



Department
for Education



Government
Social Research

Evaluation of the Alternative Provision Innovation Fund (APIF)

**Learning from set-up and early
implementation**

May 2021

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Contents

List of tables	4
1. Introduction	5
1.1 About the APIF	5
1.2 An introduction to the APIF projects	6
Reintegration projects	6
Post-16 transitions projects	6
Parent/carer engagement projects	7
Common project aims	7
Young people supported by the projects	7
1.3 The APIF Evaluation Methodology	12
2. Lessons learned from project implementation	14
2.1 Learning from project set-up and delivery	14
Recruiting for practitioner roles	15
Securing buy-in and networking with stakeholders	15
Governance and accountability	17
Cascading operational responsibility in mainstream settings	19
Engaging 'home' with APIF projects	21
2.2 Learning related to progress and outcome measurement	24
Data to support referrals	24
The range of ways to collect and generate data	25
Collecting longitudinal data	26
2.3 Thematic reflections on this learning	30
3. Learning from early outcomes and practice	33
3.1 What benefits are beginning to be experienced by young people, parents/carers and education professionals?	34
Benefits for young people	34
Benefits experienced by parents/carers	39
Benefits for education professionals	40
3.2 Learning from aspects of provision beginning to make improvements.	40

4. Conclusions	47
Annex 1: Full survey responses for tables included in Section 3	49

List of tables

Table 1: Characteristics of the YP supported by the APIF projects (Welfare status)	9
Table 2: Characteristics of the YP supported by the APIF projects (Gender)	10
Table 3: Characteristics of the YP supported by the APIF projects (Ethnicity).....	11
Table 4: Change in the SDQ score of young people supported	37
Table 5: Change in level of young peoples' difficulties with emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people	37
Table 6: Change in extent to which young people reported difficulties interfering with their everyday life.....	38
Table 7: Statements on how the young person has been feeling (in the past two weeks)	39
Table 8: Statements on strengths and difficulties	49
Table 9: Statements on how young person sees themselves and others	50
Table 10: Statements on how the young person has been feeling (in the past two weeks)	51

1. Introduction

In July 2018 Ecorys and the University of Sussex were commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to conduct an independent evaluation of the Alternative Provision Innovation Fund (APIF). The APIF was introduced as part of the Government's new vision for alternative provision (AP) and was launched in March 2018. This report presents the key findings from set-up and early implementation of the APIF projects, including insights to the three overarching priority themes for the Fund (see below).

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown, the evaluation and data collection from projects was suspended in March 2020 and, subsequently, ended early without completing some elements of the planned data collection. This report does not, therefore, provide a summative account of the outcomes from the APIF projects but rather focuses on the period September 2018 to March 2020. It is intended to recognise projects' achievements at that point in time and to provide learning for the wider sector.

1.1 About the APIF

The Alternative Provision Innovation Fund (APIF) was announced in DfE's 2018 paper, *Creating opportunity for all*, which set out a vision for the development of a high-quality AP sector. The APIF aimed to test what works in securing better outcomes for children in AP and to extend the evidence base for the sector. It awarded £4m to nine projects across two academic years, starting in September 2018 and with a focus on three themes:

1. Supporting Young People (YP) to reintegrate into suitable mainstream or special school placements;
2. Supporting YP to make good academic progress in AP and successful transitions from AP to education, training and employment; and
3. Enabling YP to achieve better educational outcomes by increasing parent and carer engagement.

1.2 An introduction to the APIF projects

While most of the APIF lead organisations were based in AP provider settings, some were based in charities, service providers and a local authority. For one project, responsibility was shared across the two charities involved in delivering the provision. All nine projects also utilised a Project Board or Steering Group that included representation from local stakeholders.

Reintegration projects

- **Bradford AP Academy Central** trialled key worker support for YP at the same time as developing closer partnerships with local secondary schools and parents. The aim was to reduce barriers to inclusion in order to enable reintegration to be more sustained.
- **Francis Barber Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)**, a South London PRU, delivered an intensive literacy and behaviour intervention package, followed by focussed behaviour mentoring and restorative work. A key aim was to improve self-regulation in order to reduce conflict on future reintegration.
- **Telepresence Robot Collaboration (Hospital and Outreach Education)**, a medical AP provider, provided YP with a tele-visual robot, AV1, controlled remotely using iPads in order to facilitate virtual access to lessons. The aim was to support reintegration by helping YP to make appropriate progress with their learning and maintain relationships with teachers and peers.

Post-16 transitions projects

- **Cognus Ltd** offered a wide package of support to prevent YP becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). This included: transition coaches to support YP moving from Year 11 to post-16; workshops over the summer holidays; resilience training; work with parents; bespoke training for staff in post-16 settings around support, engagement and retention.
- **Futures for You** (Futures Advice, Skills and Employment Ltd) recruited specialist employability coaches to provide tailored careers advice to YP. The intervention included activities such as access to supported work placements and workplace visits in order to improve YP's knowledge and decision-making around future options and pathways.
- **Build Salford** (Salford City Council) offered YP structured supplementary provision to improve their practical, personal and academic skills in order to prepare them for work in the construction industry. Activities included access to work experience,

regular site visits, industry-led training days and a dedicated construction industry mentor.

Parent/carer engagement projects

- **Parent Coaching for Pupil Progress** (The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families), delivered their parent coaching for pupil progress programme, developed with The Family School, in three new AP settings nationwide. This trains teachers in AP settings to deliver a 10-week parental engagement programme within their own professional context.
- **The Turnaround Project** (Portsmouth Education Partnership) aimed to improve the attainment and reintegration of YP in Key Stage Three in particular. It combined short-term AP placements with mentoring when the YP returns to mainstream school. Mentors also support the wider family.
- **The Right Angle** (The Tutor Trust and TLC: Talk, Listen, Change) provided a combination of academic and therapeutic interventions. This included bespoke academic tuition from young inspiring role models in Maths, Science and English, designed to boost YP's academic attainment, alongside 1-1 counselling from a qualified practitioner.

Common project aims

Across the nine projects, common aims included a focus on:

- Strengthening support systems via improved inter-professional collaboration and communication;
- Increased capacity to support the needs of YP via flexible and tailored approaches to provision and innovations in staff roles and training;
- Improved participation and progress in education via holistic approaches to the development of personal, social and academic skills; and,
- Developing relationships with parents and carer that enable higher levels of support and engagement.

Young people supported by the projects

Although there is no 'typical' profile of a YP supported by APIF provision, those supported by the nine projects tended to have experienced higher levels of educational and social disadvantage than the general school population. This included prior experiences of school suspension or expulsion, disrupted patterns of school attendance

and additional needs such as: complex special needs, complex physical health needs, Tier 3-4 mental health needs and behavioural needs. Tables 1-3 provide further information about the characteristics of the YP supported under the APIF provision. They are based on aggregated data drawn from the Termly Monitoring Reports (TMRs) submitted by each project and as such, they do not reflect variations related to specific project aims and contextual differences. It should also be noted that they are based on the most recent data received from projects as at June 2020 and that they may not reflect the final number of YP supported by projects, where delivery was ongoing beyond this date and/or where TMR returns were incomplete.

Data collected on the welfare status of the YP supported under the APIF programme indicates some differences with recent national data on the characteristics of YP in AP^{1,2}. Table 1 indicates that more than half (57%) of the YP supported by the APIF projects were eligible for Free School Meals which is considerably higher than the general school population (17.3%) and in state-funded AP (46.6%).

In addition, a higher proportion of YP supported by the APIF projects had an Education, health and care plan (EHCP) compared to all pupils in schools in England and all pupils in state-funded AP, 11% versus 3.3% and 16.4%, respectively.

¹ Schools, pupils and their characteristics, 2019/20 <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics> [Accessed: 25 September 2020].

² Special educational needs in England: January 2020. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england> [Accessed: 25 September 2020].

Table 1: Characteristics of the YP supported by the APIF projects (Welfare status)

Welfare status of pupils	Count of supported pupils	Percent (of total supported pupils)	Comparison to national average or numbers	
			All pupils	Pupils in state-funded AP
Number of pupils eligible for Free School Meals/Pupil Premium	576	57%	17.3%	46.6%
Number of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)	109	11%	3.3%	16.4%
Number of pupils who are a Looked After Child (LAC) ³	132	13%	46,230 (0.6%)	1,070 (6.6%)
Number of pupils with a Child Protection Plan (CP) ⁴	47	5%	28,810 (0.4%)	800 (5.0%)
Number of pupils assessed as being a Child in Need ⁵ (CIN)	58	6%	210,920 (2.6%)	4,430 (27.4%)
Total number of pupils supported by the APIF projects	1,007	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Termly Monitoring Reports submitted by APIF projects.

Table 2 shows that 67% of YP supported by the projects were male, which is slightly lower than for the AP sector in England as whole (75.2% of placements⁶).

³ Outcomes of children in need, including looked after children. These statistics refer to pupils in state-funded schools only; the figures for state-funded AP only include single and dual-main registered pupils in PRUs, AP academies and AP free schools. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/outcomes-of-children-in-need-including-looked-after-children>.

⁴ ibid

⁵ ibid

⁶ Schools, pupils and their characteristics, 2019/20

<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

[Accessed: 25 September 2020].

Table 2: Characteristics of the YP supported by the APIF projects (Gender)

Gender of supported pupils	Count of supported pupils	Percent (of total supported pupils)	Comparison to national average or numbers	
			All pupils ⁷	Pupils in AP ⁸
Male	685	67%	51%	73%
Female	341	33%	49%	27%
Non-binary	3	<1%	-	-
Other			-	<1%
Total	1,029*			

Source: Termly Monitoring Reports submitted by APIF projects.

*This figure is based on the most recent data for pupils received from projects as at June 2020. Differences between this figure and the total number of pupils supported by APIF projects reflect disparities reported in the TMR returns.

Table 3 demonstrates that most of the YP supported by the APIF projects were white. This is in contrast to national data, which shows that black Caribbean and mixed white/black Caribbean pupils are over-represented in PRUs and local authority AP.

