of secondary students in schools with good or outstanding leadership.

The Norwich Opportunity Area (NOA) leadership, in consultation with multiple local stakeholders, set out their vision to “create a system where no child in Norwich is left behind”:² The NOA Partnership Board sought to bring together local leaders from

² Norwich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2017). [DfE Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Norwich, page 5](#), (viewed on 2 May 2022).

across sectors, including the local authority, schools, colleges, universities, businesses and community groups to review how children in Norwich compared nationally and set about a plan to tackle this.

Our vision is that all young people, regardless of their background, can fulfil their potential and access the opportunities available.³

1.3 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation team conducted a documentary analysis of a range of secondary data, published outcomes/frameworks, and other relevant documentation relating to the whole programme. The team sought out previous project evaluations that had been commissioned by the NOA⁴ and the national process evaluation report.⁵ The research team interviewed the programme leader. Additionally, there was an opportunity to attend several Network meetings and legacy groups across the priorities. The data collection phase of the research ran between mid March and mid May.

1.4 Method

The research evaluation examined the legacy of the NOA and examined to what extent it had achieved its intended outcomes. The scope of the evaluation was directed by three research questions:

- 1. Understand what the NOA did in trying to meet the original delivery aims set out in the delivery plan.**
- 2. Examine the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims by the NOA.**
- 3. Explore perceptions about approaches that seem successful at improving social mobility via a place-based approach.**

Within these three research questions, further areas were explored and comprised:

- What were the key aims of each priority in this OA?
- Who was targeted?
- What projects were used to meet these priorities?

³ Ibid.

⁴ See York Consulting LLP (2022). [Norwich Inclusion Charter Evaluation](#). May 2022 (viewed on 15 June 2022)

⁵ See NatGen (2022). [Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation](#). Research Report (viewed on 20 June 2022).

- Were these projects new/existing? Who were they targeted? How were they delivered? Who was involved? Were these short- or long-term projects?
- How has the approach varied across the different programme years?

1.5 Data and Analysis

This evaluation combined documentary analysis of published and unpublished documentation, attending stakeholder network meetings and seven semi-structured interviews including with the NOA Programme Manager, others with leading roles on specific projects or part of a group or Network and those involved with NOA at the Norfolk County Council.⁶ Data analysis occurred across the course of the research evaluation. Initially, a broad thematic analysis was conducted of high-level reports, Partnership Board reports, NOA newsletters and survey data on headteachers produced by NOA. Following this, a more focused approach was taken to look at unpublished monitoring reports from individual projects. At the same time, the evaluation team met stakeholders in four separate Network meetings to try to better understand the stakeholders' experience of working within the NOA programme. Two members of the research team joined the NOA's 'Big Breakfast' (half-day) event, which reflected on the progress of the NOA programme.

Documentary analysis involved analysing published and unpublished documentation to triangulate and test assertions in high-level reports, evaluating individual projects and developing recommendations.

Access to two **stakeholder meetings** was secured by the OA leads who invited the University of East Anglia (UEA) research team to attend the project group meetings. During 15- to 20-minute designated slots, UEA researchers asked NOA stakeholders such as education leaders, teachers and early years practitioners, questions to get their views on their engagement with projects, any barriers they faced, experiences from their participation with the NOA and examples of best practice.

Seven **interviews**, including with the Programme Manager, those who were leading or supporting projects or were a part of a group or Network, and those involved with NOA at the Norfolk County Council. Interviews covered topics about why certain decisions were made early in the programme, the development of the NOA programme, COVID-19 disruption, legacy, and future considerations.

Stakeholder meetings and interviews were strategically important for developing a report that included some context-rich findings. This qualitative approach can capture examples of positive engagement by schools during the past couple of years whilst under significant pressure from COVID-19. Moreover, meetings and interviews

⁶ An annex accompanies this evaluation and provides more detail about the types of documentation (published and unpublished) analysed.

enabled researchers to probe and contextualise any gaps in available data, caused by the monitoring challenges posed by COVID-19. Project group discussions and stakeholder interviews were held virtually, which allowed for time and cost savings for both participants and the research team.

Method	Description
Documentary Analysis (2017 to 2022 documents)	Logic models, prior evaluation reports, headteacher surveys, Partnership Board reports and meeting minutes, NOA newsletters. Headteacher surveys, unpublished individual project evaluations and monitoring reports.
Stakeholder Interviews (semi-structured)	Seven interviews, including with the Programme Manager and those involved with NOA Networks and groups, part of the local authority or involved with supporting or delivering projects.
Legacy groups and Network meetings	Attendance at groups and networks that ran across the priorities; context-building exercise. Two meetings were conducted.

Ethics

Stakeholder meetings and interviews were subject to the UEA’s School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics sub-committee's approval. This ethics process ensured that there was a rigorous in-built design and procedure for protecting stakeholders and data generated. Interview participants were fully briefed about the purpose of the research, how their data would be handled and any opt-out procedures. For the interview, Microsoft Teams-generated transcripts were produced. Stakeholder meetings were part of the research team’s attempt to understand the context of the NOA.

Limitations

Within an eight-week window for data collection and analysis, this evaluation attempted to cover 97 activities⁷ conducted by the NOA over the duration of the programme (2017 to 2022).

The evaluation team had hoped to interview senior school leaders to provide a more context-rich discussion of perceived outcomes for schools; however, recruitment within the time window proved difficult. As a result, this evaluation relies more heavily on previous headteacher surveys, on the documentation provided by the NOA, including high-level reports, unpublished documents and previous evaluations commissioned by the NOA and nationally.

Because a lot of baseline data was not collected in the early stages of the programme, it has been hard for the OA to demonstrate (either way) whether headline targets have been met. This was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in more gaps in testing data. As a result, any measured progress is limited to individual project data, where it exists.

This evaluation is not an impact evaluation and therefore its scope is limited to the three research questions outlined earlier in this chapter.

UEA/OA Seminar

On 27 June 2022, a half-day hybrid seminar was held at the UEA. The evaluation team and OA worked collaboratively to deliver this event. Prior to the seminar, the UEA evaluation team shared its full provisional report, including findings and recommendations, with those stakeholders who were joining online or in person. The event was intended to generate feedback from stakeholders on whether they agreed with the evaluation team's findings and recommendations, as well as to reflect more broadly on what they felt had changed in Norwich and Ipswich because of the OA programme.

Overall, around 40 people attended the event in person (30) and online (10). Both OAs' Chairs were present, alongside some Partnership Board members, as well as stakeholders from Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, school leaders, OA Programme Managers, DfE leads and members of UEA's outreach and widening participation team.

Three questions were circulated with both reports in advance of the event and provided the basis for a group discussion and feedback session.

Question 1: Do you agree with the evaluation findings and recommendations? Are there any surprises?

Question 2: What difference has the OA programme made in Norwich and Ipswich that will contribute to greater social mobility?

⁷ Within defined 'projects', the NOA programme had often developed multiple activities. For instance, the Communication Champions project involved activities such as offering masters qualifications, audit tools, pilots and CPD provision.

Question 3: What would you recommend to others setting up a similar programme?

There is a discussion of the findings of this event in the Conclusions chapter of this report.

1.6 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is structured in the following way:

- **Chapter 2, Findings.** Overarching findings from across the programme, as well as each priority individually.
- **Chapter 3, Social Mobility via a Place-Based Approach.** A discussion of the way social mobility was addressed via a place-based approach by this OA.
- **Chapter 4, Conclusion and Considerations for the Future.** A summary of each research question and some reflections for the future.

2. Findings

This chapter presents findings from the synthesis evaluation research conducted by the UEA research team. It begins by reiterating the key findings from across each of the four priorities. Each priority is then set out in its context, as well as the targets that the NOA developed in its original 2017 delivery plan. This evaluation then assesses what was done by the NOA for each priority, as well as any measured and perceived progress that was made towards achieving headline targets.

2.1 Key Findings

- **The evidential base on which this evaluation draws does not allow for quantifiable, systematic and robust data to be obtained in relation to headline targets set out in the initial delivery plan and the degree to which they have been achieved.** Multiple potential reasons for this came up throughout the evaluation. First, COVID-19 disrupted national benchmarking, which made it difficult to assess local progress at a national level. Second, at a programme level, not enough was done from the start to build a robust quantitative evaluation of project impact. Finally, echoing a theme from the national evaluation,⁸ demonstrating a marked impact on social mobility takes longer than the programme's lifecycle and so the capacity-building and infrastructure set up to tackle deep-rooted problems will need to be considered over a longer period.
- **Several individual projects were perceived to provide positive significant outcomes for beneficiaries of the funding (such as pupils, staff, parents and schools).** Through documentary analysis and interviews, this synthesis evaluation found that the NOA delivery team was able to deliver several innovative projects over the five years of the programme. Across the four priorities, some projects specifically targeted outcomes for a specific group of schools, whereas others provided schools with discretion to use funds to target priorities in a way that made sense for them. A significant number of practitioners benefited from professional training. Though many of the projects were school based, there were also examples of direct interventions for young people and their families. Moreover, some projects demonstrated tangible quantifiable progress in the data for individual cohorts involved with projects.⁹

⁸ NatCen (2022). [Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation](#). Research Report (viewed on 20 June 2022)

⁹ An example here would be the What a Difference a Day Makes, which showed that pupils from one cohort taking part on the programme (English and maths) increased their GCSE grades by 1.6.

- **A key finding from interviewing stakeholders was the way the NOA programme had prompted softer changes, such as culture shifts in ways of working.** The NOA programme has encouraged stakeholders across sectors to consider capacity and infrastructure-building to enable ongoing improvements across several areas, including inclusion and transitions provision. Examples were given, such as schools coordinating with one another to ensure open evenings would not clash. NOA schools and their teachers have been keen to investigate and implement a broad range of evidence-based approaches to improve outcomes for pupils in Norwich and beyond. This was seen as a substantial new change in ethos by the stakeholders the evaluation team spoke to in stakeholder meetings and interviews.
- **The Partnership Board and programme leadership have worked to ensure many of the NOA projects have a good chance of being sustainable once OA funding ends.** Where it has been relevant and strategic for stakeholders involved, legacy assets are currently being adopted into the local authority frameworks. Some large-spend projects, such as Communication Champions, have already started to be rolled out across the county. Responding to the DfE's request for OAs to share their learning and 'twin' with new areas, the NOA has started to cascade successful projects across Greater Norwich, Great Yarmouth and parts of the Breckland District. The Transitions Project was also mentioned as a key legacy asset. Although this started in Norwich, it has now been extended to the Greater Norwich areas as a twinning project. Learning and resources have also been shared with the Norfolk Learning Board sub-group on transitions, who are considering which principles, practices and resources can be extended more widely across Norfolk

The NOA tried to either provide elements of sustainability in its projects or offer the opportunity for local partners or schools to assess costs and benefits to inform future decisions about whether they would wish to support projects in future. Where this has not been taken up, some projects have ended.

- **This evaluation can point to significant positive changes in the way 'working practices' developed between educational settings and multiple local stakeholders because of the NOA programme.** This involves relationships amongst different schools, including between primary and secondary schools. There has been strong engagement and collaboration amongst practitioner networks, which has enabled the good practice to be shared and joint solutions to be pursued. For many stakeholders across the sectors, this collaborative focus has increased collective responsibility. Some

strategic stakeholders felt it had been harder to get collaboration between primaries. There was a mixed response amongst stakeholders about how much the council had been involved in the strategy of the NOA programme, especially in the early stages of the programme; however, there was an overall appreciation that it had shifted practice.

- **The flexible and responsive design of the NOA programme helped to mitigate some of the disruptions to pupils' learning during COVID, with examples of positive outcomes on pupil engagement and reintegration back into classes.** The inclusive ethos resulting from the whole-school changes and staff development delivered via the NOA underpinned school responses during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Inclusion staff said that specific inclusive practices were important to prepare for school closures, whilst funding allowed for bespoke and targeted interventions that could demonstrate tangible outcomes. There was a feeling amongst stakeholders that uptake was higher and more successful than some national schemes, such as the national tutoring programme.
- **Broad lessons have been learnt about tackling social mobility through a place-based approach.** Key stakeholders have drawn attention to the sense of local identity and ownership that has been forged through working with the NOA programme. Practitioners have been empowered to become leaders in their area of work through the chance to access support, training, new ideas and opportunities, lead new initiatives and tailor projects to their schools. Moreover, some stakeholders noted that the fact the OA was focused on Norwich meant that there was a higher engagement and focus than might have been if the programme had included the whole of Norfolk. The OA programme was positioned outside the local authority. This was perceived by several of the NOA team as allowing the programme to work as an independent and objective facilitator, to secure a stronger sense of co-ownership amongst local partners, potentially improving project outcomes.

Priority 1: Improve early speech, language, listening and communication

Context

Priority 1 was focused on improving early speech, language, listening and communication. In its delivery plan, the NOA had identified that the take up of early years provision was below the national average and the proportion of children achieving a “good level of development” when they started school was low. The average Early Years Foundations Stage Profile point score for FSM-eligible pupils was amongst the lowest for all local authority districts in England.

What was done?

- Eight substantial projects, comprising of 20 activities across the five years. These activities spanned a vast range of CPD in early speech, language and communication development, toolkits (WellComm), sustainability and twinning work, training Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) and annual conferences.
- The work done for this priority has led to several high-profile flagship projects such as Communication Champions (Appendix 1), Community Communication Champions and The Early Years Transition Project (Appendix 2). The Community Communication Champions project was evaluated¹⁰ over a period of 18 months. Lessons on delivery have been applied to further rollouts of provision.¹¹

What were some key outcomes?

- There is now a trained Communication Champion in 92% of Norwich primary schools. 95% of parents reported that the course had been helpful in changing the way they talked to their child.
- The Partnership Board has set out multiple legacy assets in relation to priority 1. This includes the Communication Champions Hub model, which plans to continue running active networks for practitioners to share best practice. The vision of the OA is that every school in Norwich will have a Communication Champion who can ensure “a consistent, universal approach to supporting early communication”.
- Communication Hub schools and settings will maintain the networks of Communication Champions and continue to meet, and there are plans to offer training across Norfolk for Early Years Foundation Stage settings. The Council plans to support the future proofing of resources available to parents.

¹⁰ Milligan, T, Smith, T, Trelford, H (2020). [Community Communication Champions in Norwich: an evaluation](#). University of East Anglia (viewed on 20 April 2022)

¹¹ UEA evaluation team interview.

In its initial delivery plan, the NOA's targets were:¹²

- By September 2021, 75% of eligible two-year-olds and 95% of eligible three-to four-year-olds will be benefiting from funded early years education.
- By 2021, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development will be in the top half for all local authority districts in England.

The NOA proposed to develop greater consistency in supporting children with their language development by developing a bespoke programme with local and national experts to train teachers and early years professionals.¹³ New early education places would be made available to strengthen the link between education and school, and approaches focused on improving "the home learning environment" would be piloted, reaching at least 100 families.

What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original delivery aims as set out in the delivery plan?

In this priority, eight substantial projects, comprising 20 activities were conducted across the five years.

- These activities spanned from offering a vast suite of training, which involved funding level 2 and 3 qualifications (51 practitioners), masters (7 practitioners) and honorariums (38 in Norwich and 8 in the Breckland area) to recognise staff that have acquired the knowledge and resources they need to cascade their learning to new colleagues and continue to implement change in their setting.
- Other activities included making toolkits (WellComm) available to 40 schools in Norwich and 39 in the Breckland area, to screen children for speech, language and communication needs.
- Early Years ELSA training involved 37 schools across Norfolk, 14 of which were based in Norwich or the Breckland area. This provision included ongoing supervision led by an educational psychologist until autumn 22. Termly reports will determine if funding is continued for half-termly supervisions by Norfolk County Council Early Years Training Team. It would be possible for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settings to fund this provision themselves.

The NOA's work in this priority has led to several high-profile flagship projects, such as Communication Champions, the Community Communication Champions and the

¹² Norwich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2017). [DfE Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Norwich, pages 22–23](#) (viewed on 2 May 2022).

¹³ Ibid., page 22.

Early Years Transition Project. The Community Communication Champions project was evaluated over a period of 18 months.¹⁴ Lessons on delivery have been applied to further rollouts of provision.

What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?

This evaluation reviewed high-level NOA reports, as well as specific documents and evaluations relating to the projects that were conducted within this priority. Overall, with the evidence base the evaluation team had, it has not been possible to determine how quantifiably successful the NOA had been in meeting the two targets it set out in its delivery plan, though there is some data in the DfE's Insight Guide regarding the Communication Champions project.¹⁵ It is possible to point to some individual projects making tangible progress through the numbers of trained practitioners, engagement rates with projects and the potential sustainability of legacy assets developed by the NOA.

Some of these tangible successes are highlighted below in the percentage of school coverage for interventions. For instance:

- Over 700 early years practitioners have accessed Communication Champions training. There is a trained Communication Champion in 92% of Norwich primary schools, and 95% of parents reported that the course helped change the way they talked to their child.¹⁶
- A DfE Insight Guide included the Communication Champions project. Delegates took a baseline and end-point questionnaire, which pointed to several positive improvements, including on practitioners' knowledge and confidence to identify and support speech and language needs.¹⁷ Moreover, "the average knowledge score increased from a baseline score of 6.6/10 to 8.4/10 post-training, and the overall average score increased from 6.5/10 to 8.6/10".¹⁸ Data (between 2017 and 2019) also showed that there had been a "small rise in the percentage of all pupils achieving a good level of development in Norwich (up 2.3% from 64.2% to 66.5%)", a rate "outstripping

¹⁴ Milligan, T, Smith, T, Trelford, H (2020). [Community Communication Champions in Norwich: an evaluation](#). University of East Anglia (viewed on 20 April 2022).

¹⁵ DfE (2021), [Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Early Years](#), December 2021 (viewed on 15 June 2022).

¹⁶ NOA (2022). [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 7 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

¹⁷ Ibid., page 28.

¹⁸ Ibid.

the 1.1% increase nationally.¹⁹ Data from 2019 showed “significant progress” for those receiving FSM.²⁰

Sustainability and legacy. The future vision for priority 1 includes every school and setting in Norwich having a trained Communication Champion who can ensure a “consistent, universal approach to supporting early communication”.²¹ In developing a shared model, the NOA intends that professionals and parents have the right skills and resources to support children’s speech and language communication during the first 1,001 days of their life. This priority has been given a key Norfolk County Council link, a local (school) lead and strategic oversight from a forum and stakeholder group.

- The Partnership Board has set out several legacy assets concerning priority 1. This includes the Communication Champions programme, which plans to continue running active networks for practitioners to share best practice. Communication Hubs (six schools and settings in Norwich and the Breckland, established with the help of OA money) will continue running the active Communication Champions networks.
- There are plans to offer training across Norfolk for EYFS settings.
- Early Years Transition support resources will continue to be offered across multiple platforms (such as virtual tours, Starting School videos and Top Tips videos and resources). These resources will be future-proofed to cover staffing changes that occur in schools.
- Norfolk County Council will continue to promote parent resources, including ‘50 things to do before you’re 5’, on its website. All NOA and Breckland schools and settings will receive resources in summer 2022 to promote the project.²²

¹⁹ NOA (2022). [What’s Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 7 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ NOA Partnership Board Report (2022). March 2022. (unpublished).

²² Ibid.

Priority 2: Raise attainment through targeted, evidence-based continuing professional development for teachers and stronger system leadership support

Context

The initial 2017 delivery plan²³ spelt out that young people in Norwich from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely than their peers elsewhere in England to leave school with a good level of attainment, go on to study for a level 3 qualification (such as A-Levels), continue with education or employment from age nineteen, or go to university¹. Within this context, work was set out to use existing school providers to drive up the standard of qualifications and close the gap between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers, by using a targeted approach based on the best available evidence.

What was done?

- Nine core projects, comprising 13 activities were implemented. These spanned targeted interventions looking to embed evidence-based practice, additional tuition, reading interventions and focused tutoring in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Flagship projects such as the What a Difference a Day Makes (WADADM) were delivered to pupils with tangible results.

What were some key outcomes?

- There is hard data about improvement in schools for the key stage 4 project WADADM. Pupils from one cohort on the programme who were tracked went up by an average of 1.6 grades at GCSE.
- The Chartered College of Teaching (CCT) audit showed clear progression for six schools that participated in the Enhanced Research Leads Network and for two of these schools the progress is reported to be significant. Seven of the leads have been appointed as Evidence Leads in Education and are deployed to provide school-to-school support.
- Key legacy assets have emerged, including the OA online-sharing learning hub, which captures experiences from beneficiaries and will host project summaries and case studies. Formal collaboration is continuing between NOA secondary headteachers. The Research Leads Network and Implementation Leads will work to drive more evidence-based classroom practice and better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Youth Board opportunities will continue.

²³ Norwich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2017). [DfE Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Norwich, page 26](#) (viewed on 2 May 2022).

The NOA's targets for 2020 to 2021 were as follows:

- "By 2021, attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4 will be in the top half of all local authority districts in England.
- By 2021, 50% of nineteen year olds will be qualified to level three.
- By 2021, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and all pupils will be half what it was in September 2017".²⁴

What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original delivery aims as set out in the delivery plan?

Multiple projects have been implemented in relation to this target. Some of them include:

- Supporting the Research Leads Network, a peer-support network to share ideas and practice amongst educators.
- NOA School Leads, which aimed to improve academic and destination outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by seeking to recruit an additional member of staff in eight schools to focus on embedding OA projects into schools, auditing pupil premium progress and creating a sustainable plan for schools to close the gap in the long term.²⁵ This project was a core part of NOA's Year 4 and 5 programme strategy.
- Evidence-Based Practice Fund (EBPF).
- Further Education (FE) middle leader development programme (involving 20 leaders from eight FE and sixth form colleges across four OAs including Norwich).
- In response to COVID-19, the NOA offered the Remote Teaching Champions project, which involved training and support for primaries to develop a remote teaching and learning strategy. Separately, it funded targeted tutoring to support educational recovery before the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) was fully established (13 primary schools and 820 students in Norwich participated in this tutoring project).

Perhaps one of the most impactful projects is the WADADM project. Learning from the Ipswich Opportunity Area (IOA), the NOA set up a maths and English GCSE intervention project for Year 11 students, which provided 24 hours of small-group tuition in maths or English, hosted at the UEA, to help selected students achieve a minimum level 4 in their maths or English GCSE. Moreover, it offered sessions on

²⁴ Norwich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2017). [DfE Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Norwich, page 26](#) (viewed on 2 May 2022). page27.

²⁵ NOA (2020). NOA School Leads: Final Report. 20 August 2020 (unpublished).

study skills and wellbeing delivered by mentors and Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach Higher Education (NEACO HE) coordinators to prepare students for their post-16 destinations. Additionally, it donated IT equipment, such as tablets, to students without access to them and allowed mentors to provide wraparound support to students, encouraging them to attend study sessions, troubleshoot technical issues with Google Classrooms and make fortnightly phone calls to check in.