⁷ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

⁸ [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic Year 2019/20 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics/academic-year-2019-20). These statistics refer to all single and dual-main registered pupils in state place funded AP (PRUs, AP academies and AP free schools) in January 2020.

Table 3: Characteristics of the YP supported by the APIF projects (Ethnicity)

Ethnicity of supported pupils	Count of supported pupils	Percentage (of total supported pupils)	Comparison to national average or numbers ⁹	
			All pupils ¹⁰	Pupils in AP ¹¹
White – White British	809	81%	73.1% (Primary) 72.3% (Secondary) 73.1% (Special schools)	70.7%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	79	8%	6.5% (Primary) 5.7% (Secondary) 6.2% (Special schools)	8.7%
Asian or Asian British	60	6%	11.3 % (Primary) 11.6% (Secondary) 10.2% (Special schools)	3.7%
Black African/ Black Caribbean/Black British	46	4%	5.4% (Primary) 6.0% (Secondary) 6.9% (Special schools)	6.2%
Other ethnic group	9	1%	2.1% (Primary) 2.0% (Secondary) 1.7% (Special schools)	1.5%
Unclassified ethnic group			1.1% (Primary) 1.8% (Secondary) 1.5% (Special schools)	3.8%
Total	1,003*			

Source: Termly Monitoring Reports submitted by APIF projects.

*This figure is based on the most recent data for pupils received from projects as at June 2020. Differences between this figure and the total number of pupils supported by APIF projects reflect disparities reported in the TMR returns.

⁹ Schools, pupils and their characteristics <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

¹⁰ These statistics refer to pupils in state-funded schools only.

¹¹ These statistics refer to all pupils who were single or dual-main registered in state place funded AP (PRUs, AP academies and AP free schools) in January 2020.

1.3 The APIF Evaluation Methodology

The aims of the APIF evaluation were to:

- **Support the nine funded projects to develop individual evaluation plans** and to standardise, as far as possible, the measures, methodologies, management information and data collection tools across projects to enable comparison between projects and across themes.
- Undertake a **thematic and project-level process and outcome evaluation** of the APIF projects via analysis of national and survey data; collection and review of documentary evidence and management information and qualitative case-study research.
- **Share the findings of the evaluation on effective practice** with the education sector via external webinars, project learning events (involving only lead and senior staff from projects), 'practice' guides and attendance at conferences.

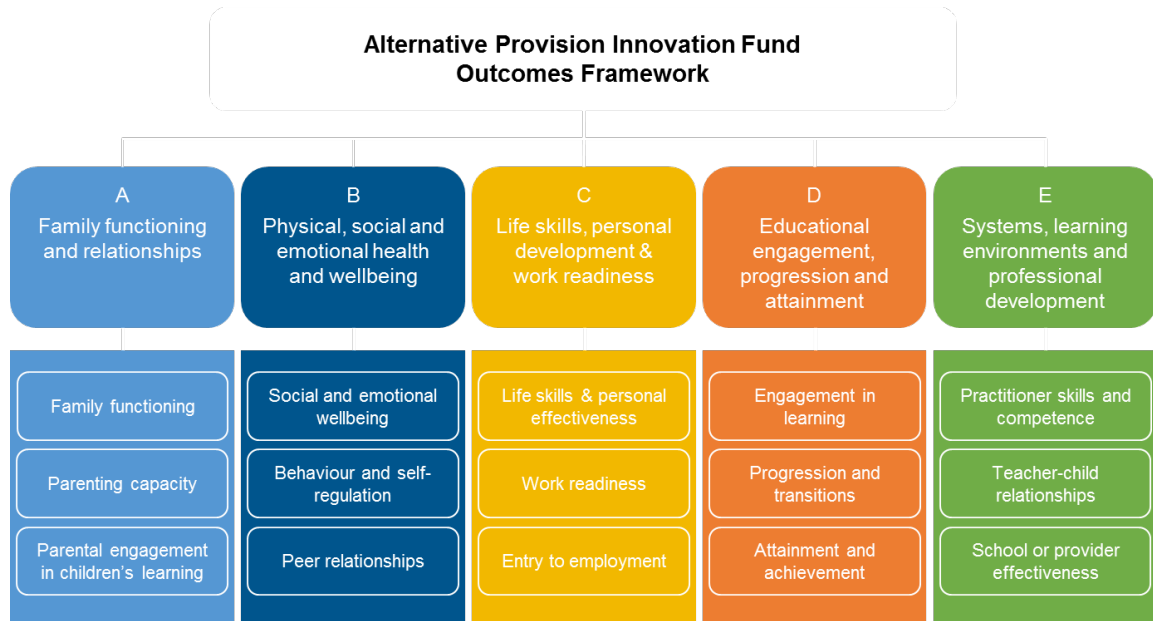
The APIF evaluation was based on a mixed-methods approach that aimed to learn from the models of alternative provision adopted by the nine projects. The evidence sources used as the basis for this report comprised:

- **Surveys of young people** engaged in learning and/or receiving support from the APIF projects. The purpose was to capture individual level data on mental health, wellbeing and resilience in a common format. The survey was designed to be administered at two time points; the first at the start of YP's participation in the project (baseline, n=139 responses) and then when their involvement ended (follow-up, n=86 responses).
- **In-depth case-study visits** conducted in Summer 2019. These involved face-to-face and telephone interviews with: project leads, senior staff in AP providers, mainstream schools and other partners, practitioners involved in direct pupil-facing roles, parents and carers as well as YP enrolled on AP provision (aged 11+). The case-study research focused on capturing a detailed understanding of the support and learning/training provided by each project. They covered its set up and implementation, what had worked well and progress made in achieving intended outcomes to date. In total, these visits elicited n=115 qualitative interviews, comprising of n=100 with staff and parents/carers, and n=15 with YP supported by the APIF projects.
- **Termly monitoring reports (TMRs)** were requested from all APIF projects. These elicited qualitative and quantitative data on a range of measures

covering engagement and participation in project implementation, outputs, outcomes, and lessons learned.

At the start of the Evaluation the nine projects were invited to map expected outcomes across five key domains as shown in Figure 1. These derived from a preliminary desk-based analysis of key outcome measures from the project applications.

Figure 1: APIF Outcomes Framework



As might be expected, the projects varied in their assessments of which areas of the Outcomes Framework were most relevant to their particular project aims. Areas of overlap - both between projects and across the APIF themes - reflected the generally multi-stranded nature of the approaches to intervention adopted by the different projects.

2. Lessons learned from project implementation

Summary of key findings

Learning from project set-up and delivery

Engaging ‘the right people in the right roles’ is central to deliver projects that can meet the needs of YP successfully and within a short project duration, specifically:

- Transparency of communications and practice are central to effective delivery.
- Having a named contact within mainstream school helps with the implementation of bespoke approaches to supporting a student’s reintegration to their mainstream setting and can also support post-16 transitions where relevant.
- Parent/carer engagement can be strengthened by a mediating approach that takes account of different lived experiences and bridges home, mainstream (if involved) and AP.
- Post-16 transition set-up and delivery benefits from employer and industry engagement.

Learning related to progress and outcome measurement

- Projects collected data spanning both quantitative and qualitative measures, finding creative and flexible ways to capture and validate YP’s progress and outcomes (ranging from GL assessments¹² at baseline and exit to behaviour logs and practitioner observation).
- Participants noted that, in some instances, approaches to recording the progress of YP and outcome measures needed to be bespoke to the project, the local context and cohorts of YP.
- Transparency between schools, AP settings and wider stakeholders was considered to be critical in holding an accurate, shared understanding of YP’s progress and attainment in order to ensure the suitability of the project.
- The better the clarity of information shared between settings the more AP providers could work effectively from the outset of a YP’s engagement with APIF projects.

2.1 Learning from project set-up and delivery

The setting up and mobilisation phases of the APIF projects generated a range of learning points relating to structures and processes. These included insights into

¹² These are a range of different types of standardised tests, developed by GL Assessment, to support the measurement of children and young people’s educational progress and achievement.

recruiting for practitioner roles, securing buy-in with stakeholders, governance and accountability systems, the cascading of day-to-day responsibility within mainstream settings and engaging the YP's 'home' with the APIF projects. Each of these are discussed in turn in the following sections.

Recruiting for practitioner roles

Some projects experienced challenges in recruiting for APIF practitioner roles such as support staff, mentors and counsellors. The senior staff at one APIF project suggested that this was due to a "limited supply" of candidates with the necessary skills mix. They overcame this challenge by having two recruitment rounds, in order to "strengthen the pool" of candidates to interview. In some cases, projects more specifically defined the job descriptions at the second round and amended the required skillsets/experience for the job adverts. Other projects staggered start dates for staff with less experience, to provide training to upskill them, before project delivery commenced. In one case, as there were limited personnel to support specialist literacy intervention work, it was necessary to pause this and focus on the core project delivery until recruitment had been completed. This then posed challenges for keeping to project timescales and milestones. The post-16 transition projects reported having experienced fewer challenges with recruiting staff to key project roles, as they were able to draw on a wider pool of professionals, for example, those from youth work or careers advice backgrounds.

The recruitment of a range of practitioners with a diverse set of professional backgrounds, was important to being able to tailor provision to the needs of supported YP. Projects reported that they 'matched' APIF practitioners to fit the needs and experiences of the YP receiving the support. This was either done internally or across partner organisations and involved reviewing the data available from the student, school or referral organisation and matching needs to the skillsets, experiences, or characteristics of the available practitioners:

It's important to make sure, from the off, that we set a young person to work with someone who is going to be best for them. For example, we might see that someone quite clearly has issues with male role models so I will put a woman in or vice versa. – *APIF practitioner*

Securing buy-in and networking with stakeholders

APIF project senior staff noted that securing buy-in from stakeholders was important for the project's success. Firstly, they considered that it would ultimately lead to better engagement with the project over time. Secondly, they suggested it might contribute to more sustained outcomes for YP and their families, because the new relationships were an opportunity to refresh communications. At mobilisation phase, some projects

increased the intensity of work with school staff/leaders, to ensure that they understood their purpose/place in the project.

Coupling therapeutic intervention with 1-1 tutoring at The Right Angle

The Right Angle project offered a two-strand package of support to young people in AP:

1. tutoring from the Tutor Trust (TTT) and,
2. counselling from TLC: Talk, Listen, Change (TLC).

This required multiple points of contact between the AP provider, the coordinators, tutors and counsellors, to timetable sessions and to communicate and collect informed consent. Best practice showed that forming close relationships between The Right Angle and AP Providers reduced scheduling challenges, ensuring that YP working on reduced timetables were still able to receive support.

Generally, YP were more likely to easily engage with tuition as something they were already familiar with. Challenges associated with engaging young people to take up the offer of counselling were addressed by producing a communications package, including postcards with myth-busters and FAQs about counselling and the process that would help to mitigate any concerns around the therapeutic offer. These were given to, and talked through, with YP and families, as well as AP staff, to increase the engagement with the counselling support.

Where projects perceived 'good practice' around stakeholder engagement, this was achieved largely by creating a single channel of simple and understandable communications about what involvement would be requested of the various stakeholder groups, such as, mainstream schools, college admissions, employers and relevant local authority departments. Projects had initial face-to-face meetings with staff in mainstream schools and, in some instances, practitioners worked from mainstream schools themselves to become familiar with the staff and the environment. It was perceived that face-to-face meetings were important initially, but that these relationships could be maintained through remote channels (e.g. emails, conference calls) thereafter.

Practitioners – particularly in reintegration projects – found that they needed to mediate relationships across the different stakeholders involved in a young person's AP journey. APIF practitioners described their role as being the "mediator between home, school and student". But this mediation often extended beyond the triad of home-school-student and

involved healthcare professionals and/or social workers. AP practitioners offered multiple opportunities for bridging (and, in some places, reparation) across the different stakeholders involved in planning for more positive outcomes for the YP.

Technology as an enabler and a barrier to AP innovation... from Hospital and Outreach Education (HOE) using 'AV1' – the robot for children with long-term illness

The HOE project used advanced technology (AV1 robots) that transmitted a live stream of the young person's mainstream classroom. Notable work was required to overcome concerns and misconceptions from schools, teachers, parents and carers e.g. in relation to privacy, safeguarding and data security.

HOE project staff provided information for the AP practitioners about AV1, and on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), to help them explain the offer to schools. Providing technical and implementation advice added another layer of support for schools.

Despite the technology being encrypted, APIF practitioners said that "lots of people feared that it would be recording". Queries from both schools and parents/carers about the technology, safeguarding and risk, required continued explanation between the APIF practitioners and stakeholders, as the following quote illustrates:

They have a misconception about GDPR and what it is and what it isn't. Some schools are quoting 'safeguarding' [in their decision making] without having/providing any clarity over what that means.
– *Project Lead*

Various steps were taken to address this issue. For example, in one school, HOE staff were able to attend an established parent/carer coffee morning, in order to try and unpick some of the misconceptions about the technology and the security of it. In another case APIF practitioners worked through the informed consent process with specific stakeholders on a one-to-one basis explaining how the AV1 technology worked in the classroom and providing reassurance regarding any outstanding concerns.

Governance and accountability

Having the "right people", in terms of the authority and seniority to leverage change, emerged as important for the governance of the projects. Projects across the APIF programme all indicated that solid steering and governance mechanisms with multiple agencies around the table were critical to their success as these structures were useful

where there was a need to establish collective system leadership but also to explore challenges that were emergent from different parts of the system.

For reintegration projects, gaining mainstream school senior leadership buy-in to projects was also considered to be important in ensuring that appropriate lines of accountability could be formed and maintained when seeking the best outcomes for YP in AP.

Robust networks across partner' schools and AP providers were used to successfully achieve required changes, or to address idiosyncrasies at a wider level. For example, one project found that there were some inconsistencies with Fair Access Protocols¹³ at the local authority level. Together the stakeholders had more power and they were able to collectively negotiate to seek changes to the processes for YP that would further support their reintegration to mainstream:

The project board is a really strong group of people. A mix of headteachers, local authority, senior members of school staff and other senior executives from academies. And what that allows is different doors opening into different [opportunities] in terms of not just the local authority but with schools as well. – *Senior leader, AP Provider*

Futures for You post-16 transition careers support

Intensive careers (and 'futures') support was provided through two embedded careers coaches, each working in a designated geography by Futures for You. The coaches became embedded within their education settings (e.g. AP and Further Education), established relationships with the relevant stakeholders and increased the engagement of YP:

It's built the relationships with the two coordinating bodies sitting in county and then with the APs themselves, so the actual deliverers. They've become like a teacher, they're a recognised face, the young people got to know them, they've built their relationships, the providers know them and that has allowed us to gain new levels of engagement from the cohort that we've never seen. The proof is in the pudding because last year's NEET figures [have reduced]. – *Schools Manager, AP*

¹³ The local authority process which is binding on all schools in the area and governs the identification and offer of a school place, outside the normal round of school admissions, to any unplaced children. Further information available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fair-access-protocols-in-school-admissions>.

Learning from the APIF project has allowed Futures for You to develop a new model of working called their 'NEET approach'. This will employ four to five careers coaches to work specifically with the cohort of YP in AP:

So we'll give them designated schools that they will work in, they will become that member of staff across the AP providers, but they will also do a lot more of the soft skills work. So they work with the tutors and teachers to look at more than just careers; to actually look at right, what's your family like, your life like? Do you need help with clothes, etc.? So more of the life skills and the family wraparound, they're doing the bigger piece of work. – *Head teacher, AP*

The same team of coaches working with 14-15 year olds will also be working with 16-18 year olds. Therefore, if YP return to the service at 16+ they will be allocated the same coach, offering a consistency of practitioner from Year 11 through to adult services, where required.

In a post-16 transitions project, engaging a group of employers at the outset helped to raise their awareness of the behaviours and needs of the YP within AP (and whom they might later train or employ) as well as to offer information on why and when these behaviours may surface. Employer engagement meetings acted as an awareness-raising exercise for employers and also provided the opportunity for YP to seek out roles with these employers as part of their post-16 transition. For example, employers from particular trades (e.g. electrical, plumbing) were invited to participate in courses provided at the college to YP from the APIF project, covering skillsets required across multiple trades including plumbing, electrical and construction. Employers participated by sitting in on sessions and delivering aspects of workshops. Additionally, YP were able to use these opportunities to quiz employers about the realities of working within a particular industry and pair that with their formal 'classroom' aspects of the project, in their decision making for their future. This enabled APIF practitioners to help YP to understand whether a certain role would fit with their skillsets and needs.

Cascading operational responsibility in mainstream settings

Some APIF projects found that gaining buy-in at the senior leadership level ensured the work was embraced by schools. Once buy-in was secured, it was then possible to cascade the day-to-day, operational responsibility and communications, to a named member of school staff. This was felt to sit more effectively within operational roles (e.g. an admin team) as it enabled APIF projects to get quicker responses from staff with greater availability to respond to queries. Typically, this role helped with essentials like

individual timetabling, appointments and attendance. However, this was not always effective across the board; changes were not always communicated on time to some project staff, leading to multiple wasted journeys and missed or rescheduled appointments.

Having a key contact within schools was also seen to influence the implementation of the bespoke approaches suggested by APIF projects for the reintegration of YP into a mainstream setting. Although not always as successful in practice, a key finding from the three reintegration-focused APIF projects' perspective is that schools can make a substantial difference by appointing these key contacts who can anchor the coordination and tailoring of schools' approaches to reflect the needs of returning pupils, especially within their first 6-8 weeks of reintegration.

Learning from Francis Barber PRU on reintegration mentoring

APIF funding enabled reintegration mentors from Francis Barber to work 'in-situ' with the young people in their mainstream setting. Consistency, of the same reintegration mentor, was key to developing positive and trusting relationships over a short-term period, that extended six weeks prior to the reintegration back into the mainstream environment:

The pupils really benefit from having the consistency of one mentor - it means that we can develop really enriching relationships and help them to respond to issues they may face in the mainstream setting. – *Project Lead*

At the strategic level, the PRU had secured buy in to their work with senior mainstream staff who were "*brilliant partners*". However, at an operational level, further work needed to be done to set expectations for post-reintegration support packages and improve other avenues of communication e.g. data sharing. It was suggested that this would require flexibility from the AP provider to extend their short-term (six week) support in school, as well as, working closely with schools to generate better understandings of the ways the young person should be supported.

PRU staff could also be a little clearer with the mainstream school about their expectations in terms of what support the school can put in place. We still need to do some work to ensure a shared understanding is developed. – *Inclusion Officer*

The personnel who held the key contact role within each school had varying working remits, which again in places, affected engagement with communications between school

and AP providers. For example, some key contacts would be a pastoral lead, and others an academic Head of Year. Having established relationships at the senior level enabled AP practitioners to escalate any communication challenges, so that needs were met by another member of staff, with more capacity.

Engaging 'home' with APIF projects

Although a focus of three APIF projects in particular, parent and carer engagement emerged as a cross-cutting theme across the other six as well. It was regarded as vital for understanding the wider determinants of a young person's engagement but also how to develop a 'home-school' relationship that is supportive of a YP's journey through AP. Many parents and carers were highly engaged and on-board from the outset and throughout the project. Parents/carers observed the positive change that had been achieved with the help of the APIF practitioners.

APIF practitioners perceived that getting parents and carers 'on-board' required consistency and clarity in communications, and by offering a supportive role that could mediate between them and school and/or AP staff. Parent/carers communications benefitted from being flexible, informal and could work remotely. Day-to-day exchanges between the AP setting and 'home' helped with liaising about best ways to support the young person. For example, to understand any potential 'trigger' situations or patterns of behaviour and to make sure that attendance and punctuality were regular and timely.