Research champions (Research Champions and Research Leads) was another funded project offered to primary and secondary schools that fell within the NOA to facilitate the use of research evidence to improve classroom practice. The Norwich Research School ran an in-depth coaching programme for the Enhanced Research Leads, in 10 Norwich primary schools to support NOA schools' use of research evidence to improve teaching and learning outcomes via evidence-informed prioritisation, filtering, decision-making, implementation and evaluation by senior and middle leaders. The Research Leads Network provided an additional layer of system leadership to secure progress by students at all key stages, with a particular focus on the performance of disadvantaged children.²⁶

The CCT audit shows clear progression for six schools, and in two of these schools, progress is reported to be significant; seven of the leads have been appointed as Evidence Leads in Education (ELE) and are deployed to provide school-to-school support. Five of the schools reported that they valued the use of research evidence highly enough to self-fund the Research Lead role, and five secondary schools took up a funded Research Champion project to facilitate the use of research evidence to improve classroom practice.²⁷

The EBPF programme focused on a variety of projects in schools in Norwich to determine "what works" and target disadvantaged pupils. It developed literacy and numeracy projects, such as reading, writing, oracy, communication or language for learning, as well as projects addressing student mental health issues and teachers' professional development and wellbeing. The Norwich Research School assisted schools in strengthening their implementation and evaluation strategies.

The EBPF was accessed by 37 schools in Norwich, with grants of up to £25,000. 47% of headteachers said their decision-making at senior leadership team (SLT) level was more evidence-informed and 52% of headteachers said classroom practice was more evidence-informed:

²⁶ NOA Partnership Board Meeting Minutes (2018). 17th May 2018.

²⁷ NOA (2022). [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

*The biggest success is a change in thinking and attitude [in school leadership teams] as much as it is about the individual projects themselves ... it's proving the worth of evidence-informed research and practice, whether the individual project has borne fruit or not.*²⁸ (NOA school feedback)

*The ability of whether it's individual schools or schools as a collective applying for money from other places will continue.*²⁹ (Local stakeholder)

What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?

This evaluation reviewed high-level NOA reports, as well as specific documents and evaluations relating to the projects that were conducted within this priority. Overall, with the evidence base the evaluation team provided, it has not been possible to determine how quantifiably successful the NOA was in meeting the three targets it set out in its original delivery plan. It is possible to point to some individual projects making tangible progress through the numbers of trained practitioners, engagement rates with projects and the potential sustainability of legacy assets that have been developed by the NOA.

- There is hard data about the improvement in schools for the key stage 4 project WADADM. Pupils went up by an average of 1.6 grades at GCSE.
- On better evidence-based practice, 47% of headteachers said their decision-making at SLT level was more evidence-informed and 52% of headteachers said classroom practice was more evidence-informed in response to the work done in this priority. The focus on CPD and rigorous methodology applied to the approaches was also shared with broader stakeholders in the council:

*What we concentrate on is resources and CPD for staff in order that they're trained up in methodology on different approaches; for example, "thrive practitioners" is the one that's been [the] most popular amongst schools and what we're doing now is our online learning hub.*³⁰ (Local stakeholder)

- The final School Leads report³¹ noted that the project had achieved strong engagement in each individual school and increased collaboration between schools over the two-year period. At the time of reporting, "most schools were anticipating stronger outcomes in GCSEs in 2020" for their

²⁸ Ibid., page 11.

²⁹ UEA evaluation team interview.

³⁰ UEA evaluation team interview.

³¹ NOA (2020). NOA School Leads: Final Report. 20 August 2020. (unpublished).

disadvantaged pupils.³² By the end of the project, NOA School Leads had “a strong presence in their school Senior Leadership Team” and most were working “closely” with pupil premium leads “to audit and plan provision and progress”.³³

Sustainability and legacy. The Partnership Board has set out a legacy vision for priority 2.³⁴ Schools across Norwich have a well-established culture of collaboration on shared goals and local challenges to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. There is an ambition that leadership and classroom practice will always be evidence-informed and Champions will lead in disseminating evidence to colleagues.³⁵

- Shared learning from across the programme will sit on the OA online sharing learning hub in the form of project summaries, case studies and captured experiences from project participants and beneficiaries.
- Collaboration will continue with the NOA secondary headteacher board continuing to meet. Primary schools will be encouraged to establish closer working relationships.
- The Research Leads Network and Implementation Leads will work to drive more evidence-based classroom practice and better outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Ambitions for softer forms of collaboration between schools will be encouraged.
- The opportunity for young people to engage with the Norwich 2040 vision will continue, though the format of this is yet to be agreed upon.³⁶

³² NOA (2020). NOA School Leads: Final Report. 20 August 2020. (unpublished). page5.

³³ Ibid., page 3.

³⁴ NOA Partnership Board Report (2022). March 2022 (viewed on 27 May 2022).

³⁵ Ibid., page 4.

³⁶ Ibid.

Priority 3: Support children at risk of exclusion from school

Context

In its 2017 delivery plan, the NOA noted that rates of exclusions were high in Norwich, which led to pupils being educated in alternative provision or being absent from school. The NOA would research this area (alongside the Blackpool OA) and use research outcomes to target children who were most at risk from exclusion.

What was done?

- 41 unique activities were conducted in response to this priority. Work on this priority led to the development and signature of the Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC), inclusive culture packages, CPD (behaviour focused) for teachers, training for governors, funding of off-site alternative provision, investment in development of in-house alternative provision, ELSA training, resilience building, transition work and audit tools to share best practice
- A tendered Inclusion Project was led by the Benjamin Foundation, which aimed to bring together thinking between parents, schools and pupils. Family support workers were recruited. The project had 250 referrals.

What were some key outcomes?

- The NIC has provided schools with a significant package of funding and support to test and evaluate approaches to improving inclusion within their schools, including inclusive culture programmes to support them with training to meet the Inclusion Charter's principles. 32 schools accessed the funded inclusive culture programmes; 13,202 Norwich pupils benefited from their school undertaking Inclusive Culture Training and 12 primary schools successfully applied for funding for a named member of staff to take up the Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champions role.³⁷
- 98% of NOA schools have committed to the NIC.³⁸
- A total of 250 pupils and their families had been referred via the Benjamin Foundation-led Inclusion Project. As of December 2020, 170 were recorded as completed and of these 133 were regarded as successful interventions; 50 parents chose to also take part in the Nurtured Heart Approach Parenting course and 100% of NOA secondary schools and 63% of primary schools use the Benjamin Foundation support offer.

³⁷ NOA (2022). [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 15 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

³⁸ Ibid.

The NOA set a goal that:

- In 2020 to 2021, the rate of fixed-term and permanent exclusions will have reduced by two-thirds from the rate in 2016 to 2017.³⁹

What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original delivery aims as set out in the delivery plan?

The NIC project was created to assist primary and secondary schools in supporting students at risk of exclusion. The NIC core structures are: inclusion charter principles, an independent facilitation role, inclusion champions and networks for collaboration amongst local school leaders. The Inclusion Charter provided schools with a significant package of funding and support to test and evaluate approaches to improving inclusion within their schools, including inclusive culture programmes to support them with training to meet the Inclusion Charter's principles. Norwich schools benefited by NIC-funded interventions to develop school inclusion practises and actions that targeted individual families and parents and coordinated transition activities.⁴⁰

*We are working together to support each other and to reduce the number of fixed and permanent exclusions in Norwich. There has been a change in ethos in our academy as we have gained access to managed moves, the use of alternative provision and the opportunity to network, collaborate and the chance to start to rebuild professional dialogue with different schools and Trusts across the city.*⁴¹ (Inclusion Champion)

The parent-support programme was associated with Benjamin Foundation initiatives, which were funded by the NIC and aimed to provide families with personalised Pathways to Inclusion plans. This included a combination of coaching for parents, counselling sessions with students, home visits, multi-agency meetings, and referrals to other resources. The emphasis was on building relationships, providing emotional wellbeing support for young people, facilitating communication between key players, adapting to individual circumstances and putting the Nurtured Heart Approach at the heart of the support provided. This was a collaborative approach to assisting students at risk of exclusion and aided in the facilitation of communication between students, parents and schools.⁴²

³⁹ NOA (2022). [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 15 (viewed on 1 June 2022). page 29.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., page 15.

⁴² York Consulting LLP (2022). [Norwich Inclusion Charter Evaluation](#). May 2022 (viewed on the 15 June 2022)

NOA work has supported both off-site and internal alternative provision (AP). Over the course of the programme, 296 pupils have accessed AP – 84 primary pupils and 212 secondary pupils.⁴³ NOA received feedback from these schools because of these interventions. This included fewer behaviour issues, improved attendance and “more meaningful engagement in school lessons”.⁴⁴ In June 2020, schools developed further approaches to in-house AP, designed to support those at risk of exclusion within their home school setting and community.⁴⁵ The NOA reports that five out of eight of the new projects that were started in the autumn term 2020 have “shown successful outcomes”.⁴⁶

The ELSAs project was an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists and designed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils within the schools’ existing resources. This was designed to help children understand and cope with their emotions, as well as develop their self-esteem and positive interactions with others. An ELSA is a member of staff who has been trained to assist children in developing their emotional literacy, as an increasing number of children of all ages exhibit social, emotional and mental health challenges. An ELSA typically works with identified students on a one-on-one basis, and their training includes social skills, emotions, bereavement, social stories and therapeutic stories, anger management, self-esteem, and counselling skills such as solution focus and friendship.

The NOA funded ELSA training for Teaching Assistants (TAs) in 50% of primary schools and 75% of secondary schools, including two specialist provision settings and two special schools and five of the seven Great Yarmouth ‘twinning’ secondaries. In total, 133 ELSAs were trained in Norwich and within the Great Yarmouth twinning area amongst secondary schools. Responses from those involved with the project have been positive:

Training has given members of staff the skills and confidence to support children with a wide range of difficulties, for example bereavement, family break up, anger and anxiety management. NOA funding has given us the opportunity to upskill and develop key staff in order to create a sustainable programme in school. We have already seen the impact in terms of our provision and our school culture, but also, more significantly, the impact on individual children who have participated in ELSA sessions.⁴⁷ (Special Educational Needs Coordinator, SENCO)

⁴³ NOA (2022) [What’s Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 18 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., page 17.

*The network of emotional literacy support assistants has definitely been recognised and it's a hugely valuable resource; they need information, [and to] share good practices and resources because resources are changing all the time for these children.*⁴⁸ (Local stakeholder)

The NOA has focused on transitions work, aiming to foster collaboration between schools. For instance, it supported a curriculum-bridging programme, resulting from feedback by primary schools that was a lack of “rigour and continuity between the Year 6 and Year 7 curriculum”.⁴⁹ Seven schools participated in this project in the summers 2020 and 2021 to create an English bridged-curriculum project, which could be used as a set of resources that link Year 6 work to the work children do when they move up to Year 7.

What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?

This evaluation synthesis reviewed high-level NOA reports, as well as specific documents and evaluations relating to the projects that were conducted within this priority. It is possible to point to some individual projects, such as the Benjamin Foundation, making tangible progress through the number of referrals and positive feedback from beneficiaries. The NIC is arguably an embodiment of the shift in working practices that were mentioned so often during this evaluation.

The NIC has been seen as a success story in encouraging joined-up thinking between different stakeholders. Stakeholders, schools and families reported that the project contributed to positive benefits, including changes in school ethos as well as an improved and calmer school environment. The stakeholders suggested that this improved pupil behaviour and attendance, and reduced exclusions. The key highlights are: 98% of schools in Norwich have committed to the Charter; 27 school governors received training on inclusive practice and supporting schools to reduce permanent exclusions; 32 schools accessed the funded inclusive culture programmes; 13,202 Norwich pupils benefited from their school undertaking Inclusive Culture Training and 12 primary schools successfully applied for funding for a named member of staff to take up the Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champion role.⁵⁰

As of December 2020, 170 were recorded as closed and, of these, 133 were regarded as successful interventions; 50 parents chose to also take part in the Nurtured Heart Approach Parenting course and 100% of NOA secondary schools and 63% of primary schools use the Benjamin Foundation support

⁴⁸ UEA evaluation team interview.

⁴⁹ NOA (2022) [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 21 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

offer. At the time of writing this evaluation, a total of 250 pupils and their families had been referred to the Benjamin Foundation Inclusion project.