A parent's 'reintegration' story... from Bradford AP Academy Central

One YP was permanently excluded from their school. This YP's parent told their story of mainstream school and the APIF project, and their child's reintegration to a new mainstream setting:

I can't describe how awful it has been for us and for [my child], and the frustration we've felt with [their prior mainstream] school.

I cannot fault the [APIF project], they have been so fantastic with [my child] at getting [them] back into mainstream school... we had a meeting to begin with, the head of the centre spoke to us and gave me his business card. He was always available to speak to. We were kept engaged with regular feedback.

We did go into the AP provider a few times. We had various discussions along the way, obviously we were worried [...] and we wanted [my child] back in school and to be learning again. – *YP's parent*

The YP's parent felt really reassured by the support provided to their child by the APIF practitioner in helping their child to reintegrate from the APIF project and into a new mainstream school.

As a family we have contact with the key worker from the [APIF project] on a weekly basis. The teachers there... I don't know how they do their job, they are really level-headed and really calm. They are really good at dealing with kids and understanding them. – *YP's parent*

Where there were initial barriers to parent/carer engagement to be overcome, APIF practitioners observed that this was often where there had been notable and repeated difficulties at mainstream school. Staff speculated that their work was sometimes about reparation of these perceptions, as the relationship that parents and carers most commonly understood was shaped by past experiences of interactions with staff in mainstream schools. Where relationships had become strained between 'home' and school, APIF practitioners felt it was important to work closely with their parents/carers to disentangle the negative associations with mainstream and/or AP and help them to reform them as positive perceptions and new opportunities.

Despite some difficulties in engaging particular parents/carers, support for them was often considered by APIF project leads to be 'equally important/valuable' as the support for YP.

Building relationships with parents

The Anna Freud programme aimed to train teachers in an AP setting to deliver 10-week engagement programmes to parents of their students. Based on the Anna Freud centre model, the programme emphasised the importance of family involvement for comprehensive support of YP in AP. There was an awareness amongst staff members that a prescriptive training course facilitated by the AP would not have secured parental engagement. Therefore, the Anna Freud programme was delivered in a format that maintains a sense that teachers and parents are standing 'shoulder to shoulder' in supporting the YP.

I think if we'd have knocked on the door and asked if they want support from school we might have got a closed door, but because they have come together as a group they didn't see us as leaders, or people in charge, so they were more comfortable asking for help. - *Teacher*

This was achieved through tailored content specific to the needs of the parent cohort, creating an open learning environment, supporting parents to fully engage (e.g. course timings, reminders and ability to reschedule) and importantly, a focus on teachers learning from the perspective and experiences of the parents.

[We] wanted something that felt more like a group, where they could tell us what they needed and we could learn from their experiences, rather than us sitting and [giving the impression that we are] telling them that they are a bad parent. – *Teacher*

'The parent group is where we learn together. It is a support group which makes us realise that we are not the only ones who are having to cope and manage difficult behaviour. It's not like other parenting groups which make us feel we have failed. It shows that we're supporting our child through difficult times. We feel that it helps our relationship with school. We all work together and it feels like an extended family. We feel cared for as well as our child. We like the fact that we can see our child in his school environment. He likes us to come. We look forward to coming to the group.' - *Parent*

Furthermore, the needs of parents and carers influenced their level of engagement, much like with YP. Factors such as English as an additional language (EAL), level of literacy, and parents/carers' own mental health were highlighted by APIF practitioners as influential to their capacity to engage. Projects cited a range of ways in which they had aimed to address, and improve, parents/carers' engagement. Signposting parents and carers to financial information and other sources of support was felt to be helpful in accessing help with costs of travel or equipment to support their child's access to learning. For example, families were advised on free Oyster cards, discounted travel, and, in some cases, referrals to the Princes Trust for equipment costs were made, and, bursaries information was shared.

Working with parents/carers was also important for post-16 transitions, as their engagement helped support the young person into their next education, employment or training (EET) destination and remain in the placement. This was considered particularly vital given that often, for post-16 transitions, parents/carers are the primary responsible adults available to help that YP through the transition to their next life stage e.g. ongoing support over summer prior to their transition into a different education or training setting, or employment.

2.2 Learning related to progress and outcome measurement

This section explores learning on data to support referrals, the range of data sources, and the challenges associated with, but value of, collecting data longitudinally.

Data to support referrals

Generating a range of referral-related data (e.g. data on their educational and welfare needs, their academic history and/or their welfare status and any risk factors), from mainstream settings, YP themselves, and parents/carers, was considered to be vital to the success of the APIF projects. Working within tight timescales for set-up and delivery, APIF projects sought to gain as much information about the YP and their education journey as possible. This was in order to rapidly understand their situations inside and outside education, including the circumstances of their family life, and of their peer networks, so that APIF practitioners could use this information to ensure the support and learning provision offered met their needs and to support mainstream staff in their referrals.

However, a lack of available, clear data was reported to be a factor relating to (what were perceived to be) 'inappropriate referrals', both into AP generally, and specifically into some APIF projects.

For example, APIF practitioners felt that short-term projects may not always be the most suitable provision for YP who had very low levels of school attendance. Instead, in some incidences, it was considered to be more appropriate for schools to review the data on patterns of the YP's attendance and any data on the underlying reasons for this, current support offers and plans in place to support those YP's learning at school. APIF practitioners suggested that schools should consider the 'continuum of options' for that specific young person, based on a thorough needs-assessment, in order to generate the best outcomes and to avoid inappropriate referrals. They continued that if referrals were inappropriate, this was inappropriately using AP resources.

For the valuable and limited resources of the project, reintegration has to be the objective, and only for those pupils who are best placed to achieve that. – *Senior leader, mainstream school.*

The combined impact of circumstances in which there was a lack of data about a YP's prior educational history - including their specific needs and circumstances, or reasons for no longer being in a mainstream school - made it harder for AP providers to understand how to begin supporting a young person. Project leads perceived that schools may, as one lead put it, "not [always] be entirely honest" in their account of the referral of a young person into AP. Additionally, APIF practitioners reported feeling that some schools, in some circumstances (albeit rare), wanted to remove the child that they viewed as a problem. This was an ongoing tension for APIF projects in both the referrals of YP into AP, and the data that they needed to collect from schools to ensure that YP were being referred for appropriate reasons. Projects who addressed this found that the 'bridging' approach was helpful here too. By having discussions with key senior stakeholders from mainstream schools, as well as with Multi-Academy Trusts with 'different lines of accountability', in combination with the local authority, all could begin to untangle these conceptions and heighten the transparency and accountability across settings.

The range of ways to collect and generate data

While projects were thematically focussed, data was collected and recorded by them for a range of outcomes spanning both quantitative and qualitative measures. The range of assessment tools were wide and varied across the overall programme. These measures included: GL assessments at baseline and exit; Gillick competency¹⁴; behaviour logs; practitioner observations; student voice, and; in-app feedback measures (questions on student experience, embedded in the application software). However, as the project delivery models were highly bespoke to their context, certain internal measures were

¹⁴ Children under the age of 16 can consent to their own treatment if they are believed to have enough intelligence, competence and understanding to fully appreciate what's involved in their treatment. This is known as being Gillick competent. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/consent-to-treatment/children/>

perceived as more or less relevant to what they were providing. For example, Gillick competency was only relevant for an offering of a therapeutic intervention. GL assessments was relevant for projects seeking to record outcomes for English, Maths and Science tuition.

APIF practitioners suggested that it was necessary for data collection approaches to be tailored to both the project and the young person. It was perceived to be helpful to have a flexible approach to data collection and utilise measures that suit the needs and experiences of the cohort. One project developed a 'hybrid assessment' to allow them to capture their own baseline data as well as data required for the evaluation, following anecdotal feedback from YP who felt 'over-assessed'. A project working with primary school aged YP did not collect the wellbeing measures (WEMWBS)¹⁵ as the phraseology was not considered appropriate for YP of younger-ages or with physical and/or mental health diagnoses, in particular for discussions around wellbeing and life-purpose:

It's incredibly subjective to measure loneliness. You can measure social isolation, but loneliness is a feeling. – *APIF Project Lead*

Collecting longitudinal data

Data collection for certain progress and outcomes measures were found to be more effective when they could be made simple. This led to clearer communication between settings, and more transparent assessments of YP's needs. For example, reintegration projects measured the ultimate outcome by a sustained reintegration (to a previous or new setting) and projects focused on post-16 transitions recorded outcomes through a sustained transition into EET.

Projects used diverse methods to validate YP's progress and outcomes, and track them over time, and in ways that best suited their cohort. For example:

- Where advanced technology was used, in-application feedback measures for YP took the shape of a pop-up feedback element at the end of the session, as the project lead explained:

What we have done is to develop an in-app survey sent to the children. Every so often it asks the child how they are feeling with the AV1 and asking them about how they are feeling now compared to before. – *APIF Project Lead*

¹⁵ WEMWBS refers to the 'Warwick-Edinburgh Metal Wellbeing Scales'. These are validated scales, comprising a fourteen item scale and alternative short seven item scale, used to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and in the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. More information can be found at: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

- Other projects were considering social, emotional and behavioural aspects of progress and outcomes measures. They reported seeking to measure this through their school reporting system by creating behaviour logs with the aim of measuring changes over time.
- Where AP settings worked with Further Education providers, an important aspect of that relationship was to build mechanisms through which information about YP could be exchanged. Specifically, the aim was to help inform the FE provider of any characteristics, enablers and risk factors to guide them to better support the student.
- Stronger governance, ownership and collaboration between AP providers, and mainstream schools can help overcome the challenge of monitoring progress and achievement of sustained outcomes for YP in short-term placements.