*This taught me how to do things differently – provided me with new strategies to managing the kids at home. It also provided me with the opportunity to meet new people and talk to others in a similar situation.*⁵¹ (NOA parent)

*She has loved her 1:1 sessions and is a lot happier at school and home. Thank you for all your help. Things are better at home and we don't have massive long explosions anymore thanks to the Nurtured Heart techniques.*⁵² (Parent feedback)

Sustainability and legacy. The NOA leadership has supported the development of countywide transformation work through the NIC, which is a core legacy asset of this priority. It will form a key element of a shared inclusion plan between the NOA, Norfolk County Council and Norwich schools for a collaborative model to share capacity, expertise and increased provision to support early intervention in schools.⁵³

- The NIC will continue to provide schools with a shared commitment to the principles agreed to support inclusion. NOA schools will continue to use the Charter as a set of principles for Norwich. Inclusion Champions at the secondary phase will continue to meet regularly in 2022 to 2023 and beyond, to share current barriers and solutions and to collaborate to support young people in Norwich.
- ELSAs will continue to support pupils identified within schools as benefiting from support.
- Staff CPD around mental health and wellbeing and therapeutic approaches will continue to have an impact on supporting pupils across NOA schools. Case studies and experiences will be shared via the OA online sharing learning hub.⁵⁴

Collaboration across Priorities 2 and 3

During the evaluation it was noted that early in the NOA programme, a choice was made to combine stakeholder meetings between priority 2 and priority 3, pooling together the resources to tackle both priorities together. The Programme Manager

⁵¹ NOA (2022) [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 21 (viewed on 1 June 2022). page 17.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ NOA Partnership Board Report (2022). March 2022, page 5. (unpublished).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

noted stakeholders agreed that a broader approach was needed to support disadvantaged and vulnerable children, which went beyond the school gates:

All of the conversations that we kept having were around the same thing in both of those working groups, which was a focus on disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils and the world beyond the school gates and everything that is needed to make sure that young people have a supportive, stable learning environment that's not only within school.⁵⁵ (Programme Manager)

Specifically, the work that came out of the inclusion priority (priority 3) was a key element in supporting the Year 6 and Year 7 transition, which had been identified as a key factor in supporting those pupils most at risk of exclusion as they moved schools. Transition was an important factor in reshaping the priorities midway through the NOA programme.

A recent Partnership Board report of the NOA leadership has set out a series of legacy assets relating to improving the transition. Its vision is one of collaboration and information-sharing, curriculum bridging and “the sharing of good practice to support Year 6–7 transition across Norwich and Norfolk”.⁵⁶ Three key Norfolk County Council links have been made and includes a local lead with a school. The Norfolk Learning Board and Transition Workstrand will be providing strategic oversight.

- **Years 6–7 Transition Resources.** There has been a focus on resources to support curriculum bridging and resources for schools and parents. A Common Transfer Document is widely shared and well used across NOA schools. Further developments of the tool are planned within the Norfolk Learning Board Transition Workstrand for recommended use of the tool across Norfolk.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ UEA evaluation team interview.

⁵⁶ NOA Partnership Board Report (2022). March 2022, page 6 (unpublished).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Priority 4: Give young people the information and support they need to move successfully between school, college, university and into work

Context

The NOA's 2017 delivery plan noted that Norwich has fewer disadvantaged pupils in education, employment and training between October and March after Key Stage 4, than the national average. Moreover, "very small numbers of young people go to university"; seven Norwich wards were amongst the bottom 20% nationally. The NOA wanted to set up a raft of activities to tackle this, including the coordination of the Careers and Enterprise Company, NEACO and the National Citizen Service, to support young people.

What was done?

- Six substantial projects, which encapsulated 12 activities, were implemented. These ranged from careers facilitator training and network development, mentoring programmes, a focus on primary schools (World of Work sessions), a Community Innovation Fund, and work with parent ambassadors.
- The NOA set up the Aspirations Working Group to look at the local issues, strengthen the careers infrastructure and coordinate existing support and opportunities.

What were some key outcomes?

- NOA's target was to create 36,837 meaningful encounters between pupils and employers by July 2020, which is equivalent to four per pupil. It exceeded this by 185% with 68,218 employer encounters achieved by July 2020. In autumn 2018, just four schools had achieved Gatsby Benchmark 5 (encounters with employers and employees).
- By the end of the 2019 to 2020 academic year, despite the disruption of the pandemic, 11 out of 15 schools had fully achieved Benchmark 5, with the remaining four having partially achieved it. At the end of the 2019 to 2020 academic year, participating schools had consolidated their progress towards meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks, outperforming the national average for scores against seven of the benchmarks.
- As a result of work developing the careers facilitator roles and network, 8 out of the 12 participating schools have committed to the ongoing provision of a named careers facilitator, using their own resources to continue their participation in the network meetings and ensure dedicated additional time is focused on careers.

Context and Targets

The NOA set three delivery goals:

- 90% of the 2018 to 2019 cohort who were eligible for pupil premium in Year 11 will be in a sustained destination six months after completing key stage 4.
- By 2021, 40% of young people in Norwich will go on to higher education or a higher-level apprenticeship.
- By 2021, 85% of pupils who were eligible for pupil premium in Year 11 and who studied for a level three qualification will go on to a sustained destination after key stage 5.

What has this Opportunity Area programme done towards meeting the original delivery aims as set out in the delivery plan?

The NOA developed six substantial projects, which encapsulated 12 activities throughout the programme. These comprised of:

- Employing careers facilitators, training them, and developing a strong network which continues to meet regularly
- Developing mentoring programmes
- Focusing on primary schools (World of Work sessions)
- Setting up a Community Innovation Fund
- Setting up a Parent Ambassadors project.

Some of the larger-spend projects, such as primary parental and community engagement and the Community Innovation Fund, were significantly disrupted by COVID-19 and, as a result, some of the delivery and evaluation was not as strong as the NOA had hoped.

The NOA set up the Aspirations Working Group to look at the local issues, strengthen the careers infrastructure and coordinate “the best use of available support and opportunities”.⁵⁸ Headteachers had noted that the wide range of careers offers and providers for schools was overwhelming, and the capacity for them to engage was limited. Norwich schools were not meeting the expectation, set out in the 2017 careers strategy, for schools to meet the Gatsby Benchmarks by 2020. Schools were not delivering enough employer encounters and it was not clear which ones were the most effective.

A provider, Form the Future, was commissioned to deliver a two-year programme of CPD. Twelve staff (teachers and support staff) were trained as Careers and CPD Workshop Facilitators. The Careers Facilitator Network brought all secondary

⁵⁸ DfE Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Careers. May 2021. [Opportunity areas insight guide – careers](#), page 11 (viewed on 30 May 2022).

schools together to improve Compass scores against all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks. This work led to a collaborative network of Careers Facilitators supporting each other, sharing, reviewing and seeking to improve individual school careers strategies. As a result, confidence amongst facilitators improved significantly:

*The network continues to be a source of inspiration and support. It provides up to date and timely advice, great contacts, inspiring discussion and ideas about resources which I might otherwise have been unaware of.*⁵⁹ (Careers Facilitator)

*I find the Careers Facilitators network really useful and when others share useful insights and tips it gives me confidence with what I'm doing.*⁶⁰ (Careers Facilitator)

Further activities were conducted over the life of the NOA programme:

- 650 pupils attended the Careers Events between 2019 and 2021 (88% of these pupils had learnt about new post-16 options and 70% pupils felt more confident about planning for the future).
- The NOA repeated a (2019) successful Greater Norwich Opportunities fair held in October 2021 (almost 1,000 students attended). The purpose of this event was to showcase the full and diverse range of pathways on offer to students after their GCSEs so that young people can make the decisions that are best for them about post-16 options.⁶¹

What can be said about the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims?

Overall, it is possible to point to individual projects making tangible progress, though it was not possible to determine how quantifiably successful the NOA has been in meeting its three headline targets. Some of these tangible successes are highlighted below, with a particular emphasis on meaningful encounters that local children now have with employers, Gatsby Benchmarks and a better network amongst school careers facilitators. Norwich was used in one of DfE's Insight Guides.⁶²

- NOA's target was to create 36,837 meaningful encounters between pupils and employers by July 2020, which is equivalent to four per pupil. It exceeded this by 185% with 68,218 employer encounters achieved by July 2020.⁶³

⁵⁹ NOA (2022) [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 23 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Norwich Opportunity Newsletter (2021) [NOA Newsletter](#), June 2021, page 11 (viewed on 30 May 2022).

⁶² Ibid., page 14.

⁶³ DfE Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Careers. May 2021. [Opportunity areas insight guide – careers](#). (viewed 30 May 2022).

- In autumn 2018, just four schools had achieved Gatsby Benchmark 5 (encounters with employers and employees). By the end of the 2019 to 2020 academic year, despite the disruption of the pandemic, 11 out of 15 schools had fully achieved Benchmark 5, with the remaining four having partially achieved it. At the end of the 2019 to 2020 academic year, participating schools had consolidated their progress towards meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks, outperforming the national average for its scores against seven of the benchmarks.
- Schools have reported that the careers facilitator role has simplified the communication of careers offers, streamlined engagement with employers and reduced burdens on schools. They have valued the positive impact this has had on pupils and the guidance they receive. As a result, 8 out of the 12 participating schools have committed to the ongoing provision of a named Careers Facilitator, using their own resources to continue their participation in the network meetings and ensure dedicated additional time is focused on careers. Secondary headteachers have committed to continuing with two annual citywide careers events, with agreement from local stakeholders, businesses and venues to support them.⁶⁴ Schools have agreed to a coordinated calendar of employer-linked activities promoted to companies and industry contacts.⁶⁵
- **Post-16 transition.** Trained Parent Ambassadors will continue to support schools with careers events and improve approaches to parental engagement, with the hope that UEA will continue the project with NEACO funding.

⁶⁴Norwich Opportunity Newsletter (2021) [NOA Newsletter](#), June 2021, page 11 (viewed on 30 May 2022).

⁶⁴Ibid., page 14.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

3. Social Mobility via Place-Based Approach (RQ3)

This evaluation was tasked with considering what could be said about tackling social mobility via a place-based approach. The following chapter draws on documentary analysis of published and unpublished documents, triangulation with the national evaluation NatCen, NOA-led survey responses as well as the interviews with stakeholders that the UEA conducted. The chapter considers some themes in the programme delivery that came about because of projects being developed with a place-based design. Furthermore, it provides some responses the UEA team collected from stakeholders about the role and impact that projects had on tackling social mobility in Norwich.

3.1 Definitions

Strategic and local stakeholders' definitions of social mobility centred on three key themes. First, increasing young people's choices by providing them with opportunities; second, raising aspirations through an awareness of options; and third, improving life chances by making family background and birthplace less relevant in shaping outcomes. However, it was noted that a focus on social mobility did not engage critically with persisting social inequalities. This is because social mobility is geared towards improving individuals' standing within existing socio-economic hierarchies rather than challenging those hierarchies.

Social mobility is difficult to measure for anyone, let alone for school-aged children and young people. In this context, social mobility refers to:

- Smooth or successful transition to the next stage in education, e.g. from reception to Year 1.
- Educational attainment so the gap between students from affluent and disadvantaged backgrounds is reduced.
- Educational progress (through decreased school exclusions and higher and more robust types of inclusion into the school life and opportunities to thrive educationally, personally, emotionally and socially).

3.2 Programme Delivery

Over the course of the programme and across the four priorities, the NOA delivered several activities and interventions that directly or indirectly attempted to impact social mobility. Some projects that were explicitly identified in published documents or identified by stakeholders as being particularly impactful for beneficiaries. One key element of situating the programme delivery within place-based design was the way it supported schools and outside groups to work collectively, focused squarely on

young people's involvement and prioritised strong local leadership. Some following themes can be noted:

- **Bringing together cross-sector stakeholders.** As an example of many the UEA evaluation team found on bringing together cross-sector stakeholders, the Careers Programme launched two major initiatives. The Careers Facilitators Network and Careers Events. The former was created to build a sustainable and collaborative network of practitioners in Norwich to share best practices and develop shared accountability for a calendar of career and enterprise opportunities. This enabled a more efficient approach that provides more disadvantaged young people with access to a diverse range of high-quality and appropriate encounters. The Careers Events were created to collaboratively deliver large-scale employer-engagement activities, save time and resources across local schools, and improve the range of information and opportunities available to young people.

After 2020 to 2021, transition activities focused on communicating good practice, evaluating the work and joining up strategically on all transition elements across the four priorities of the NOA work, as well as working with experts that represent all key stakeholders involved in transition.

- **Putting young people at the centre.** At the start of the NOA programme, a group of young people living, working or studying in Norwich formed the Youth Board, which advised and supported the programme. The Board developed project ideas for improving social mobility in their schools that would be funded through the main programme budget. Two projects were established by young people with the support of the local programme team:⁶⁶ (a) Support for English as an Additional Language (EAL) Families: the project aimed to help EAL parents improve their English language skills as well as job skills to help them find work; (b) exchange trip to Southend: visit schools in an area that had seen an improvement in social mobility, to understand what worked in similar areas.⁶⁷ In total, 24 parents and 34 pupils benefited from the support for EAL families, and 35 students joined the trip from six different schools in Norwich.
- **Strong leadership in local schools.** The school leads project aimed to embed OA projects into local schools with a dedicated senior school leader raising the profile of OA interventions and their potential for tackling disadvantage at individual schools. This focus on funding leadership roles meant that schools involved would have a robust strategy for tackling

⁶⁶ NOA (2022). [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 24 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

disadvantage, incorporating lessons that have been learnt over the course of the five years of the NOA programme.

- **Overlapping themes with other national evaluations.** During its research, the UEA team found similar themes in its interview and document analysis as the national (qualitative design) evaluation conducted by NatCen.⁶⁸ These interrelated themes may be summarised as issues of measurement and time constraints of the OA programme.

Both NatCen and the UEA team's work noted that interviewees cited challenges around not being clear at the start of the programme about how best to measure the impact of the programme on social mobility targets given the wide scope of the programme. Time constraints meant that incredibly complex and embedded problems would only start to generate positive improvements later in the programme. At the same time, holistic impact takes a long time to occur.

Local stakeholders stressed the importance of measuring progress over a longer period of time. As at the time of writing, there is no mechanism to keep track of the programme and social mobility progress longitudinally (over, say, a decade or two).

3.2 Impact of NOA on Social Mobility

What has been the impact of NOA on social mobility? In place of an unequivocal answer, we offer several insights that emerged from interviews with those connected to the NOA programme, either within the local authority, beneficiaries or programme managers. The prevalent feeling was that some progress has been made but more was needed. As noted above, social mobility is a long-term challenge. Any success is contingent upon investing in those areas that will sustain change over time. To this end, the NOA has given a lot of attention to local leadership, collaborative working, transitions across stages and taking collective responsibility for Norwich children. The NOA also focused on supporting emotional and mental health, as well as early years children getting a stronger start in life.

- **Transitions resonated with many of our respondents. One of them highlighted the importance of this work for students and parents alike:**
The overall transition package around giving children the opportunity to go and visit schools, giving parents parent evenings where they can go and have an opportunity to, you know, to really hear about that particular school's ethos

⁶⁸ NatCen (2022). [Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation](#). Research Report (viewed on 20 June 2022).

*and whether that's right for their school, that transfer, that common transfer document, I think is hugely important.*⁶⁹ (Local stakeholder)

- **The Emotional Literacy Support Assistants was another project that was identified as successful in this context:** *Being able to support, we have got massive issues around mental health in young people. You know that social, emotional, mental health has been a real key area for us in Norwich as it has across the county and no doubt across the country as a result of COVID. But we already had that issue. We already had that issue of children not being ready to learn.*⁷⁰ (Local stakeholder)
- **There is evidence that the targeted approach to disadvantaged families might have had some impact:** *Our attainment and inclusion work [were very important]. By inclusion, meaning supporting vulnerable children really in its broadest sense, including all pupils, so that everybody can succeed within learning just became one piece of work. So, I think compared to the starting point, local stakeholders really steered the programme to focus very much on disadvantage of vulnerable peoples, probably more so than the original DfE expectation of the programme, because that was the biggest thing that was coming through from local stakeholders around.*⁷¹ (Local stakeholder)
- **The place-based approach was identified by several participants as an effective approach in meeting the set targets:** *We brought together a much broader range of stakeholders than would normally engage with each other which definitely came from it being a place-based initiative. So our Partnership Board but also all of our working groups.*⁷² (Programme Manager).

*Since being in an Opportunity Area I have noticed a buzz of excitement in the school as new ideas and strategies kick in. There is a growing awareness of the Norwich Opportunity Area and the real impact of disadvantage.*⁷³ (NOA School Lead)

⁶⁹ UEA evaluation team interview.

⁷⁰ UEA evaluation team interview.

⁷¹ UEA evaluation team interview.

⁷² UEA evaluation team interview.

⁷³ NOA (2022) [What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area?](#) March 2022, page 12 (viewed on 1 June 2022).

4. Conclusions and Considerations for the Future

4.1 Conclusions

This synthesis evaluation of the NOA aimed to:

1. Understand what the NOA did in trying to meet the original delivery aims set out in the delivery plan.
2. Examine the perceived and/or measured progress that has been made in achieving these aims by the NOA.
3. Explore what could be said about approaches that have seemed successful to improve social mobility via a place-based approach.

In this chapter, we discuss the findings for each of these questions and we discuss some considerations for the future.

4.2 Programme Delivery (RQ1)

This evaluation noted the diversity of activities across each of the four priority areas. The beneficiaries of these activities were equally substantial and included schools, teachers, parents and pupils. Some themes emerged in terms of the way the programme was delivered:

- The NOA regularly procured third parties to develop interventions. Several of those commissioned to do work were local to the area or involved in funding schools directly.
- Activities were generally backed up by the development of groups or networks to ensure that lessons, reflections and future planning were both bottom-up and sustainable. The evaluation team met several of these working groups and networks during the synthesis evaluation work.
- The local programme team were originally hosted by the New Anglia Local Economic Partnership, which gave them a neutral identity, enabling them to work quickly to engage stakeholders and encourage buy-in and a sense of co-ownership. The Programme Manager and Programme Coordinator were moved into Norfolk County Council in Year 5 of the programme, though some of the NOA team had been embedded from the start.
- Across the four priorities 66 projects were conducted, which involved 96 discrete activities. These ranged in size and scope (in terms of spend and beneficiaries involved).

- The NOA team noted that the delivery of some projects was severely disrupted by COVID-19. However, the pandemic also led to adapted or new interventions being adopted, such as the virtual tours of schools or bespoke mentoring programmes.

4.3 Perceived and Measured Progress (RQ2)

Through secondary document analysis and interviews with local stakeholders and the Programme Manager, this evaluation sought to understand the perceived and measured progress that has been made in achieving the aims set out in the initial priorities.

- As already noted, the evidential base on which this evaluation draws does not allow for quantifiable, systematic and robust data to be obtained in relation to headline targets set out in the initial delivery plan and the degree to which they have been achieved.
- The potential reasons the evaluation team identified for not having an evidential base by which to assess headline targets were: 1) COVID-19 disrupted national benchmarking, which made it difficult to assess local progress at a national level; 2) at a programme level, not enough was done from the start to build in robust quantitative evaluations of project impact; 3) it was felt by NOA that demonstrating a marked impact on social mobility takes time.
- In interviews and conversations with stakeholders, a great deal was made of the significant positive changes in the way working practices developed between educational settings and multiple local stakeholders because of the NOA programme. This includes relationships between different schools, including primary and secondary schools. There has been strong engagement and collaboration amongst practitioner networks, which has allowed good practice to be shared and joint solutions to be pursued. For many stakeholders, this collaborative focus has increased the feeling of collective responsibility that Norwich (and its schools) has for its children.

It really has shifted practice there. It's really, really interesting. I think what we do have to be mindful of though is that what that has enabled and what that has created is something which sits in autonomy and a separate space to other things that are taking place across the local authority.⁷⁴
(Local stakeholder)

- Practitioners' feedback that the norm in Norwich has changed and approaches to how schools work together and their ambitions for education is different. Schools and settings feedback there is an increased awareness of,

⁷⁴ UEA evaluation team interview.

and focus on, the needs of disadvantaged pupils, and a strong and shared understanding of evidence-based approaches and tools to make improvements for all.

- In terms of measuring progress, the evaluation team can point to the number of legacy assets that have emerged from the NOA programme. An early ambition of the OA rationale was to allow the identification of “new approaches and innovation in a different setting – and actively spread this to other similar places that can benefit”.⁷⁵ The Partnership Board and local programme team have worked to ensure several NOA projects are sustainable once OA funding ends. These legacy assets are currently being adopted more systematically (where it makes sense) into the County Council frameworks. Some large-spend flagship projects, such as the Communication Champions, have been rolled out across Norfolk and lessons are being cascaded through the DfE’s ‘twinning’ objective. NOA has started to cascade successful projects across with Greater Norwich, Great Yarmouth and the Breckland District.

4.4 Place-based Approach to Social Mobility (RQ3)

The OA was set out to give local stakeholders ownership over the kinds of projects and interventions they felt most effectively tackled disadvantage in their respective locations. Justine Greening set out the vision for opportunity areas in a 2017 speech she gave: “Tackling regional disadvantage means drilling down into the local factors which have concentrated poor educational outcomes and lack of capacity to improve in certain parts of the country.”⁷⁶

According to several stakeholders, the OA approach allowed key stakeholders to take ownership of the direction that they wanted to take on several big issues, such as inclusion and exclusion. Achieving a local identity allowed schools to work towards shared goals and not just think in terms of just their individual school. Tangible results of this include the NIC, which has secured the collective support of 98% of schools.

*If it had been a Norfolk priority area, I don't think we'd have had in any way the same type of stakeholder engagement or local ownership of it. So I think the place-based approach is absolutely something that I would highlight as being the most important thing about the opportunity area, but also within that the sense of.*⁷⁷ (Programme Manager)

⁷⁵ Justine Greening (2017). [Education at the core of social mobility](#). 19 January 2017 (viewed on 30 May 2022).

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ UEA evaluation team interview.

In Chapter 3, this evaluation highlighted how the programme's place-based design had shaped it to encourage cross-sector collaboration, put young people at the centre and focus on the importance of leadership.

4.5 UEA/OA Seminar

As noted earlier in this report, the evaluation team was able to share the full report prior to publication with several OA stakeholders who attended a half-day seminar held at the UEA. This section includes some reflections from stakeholders at both Norwich and Ipswich OAs, CEOs, some Partnership Board members, Norfolk and Suffolk county councils, school leaders, OA Programme Managers, DfE leads and members of UEA's Outreach and Widening Participation teams.

Three questions were circulated to attendees in advance of the seminar and formed the basis of a group discussion and feedback session. The feedback from six groups of participants (including one conducted on Microsoft Teams) were collated by the OA delivery team and shared with the evaluation team to summarise and take account of in the final reports.

- **Q1: Do you agree with the evaluation findings and recommendations? Are there any surprises?** Five of the six groups commented on this question. On the question of measurable outcomes, multiple groups recognised the report's findings that there were issues around data and agreed it was very hard to make conclusive links between the work of the OA's and the outcome improvements stakeholders had seen, though they expressed disappointment that this had been the case. Similarly, across each group that answered this question, there was a shared recognition that both OAs had approached the programme to achieve the longer-term goals of the programme and not just to shift data in the short term. Referencing the softer changes to working practices, another group commented that the OA had helped set up systems that made sense for everyone and that these would continue. Although in some cases, funding support roles would mean issues for schools for next year, including some of the NOA inclusion work.