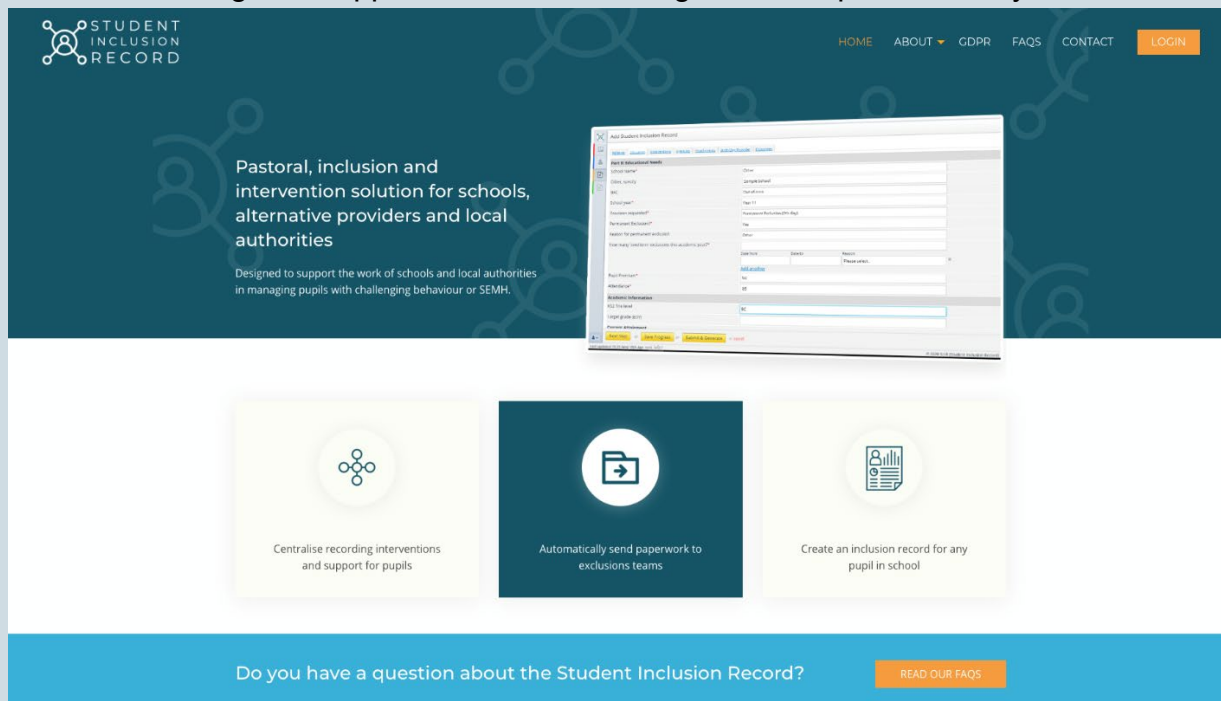
‘Student Inclusion Record’ - a product developed by Bradford AP Academy Central

Bradford AP Academy Central ideated a ‘passport’ type record for YPs’ AP journeys, described on the website as: “Pastoral, inclusion and intervention solution for schools, alternative providers and Local Authorities.”

This was designed to seek to overcome variability in the data from schools, for YP. By seeking a standardised set of data for each student, the Student Inclusion Record (SIR) aims to support them and the agencies involved in their education, throughout their journey and reintegration into mainstream. The system significantly benefits from utilisation and adoption at a local authority level to ensure compliance with GDPR and engagement from all schools. Without this commitment from local education leaders, the database can still function at a school-AP level but its efficacy is reduced. The project lead described the SIR as a:

Database created to support pupils, adding pupil information and case notes to the database, allowing for the creation of a chronology about each excluded pupil which can be shared with partners and placement schools. – *Project Lead*

AP settings or local authorities will require dedicated staff to administer the database and offer training and support to ensure the longer-term impact of the system.



The screenshot shows the Student Inclusion Record website. The header includes the logo, navigation links (HOME, ABOUT, GDPR, FAQs, CONTACT), and a LOGIN button. The main content area features a dark blue background with the text: "Pastoral, inclusion and intervention solution for schools, alternative providers and local authorities" and "Designed to support the work of schools and local authorities in managing pupils with challenging behaviour or SEMH." Below this is a screenshot of a data entry form titled "Add Student Inclusion Record" with fields for Name, Date of Birth, Gender, etc. At the bottom, there are three icons representing: "Centralise recording interventions and support for pupils", "Automatically send paperwork to exclusions teams", and "Create an inclusion record for any pupil in school". A footer bar asks "Do you have a question about the Student Inclusion Record?" with a "READ OUR FAQs" button.

Further information is available at www.studentinclusionrecord.com

Projects collected data for their own purposes (beyond that collected for the evaluation of APIF). Such purposes included, for example, informing assessments of outcomes for the young people supported, aiding compliance with monitoring and reporting requirements, and understanding young peoples' satisfaction and experiences of the APIF project 'intervention'. However, multiple avenues of primary data collection with young people were perceived by APIF practitioners to disincentivise engagement. Similarly, data collection with YP required 'multiple levels' of approval in order for it to be ethical, sit within principles of informed consent, and uphold GDPR regulations. Therefore, a combination of 'red tape' and multiple data collection methods were seen to influence both the keenness of YP to engage, as well as the quality of the data received.

In some circumstances, the development of relevant and meaningful measures of positive outcomes presented distinct challenges for AP and mainstream education settings. For example, reportedly some children did not want to leave the support of the APIF provision. Especially for those who gained a "real boost" through AP because they had built trust with the AP practitioners. For some children, the outcome of reintegration felt like a barrier and that perception required continued post-intervention work with a mentor to unpick (likely, but not exclusively) in a mainstream school. For post-16 transitions, the worries were around the new setting(s), and ongoing work was done between APIF practitioners and the YP to support this, including extending support outside of term time.

Additional factors countering the use of appropriate measures of progress and outcomes, of both reintegration and post-16 transitions, were that the expectations placed on children to cope and manage in mainstream settings could be very high. Practicalities of school- or college- life and the metaphorical 'distance' that can exist between school and AP could mean that reintegration was challenging and non-linear. For example, YP's needs that were identified in AP, could be more challenging to cater to, and implement, in mainstream. Because mainstream staff to student ratios were much lower this meant there were more YP' needs to consider.

Furthermore, where plans and suggestions of support did not fit with mainstream setting behaviour policies, there could be, in places, a lack of specialist understanding of managing behaviours. There were several elements of reintegration care that were reportedly, on occasion, difficult to negotiate with schools. Where this was the case, the difficulties were reported to centre around mainstream practitioners' understanding of attachment, the need for de-escalation time surrounding triggers or conflict, and appropriate space and time for sensory breaks. This aspect could be taken to demonstrate how unique, and therefore valuable, the one-to-one learning and bespoke support funded through APIF has been in terms of its ability to rapidly establish a more individualised and responsive learning environment for YP.

2.3 Thematic reflections on this learning

This section highlights both overarching learnings from the three funding themes as well as cross-cutting learning, related to processes, structuring projects and progress and outcomes data.

Parent/carers engagement was perceived as successful where APIF practitioners considered parent/carers needs. The relationship with their student's school(s), as well as their own experience of schooling, could influence parents' contemporary perception of education. Telephone and text message methods of communication worked well, between APIF practitioners and parents/carers, particularly after an initial meeting in person.

Reintegration to mainstream settings, as the end goal of APIF support, was supported by mainstream settings sharing clear information with the AP provider on YP's educational history and responding to further data or information requests from the AP provider. Relationships needed to be built rapidly and reintegration did not have to be into the same mainstream setting as before the project for it to be successful and sustainable. 'Post-intervention' mentoring added another layer of help for YP, when adjusting to their mainstream setting. This was most effective when mainstream schools had gained a good understanding from APIF practitioners about what would maximise a YP's engagement in any learning environment.

Support for post-16 transitions recognised the need to engage potential employers, and to help to build a network of awareness of the needs of the YP. Communications across AP with onwards destinations in EET, sought to help EET destinations to understand the YP in more detail, to support a sustained transition.

Approaches to progress and outcomes measurements were ultimately considered successful where outcomes were clearly defined and measures could provide valuable and meaningful information for all those providing learning and support to YP in AP, in schools and in post-16 settings. Data ranged from assessments of YP's educational knowledge and skills (e.g. at the point where a YP enters and leaves AP) to information on their social and emotional well-being (e.g. using 'in-app' technology to capture YP's feedback on their experiences of provision), although not all of which was readily available or shared between settings. Feedback across the programme reflected that collecting the necessary data can be a lot of work for all stakeholders (referring to data necessary for projects' internal monitoring of progress, rather than that being collected for the APIF evaluation), although the importance of understanding the experience and satisfaction from the YP themselves was acknowledged by APIF practitioners. Projects responded to this by exploring adaptations to existing systems or new processes or forms to provide professionals in AP or mainstream settings with the necessary information. Key learning indicates that successful approaches require clarity on the short

and long-term benefits for all those involved in data collection and sharing, to ensure completion and consistency in the data recorded and shared. Practically, methods for data collection and information sharing need to be accessible and easy to use, enabling the swift response to tailor bespoke approaches to young person's needs.

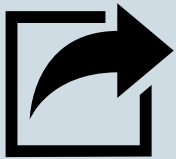
More generally for data collection, APIF practitioners suggested that mainstream schools could benefit from additional support and awareness-raising on the application of data-sharing and GDPR to certain technologies or contexts. Specifically, as this was central to their ability to understand the situation of that young person, and their needs.

Key learning to inform future AP innovation

Key learning from the APIF projects is set out below. These are the main points identified by participants as critical to the success of short-term innovation projects in AP.



Structuring innovative AP projects required time and resource for relationship building that supported positive partnership working.



Clear and positive lines of communication from the outset helped APIF practitioners to rapidly establish good relations with stakeholders, which was important given the relatively short timescales of the programme.



Face to face interactions were needed initially. Once established, relationships could be maintained remotely.



Projects' approaches to engage mainstream schools illustrated the importance of 'bridging' – across and between different settings and stakeholders, taking a meditative approach and brokering new opportunities to 'refresh' relationships, where necessary.



Mainstream schools were approached at the executive/headteacher level (an appropriate level of authority and seniority to leverage change and action strategic-level decisions or powers). The responsibility for the day-to-day and operational project elements was cascaded to a named contact in mainstream schools.



Project governance was bolstered by having senior staff 'around the table'. This became more important when uncovering issues that required collective leadership across the system, particularly when looking to make changes at the local authority level.

3. Learning from early outcomes and practice

Summary of key findings

What benefits are beginning to be experienced by YP, parents/carers and education professionals?

- Based on a combination of evidence¹⁶, some YP across reintegration and transition projects showed evidence of sustained positive outcomes. For others progress was non-linear and needed to be viewed as a part of the journey rather than a negative outcome.
- On average, YP showed improvements in engagement with education, social and emotional development and feelings of optimism about their future. They were more positive towards school, learning and more willing to attend.
- Parents reported improved relationships within the home and an increased understanding of the young person and their behaviours. The support opened up parents' communication and collaboration with education professionals.
- For educational professionals, the key benefit of support was the impact on partnership working between key stakeholders.

What aspects of the APIF-funded provision are beginning to make improvements?

- Across all projects, staff reported that tailored one-to-one support was important for making progress as it offered flexible, holistic support to accommodate the complex circumstances and diverse needs of YP and their families.
- In transitions projects, the support enabling YP to make appropriate choices about their future, whilst building up their aspirations, was viewed as important preparation for this transition process and valued by the YP. Case-study interviewees perceived that the level of sustained transitions was higher for the YP supported by the APIF projects than the national average for AP of 59%.¹⁷ Analysis of data provided by the transition projects showed that 66% of pupils transitioned to EET and sustained this for at least two terms.
- Staff across all projects reported that building relationships and trust between those providing support and the YP and their families was critical to the success of the projects. Consistency, expertise and approachability were considered key.

¹⁶ For example, projects' outcomes data for their supported YP and qualitative data on the professional judgements and perceptions of staff working with these YP (collected via case-study interviews and TMRs)

¹⁷ Destinations of KS4 and 16-18 (KS5) pupils: 2019

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/860135/Destinations_main_text_2020_REV.pdf

- In reintegration and transition projects, reliable support provided to professionals within mainstream school and post-16 provision was reflected in improved communication and collaboration across settings, and better understanding of YP leaving AP settings. Analysis of data across reintegration projects showed 45% reintegrated to mainstream (or a special) school, of which, 73% maintained this for at least two terms.
- Seven projects were able to provide data on the number of pupils formally assessed and making progress in English and maths. For English, 52% demonstrated progress, and for maths, this was 58%.

3.1 What benefits are beginning to be experienced by young people, parents/carers and education professionals?

The evaluation identified the benefits of the APIF-funded provision for YP, both in successful reintegration and transitions, but also in soft outcomes. The evidence suggests that the non-linearity of YP's journey towards sustained reintegration and transitions should not be viewed as a negative outcome, and instead considered part of an individual journey. The section also considers the impact of support on parents/carers and education professionals.

Benefits for young people

The transitions projects showed promising success in facilitating post-16 transitions for YP. Projects focussed on transitions reported that of the 395 Year 11+ pupils participating in their provision, 77% (n=306) transitioned to education, training or employment on before September 2019.¹⁸ In terms of sustained (for at least two terms) transitions, 66% (n=261) of those supported achieved this outcome. This compares to a national average for YP in alternative provision from the previous academic year (latest data available¹⁹) of 59%. They did this by providing YP with the information and support to make appropriate and realistic choices about their future, as well as the ongoing support from the APIF-funded project and their EET destination. In one example, 69 students were engaged by the transitions programme and, of those, more than three quarters had successfully transitioned into a post-16 destination for the 2019/20 academic year.

¹⁸ Note, some pupils were still being supported beyond September 2019 and more may have transitioned to education, training or employment after this time.

¹⁹ Ibid

I am confident that the majority of our students will have a positive destination for September [2019] and will still be in it by Christmas. I think if it wasn't for this project that would only be about half of students. – *AP Professional providing transition support*

Similarly, reintegration projects showed success in returning YP to mainstream education. Analysis of data from reintegration projects showed that of the 227 pupils participating in provision, 45% (n=102) reintegrated to a mainstream (or a special) school on or before September 2019.²⁰ Furthermore, of those who reintegrated, 73% (n=74) maintained this for at least two terms. Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils accounted for most reintegrations. Of the 138 Key Stage 3 pupils supported, 47% (n=69) reintegrated and of these, 68% (n=47) sustained this. Of the 58 Key Stage 4 pupils supported, 53% (n=31) reintegrated and of these, 84% (n=26) sustained this. There is no national comparator data for reintegration. The practice example below highlights the case study of one young person supported by the Turnaround reintegration project.

²⁰ Note, some pupils were still being supported beyond September 2019 and more may have reintegrated after this time.

The Turnaround Project - Successful reintegration

The experience of one young person, supported by Portsmouth's Turnaround Project, highlights their successful approach to reintegration.

The supported young person was raised by their close relative, in the unexpected absence of their parents. This is believed by the AP professionals to have contributed to the YP's behaviour as they reached secondary school, becoming both physically and verbally aggressive, and struggling to control their emotions.

The young person was referred into the APIF project and the family were supported by one of the mentors. The mentor provided wraparound whole-family support including referrals into family counselling, information to understand the cause of the young person's behaviour, communication with mainstream school and support for the young person to attend a youth club for young carers.

It was considered that the greater support experienced by the YP, including the referrals, better enabled them to control their emotions. The YP, their family and the mainstream school have learnt that the YP's "outbursts" were not simply bad behaviour and the YP now speaks more openly about their emotions. Their relative felt that the young person is '*on a much better road*' and that without the support of the APIF programme may have '*gone entirely off the rails*'.

The young person has returned to mainstream school and plans to complete their GCSEs.

They have changed our whole life, both of us. – *Parent/Carer*

Across all reintegration projects, the interviewees (professionals based in both AP and mainstream school settings) perceived there had been an improvement in attendance of those who had returned to mainstream education, compared to their prior mainstream attendance. There was also a notable change in the YP's attitude towards school, with one mainstream headteacher feeling that the YP were actually wanting to attend. Despite this positive outcome, interviewees considered it was too early to see if the increased attendance would translate into improved academic attainment.

Seven projects were able to provide data on the number of pupils formally assessed and making progress in English and maths during the period in which they were supported by the project. Of the 411 pupils that were assessed in English, 52% (n=212) recorded making progress. For maths, 412 pupils were assessed, with 58% (n=238) demonstrating progress.²¹

²¹ Note that the figures are based on the projects' own sources of assessment data.

The impact of the APIF-funded provision on social and emotional outcomes for YP was measured via the survey administered as part of the evaluation. As part of this survey, YP were asked to report the extent to which they agreed with different statements about their strengths and the things they find difficult. The measures used in relation to these outcomes were based on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), where a high score indicates the young person has more difficulties. YP were surveyed at two timepoints; at the beginning of their participation in the APIF project ('baseline') and when their involvement ended ('follow-up').

Table 4 below shows that following APIF project involvement there was a reduction in difficulties reported by YP. The average SDQ score for those responding to both surveys (i.e. matched baseline and follow-up responses) at baseline was 15.8 and at follow-up this had reduced to 13.6. This change was statistically significant. Expressed differently, Table 4 shows that two-thirds (66%) experienced a decrease in difficulties at follow-up.

Table 4: Change in the SDQ score of young people supported

Change from baseline to follow-up	Count	Percent
Decreased	52	66%
Stayed the same	4	5%
Increased	23	29%
Total	79	100%

Source: Ecorys analysis of APIF evaluation survey.

Notes: n=79.

YP were asked whether, at the point of responding to the baseline and follow-up surveys conducted, they thought that overall they had difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people. Table 5 details the change reported between baseline and follow-up. Over a third (37%) of YP experienced a decrease in their levels of difficulties. The positive change from baseline to follow-up is statistically significant.

Table 5: Change in level of young peoples' difficulties with emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people

Change from baseline to follow-up	Count	Percent
Decreased	31	37%
Stayed the same	37	44%
Increased	17	20%
Total	85	100%

Source: Ecorys analysis of APIF evaluation survey.

Notes: n=85, totals do not sum 100% due to rounding.

For those reporting difficulties with emotions, concentration, behaviour or being able to get on with other people, additional questions were asked. For all those responding to the baseline survey (n = 135), four-fifths (n = 91) of YP reported having experienced at least one of these difficulties for over a year.²² Just over a third (n = 26) of YP that completed a baseline and follow-up questionnaire reported these difficulties upset or distressed them “quite a lot” or a “great deal”. At the follow-up stage, this reduced to under a quarter of YP (n = 15) – this indicates positive distance travelled on this measure.

Table 6 shows the average responses to the question about the extent to which YP reported their difficulties interfered with their everyday life in different areas. There were notable decreases in difficulties interfering with classroom learning (39%) and home life (33%). These changes were not statistically significant.

Table 6: Change in extent to which young people reported difficulties interfering with their everyday life

Change from baseline to follow-up (number of responses provided in parenthesis)	Percentage of YP reporting a decrease in difficulties	Percentage of YP reporting that difficulties stayed the same	Percentage of YP reporting an increase in difficulties
Classroom learning (n=57)	39%	40%	21%
Friendships (n=58)	21%	59%	21%
Home life (n=57)	33%	40%	26%
Leisure activities (n=56)	23%	46%	30%

Source: Ecorys analysis of APIF evaluation survey.
Notes: totals do not sum 100% due to rounding.

The above findings are supported by the qualitative data. For example, one headteacher felt that there was clear social and emotional development in the YP returning to mainstream education. The students were better able to verbalise how they felt rather than resort to behaviour displays and had a stronger understanding of what works for them at school.

A number of children returning are much better able to verbalise and talk about how they feel. They have an understanding of what works for them and what doesn't work for them. A really mature dialogue. It is a really mature skill. That is what excites me about this. –
Mainstream headteacher

The survey also asked YP to report the extent to which they agreed with different statements about how they see themselves and others. The measure used was The

²² Question not asked at follow-up.