One group felt the evaluation team might have tried to do more to show how different parts of the school improvement offer and landscape had been improved because of OA work. Another group felt the evaluation team should have spoken to more people and, as a result, the evaluation was unlikely to be a broad enough reflection of the programme. Stories of practical change on the ground may have been missed as a result. Though the evaluation team had suggested the geographical boundary of the OA had been helpful in providing focus, one group cited an example when it had been divisive and undermined collaboration between schools in the same catchment area. This occurred when one school had fallen within and another outside of the OA boundary. One group disagreed with the report's comment about the creation

of a cliff edge for funding. Many of the things that had generated impact did not need significant funding (such as Transitions Work) and it was the collaboration and partnerships that were most important.

- **Q2: What difference has the OA programme made in Norwich and Ipswich that will contribute to greater social mobility?** All six groups answered this question. There were reoccurring discussions about the positive impact on working practices, system, and culture change. At secondary school level, there was now a different landscape with improved communication between schools, less of a catchment focus and more support for Norwich families and children. Broadly, there was a willingness to ask for help, career progression and promotion between city schools.

Stakeholders identified certain priorities and projects as being very successful. For Norwich, this included Communication Champions, which was being rolled out to other parts of Norfolk. Additionally, the inclusion work had improved cultural changes. Although there was no hard data to improve impact, there were significant improvements in networking and attitude changes towards tackling inclusion. For Ipswich, most difference has come in the last year with projects such as Learning Behaviour Leads and the Implementation Leads. Supporting Wellbeing and Emotionally Resilient Learning (SWERL) and the Wellbeing & Resilience hub has had the most traction, with schools reporting these as being helpful in supporting pupils in schools.

Some stakeholders discussed how the programme has been extremely successful in raising awareness of deprivation in Norwich and the needs of disadvantaged learners. There were now more regular and open conversations about this in schools and with parents. OA schools were better placed to respond to the challenges of the pandemic as a result.

Nearly all groups noted that social mobility was a long-term (generational) issue and that the programme had not been happening in a vacuum. Most recently this included the cost-of-living crisis that would make it harder to disentangle the long-term impact of the programme. As the world had changed over the past two years, so likely had many of the barriers, therefore making it difficult to say what the impact had been. One group noted that the barriers to social mobility had not necessarily been removed, because the social inequalities the OAs faced were wider than the remit of the programme. However, the programme had increased schools' capacity and strength to tackle barriers. It was raised that analysing the changes to Ofsted reports since 2017 would be an interesting study to see if themes such as culture change and working practices were referenced.

Q3: What would you recommend to others setting up a similar programme? Five out of six groups answered this question. Overall, groups noted that any future programme should set a clearer framework from the outset with tighter, measurable parameters. More time should be invested up front in planning the theory of change and what measures would be used to track and evaluate impact, as well as to establish connections with local providers. Multiple groups commented how targets could and should have been put in place from the start and that an in-house data analyst could have been embedded into the programme early on.

Though the extension of funding had been positive, multiple stakeholders across groups had only been able to plan a year at a time and so focus was often short term. If they had known the programme would be five years of funding from the start, they could have been more ambitious with community change. Some stakeholders noted that the sustainability of projects should have been explicitly built in at the very start and to ensure that learning would be taken forward

Over 180 activities had been conducted between both OAs. This scattergun approach had been overwhelming for schools. In future programmes, less activity and more time spent considering how to tackle and address inequalities, with joined-up thinking on housing, health and the long term could be beneficial.

4.6 Considerations for the Future

This report offers some thoughts on considerations for the future.

- The centrality of place was significant in our conversations with stakeholders. Norwich has a unique set of circumstances, which have been tackled using local knowledge, provision and bottom-up planning. This has been effective in engaging stakeholders. The place-based approach ensured that schools and other stakeholders considered disadvantage through a holistic lens that went beyond just the school gate. Future projects and policies should consider the lessons of a place-based approach to tackling disadvantage and the importance of trusting local leaders to improve social mobility outcomes.
- More consideration should be given to developing projects with a robust evaluation framework from the start. The evidence base of this evaluation was too reliant on small-scale surveys and interviews conducted by the UEA evaluation team to say anything significant about the measured progress of the programme on headline targets. The DfE leads and local programme

team noted that lessons had been learnt and that projects had tried to embed evaluation more robustly in later-stage projects.

- The long-term legacy of the NOA programme is now partially dependent on ensuring new teachers in the Norwich/Norfolk region are introduced to tackling disadvantage and social mobility through a place-based approach. For the joined-up ways of working between schools to continue, new teachers must appreciate the value of engaging with networks, revisit NOA learnings (such as through the online sharing learning hub) and be aware of the unique circumstances of disadvantage and its impact, including Norwich's. This process would ideally begin the moment teachers are inducted into teacher training programmes.
- The successful continuation of many of NOA's most impactful projects is contingent on the ability of local partners or schools to sustain these and where possible to extend and scale them up in Norwich and in the wider area. In part, this will be dependent on future funding from different partners. A fully developed framework of how to achieve these three aims (extend, scale-up and sustain) ought to be developed and shared with all stakeholders.
- The range of stakeholders involved in the design, implementation and sustainability of all NOA initiatives is wide and it kept growing as the programme developed. More consideration ought to be given to creating meaningful and long-lasting relationships amongst all stakeholders so that the benefits of such a place-based and close-partnership approach can outlive the duration of the NOA programme. The DfE could consider a more embedded way of leading such programmes in the future and ought to consider the impact of leadership styles on the children and young people of NOA.

References

DfE (2017). [Opportunity Areas](#). Policy Paper. 9 October 2017 (viewed on 2 May 2022)

DfE (2021). Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Careers. May 2021. [Opportunity areas insight guide – careers](#), (viewed on 30 May 2022)

DfE (2021). Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Early Years, December 2021. [Opportunity Areas Insight Guide – Early Years](#) (viewed on 15 June 2022)

Greening, J (2017). Speech Education at the core of social mobility, 19 January 2017. [Justine Greening: education at the core of social mobility - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (viewed on 30 May 2022)

Milligan, T, Smith, T, Trelford, H (2020). Community Communication Champions in Norwich: An Evaluation. University of East Anglia. <https://norwichopportunityarea.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/full-evaluation-norwich-community-communication-champions.pdf> (viewed on 20 April 2022)

NatCen (2022) Opportunity Areas Process Evaluation. Research Report. [Opportunity areas programme: research and analysis - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) (viewed on 20 June 2022)

Norwich Opportunity Area Delivery Plan (2017). The Department for Education Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Norwich. [DfE Social Mobility Delivery Plan – Norwich \(publishing.service.gov.uk\) \(viewed on\)](#)

Norwich Opportunity Area Partnership Board (2018). Meeting Minutes. 17 May 2018 (unpublished)

Norwich Opportunity Area (2020) NOA School Leads: Final Report. 20 August 2020 (unpublished)

Norwich Opportunity Area (2021). NOA Newsletter. June 2021. <https://norwichopportunityarea.files.wordpress.com/2021/06/norwich-opportunity-area-newsletter-june-2021-1.pdf> (viewed on)

Norwich Opportunity Area (2022). What's Changed in the Norwich Opportunity Area? <https://norwichopportunityarea.files.wordpress.com/2022/03/norwich-opportunity-area-whats-changed-report-2022-final.pdf> (viewed on)

Norwich Opportunity Area Partnership Board (2022). Report. March 2022 (unpublished)

York Consulting (2022). Norwich Inclusion Charter Evaluation. May 2022. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1078601/Norwich_Inclusion_Charter_project_evaluation.pdf (viewed on 15 June 2022)

Appendix: Selected project summaries

Project summary A

Priority 1 – Improve early speech, language, listening and communication
<p>Communication Champions</p> <p>Project Context</p> <p>The Communication Champions project resulted in two major programmes: the Communication Champions Network (CCN) and the Community Communication Champions (CCC). The Communication Champions Network was a training programme and network for early years specialists in Norwich schools, nurseries and other early years settings. The Communication Trust provided Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to equip staff to address early speech and language needs, as well as to cascade training to all staff in that setting to provide a universal approach. Half-termly network meetings were organised by five local school/setting Communication Champion Hubs, providing a forum for trained Champions to share best practice, access further CPD from guest speakers and collaborate. The CCCs programme was established to supplement provision in schools, settings and the community by providing parents with assistance with their child's early language development so that when children start school, they can access learning quickly.</p>
<p>What was done?</p> <p>Overall, £696,415 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the Communication Champions project. The Norwich Opportunity Area (NOA) funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Communication Champions Conference✓ Communication Champions CPD and resources✓ Communication Champion Honorariums✓ WellComm✓ Communication Champion Hubs✓ Community Communication Champions Research & Resources✓ Community Communication Champions Parent SLC programmes✓ Community Communication Champions Community Outreach
<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 249 practitioners completed the core training programme to become a trained Communication Champion in their school or setting.✓ 92% of Norwich primary schools now have a trained Communication Champion.✓ Seven Norwich practitioners received funding to complete an Educational Practice and Research Masters Degree at UEA.✓ Over 700 early years practitioners have accessed Communication Champions training.✓ 50+ Norwich practitioners have completed an accredited Level 2 or 3 Elklan qualification in speech and language.

Priority 1 – Improve early speech, language, listening and communication
The Early Years Transition Project Context <p>The Early Years Transition Project has grown into two major initiatives: the Virtual Tours and the Early Years Transition Campaign. The NOA team worked with a local interactive media specialist to create the Virtual Tours for Norwich primary schools so that families could ‘see’ their new school and ‘meet’ key staff. The Early Years Transition Campaign was designed to provide parents with simple and easily accessible resources to assist them in preparing their children for school.</p> <p><i>The children come in looking for particular areas that they have seen and feel familiar with the setting ... This tour alleviates the worry of the unknown and lets them discover the setting together as a family from the safety of their homes.</i> (Virtual Tours – Setting feedback)</p>
What was done? <p>Overall, £125,289 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the Early Years Transition project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Early Years COVID-19 Recovery Intervention grant fund✓ Virtual Tours Project✓ Early Years ELSA Training✓ Early Years Transition Campaign
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ The Virtual Tours reached 177,291 views.✓ In 2021, 100% of Norwich primary schools took part in the Virtual Tour project.✓ 5 short starting-school videos and 50 free and fun activities shared.✓ 10,000 copies of printed resources were distributed with Top Tips for parents to support their children for a smooth transition into their new primary school.

Priority 2 – Raise attainment through targeted, evidence-based CPD for teachers and system leaders
What a Difference a Day Makes (WADADM) Project Context Learning from Ipswich Opportunity Area, Norwich set up a maths and English GCSE intervention programme for Year 11 students. The WADADM programme focused on brushing up maths and English skills, as well as sessions on study skills and wellbeing, delivered by mentors and the Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach Higher Education (NEACO HE) coordinators, to prepare students for their post-16 destination. Students without access to the appropriate IT equipment needed to study were bought tablets. Mentors provided wraparound support to students, encouraging them to attend study sessions, troubleshooting technical issues with Google Classrooms and making fortnightly phone calls to check in. <i>These sessions are really helping our daughter, she came out on Saturday really positive and happy about her English. That means a lot, thank you. (WADADM parent)</i>
What was done? Overall, £69,236 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the WADADM project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Recruitment of maths and English teachers✓ UEA Learning Support✓ Mentoring Support✓ Summer Study Programme (Summer 2020)✓ GCSE Resit Programme (Autumn 2020)
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 7 NOA secondary schools participated.✓ 315 pupils completed the course.

Priority 2 – Raise attainment through targeted, evidence-based CPD for teachers and system leaders
Research Champions and Research Lead Network
Project Context <p>A funded research champion post was offered to secondary schools that fall within the NOA to facilitate the use of research evidence to improve classroom practice. Norwich Research School (funded by NOA) ran an in-depth coaching programme.</p> <p>Enhanced Research Leads – in 10 Norwich primary schools to support NOA schools to use research evidence to improve teaching and learning (T&L) outcomes via evidence-informed prioritisation, filtering, decision-making, implementation and evaluation by senior and middle leaders. The Research Leads Network provided an additional layer of system leadership to secure excellent progress by students at all key stages, with a particular focus on the performance of disadvantaged children.</p> <p><i>I am incredibly appreciative that I can be a part of this movement towards a more informed approach to education, and feel that the work of the Research School will have a huge impact on the profession as a whole.</i> (Deputy Headteacher – NOA primary school)</p>
What was done? <p>Overall, £267,511 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement Research Champions and Research Lead Network projects. NOA funded a wide range of activities in both projects, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Leadership engagement with Norwich Research School✓ Norwich Research School training programme for Research Leads✓ Establishment of new System Leadership accreditation✓ Recruitment and support for Research Champions✓ Engagement with the wider Research Leads Network.
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ The Chartered College of Teaching (CCT) audit shows clear progression for six schools, and in two of these schools, progress is cited as significant.✓ Seven of the Leads have been appointed as Evidence Leads in Education and are deployed to provide school-to-school support.✓ Five of the schools reported that they valued the use of research evidence highly enough to self-fund the Research Lead role.✓ Five secondary schools took up a funded Research Champion project to facilitate the use of research evidence to improve classroom practice.

Project summary E

Priority 2 – Raise attainment through targeted, evidence-based CPD for teachers and system leaders
Evidence-based practice fund
Project Context <p>The evidence-based practice fund programme focused on a variety of projects in schools in Norwich to determine "what works and [to] target disadvantaged pupils". It developed literacy and numeracy projects, such as reading, writing, oracy, communication or language for learning, as well as projects addressing student mental health issues and teacher professional development and wellbeing. Norwich Research School assisted schools in strengthening their implementation and evaluation strategies.</p> <p><i>The biggest success is a change in thinking and attitude [in school leadership teams] as much as it is about the individual projects themselves ... it's proving the worth of evidence-informed research and practice, whether the individual project has borne fruit or not.</i> (NOA School feedback)</p>
What was done? <p>Overall, £633,333 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the evidence-based practice project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Reading intervention✓ Learning support✓ Norwich Research School training✓ Projects development in schools✓ Evaluation process.
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 37 schools in Norwich accessed the evidence-based practice fund, with grants of up to £25,000.✓ 47% of headteachers said their decision-making at (SLT) level was more evidence-informed.✓ 52% of headteachers said classroom practice was more evidence-informed.

Priority 3 – Support children at risk of exclusion from school
<p>The Norwich Inclusion Charter</p> <p>Project Context</p> <p>The Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC) was created to assist primary and secondary schools in supporting students who were at risk of exclusion. The NIC programme's core structures were: inclusion charter principles, an independent facilitation role, inclusion champions, and networks for collaboration amongst local school leaders. The Inclusion Charter provided schools with a significant package of funding and support to test and evaluate approaches to improving inclusion within their schools, including inclusive culture programmes to support them with training to meet the Inclusion Charter's principles. Norwich schools benefited from NIC-funded interventions to develop school inclusion practices and actions that targeted individual families and parents and coordinated transition activities.</p> <p><i>There has been a change in ethos in our academy as we have gained access to managed moves, the use of alternative provision and the opportunity to network, collaborate and the chance to start to rebuild professional dialogue with different schools and Trusts across the city. (Inclusion Champion – Open Academy)</i></p>
<p>What was done?</p> <p>Overall, £322,251 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the NIC project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Development of the Charter principles✓ NIC pupil on-site and off-site support✓ NIC governor training✓ NIC culture programmes
<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 98% of schools in Norwich have committed to the Charter.✓ 27 school governors received training on inclusive practice and supporting schools to reduce permanent exclusions.✓ 32 schools accessed the funded inclusive culture programmes.✓ 13,202 Norwich pupils benefited from their school undertaking Inclusive Culture Training.✓ Twelve primary schools successfully applied for funding for a named member of staff to take up the Enhanced Primary Inclusion Champions role.

Priority 3 – Support children at risk of exclusion from school
<p>The Parent Support Project</p> <p>Project Context</p> <p>The parent support programme was associated with Benjamin Foundation initiatives, which were funded by the NIC and aim to provide families with personalised ‘Pathways to Inclusion’ plans. This included a combination of coaching for parents, counselling sessions with students, home visits, multi-agency meetings, and referrals to other resources. The emphasis was on building relationships, providing emotional wellbeing support for young people, facilitating communication between key players, adapting to individual circumstances and putting the Nurtured Heart Approach at the heart of the support provided. This was a collaborative approach to assisting students at risk of exclusion, and aided in the facilitation of communication between students, parents and schools</p> <p><i>“his taught me how to do things differently – provided me with new strategies to managing the kids at home. It also provided me with the opportunity to meet new people and talk to others in a similar situation.</i> (Parent/NIC evaluation)</p>
<p>What was done?</p> <p>Overall, £152,576 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the Parent Support project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Supporting families and children ✓ Building a positive relationship between schools and families ✓ Supporting the transition from primary to high school
<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 204 pupils and their families were referred from 30 different schools; 170 were recorded as closed and of these 133 were regarded as successful interventions. ✓ 50 parents chose to also take part in the Nurtured Heart Approach Parenting course. ✓ 100% of NOA secondary schools and 63% of primary schools used the Benjamin Foundation support offer.

Priority 3 – Support children at risk of exclusion from school
Emotional Literacy Support Assistants
Project Context <p>The Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) project was an initiative developed and supported by educational psychologists and designed to build the capacity of schools to support the emotional needs of their pupils within the schools' existing resources. This was designed to help children understand and cope with their emotions, as well as develop their self-esteem and positive interactions with others. An ELSA is a member of staff who has been trained to assist children in developing their emotional literacy, as an increasing number of children of all ages exhibit social, emotional and mental health challenges. An ELSA typically works with identified students on a one-on-one basis, and the ELSA's training includes social skills, emotions, bereavement, social stories and therapeutic stories, anger management, self-esteem, and counselling skills such as solution focus and friendship</p> <p><i>We have already seen the impact in terms of our provision and our school culture, but also, more significantly, the impact on individual children who have participated in ELSA sessions. ((SENCO), Mile Cross Primary School)</i></p>
What was done? <p>Overall, £60,000 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the ELSA project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ ELSAs' training and supervision sessions✓ Planning and delivery of ELSA support to pupils✓ Development of bank of resources✓ Support for the ELSA role within schools.
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ The NOA funded ELSA training for teaching assistants in 50% of primary schools and 75% of secondary schools, including two specialist provision settings and two special schools.✓ 133 ELSAs have now been trained across primary and secondary schools in Norwich.✓ ELSAs in Norwich support 665 pupils each term.

Priority 3 – Support children at risk of exclusion from school
<p>The Year 6 to 7 Transition</p> <p>Project Context</p> <p>The NOA collaborated with schools to collect examples of current transition practices across Norwich schools. The Year 6 to 7 transition programme developed four major projects: 1) Curriculum Bridging – an English bridged year curriculum project that could be used as a collection of resources to connect Year 6 work to Year 7 work; 2) Admissions events – the NOA planned collaborative events to educate students and parents about school options and to hear more from the Norfolk County Council Admissions Team; 3) Common Transfer Document – NOA worked alongside with primary and secondary school teachers to develop a single document that all schools could use to improve the process and experience of transition for students through better information transfer; and 4) Transition resources – the NOA partnered with secondary schools and a local design agency to develop a set of booklets for new Year 7 students to welcome and inform them before arriving at their new high school.</p> <p><i>The [Curriculum Bridging] resources provided by Norwich Opportunity Area were excellent – very comprehensive with a good range of reading material for our students. Teachers and students have responded really positively to it.</i> (Head of English, Thorpe St Andrew School)</p>
<p>What was done?</p> <p>The project ran between 2017 and 2022 to implement the Year 6 to 7 transition project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Improving communication✓ Common Transfer Document✓ Peer mentoring✓ Practice Guidebook✓ Parents admission events✓ Bridging Curriculum writing collaboration✓ School and transition booklet✓ Staff CPD✓ Transition audit tool and evaluation.
<p>Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 7 schools participated in the Curriculum Bridging project.✓ 77 families attended the autumn 2019 events and 143 families attended the events in autumn 2021(73% of parents said the event helped them feel more confident about how best to support their child with moving to high school and 82% said they felt better informed about their child's transition to secondary school).✓ 7 secondary schools used the document in 2020 and 2021 and the document has been downloaded 250 times.✓ 5 secondary schools created the booklets in summer 2020, which were posted to 820 students in Norwich and 7 schools took part in the extended project in summer 2021.✓ 1,300 transition activity booklets were distributed.

Priority 4 – Give young people information and support to make successful transitions
The Careers Project Project Context The Careers Project launched two major programmes: the Careers Facilitators Network and Careers Events. The Careers Facilitators Network was created to build a sustainable and collaborative network of practitioners in Norwich to share best practices and develop shared accountability for a calendar of career and enterprise opportunities. This allowed for a more efficient approach that provides more disadvantaged young people with access to a diverse range of high-quality and appropriate encounters. The Careers Events were created to collaboratively deliver large-scale employer engagement activities, save time and resources across local schools and improve the range of information and opportunities available to young people. <i>The network continues to be a source of inspiration and support. It provides up to date and timely advice, great contacts, inspiring discussion and ideas about resources which I might otherwise have been unaware of.</i> (Careers Facilitator – Open Academy)
What was done? Overall, £149,390 was spent between 2017 and 2022 to implement the Careers Project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Careers Facilitator training✓ Norfolk Chamber support✓ Support to Careers Facilitators in schools✓ Joint Careers Events✓ Careers Facilitators Network Development.
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 12 Careers Facilitators were funded in a part-time role in NOA secondary schools.✓ 68,218 employer encounters achieved.✓ 8 of the 12 Norwich schools have continued with this role using their own resources,✓ Careers Events registered nearly 1,000 visitors, and 39 education and training providers and local employers participated.✓ 650 pupils attended the Careers Events between 2019 and 2021 (88% of the pupils had learnt about new post-16 options and 70% of pupils felt more confident about planning for the future).

Project summary K

Priority 4 – Give young people information and support to make successful transitions
The Youth Board
Project Context <p>At the start of the NOA programme, a group of young people living, working or studying in Norwich formed the Youth Board, which advised and supported the programme. The Board developed project ideas for improving social mobility in their schools that would be funded through the main programme budget. Two projects were established by young people with the support of the local programme team to help English as an Additional Language (EAL) parents improve their English language skills as well as job skills to assist them in finding work; and to visit schools in an area that had seen an improvement in social mobility, to understand what had worked in similar areas.</p> <p><i>Our voices are being heard so in future younger ones like my siblings will have a better life and school experience. For teachers having that connection with kids will be a better experience too. (Year 9 pupil at City of Norwich School)</i></p>
What was done? <p>The project ran between 2017 and 2022 to implement the Youth Board Project. The NOA funded a wide range of activities in this project, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Support for EAL families✓ Research with young people✓ Visit to Southend Youth Council, secondary schools in Southend, South Essex FE College in Southend and Southend Adult Community College✓ Youth Board visit to Westminster✓ Youth Board meetings, coordination and social events
Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 24 parents and 34 children benefited from the support for EAL families.✓ 35 students, from 6 different schools in Norwich, joined the trip.

Annex

Summary of the data, material and process used in the synthesis evaluation report

1. Introduction

The synthesis evaluation was tasked with understanding what the Norwich Opportunity Area (NOA) did in an attempt to meet the original delivery aims outlined in its delivery plan. Moreover, it investigated both perceived and/or measured progress made toward its headline targets. A third component sought to understand how initiatives fared in tackling social mobility through a place-based approach.