Child and Youth Resilience Measure (CYRM) score.²³ A higher score is desirable. The average CYRM score at baseline was 29.4 and this reduced to 28.5 at follow-up. Whilst a small overall change, this was statistically significant.

Finally, YP were asked to report the extent to which they agreed with different statements about how they had been feeling in the past two weeks. The measure used was the Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS).²⁴ A high score is desirable. The average SWEMWBS score at baseline was 23.1 and increased slightly at follow-up to 23.5. This change was not statistically significant. Table 7 details the change reported between baseline and follow-up.

Table 7: Statements on how the young person has been feeling (in the past two weeks)

Change from baseline to follow-up	Count	Percent
Increased	42	55%
Stayed the same	6	8%
Decreased	29	38%
Total	77	100%

Source: Ecorys analysis of APIF evaluation survey.
Notes: n=77, totals do not sum 100% due to rounding.

Benefits experienced by parents/carers

For parents and carers, families and stakeholders have reported improved family relationships within the home. This was considered to have been achieved by improving the whole family’s understanding and management of the young person’s emotions and behaviour, as well as accessing other necessary support such as counselling and CAMHS assessments. Projects operating under the parent/carer engagement theme and other projects working more generally to engage parents/carers, had relieved some of the parental anxieties and stress about the future of the young person. For example, parents of YP supported by transitions programmes often lacked the knowledge around future pathways and were concerned about the support within mainstream providers. APIF practitioners believe the dedicated support of the APIF-funded transition programme had relieved these pressures on parents.

²³ CYRM is a scale used to gather self-reported perceptions by which to assess resilience. Further detail on the development and use of the scale can be found at: <https://cyrm.resilienceresearch.org/>

²⁴ SWEMWBS is the short seven item version of a validated scale used to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and in the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. More information can be found at: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

For reintegration and parental engagement projects, both parents and teachers provided feedback on the impact of the APIF-funded provision on the parental relationships with the school. Families were more willing to work collaboratively with schools, engage with teachers and seek advice from the school, with teachers noting an increasing sense of mutual respect between the teachers and parents.

It shows us that with supporting our child through difficult times, we feel that it helps our relationship with the school. We all work together, it feels like an extended family. We feel cared for, as well as our child. – *Parent/Carer*

[Parents] are more willing to approach us, whereas before they wouldn't have. – *Teacher, Mainstream school*

Parents have experienced the benefits of the inclusive and supportive environment created by AP providers. In one parental engagement project, parents also gained positive peer support opportunities.

The parent group is where we learn together. It is a support group that makes us realise we are not the only ones that are having to cope and manage difficult behaviour. It is not like other parenting groups that make us feel we have failed. – *Parent/Carer*

Benefits for education professionals

Finally, for education professionals, there is evidence of improved partnership working between the key stakeholders, including AP provision, mainstream schools and post-16 providers. Through increased resources, stakeholders have been able to work collaboratively to share learning, increase communication and create a stronger network. One APIF-funded transition project created 'transition forms' in response to post-16 providers' feedback that information about the young person was only provided once a placement began to break down. The transition forms capture key information about the young person, such as the young person's background and support needs, and can be provided to any relevant professional working with them at the post-16 provider, working preventatively through information sharing at the earliest stage.

3.2 Learning from aspects of provision beginning to make improvements.

Here we present a summary of reflections in what the learning means for each of the three overarching themes. For the aspects of the APIF-funded provision that were

beginning to make improvements for YP, many of the facilitating factors were cross cutting all three themes of the APIF.

An overarching finding was the **importance of building a trusting relationship** between both YP and parents, and with those providing support. Many of the families and YP supported through the programme displayed a level of mistrust in statutory services and had negative experiences of prior support. YP and their families valued that the provision of support differed from that experienced before. Integral to this was having a consistent practitioner who could be relied upon and trusted by those being supported. This, however, requires time and can be challenging given the frequently short-term nature of AP.

A large number of the AP cohort and their families have a distrust of authority figures, feeling that professionals are ever changing. However, by having the constant of a named [professional], they are better engaged and motivated to follow our advice and guidance. –
Senior leader, AP provision

We are not seen as a threat. If the child is under social care they will get a visit from a social worker like every 3 weeks, but because we have the capacity we can visit the families at least once a week. We can support them, like with appointments, visits, paperwork. I think they do see the support and how we can benefit the family. It gives the family the confidence that someone is there to help them. –
Mentor, AP provision

The Turnaround Project's PACE approach

PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy) is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the young person feel safe. The approach focuses on the whole child and not just the behaviour.

In this APIF project, the Head of the AP had recognised the gap in their support for the YP coming through AP who had experienced childhood trauma and had a lack of trust in others. To address this, the AP provider led the integration of the PACE approach within the provision offered as a core element of their local APIF project. The provision has been extended to include PACE training for mainstream schools to support successful reintegration.

The quality... has just been immense. It has been a genuine learning over a period of time, gathering likeminded people together and seeing the staff applying that in how they approach,

like redesigning structures, redesigning assessment tools, how they think about the work that they are doing, just a new language, the PACE approach language – *Senior leader, mainstream school.*

Successful engagement of parents and carers required the skills to recognise, respond to and address parents/carers own needs and circumstances. Projects recruited skilled team members from a range of disciplines to meet the diverse needs of the families and YP supported. For example, in the Cognus transition project recruited professionals with a mix of backgrounds, including in Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Special Educational Needs (SEN) settings, which enabled them to select the professional with the right skills to fit the needs of the supported young person. In the Turnaround reintegration project, mentors felt that their personal experiences of being mothers to teenagers enabled them to relate to and build a rapport with the parents they support. Some projects extended their support to maintain contact with YP and families and address or keep abreast of issues or barriers that might arise during the summer.

Importantly, support was not limited to the YP and their families. The APiF-funded projects recognised **the necessity of providing support to mainstream schools and FE destinations. Young people's reintegration was seen to work particularly well** when there is partnership working across the different education settings and all relevant stakeholders are involved in planning and delivering both learning and support. This can be achieved through a range of means including early information sharing, training for staff members and a physical presence on site. This necessitates flexibility in the systems and processes that span these different settings (and accountability regimes), a willingness to learn from other settings, and a commitment to keep all stakeholders informed by providing timely information and data (in order to tailor provision effectively irrespective of the setting the young person moves into).

It is just too easy to sit and work in your own silos. So, having this draw us together and be the driving force and having those accountability measures in place, that impresses me. – *Senior leader, mainstream school*

Cognus project training and ongoing support for teachers in post-16 provision

The early weeks and months of a YP's experience of post-16 provision are critical in establishing sustained and successful transitions. The Cognus project recognised a gap in the support available for teaching staff at post-16 provision following the enrolment of a YP from an AP setting. To address this, the Cognus team have designed training for post-16 provision that builds capacity by supporting teachers to meet the needs of students transitioning from AP to college. The training prepares them for what to expect from the YP enrolled, and to introduce strategies and processes to minimise the risk of negative situations arising (e.g. teachers using reflective language).

The support needs to go to the educators, because they are the ones dealing with that young person immediately when they come in, they are the first one to acknowledge something is not right. Pastoral leads and SENCOs get called when something has gone wrong, but we don't want things to go wrong. – *Project Lead*

Importantly, this support is offered to those directly teaching the YP, not solely staff members responsible for pastoral support. In addition, agreements were put in place to allow the transition mentor to have a physical presence at the post-16 provision during the first term to provide support for both the YP and the teachers.

Closer collaboration between settings, perhaps through specialist peripatetic support workers, with leadership that seeks to empower those working directly with YP, helps education professionals to better support and monitor YP's progress and respond quicker to help resolve issues if they arise. Across all three themes, it was also important to consider the support needs of the education professionals within mainstream schools and EET providers in order to create sustainable support for the YP throughout their journey and beyond the APIF-funded provision.

A recurring theme in relation to good practice in supporting young people's transitions into EET, was ensuring that YP are given opportunities and support to explore the post-16 options available to them, develop their aspirations and make appropriate future choices. This was done for example, by arranging to take them on short visits to local FE colleges or training providers outside of public open days, facilitating meetings with their future classroom tutors or welfare support staff and providing access to employers and the workplace through talks, site visits or taster sessions. One mentor from Cognus, a transitions project, noted the visits to post-16 destinations had 80% attendance in the first

year of the APIF project's delivery in comparison to no-one attending in the previous year. The support was also considered to have built YP's capacity to manage the change process - for example by explicitly teaching coping strategies, building self-esteem, improving their communication skills and ensuring an understanding of how best to manage their own learning, mental health and wellbeing.

Going forward to the unknown is a big deal for them. One of the aims here is to bridge, provide some continuity, doing things like travel training, extra visits, support them over the summer holidays, to be there with them in college settings when they first start, and to support them as they get used to their new setting. – *Mentor, AP provision*

For some APIF-funded projects, it was important that there was an element of follow-up support and that **engagement was not limited to term time; recognising the importance of continuous support over the summer break**, supporting YP through to their post-16 destination or reintegration to mainstream. Examples included drop-in sessions and summer school, as well as more informal check-ins.

Prior evidence shows that the summer break motivation to attend EET interviews is very low. The cohort officially left education at the end of June, resulting in a huge break in routine and withdrawal from AP support. With continued support from the [support professional] we hope to reduce the number of students that fail to progress into their chosen destination. – *Senior leader, AP provision*

Role of the Transition Mentor in Salford

In the Build Salford project, the Transition Mentor was appointed to provide direct 1-1 support to a cohort of approximately 30 young people, each year, who were currently in year 11. The key duties of this role were to:

- Provide 1-1 mentoring support including Information, Advice and Guidance on post-16 choices, including linking in with careers advisors to avoid them getting 'lost' in the system between schools and AP settings.
- Explore any barriers to their current learning and how these may impact on their post-16 choices and beyond.
- Provide practical support to attend appointments/meetings.
- Work alongside parents and carers to continue the support into post-16 transitions within the home through, for example, telephone calls to keep parents up-to-date with what actions to expect from other professionals and requesting parents' opinion on ways to support their child.
- Developing trust with parents and carers with the mentor and utilising this trust to encourage parents to accept support from other professionals.
- Work with the AP providers to provide a coordinated approach to transition including advocacy for the young person and working more closely with mainstream school-based staff, such as safeguarding and careers leads
- Work alongside and make referrals into support services, including social care, mental health support and CEIAG.