The evaluation team conducted documentary analysis of a range of descriptive secondary data, outcomes/frameworks and other relevant documentation relating to the whole programme. The data analysis phase of the research ran between mid March and mid May 2022. Evaluation drew on published and unpublished documentation. This Annex provides context to data and material that made up this evaluation (unpublished and published), as well as outlining the methodology and processes that were adopted throughout.

2. Unpublished Documents and Data

The analysis of unpublished documents and data aimed to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge of the NOA programme. The evaluation team was granted access to Norwich Opportunity Area Megahub Drive. Overwhelmingly, documents were mostly qualitative and text-rich, and included progress charts, PowerPoint presentations, reporting material produced by the NOA and third-party partners, surveys, meeting minutes, monitoring documents and pre-evaluation reports. The following sources were extensively researched.

Document	Description
Partnership Board Meeting Reports (2017 to 2020)	<p>The Partnership Board delivers high oversight and direction to the NOA programme. The data is mostly internal but found its way into interim reports such as the What's Changed? Report.</p> <p>The Partnership Board meeting folder provides three main sources: the action decision log (18 Excel documents), the meeting agendas (2 Word documents) and the NOA updates (1 PDF document). The action decision log folder contains documents that give detailed information on actions, decisions and progress/comments in each priority area. The meeting agenda documents are used to provide a</p>

	list of topics to be discussed, as well as objectives and time frames. The NOA updates bring a summary of the NOA programme delivery by priority area, proposals, approaches and funding issues.
Headteacher Meeting Reports (2018 to 2020)	The NOA Headteachers Strategic Group has worked to create system-led change to improve outcomes and opportunities for our most disadvantaged children, irrespective of where they attend school. The primary and secondary school heads meeting folders are the main sources and contain 73 documents (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, and PDF) related to headteachers' reports, agendas, school engagement and proposals, actions, decisions, risks, finance issues, focus groups, Norwich 2040 city vision and project progress in the priority areas, with a focus on communication, collaboration and inclusion.
Headteacher Surveys (2019)	The NOA designed and delivered primary and secondary school headteacher surveys, with survey results released to the programme management team in June to July 2019. The primary and secondary school surveys include open-ended, closed-ended and scale questions. The surveys for primary schools are divided into five sections: communication champions, key stage 2 support fund, evidence-based practice, the Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC), and primary World of Work activities. The secondary school surveys are organised around five themes: evidence-based practise, NOA school leaders, the NIC, raising aspirations, confidence in the NOA, and legacy.
Twinning Action Plans – Breckland and Great Yarmouth (2021 to 2022)	The Breckland Area action plan explores what needs to be changed, how to address problems, how to implement activities, implementation outcomes and pupil outcomes. This action plan includes timetables, a list of activities and their costs, as well as the network meeting themes, support and promotion. The action plan for Great Yarmouth addresses the following issues: what needs to change, intervention activities and implementation activities. This action plan delves into issues such as how to support staff members in training to develop alternative provision, the development of a specialist resource base, curriculum coverage to follow pupils to secondary schools, how it will be done, working with the local authority and what blend of activities is required.
Individual Activities (selected examples)	
Communication – Early Years ELSA training evaluation (2021)	The Early Years ELSA evaluation folder contains two sources: monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring documents hold data about the Early Years ELSA cost, the ELSA registration form for training attendants and the ELSA training flyer. The evaluation documents were gathered to assist NOA/Norfolk county council) in determining the impact of training early years ELSAs. This included a series

	of questions about ELSAs' work with children, such as the number of children involved, the children's primary needs, the impact of the ELSAs' work, the children's progress and how to measure the outcomes of ELSA support.
Communication Champions Audit Tool (2019 to 2021)	The NOA developed a toolkit for Communication Champion settings to audit themselves against best practice for supporting learners with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), identify resources to support setting development and a planning template to collaboratively commit to these developments. This evaluation document comprises of three parts: rate your agreement with each statement; reflect on your audit results; and review the Resources section to identify resources to support your setting's development and complete the Development Plan to improve support for learners with SLCN.
Communication Champions Hub (2020 to 2021)	The Communication Champions' Hub evaluation folder comprises of three sources: an action plan, a report and a questionnaire. The action plan document includes a reflection on proposed interventions (both new and ongoing), expected outcomes, finance, network meeting best practises and promotion. The report document includes the total amount spent, progress toward milestones, evidence of impact, Communication Champions Network meetings, a year 2 plan, and a case study. The questionnaire was created to help gather feedback on the Communication Hubs and understand the level of confidence of local Communication Champions.
Evidence-based practice fund evaluation report (2017 to 2020)	The evidence-based practice fund (EBPF) evaluation report, produced by Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge in October 2020, covered the three East Anglia Opportunity Areas: Ipswich, Norfolk, and Fenland and East Cambridgeshire. This report provides an understanding of how the EBPF has been operating, with a particular focus on the experiences of the schools undertaking EBPF-funded projects, as well as the Research Schools supporting the implementation of EBPF projects in each OA. It used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the EBPF and a process-oriented perspective to evaluate it, focusing on how the EBPF was implemented and participants' experiences with it. It investigates participants' own conclusions from EBPF-supported projects. The research design was built around three main components: surveys, document analysis and theory of change workshops.
School Leads evaluation report (2018 to 2021)	The Schools Leads folder is organised around two main documents: the implementation plan and the project end report. The implementation plan focuses on how students will benefit (intended student outcomes) and when we will

	see progress (progress to date, expected implementation and pupils outcomes). The project end report is divided into the following sections: agreed-upon key deliverables, approach, project outcomes (key stage 4 and exclusions), addressing planning outcomes, COVID response, impact of School Leads role, lessons learnt and recommendations, and participant feedback.
--	--

3. Published Sources

The NOA's independent evaluation reports and newsletters have increased the understanding of the programme and provided all stakeholders with an unbiased assessment that ensures accountability and generates learning, building on success and correcting what is not working. The following published documents were extensively researched:

What's changed report 2022: This report provided a high-level overview of the NOA programme's work over the last five years, as well as a picture of the changes the programme has helped to bring about for Norwich's education leaders, practitioners, and children. Multiple projects, diverse experiences, and resource support for each school can be found in each priority area, and also what doesn't work and how to learn from mistakes. More information about this report is available at: <https://norwichopportunityarea.co.uk/evaluation/>.

Community Communications Champions – An Evaluation: This report, produced by University of East Anglia in July 2020, looked at 10 initiatives that involved 374 families, 203 workers and 105 social media users. It examined how these initiatives removed potential engagement barriers and assisted families in improving interactions with children in their home learning environment. The study took into account both qualitative and quantitative data from participants, including Community Communication Champions, NOA school and setting staff, parents and the NOA Priority One Project Manager. More information about this report is available at: <https://norwichopportunityarea.co.uk/evaluation/>.

Department for Education- NatCen Social Research (2022): This report investigated how the OA programme was delivered across OAs in Years 1 to 4 and sought to understand the benefits, challenges and perceived outcomes of the programme, as well as the key factors influencing them. It examined how project beneficiaries were supported throughout the pandemic and how methods of sustainability and legacy were implemented. Across the 12 OAs, 162 interviews and 27 focus groups were conducted. More information about this report is available at: <https://norwichopportunityarea.co.uk/evaluation/>.

Evaluation of Norwich Inclusion Charter – Norwich Opportunity Area Intervention Level Evaluation Report (2022): This report sought to assist Norwich schools in reducing permanent exclusions and suspensions, as well as to assess the

effectiveness of the Norwich Inclusion Charter project in achieving its goals. A document and data review, focus groups, online surveys, interviews, and case studies were all part of the research. Local authority representatives, school leaders, inclusion leads and staff, teachers, intervention leads, students, and families were amongst those interviewed. More information about this report is available at: <https://norwichopportunityarea.co.uk/evaluation/>.

OA Newsletters – The Norwich Opportunity Area School Newsletter provided updates for projects and programmes in each priority area, as well as key dates and contacts for Norwich schools. Between November 2017 and March 2022, 15 newsletters were published. More information about the newsletters is available at: <https://norwichopportunityarea.co.uk/newsletter/>.

List of all projects in their priority

Below is a list of all projects and their activities colour coded in their respective priority. Hyperlinks take the reader to the Eastern Opportunity Areas' Learning Hub, which provides more information on the project.

Key

Priority 1
Priority 2
Priority 3
Priority 4

Project	Activity Name
Communication Champions	Communication Champions pilot
	Communication Champions CPD
	Additional CPD, resources, support and backfill
	WellComm Assessment Tool
	Train the trainer resources

	Online Communication Champion Training
	Level 2 & 3 qualifications
	Masters qualifications
	Communication Champion Hubs
	Honorarium for Communication Champions
	2-Hour Funded Offer (offshoot of Honorarium Project 2021)
Community Communication Champions	CCC research project
	CCC team salaries
	CCC community outreach
	CCC resources
	Commissioned parent (SLC) programmes
The Consultancy Project	Original Project
	Extension Project
The Early Years COVID-19 Recovery Grant Fund	The Early Years COVID-19 Recovery Grant Fund
Early Years Transition (COVID-19 Response)	Virtual Tours Project 2020 & 2021
	Starting school & Early Years Transition
	50 Things to do before you're 5
Communication Champions Conference	Communication Champions Conference (2019 & 2022)
Early Years ELSA's	Early Years ELSA Training
Twinning – Breckland	Communication Champions Training CPD

	WellComm
	Honorariums
	Breckland Communication Hub
	Breckland Eklan Offer
Support to improve attainment	Key stage 2 support grants
	What a Difference a Day Makes (KS4)
	Maths and English GCSE resit programme
	Summer 2020 WADADM programme (Covid-19 response)
	Phonics support and resources
Evidence-based practice	Research Lead Network
	Research Champions
	Evidence-based practice fund
SLT capacity to support disadvantage pupils	NOA Secondary School Leads
Reading intervention	Reading Campaign
Remote Teaching & Learning (COVID-19 response)	Remote Teaching Champions
	Additional Tutoring (Years 6/7 & Year 10)
External support for parents and pupils	Parent support programmes (Benjamin Foundation)
Norwich Inclusion Charter	Norwich Inclusion Charter (NIC) grant fund to support the principles of the Charter
	Norwich Inclusion Charter Assessment Tool
	Investing in Primary Inclusion Champions
	School governor training – inclusion

	Inclusive culture programmes
Mental Health & Wellbeing support	Mental health support grant funds
	Headteacher Coaching
Supporting children at risk of exclusion	Funded pupil support – offsite on onsite
	Schools offering on-site Alternative Provision for at risk pupils
	Primary exclusion intervention grant fund to mitigate risk of exclusions
	Engagement Coaches
	Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs)
Improving communication and relationships to support Y6 to Y7 transition	CPOMS – data sharing package
	Common Transfer Document
	Interschool visits
	Current practice guides
	Year 7 STAR research – pupil voice
	Year 7 pupil booklets to support transition
	Joint Year 6/7 Transition Week
	Parent Transition Guide booklet
Transition audit toolkit for schools	
Building resilience	Peer mentoring
	Parent admissions events
	Transition parent information sessions (Year 6)
Improving learning	English Curriculum Bridging Project
COVID-19 response	Maths Curriculum Bridging Project
	Summer schools – 2020 + 2021
Careers facilitator training and network development	Careers Facilitator CPD
	Norfolk Chamber support
	Careers Facilitator grants to schools
	Careers Facilitator Network development
	Joint Careers Events
Primary World of Work/Careers	Primary careers world of work project
	Parent and community engagement
	Community Innovation Fund
Additional support for students	SEND work tasters project

	Schools mentoring programme
	Positive Activities
Support with moving to HE	HE Parent Ambassador project