[The transition mentor] has been fantastic, she's always phoning and following up on things that people have said they will have done [in order to get things in place for the young person]. She speaks to him like an adult not like a bit of a kid off the streets. She speaks to him with respect and he likes that. She's just trying to get him on the right path really. She speaks to me a lot about what I think is best for him. – *Parent/Carer*

Regular communications and partnership working between AP providers, FE and other post-16 learning and training is also important for identifying practical ways to ensure post-16 settings are prepared for, and responsive to, the needs and behaviours of YP leaving AP. This was found to have enabled AP practitioners to continue offering some form of support to YP on their campuses and other settings but also support/training that had raised staff awareness (in FE and other providers) of the behaviours and needs of supported YP.

Early benefits were experienced by young people, parents/carers and education professionals. In terms of impact, the final outcomes for those supported through the programme were predominantly expected to be the successful reintegration into mainstream school or special placement, or sustained transitions of YP into appropriate destinations. Across all three themes, there is evidence that YP and their families are seeing varied levels of success in reaching this aim. As noted above, data from:

- transition projects indicates that of the 395 (Year 11+) pupils participating in their provision, 77% (n=306) transitioned to education, training or employment on before September 2019.²⁵ In terms of sustained (for at least two terms) transitions, 66% (n=261) of those supported achieved this outcome.
- Reintegration projects showed that of the 227 pupils participating in provision, 45% (n=102) reintegrated to a mainstream (or a special) school on or before September 2019.²⁶ and, of those who reintegrated, 73% (n=74) maintained this for at least two terms.

Essential to the achievement of these benefits and the progress made by YP was the offer of tailored support to the YP, often delivered one-to-one. Ready access to dedicated resources ensured that providers were able to provide wraparound support that included the young person, their family and education professionals. This holistic approach improved providers' capacity to be flexible when meeting the diverse needs of the YP and their families. Access to more intensive forms of support also enabled providers to better identify unmet needs of young people, and make the necessary referrals (e.g. CAMHS, Educational Psychologists) to provide young people with the wider support they need to create sustainable change.

For those supported by reintegration and transitions projects (and to a lesser extent among the parent/carer engagement projects not delivering direct support to YP), there were social and emotional developments within the supported YP, they were better able to communicate their needs and responded better to classroom learning. Positively for the whole family, relationships at home were improved across projects in all three themes, as were parental stresses and anxieties for the future.

²⁵ Note, some pupils were still being supported beyond September 2019 and more may have transitioned to education, training or employment after this time.

²⁶ Note, some pupils were still being supported beyond September 2019 and more may have reintegrated after this time.

4. Conclusions

Emerging learning from the APIF-funded projects spans a range of insights into how to improve the quality of alternative provision for YP which may be useful in the context of additional challenges linked to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The evidence highlights that **effective and sustainable AP provision** requires early consideration of how best to engage and recruit staff with the required dispositions, skills and experience, ensure the necessary buy-in from across the local education 'eco-system' and establish a regular, named staff contact in schools. Meaningful, flexible **partnership working between all relevant stakeholders** is vital to the successful introduction of new or adapted approaches, technologies or methods of teaching and learning. Efficient, day-to-day provision needs to **operate with transparency, ensuring timely communication and detailed information sharing** between different settings. Bespoke, one-to-one approaches, providing a package of holistic support for YP are central to enabling them to achieve progress within the AP setting.

Successful engagement of parents and carers requires staff with the skills, behaviours and expertise to build relationships of trust by gathering a detailed picture of parents/carers' circumstances, demonstrating their accessibility and responding to their needs with sustained, consistent actions.

Support for **young people's reintegration** works well when there is commitment to closer collaboration between settings, with leadership that seeks to empower those working directly with YP, helps them better support and monitor YP's progress and respond quicker to help resolve issues if they arise. Successful approaches to **supporting YP's transition into post-16 settings** incorporate opportunities for YP to explore their future options, support that bridges the gap in learning and routine they experience during summer break periods as well as practical steps to prepare staff in post-16 settings to effectively support YP leaving AP.

The principal reflection on learning from the AP Innovation projects – one that cuts across all three themes - is the need to **prioritise the building of effective relationships based on trust and good communication**. This includes the YP, those supporting them, their families and other professionals working in different settings. It needs to be reflected in all aspects of planning and implementing AP provision, including in related provision in other settings, from governance arrangements to the specification of the skills and experience required of those teaching and supporting YP in AP.

Overall, the learning demonstrates the diversity of approaches to achieve improvements in the quality of learning and support YP experience within and beyond AP. All require varying degrees of resource and time but are commonly underpinned by purposeful, meaningful engagement to build those partnerships and relationships to enable sustained

change, as well as identify opportunities for mutual learning from different professional and organisational cultures, processes and practices.

Annex 1: Full survey responses for tables included in Section 3

Table 8: Statements on strengths and difficulties

Your strengths, and things you find difficult	Avg. all baselines	Avg. baseline (with a follow-up)	Avg. follow-up
a) I try to be nice to other people, I care about their feelings	2.29	2.35	2.53
b) I am restless, I cannot stay still for long	2.22	2.2	2.09
c) I get a lot of headaches, stomach-aches or sickness	1.62	1.65	1.47
d) I usually share with others (food, games, pens etc.)	2.15	2.2	2.24
e) I get very angry and often lose my temper	2.25	2.22	1.87
f) I am usually on my own, I generally play alone or keep to myself	1.55	1.48	1.48
g) I usually do as I'm told	2.01	1.98	2.2
h) I worry a lot	1.87	1.88	1.93
i) I am helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill	2.33	2.38	2.45
j) I am constantly fidgeting or squirming	2	2.05	1.95
k) I have one good friend or more	2.72	2.71	2.71
l) I fight a lot, I can make other people do what I want	1.48	1.45	1.48
m) I am often unhappy, down-hearted or tearful	1.54	1.61	1.49
n) Other people my age like me	2.43	2.44	2.45
o) I am easily distracted, I find it difficult to concentrate	2.38	2.42	2.19
p) I am nervous in new situations, I easily lose confidence	2.05	2.13	1.98
q) I am kind to younger children	2.65	2.71	2.61
r) I am often accused of lying or cheating	1.83	1.77	1.58
s) Other children or young people pick on me or bully me	1.23	1.27	1.2
t) I often volunteer to help others (parents, teachers, children)	2.06	2.13	2.01

u) I think before I do things	1.8	1.87	1.94
v) I take things that are not mine from home, school or elsewhere	1.23	1.22	1.18
w) I get on better with adults than with people my own age	2.09	2.07	1.69
x) I have many fears, I am easily scared	1.46	1.53	1.42
y) I finish the work I'm doing. My attention is good.	2.03	2.05	1.95

Source: Ecorys analysis of APIF evaluation survey.

Notes: 139 respondents for all baselines. 86 responses with baseline and follow-up.

Response options were 1 = not true, 2 = somewhat true, 3 = certainly true.

Bold indicates a statistically significant change at follow-up (compared to baseline).

Table 9: Statements on how young person sees themselves and others

Statements on how you see yourself and others	Avg. all baselines	Avg. baseline (with a follow-up)	Avg. follow-up
1. Do you have people you want to be like?	2.01	2.01	2.09
2. Is doing well in school important to you?	2.47	2.53	2.41
3. Do you feel that your parent(s) / caregiver(s) know a lot about you (for example, what makes you happy, what makes you scared)?	2.46	2.5	2.4
4. Do you try to finish activities that you start?	2.34	2.36	2.31
5. When things don't go your way, can you fix it without hurting yourself or other people (for example, without hitting others or saying nasty things)?	2.09	2.16	2.09
6. Do you know where to go to get help?	2.53	2.52	2.51
7. Do you feel you fit in with other young people?	2.35	2.28	2.34
8. Do you think your family cares about you when times are hard (for example, if you are sick or have done something wrong)?	2.74	2.74	2.53
9. Do you think your friends care about you when times are hard (for example if you are sick or have done something wrong)?	2.46	2.59	2.45
10. Are you treated fairly?	2.4	2.43	2.31

11. Do you have chances to show others that you are growing up and can do things by yourself?	2.59	2.61	2.47
12. Do you like the way your family celebrates things (like holidays or learning about your culture)?	2.69	2.66	2.52

Source: Ecorys analysis of APIF evaluation survey.

Notes: 139 respondents for all baselines. 86 responses with baseline and follow-up.

Question options were: 1 = No, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Yes.

Bold indicates a statistically significant change at follow-up (compared to baseline).

Table 10: Statements on how the young person has been feeling (in the past two weeks)

Statements on how feeling (in the past 2 weeks)	Avg. all baselines	Avg. baseline (with a follow-up)	Avg. follow-up
a) I've been feeling optimistic about the future	3.1	3.18	3.35
b) I've been feeling useful	3.19	3.23	3.28
c) I've been feeling relaxed	3.21	3.17	3.23
d) I've been dealing with problems well	3.15	3.24	3.17
e) I've been thinking clearly	3.15	3.12	3.38
f) I've been feeling close to other people	3.51	3.41	3.38
g) I've been able to make up my own mind about things	3.84	3.8	3.76

Source: Ecorys analysis of APIF evaluation survey.

Notes: 139 respondents for all baselines. 86 responses with baseline and follow-up.

Response options were: 1 = None of the time, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Some of the time, 4 = Often, 5 = All of the time

Bold indicates a statistically significant change at follow-up (compared to baseline).



Department
for Education

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Reference: DFE-RR123

ISBN: 978-1-83870-257-1

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